

ARVIND SINGHAL, UTEP PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION, BRINGS LIBERATING STRUCTURES TO THE WHITE HOUSE

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On April 15-16, 2015, the practice of liberating structures (LS) came to The White House in Washington D.C.

The occasion: A two-day working meeting on the topic, *Partners in Health: Aligning Clinical Systems, Faith and Community Assets*. Some 60-plus leaders of hospitals and clinical care systems, faith networks, and community organizations gathered in the nation's Executive Office to create actionable plans to increase access to health care and preventive services, promote community health and wellness, by aligning their missions, visions, and assets.



Liberating Structures – “Shifts and Shares” in the White House.

The organizers of the event -- the White House Office of Faith based and Neighborhood, its U.S. Department of Health and Human Services counterpart, and Stakeholder Health, a Learning Collaborative of Health Systems, took a giant leap of faith by inviting UTEP (The University of Texas at El Paso) Professor of Communication, Dr. Arvind Singhal, a practitioner of LS processes, to design an interactive, inclusive, and engaging two-day event.

Unlike traditional approaches to designing meetings that mostly comprise of stand-up-and-deliver presentations and/or expert panels, Liberating Structures represent an alternative and complementary approach that include and unleash everyone, build trusting and generative relationships—with emergent processes, surprising outcomes, and meaningful connections.



Debriefing the Insights from the Impromptu Networking at the White House.
UTEP Professor Arvind Singhal (standing R with microphone).

Over the two-days, the following LS string guided the White House deliberations in a narrative sequence. **Impromptu Networking** set the stage for discussions, focusing on the challenges faced in collaboration and alignment of clinical systems, faith, and community assets. Participants then discovered root causes of success with **Appreciative Interviews** and **1, 2, 4, All**, shared innovations with **Shift and Share** (two rounds), learned and generated questions through a **User Experience Fishbowl**, generated actionable ideas through **Crowdsourcing/25 Gets You 10**, decided who needed to work with whom through **Social Network Webbing**, built upon those ideas with **Troika** and **15% Solutions**, and debriefed the experience with **1, 2, 4, All**.



A 15% Solutions with Troika in Progress.
UTEP Professor Arvind Singhal watches over.

Dr. Gary Gunderson of Stakeholder Health captured the significance of the meeting in his blog titled: Trellises & White House Meeting <http://stakeholderhealth.org/trellis-reflections-on-a-white-house-meeting/>



A User-Experience Fishbowl in Progress at the White House
UTEP Professor Arvind Singhal (standing) leads from behind.

What did the participants think of the process employed?

Surprise: “It was highly relational and not what I expected;” “These two days were unconventional and I have been continued to be blown away by the trust of the process and commitment to the process.”

Fantastic and Fun: “The process was really fantastic;” “It was fun to be a part of this.”

Distributed Abundance: “I was amazed by the process that we went through – the amount of people with ideas were fabulous and to get something tangible – gave me sight in the next steps for my work;” “My feeling is one of abundance – we have all the resources we need, the intelligence and the commitment to make our communities healthier and more cohesive and more fair.”

Inspiration: “The process was incredible and I am feeling both inspired and re-inspired.”

Grateful: “I am very grateful for how this space was opened and things were allowed to happen.”

And, as one participant, summarized the meeting: “I learned a whole lot and didn’t know how participatory this event would be. It was so nice connecting with kindred spirits and common ground, whose goal is to improve lives through health.”

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