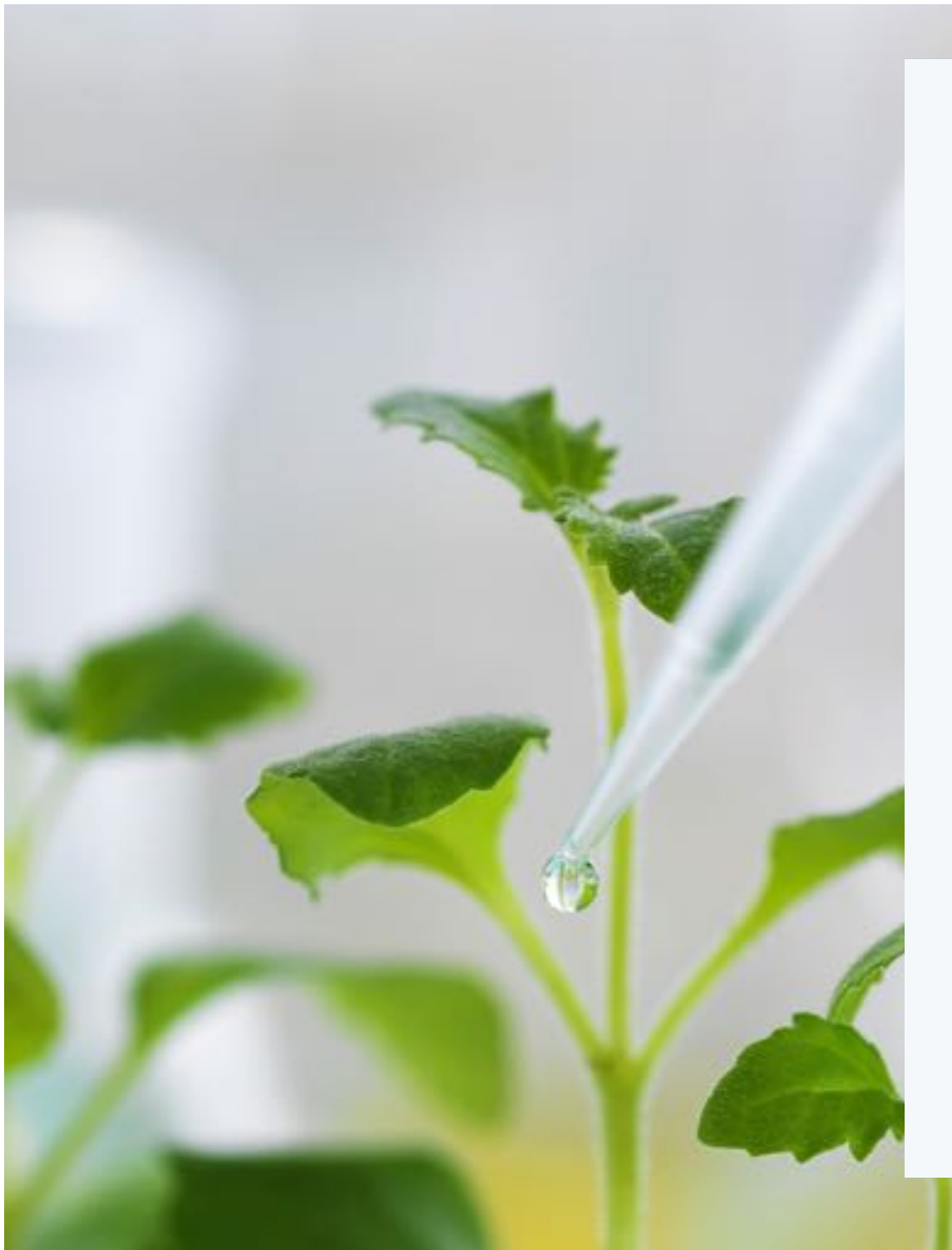# EVOLUTION OR TRANSFORMATION? APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING LONG-LASTING CHANGE

Paul Woodgates
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7 November 2019

01

WHY ARE UNIVERSITIES TRYING TO CHANGE?

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

JOHN F. KENNEDY

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

WHY ARE WE TRYING TO CHANGE?

