Leveraging education reforms and diversity initiatives to change the culture of a Physics department.

When I joined the Physics Department at the University of Central Florida in 2006, I was excited to have the opportunity to help move the department forward in research, education, and service. At the same time I was also overwhelmed by the challenges, some of which were unexpected. It was after all a traditional physics department, with traditional aspirations and traditional reward system. After a hard year of taking stock of things, some pieces fell in place and instructional reform offered itself as a vehicle that could facilitate much needed change in the departmental outlook toward teaching and research. It actually ended up doing much more. In this talk I will point to some strategies that we undertook, some collective decisions that we made and some overarching reforms that we put in place that have helped create a student-centered culture which also fosters high faculty research productivity and sound educational gains. In this regard the APS PhysTEC and Bridge Program were a boon and have helped create a diverse and inclusive environment that bodes well for the future.