Undergraduates can develop some feelings of change agency in positive experiences in Departmental Action Teams.

Encouraging individuals’ growth as change agents can lead to more sustainable change in higher education[1–3].

The Departmental Action Team (DAT) Model of change aims to help individuals grow as change agents as they work in facilitated teams on change initiatives in their departments[4–6].

We want to know...

Are DAT members developing feelings of change agency?

Do DAT members have positive associations with change agency and the DAT experience?

Developing change agency in DATs involves...

Increasing capacity around...
- (skills, knowledge, resources)
  - Collaboration
    - Working effectively in teams
  - The local context
    - The team’s department/institution
  - The DAT’s focus
    - The team’s change initiative
  - Change
    - Institutional change generally

Developing feelings of...
- (beliefs, sentiments)
  - Capability to create change
    - Self-assessment of one’s skills/knowledge necessary to create change
  - Motivation to create change
    - Desire to create change
  - Opportunity to create change
    - Assessment of one’s ability to make change within external constraints (other people, resources, etc.)

Jamie on conducting interviews for their DAT

Jamie: I got to sit in on interviews and help conduct interviews, and that was my favorite part because it was really interesting to be on your side of the table and hear what the students were complaining about, like oh we don’t have any coding classes, we don’t have any of this, I am not prepared to get a job, blah blah blah. I agreed with it, so it was so much easier for me to come into the meeting next Monday and say, okay, here’s a transcript of the interview, but here’s the main points. If you need more opinions, I have an opinion on this. I know exactly what they’re talking about. That was definitely I felt really valued in that moment.

Jamie on their unique undergraduate role

Jamie: None of [the other DAT members] are undergraduates, they don’t really know what was going on in the undergrads’ heads, so I was there to give that perspective and I was there to reach out to undergraduates. It was better for me to say, ‘Hey guys, we’re looking for a couple of people to do an interview based on X, Y, and Z. It’s for the DAT.’ Because I’m their friends, like they know me. So I felt like while the faculty did faculty outreach, I was there to do undergrad outreach in a way, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Definitely. How do you feel about that being the role you wound up with on the DAT?

Jamie: I felt really good about it.

We interviewed Jamie, the only undergraduate member of the Herbology department’s DAT, and identified moments where they discussed feelings of change agency and opinions about the DAT experience to investigate the interaction between participation in a DAT and the development of change agency.

Findings on Jamie and change agency

We may need to be more explicit about encouraging feelings of change agency when facilitating DATs.

We should give careful attention to how participating in change work is or is not empowering undergraduates to become change agents.

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