The world is changing

- Policy and funding
- Student expectations
- New technologies
- Competition between universities and with other providers
- New forms of collaboration

Universities must respond and lead

- New definitions of success for teaching and research
- New ambitions
- New education programmes
- New relevance to society
- New drive for efficiency

The way universities are constructed suits the old world not the new world

- Old operating models
- Old processes
- Old technology
- Old ways of working

So, universities need to transform

- Operating models
- Organisation designs
- Processes
- Estate and facilities
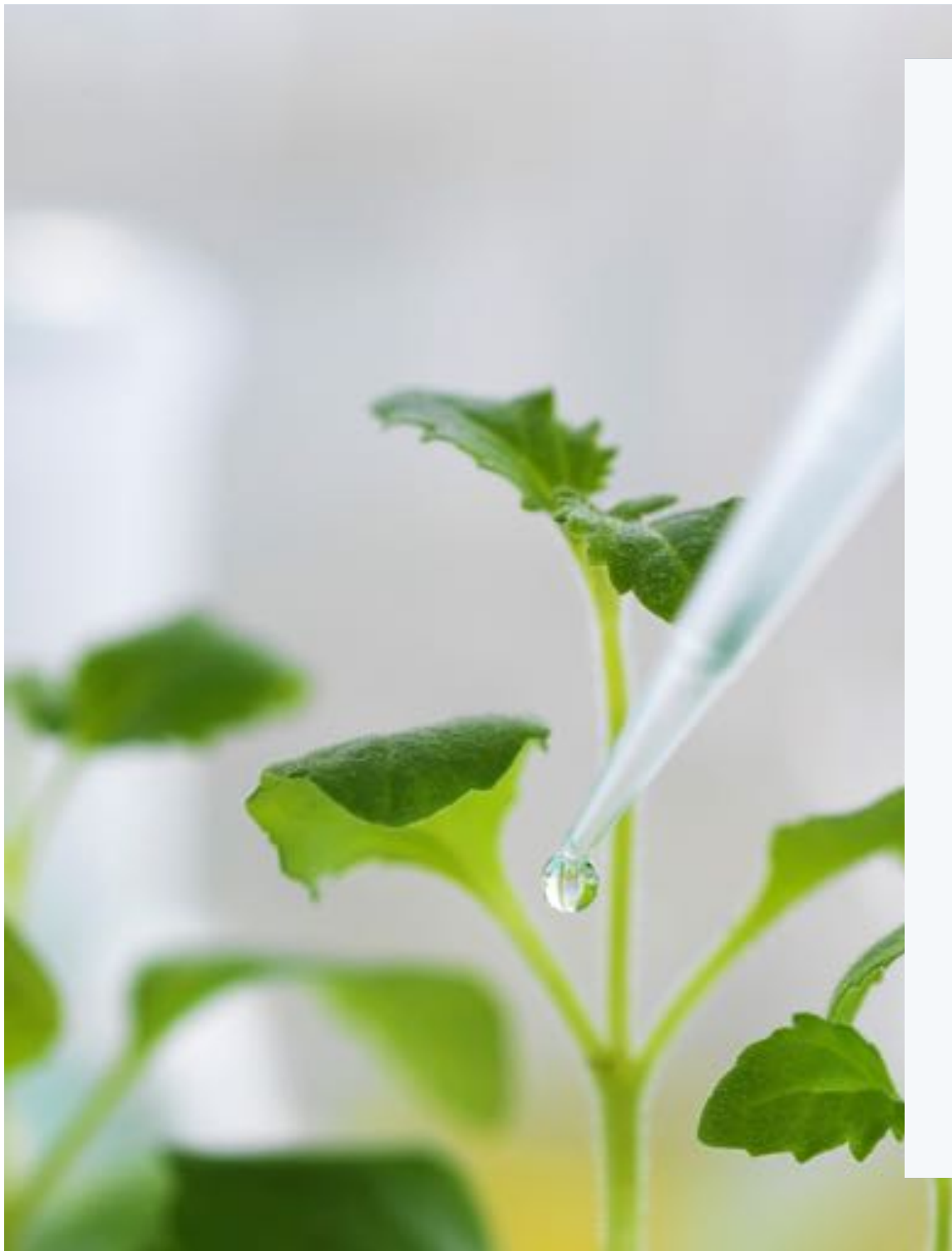- Technology solutions
- People management
- Partnerships

while keeping their focus on academic excellence and on what makes universities special

THREE KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Do we drive transformation top-down or let it emerge bottom-up?

