

The Human Side of Education Leadership

How intrinsic values influence collaboration, leadership, and campus culture

By Lisa Yankowitz, Ntrinsx Co-founder

In this article, Lisa describes how Ntrinsx helps higher education institutions strengthen leadership, improve mentoring and teamwork, and create aligned academic communities where performance and student success naturally improve.



Higher education institutions are communities of highly skilled professionals and learners who bring different perspectives, priorities, and motivations to their work. Faculty focus on teaching and scholarship. Administrators focus on strategy and institutional priorities. Staff support the systems that keep the institution operating effectively. Students bring their own expectations, goals, and motivations for learning. In such a complex environment, institutional success depends on more than expertise. It depends on how well people work together. Differences in perspective can strengthen institutions when they are understood, but when they are not understood they can slow decisions, create unnecessary conflict, and weaken collaboration across departments and roles.

Ntrinsx helps higher education institutions address this challenge by making the intrinsic values that drive behavior visible. Unlike many personality assessments that focus primarily on observable behavior, Ntrinsx identifies the motivations that influence how individuals approach responsibility, problem solving, relationships, and change. This deeper understanding allows faculty, administrators, staff, and students to recognize why people may approach situations differently even when they share the same goals. When leaders understand what drives the people across their institutions, they can strengthen communication between faculty and administration, improve collaboration across



departments, reduce unnecessary conflict in decision making, and build cultures of respect and accountability that support student success.

Faculty Create Learning Environments That Support A Broad Range Of Students

At the faculty level, Ntrinsx helps educators better understand the different ways students approach learning and decision making. Some individuals value structure, responsibility, and clear expectations. Others focus on analysis, knowledge, and competence. Some prefer action and practical results, while others prioritize relationships, trust, and purpose. Ntrinsx describes these intrinsic value orientations as Gold, Green, Orange, and Blue. Each person expresses a unique combination of these values, which influences how they communicate, collaborate, and respond to challenges. When faculty understand these differences, they can adapt their teaching strategies, communicate expectations more effectively, and create learning environments that support a broader range of students.

Improved Administrative Decision-Making

Administrative leaders also benefit from this shared understanding. Universities rely on collaboration among academic departments, student services, enrollment management, and administrative offices. When leaders recognize how intrinsic values influence how people approach responsibility, evidence, action, or relationships, they can guide discussions in ways that encourage cooperation rather than misunderstanding. This understanding strengthens decision making across committees and leadership teams and helps institutions navigate the complex dynamics that often accompany academic governance.

Mentoring Programs That Align Students

The mentoring of students is another area where Ntrinsx provides meaningful value. Effective mentoring depends on understanding the motivations and perspectives of the student as well as the mentor. When mentors understand the intrinsic values that influence how a student approaches goals, feedback, and decision making, they can provide guidance that resonates more strongly. Some students respond best to structured plans and clear milestones. Others benefit from exploratory conversations that encourage independent thinking or collaboration. Ntrinsx allows mentors to tailor their guidance so that encouragement, accountability, and feedback align with how the student naturally thinks and learns. This personalized mentoring process strengthens relationships and helps students build confidence as they develop academically and professionally.

Helping Staff Members Engage



Staff members who support students and faculty also gain insight that improves daily interactions. Academic advisors, student success coaches, and support staff regularly work with students who approach challenges in different ways. Understanding intrinsic values allows these professionals to adjust their approach to meet students where they are, strengthening engagement and helping students navigate academic requirements more effectively.

A Case Study — Color the Campus

Many institutions have introduced Ntrinsx as part of broader professional development or campus culture initiatives. In one example, a university launched a program known as Color the Campus, where faculty, staff, and students participated in sessions exploring how intrinsic values influence communication and teamwork. Over time the Ntrinsx Colors became a shared language that helped participants understand different perspectives and strengthen relationships across departments and roles.

Higher education institutions succeed when people are aligned around a shared mission of learning and discovery. Ntrinsx supports that mission by helping faculty, staff, leaders, and students understand what drives the individuals within their academic community. When people understand one another more clearly, communication improves, collaboration strengthens, mentoring relationships deepen, and institutional performance becomes a natural outcome of alignment.

Lisa Yankowitz is the co-founder of Ntrinsx® and a leadership strategist. For more than 30 years, she has worked with organizations across healthcare, government, education, and professional services to strengthen leadership effectiveness, team performance, and organizational results.

Lisa's work focuses on helping leaders understand how intrinsic values shape decision making, collaboration, and the culture that allows teams to perform at their best. She is known for challenging conventional leadership advice such as “just communicate” or “use common sense,” replacing it with practical frameworks that help people better understand themselves and others.

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