



# WESTMINSTER

Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business

## THE CENTER FOR HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

Bill & Vieve Gore School of Business

Westminster College

*Helping organizations thrive*

*by unleashing the talent, passion and potential of people for good purpose*

### ***How it Began***

In August 2014, forty-five of us gathered in Deer Valley, UT, to help shape a Center for High-Performing Organizational Cultures. Many of us were faculty, staff, alumni or Board members at Westminster College. Some of us were currently or formerly with W. L. Gore & Associates. Some were consultants and practitioners. Some were thought leaders who had written books on high-performing organizational cultures. Many of us were business leaders in our own organizations. But all of us had a commitment to the idea that organizations had the possibility of being more productive places by better tapping and unleashing the potential of people. The problem, as we saw it, was an inappropriate reluctance to move away from traditional models of organizing.

There is no doubt but that the current “bureaucratic-hierarchical” model of organization has contributed enormously to the economic well-being of the modern world. Yet there are reasons to look for ways to make significant improvements. For example, the Gallup organization reports that only about 30% of all employees in the American workforce are “actively engaged” in their work. That means, 70% of all employees are unable or unwilling to give or use their full potential at work. What a waste of human talent!

And according to Gallup, the 20% of workers who are “actively *disengaged*” represent a potential loss to American corporations of \$450-550 billion annually! The problem of a disengaged workforce is likely to get worse. According to MSN Money, 53% of millennials aren’t engaged at work at all, and approach their jobs with a detachment typical of “temp workers.”

We also know the complexity and speed of change that organizations now face is stressing their capacity to adapt. However, some organizations using approaches *different* from the “bureaucratic-hierarchical” model seem to be thriving in this environment. They are innovative. They are capable of moving quickly. Their employees are energized and engaged. We firmly believe an organization’s culture can be a source of strategic competitive advantage.

We would like to develop and share knowledge, experience, and perspectives that can help organizations improve their performance while also becoming really great places to work. Something more, something better, is possible.

### ***The Center***

We propose to create a Center for High-Performing Organizational Cultures in the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business at Westminster College. The Center has three objectives:

- 1) To promote and extend the legacy of Bill and Vieve Gore, founders of W. L. Gore & Associates, and visionaries on how enterprises might be organized to unleash the talent, passion and potential of people at work,
- 2) To create a distinctive capability in the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business in the development of tools and practices helpful to organizations, thereby elevating the reputation of the School and Westminster College,
- 3) To help shape organizational practice to enable interested and committed organizations to thrive.

Although we are not officially aligned with W. L. Gore & Associates, many of us have extensive experience with how their culture, tools, and practices can be used to create a thriving and highly profitable organization that truly engages people. Others of us have experience with other organizational models that also unleash the talent of people enabling the organization to achieve exceptional results. All of us are committed to create more organizations that are truly “great places to work.”

We believe that we can best deepen the conversation about organization and work by striving always to bring together (at least) four relevant perspectives—those of the academics, thought leaders, practitioners, and business leaders. We believe that such an approach will create greater understanding, learning, and ultimately more value. We also believe that providing a forum where we can integrate the views and wisdom of these various stakeholders will be truly distinctive.

There are (at least) two basic emerging and interdependent vectors for the Center. Each vector has a somewhat different focus.

Each vector can be imagined growing organically and more slowly (with less investment), or can be imagined with accelerated growth (and thus with greater investment). In either case, these vectors probably are most synergistically productive if pursued together, quickly. They are:

- Practice-based, customer-focused vector, where the Center provides products and services of sufficient value that customers are willing to pay for. Along this vector, we manifest the Gore and other Gore-like approaches to organization.
- Research-based, academia-focused vector, where the Center provides the academic grounding underlying the practices, and promotes the underlying knowledge to students in classes, and to the academic community through published research, as well as by informing the practice-based, customer-focused vector.