How fast should we transform?

How do we bring stakeholders with us on the journey?

02

TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP TRANSFORMATION?

"If you want to make enemies, try to change something."

WOODROW WILSON

TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP – THE ARGUMENTS

TOP-DOWN

"*Just make it happen*":

- Drive change with a clear mandate form the top

- Leadership is very clear on the destination and the journey

- Leave no room for doubt – either staff take part, or they leave!

But:

- Do leaders have a mandate to issue instructions like that?

- Does it go counter to university culture?

- Will any compromise cause an avalanche of others?

BOTTOM-UP

"*Let a thousand flowers bloom*":

- Enable staff to design their own changes

- Free up the latent desire to make things work better

- Go with the grain of the organisation

But:

- How do we make sure that people change in the same direction?

- Won't it take too long?

- How do we control implementation dependencies?

SOME TIPS FOR BALANCING TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP

- Top-down vision, bottom-up detail

- An effective design authority to own the vision and make sure the detail fits the vision

- A clear narrative about why we are changing and what the benefits will be

- Centrally managed implementation resources – to manage prioritisation, scheduling and dependencies

- But maybe avoid big central branding and structures?
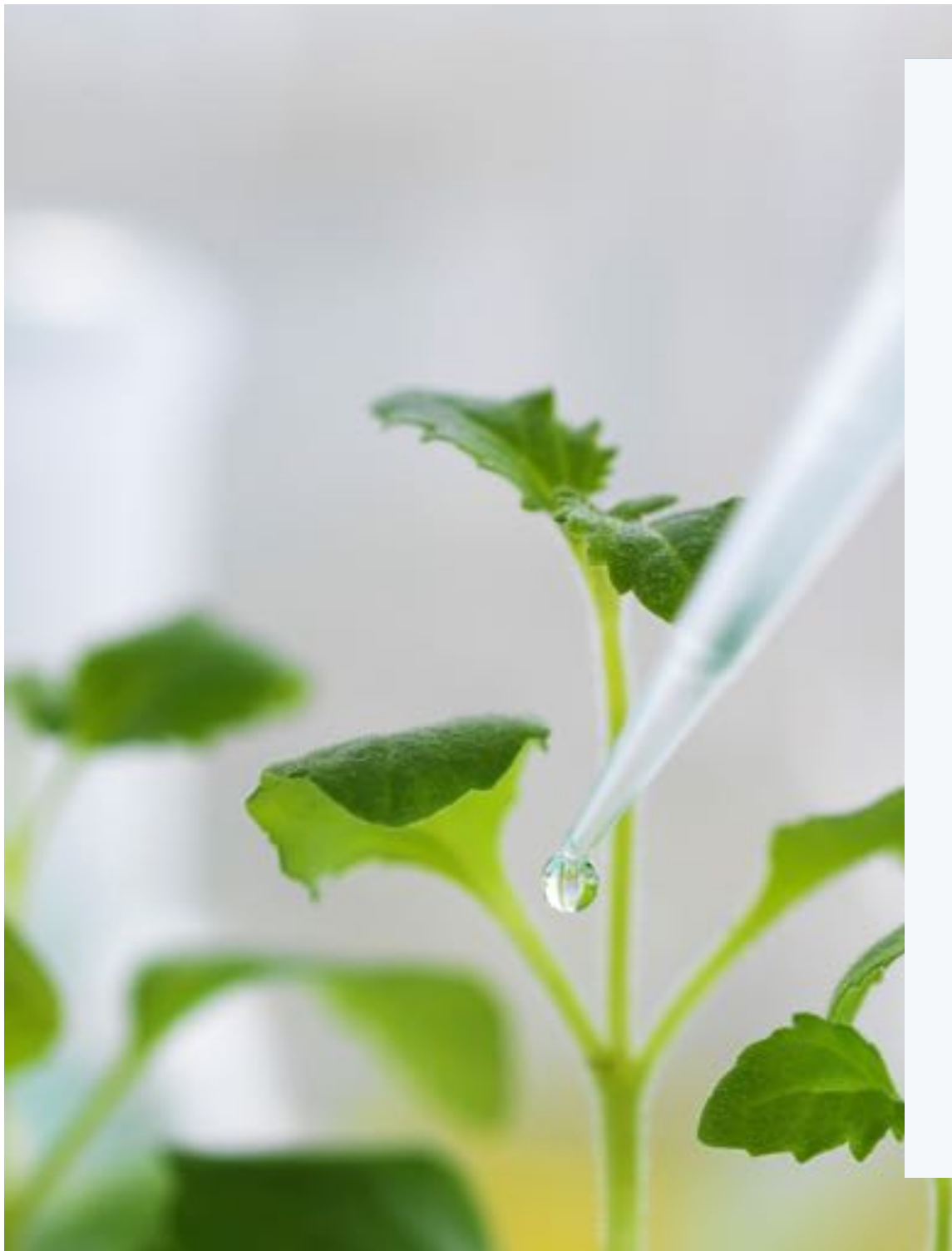
03

