You are listening to, you've got this episode 336. Welcome to You've Got This, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life. I'm your host, Dr. Katie Linder. On this episode, I thought I might share how I have come to take on some new job responsibilities at.

Work. Um, and this is definitely tied to the project that I've been mentioning that I've been working on over the past several months. And, um, so I'm gonna talk a little bit more about that project and then also how it led to kind of a, an official shift in my position description. Um, because of some of those duties that I had taken on, so for the last six months or so, um, since like November of 2022 or like October of 2022.

I've been co-leading a campus-wide budget reduction project. Now, you may have similar projects happening at your campuses. I think a lot of higher ed is going through this process. Um, and you might wonder like, why is the person who does digital strategy, uh, the one who is doing these budget projects, um, if you know anything about my job, you know, that I lead digital strategy and, and kind of online teaching and learning at my institution.

And I think that's a really good question. How, how did someone like me get pulled into a project like this? And it was actually kind of a combination of factors. One was kind of my willingness to raise my hand and step into the project. Um, we, I, I saw that there was kind of a need to have someone that had my skills, um, which is kind of a second variable here.

I have some project management background, um, and I knew that that would be helpful here. I also have change management background that could also be helpful here. And then also I had been involved in some other related projects like academic planning at my institution that were tied to some of the budget reduction work that we needed to do.

So I ended up leading a small team of people who helped units across our campus cut between three to 4% of their budgets, and we tried to make a really inclusive process that happened over about four months. And you might think four months sounds like a lot, but it's really not in a process like this, it was actually very rapid.

Altogether, um, the campus had to cut about 6 million in that period of time, and that was just phase one. So in this next fiscal year, uh, we're actually making more cuts and I'll be co-leading that effort as well. So, um, That is kind of the bigger project that I've been working on and I've learned a ton, uh, through that project.

That's probably a, another podcast episode for another day. But simultaneous to working on that project, there were also a couple of leaders at my institution who were kind of engaged in, in that kind of work that were moving on to other opportunities, and that created some space for me to inherit some additional responsibilities.

And so starting this month, um, I'm gonna be continuing to keep my current portfolio, which is focused on digital strategy. And that digital strategy portfolio also includes things like our Center for Teaching and Learning, um, program development across all different modalities or institution. And that's on the credit side and the non-credit side.

My area also does work on micro-credentials. Uh, market intelligence data is another thing that we offer, and also academic technology. So that's kind of my current portfolio of things that I do at my institution. But I'm also going to be taking on this new piece of a portfolio, which is leading our institutional strategy as well.

And more specifically, this includes the implementation of our campus's multi-year strategic plan. And I've basically inherited this wonderful team of project managers that I'm super excited to work with. And this team was the team that was already kind of working on implementation of our different projects that are tied to the goals of our strategic plan on our campus.

And um, the person who had previously been leading that team, a really good colleague of mine, um, was moving on. And so we had this opportunity to kind of rethink where that team would report to. And they're gonna now report to me, which is really, really exciting. Um, so my title is actually shifting from Digital Strategy and Learning to Academic Innovation and Strategy to give us a little bit more flexibility and give me a little bit more latitude on the kinds of projects that I'm gonna be working on now.

I think, uh, it's probably pretty clear if you've been following the show for a while. How much I love strategy, like this is something that I, I love strategic planning. I love, um, planning in general cuz I always like to look at my own goals and kind of break them down and think about how they're being implemented in my own life.

And I'm just a couple months shy of about two years at my institution. I feel like that time has passed by very quickly and I'm just really looking forward to this new kind of expanded set of responsibilities. Um, getting to know the larger campus initiatives more deeply by engaging with them from this new angle.

Now one of the other cool things I think about this transition is I am still kind of squarely within the provost office, which is where I reported before, but I'm also gonna be reporting now on the chancellor's side, um, as well. And that will allow, I think, for some bridging between the provost, uh, team and members of the chancellor's team.

And then also we have a, a kind of third area of the institution that focuses on. Kind of operations, which I worked very closely with during this budget project. And there's a new leader in that space as well. So it's kind of a, a position that kind of works between all of those three areas and allows us to make kind of more connections between budget strategy and eventually some conversations we're gonna be having around metrics at our campus.