**Potential Activities of the Center**

We believe the Center can contribute to creating more great places to work by offering a number of activities and events. These include:

<p>➤ <b>Annual Collaborative Culture Summit</b></p>	<p>Bring CEOs and C-suite executives to the Westminster campus and to Park City for a two-day event. The idea is to have several brief presentations (20-30 minutes) by key thought leaders or executives from exemplary organizations followed by intense discussion in mixed tables to process how the ideas presented might be applicable in each attendee’s organization. Attendees will also be able to choose from different experiential sessions where innovative tools will be demonstrated. One possible addition is to award some select organizations with a <b>Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business award for outstanding cultural leadership.</b></p>
<p>➤ <b>Assessment Tool for High-Performing Organizational Cultures</b></p>	<p>Used diagnostically in an organization to help improve its tools and practices. The assessment tool could also be the basis for the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business prize.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Leadership Team Culture Deep Dive</b></p>	<p>Provide a facilitated forum for the top leadership team in an organization to help develop the practices of a high performing culture.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Workshop on Tools and Practices of a High-Performing Culture</b></p>	<p>Offered to leaders from different organizations, so that they can adopt some helpful practices to improve their organizations.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Consulting Engagements</b></p>	<p>Affiliates of the Center help committed leadership teams to build or transform organizational cultures.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Develop an Evidence-based Knowledge Base (effective tools and practices)</b></p>	<p>Would bring together all extant information on organizations using culture as a competitive advantage, including Center-related research (like <b>case studies</b> and <b>white papers</b>).</p>

<p>➤ <b>Evenings of Cultural Discussion (ECDs)</b></p>	<p>Introduce the ideas and benefits of High-Performing Organizational Cultures to small groups of invited business leaders in an informal setting that allows for dialogue, questioning, and reflection. We will typically invite a thought leader to give a brief presentation to stimulate thinking, and then create an environment conducive to interaction and discussion.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Annual Summer Conferences</b> (in both the US and Europe)</p>	<p>Bring together selected academics, practitioners, thought leaders and business leaders to advance thinking on specific aspects of High-Performing Organizational Cultures.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Conduct a Series of Millennial-Corporate Dialogues</b></p>	<p>Organized by the Center to bring together millennials and corporate leaders for a discussion of millennials’ perspectives on work, organizations, and the kind of organizational cultures that would be attractive to them.</p>
<p>➤ <b>Networking sessions</b></p>	<p>Include interesting people or companies where we can learn and share.</p>

We also anticipate many opportunities for **student engagement**, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, in the activities of the Center. Internships, research opportunities, and participation in millennial panel discussions with organizational leaders are examples of opportunities we envision for student engagement. In addition, we foresee Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business faculty creating courses, perhaps even a certificate or academic minor, in corporate culture. We are also proposing that the School integrate more “Gore-like” approaches into its courses, and indeed create one course each at the undergraduate and graduate levels that focuses on Gore-like organizational practices.

We also plan to greatly increase the number of **outside speakers** coming to the Westminster campus (in the manner of Vieve Gore Distinguished Residents) who will speak to classes and give public lectures.

If possible, we would like to create positions for **post-doc and senior visiting Fellows** who will conduct academic research in the area of organizational culture, and present their work to classes and in public lectures.

We realize this in an ambitious schedule of products and activities that must be undertaken and phased over a period of years. We will prioritize them in the coming months, with input from business leaders at our Evenings of Cultural Discussion.

***Projected Calendar for 2014-15 (Subject to Change)***

<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Activity or Event</i></b>
Sep 2014	Networking trip to Zappos conference on culture and higher education
Oct 2014	Evening of Cultural Discussion in Salt Lake City
Nov 2014	Tools and Practices pilot workshop at Westminster College
Dec 2014	Evening of Cultural Discussion, location to be determined*
Jan 2015	Guest speaker: Anna McGrath, WonderWorks consulting
	Evening of Culture Discussion in Munich, Germany
Feb 2015	Vieve Gore Distinguished Resident: Luca Cerruti, Global Fabrics Sales leader, W. L. Gore & Associates
Mar 2015	Millennial-Corporate Dialogue at Westminster College
May 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> European Summer Conference
Jun 2015	Evening of Cultural Discussion, location to be determined*
Aug 2015	2 <sup>nd</sup> US Summer Conference
Sep 2015	Collaborative Cultural Leadership Summit at Westminster College and Park City
	Evening of Cultural Discussion, location to be determined*

*\*Anticipated locations for Evenings of Culture Discussion are Philadelphia, Phoenix, Houston, Boston, and Palo Alto.*

If you would like any additional information about any of these events, activities, or are interested in investing in the Center for High-Performing Organizational Cultures, please contact:

Michael Pacanowsky  
Gore-Giovale Chair in Business Innovation  
Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business  
Westminster College

Phone: +1-801.832.2644

Email: [mpacanowsky@westminstercollege.edu](mailto:mpacanowsky@westminstercollege.edu)