WHAT SPEED IS THE RIGHT SPEED?

"Change before you have to."

JACK WELCH

WHAT SPEED IS THE RIGHT SPEED?

Too slow:

- Delay in realising benefits
- Loss of momentum
- Change fatigue
- Staff lose sight of the endgame

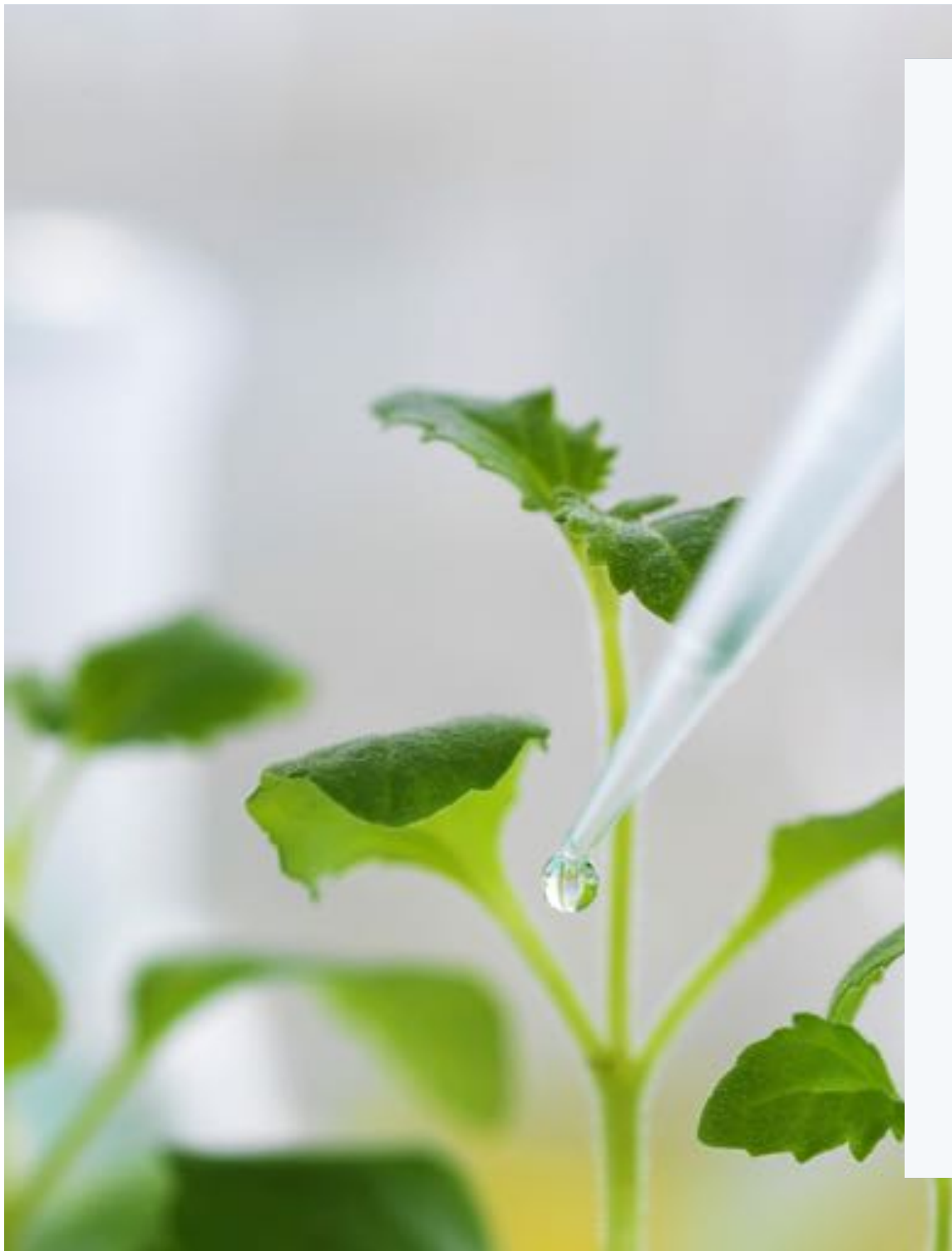Pace of change that maximises and sustains programme benefits