So lots of really interesting opportunities to connect these things together. And where it really came out of was my willingness to kind of raise my hand in the. Fall and say I was, I was happy to step into this other project that was not necessarily what I was hired to do. And I think that this is kind of an interesting lesson for any of you who are kind of looking for something new or different, is sometimes it means stepping into areas of your institution that are different than what you were hired to do That that are maybe a committee that you might join or a project team that you might join.

And then sometimes opportunities kind of come out of that in ways that you were not necessarily considering in the beginning. So this summer I'll be kind of making the transition into that work. I would imagine the fall is gonna be pretty chaotic and I'm probably gonna share in some upcoming episodes about how I'm managing this transition.

Um, my portfolio is kind of doubled in size, and to give you a bit of a sense of this, I actually, when I knew that this transition might be coming, I started to get really granular about tracking my projects at work, and I created. Um, kind of a, a new list of projects and I themed them on Asana so that I could kind of know what are the projects that are in every kind of larger area of the work that I'm doing.

And some of these, um, areas, for example, are like program development, um, some of the academic technology work that we do, really just trying to theme them. So I had a sense of who's responsible for what, um, within the teams that I manage. And to give you a sense, when I, when I did that list and when I started kind of listing everything out, I had about 70 projects that I was kind of keeping an eye on in some way, shape or form.

Even if someone on my team was kind of leading the project, I was still responsible for kind of checking in with it, mentoring that project, making sure that it had the resources that it needed. And, um, the project management team that I'm gonna be working with in the future, they manage about 80 projects a year.

So it's, uh, a lot of projects to keep track of and I've been incorporating some new strategies to kind of keep it all straight and make sure that it's not having to like live in my brain. So, uh, more on that soon. I think it'll be important for me to share some of those strategies because I think one of the hardest things about, um, when you move into positions that are.

Kind of heavy in terms of the load, you know, that you're being asked to carry is one. You can't keep it all in your brain like I just don't believe that's true. Maybe there are some superhuman people out there that can really keep everything in their brains that way. I am not one of those people. I have to write things down.

I have to. Kind of document them in different ways because I need my brain to actually like help me think process, problem solve throughout the day. And I feel like if I try to like store all that information there, it slows down the other processes that I need to engage with. So one thing is that I have to kind of get things outta my head and written down.

Another thing that I think is really important in those kinds of jobs with that heavier load is that you also have to think about with all of those projects, whether they're in your head or written down somewhere, how are you actually prioritizing them? Because I can't necessarily take, like what I just mentioned here, like 150 projects, like I'm not working on all of those projects every day, and so I do have to have a bit of a prioritization method.

I do have to have a way of thinking about. Who has this project at any given time? Like how do I have a way to check in on those projects and make sure they're moving forward? What are my mechanisms if I feel like a project is stalling? Like what are, what are the things I need to do to kind of like reengage?

And are there opportunities when a project is kind of left behind for, for intentional reasons, like we kind of move on from a project and we don't take it any further. All of those kinds of processes or things I have to think through when I have a lot of these kinds of projects on my plate. Now the other thing that I think is super important, um, and this is kind of tied to my last episode when I talked about sleep, is how do you kind of create systems for yourself so that you feel like you can walk away at the end of the day or on the weekend or in the evening?

And not feel like you are constantly thinking about all of the things that are on your plate. And I feel like this sense of overwhelm is so easy to fall into when you have all kinds of projects. And for me, the kinds of systems that I've created and the ways that I track them are actually what help me to let them go at the end of the day and know that they can just kind of like.

Sleep in my systems while I am also sleeping, and I don't have to constantly be thinking about these things. So I definitely wanna share more about that soon. If you have questions about that, I'd love to hear them, and I'd also love to hear some of your strategies when you're asked to take on new projects or responsibilities at work.

Are there recommendations that you would share with me as I'm entering into this period? You can always email me at hello dr katie linder.com. I always love to hear from you. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of You've Got This. You can access show notes and transcripts for each episode@drkatielinder.com slash podcasts.

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