The *right* pace is specific to each university

Too fast:

- Staff not bought-in
- Leadership attention is diluted
- Not time to make change stick
- Corners are cut

SOME TIPS FOR MANAGING PACE

- Break up the change into manageable chunks – a series of sprints is more manageable than a marathon

- Define "transition states" that show everyone how the university will be different at interim points on the journey

- Create a sense of pace and momentum – even when allowing people to move at their own speed

- Recognise that constant change is threatening for people – manage the impacts
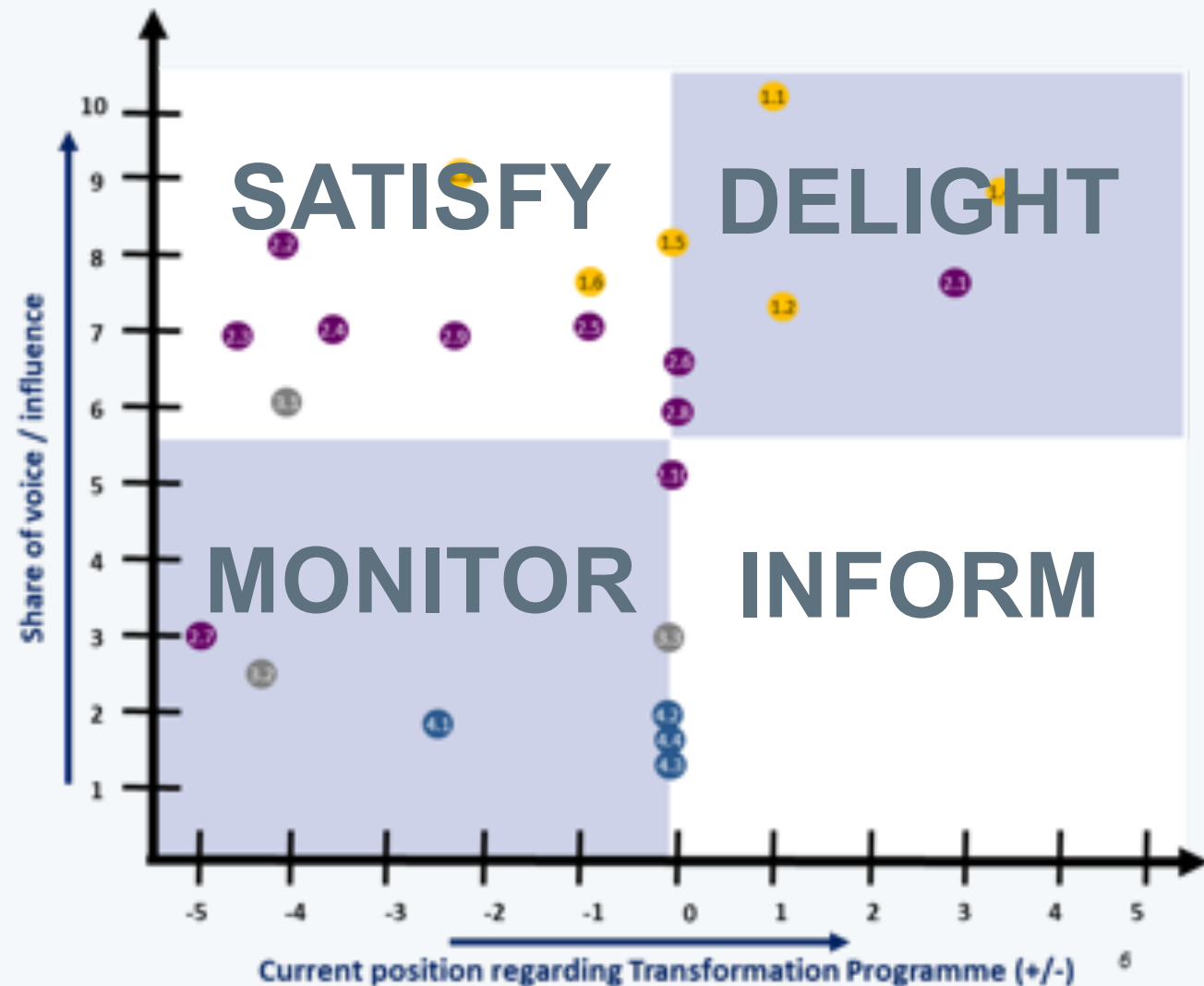
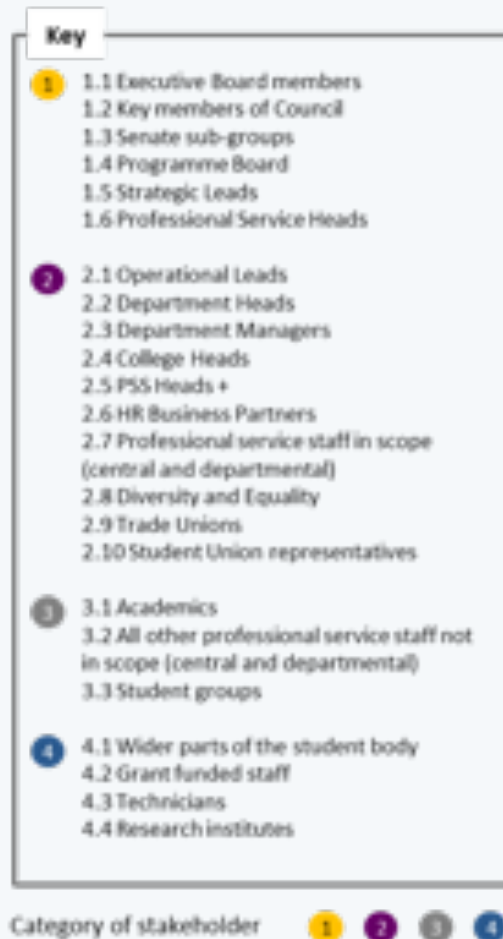# 04

HOW DO WE ENGAGE OUR PEOPLE?

"People don't resist change. They resist being changed!"

PETER SENGE

HOW DO WE ENGAGE OUR PEOPLE?

Example stakeholder segmentation:

HOW DO WE ENGAGE OUR PEOPLE?

Example engagement approach:

Executive Board members

Programme of one-on-one engagement meetings and attendance at Executive Board. Further align to the vision, ambition and shape of transformation programme so executive leaders are championing the programme as influencers and opinion leaders. Ensure the changes are owned from the top down.

Faculty and Department leadership

A structured programme of face-to-face engagement. We will look to create Faculty-level communication and engagement plans to meet local needs (within resource constraints).

Academics

Vital to engage academics on the basis of content and proposals. We will seek to engage academics in face-to-face forum via departmental meetings and events led by the project strands.

Directors and managers of professional services

A structured programme of face-to-face engagement. We will look to create professional service specific communication and engagement plans.

College leadership teams

Engage primarily through the Student Development project. Attending key meetings / events as per agreement with PVCs.

Line managers

Look to develop the skills and confidence of our line managers to lead their teams through change through a programme of upskilling. We will also provide specific briefings to line managers at key points regarding programme status and progress.

Strategic and operational leads

We will build a community of our operational leads that are informed, engage regularly and share best practice. Include a weekly cascade of need to know information, monthly f2f and access to training.

Students

The student development and academic model projects will lead engagement with students. Key that we engage on points of content. The programme will maintain a relationship with the Students Union.

SOME TIPS FOR ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

- However much engagement you do, there is always a demand for more!

- The level of engagement is situational – e.g. changing academic direction requires wide consultation with academics, but changing payroll does not

- You'll never bring everyone with you – but there is a tipping point

- Universities are consultative and collegiate – you need to find the right balance between accepting that and challenging it
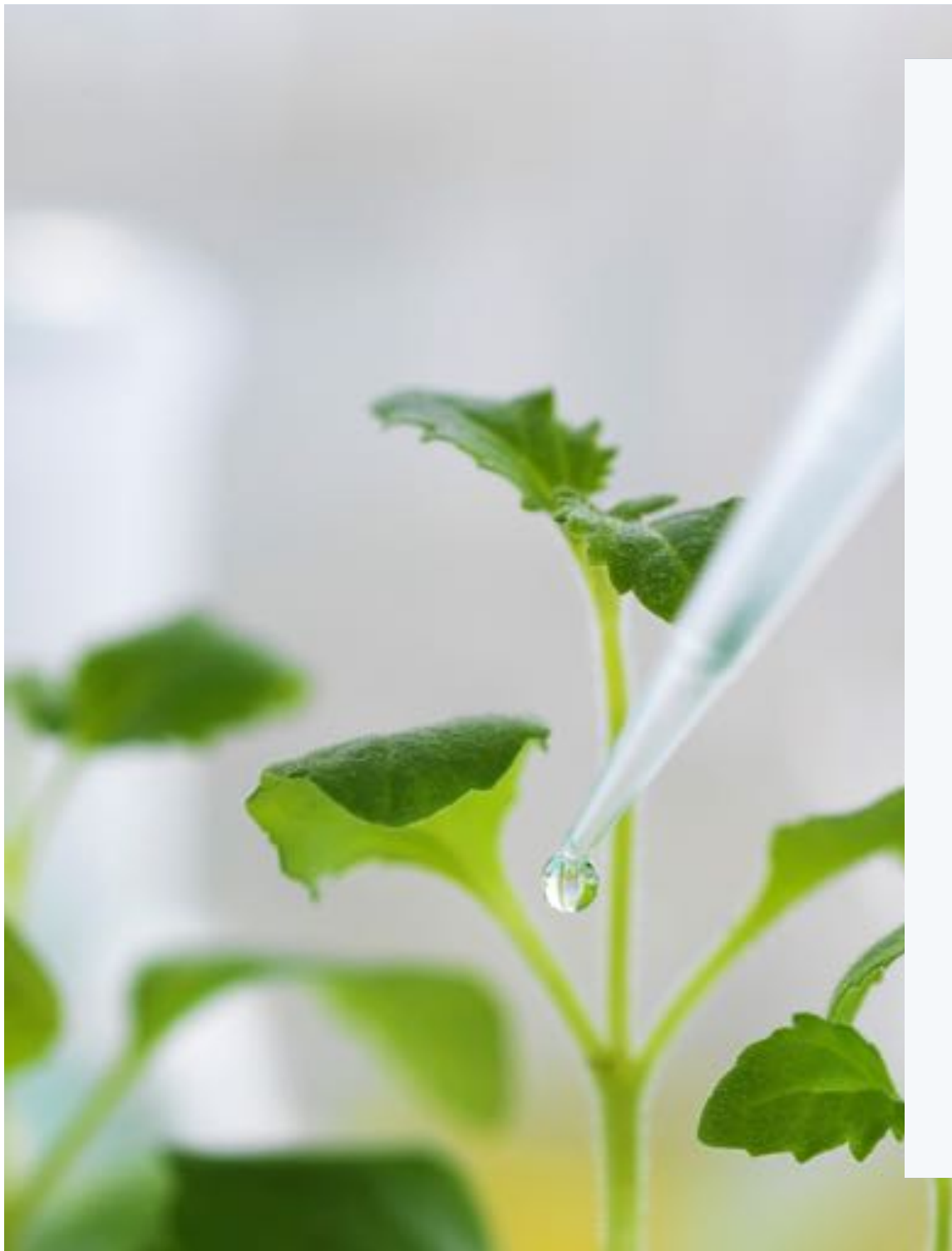
05

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

In your tables, please agree three examples to share with the wider group – one for each of the following situations:

1. An example of where **top-down and bottom-up approaches** have been balanced to deliver effective transformation

2. An example of where a university has **managed the pace of change** to deliver at speed but in a controlled way

3. An example of where **stakeholder engagement has been effective** at getting buy-in and support for the change

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."

UNKNOWN

PA IS THE LEADING ADVISER TO UNIVERSITIES

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