

IDEA: From Theory to Action & Assessment

Fall 2009 Report to SGC

IDEA spent the spring 2009 semester focused on clarifying its purpose and procedures as a newly endorsed Shared Governance Council (SGC) committee. The group worked on developing and articulating a vision for cultural and structural change at LMC to better serve its diverse student body. The resulting Theory of Change is described earlier in the document. The next step for IDEA is to develop a plan for action that prioritizes activities, defines roles and responsibilities and sets timelines. An action plan will be built directly from the Theory of Change so that each action plan activity ties back to the specific strategies and tactics already identified. Assessing progress toward the milestones, short- and long-term outcomes identified in the Theory of Change will be embedded in the action plan. An action plan will provide a clear roadmap for IDEA's ambitious and important work.

To ensure the completion of its work, IDEA will need to clearly define leadership responsibilities and committee structure. Newly endorsed by the SGC, IDEA's meetings and activities to date have been coordinated by two temporary co-chairs. Throughout the spring semester, the group's structure and membership remained relatively informal. As it moves from planning to action, IDEA should consider the resources needed to do the work, in particular, who will take on critical leadership roles.

A primary tactic for IDEA to consider in fall 2009—completing the Student Equity Plan—is an example for how the committee might consider all aspects of an action plan, including assessment.

THE PLAN FOR ACTION

Step One: Determine IDEA committee structure, teams and communications

Two temporary co-chairs have led IDEA, represented the committee at SGC meetings and coordinated materials and meeting agendas with BTW staff. Moving forward, it is critical to determine not only what the priority work of IDEA will be but how the group will accomplish that work. IDEA needs to define the organizational structure of the committee, including leadership responsibilities, work teams for the primary activities, a communications plan for involving other groups on campus and a master calendar for the 2009-10 Academic Year. In determining this structure, IDEA will need to decide its role on upcoming projects. For example, is the group coordinating or participating in the development of the EEO Plan? Is IDEA a broker or a sponsor of the CUE Equity Scorecard?

Specific administrative tasks that IDEA needs to accomplish before starting its real work are listed below.

1. Generate a master calendar for the 2009-10 academic year with the following:
 - a. SGC check-in meetings
 - b. Monthly meetings and agendas for the full IDEA group committee and for working groups
(IDEA meetings will take place on the 3rd Thursday of the month in CO-420.)
 - c. Time to update IDEA's intranet page
2. Define roles and responsibilities of IDEA Committee members, which will include:
 - a. Writing individual "job" contracts/work plans for all committee members
 - b. Defining working groups, which in the short-term will include:

- i. Student Equity Plan
 - ii. EEO Plan
 - iii. Access, Diversity and Equity (connect with Associated Students Diversity group)
3. Create a communications plan to invite others to learn with IDEA
 - a. Consider flex activities or other professional development opportunities to engage more of the college community into equity conversations
 - b. Identify allies at the college on specific issues and action items.
 - c. Determine processes for internal and external communications (e.g., regular email updates, listserv)

In each of these three tasks, it is important to reflect on how IDEA's own policies and procedures will demonstrate the equitable practices that the group wants to see on campus. An important part of this is building relationships, so in communicating with the SGC, IDEA should consider how the frequency of communication and reporting mechanisms will foster a relationship with the SGC. When defining individual roles and responsibilities, IDEA should look for opportunities for its members to be more involved in campus-wide research and planning activities that relate to equity, inclusion and social justice. Also, when developing a communications plan, IDEA should think creatively about how IDEA can invite others on campus to learn with them in ways that will facilitate a cultural shift at the college.

Step Two: Create action plans for priority activities

Along with determining committee structure and responsibilities, a more specific action plan for the next year is advised. Individual action plans for each activity (or tactic, as identified in the Theory of Change) will define what steps need to be taken, who will be responsible for those steps, the timeline and the anticipated milestones. The action plan is intended to be a working document that the group adjusts along the way as new steps arise or new opportunities present themselves. The more specific the group can be in laying out the steps, the more clarity each committee member will have about expected contributions.

Step Three: Embed formative assessment in the action plan

In order to understand the impact of IDEA's work on the campus, two types of assessment can be used: formative and summative. First, IDEA should assess the impact of each action item: Was the task accomplished? What was the impact of getting that piece of work done? This is formative evaluation and where IDEA should focus assessment efforts for the next two to three years to inform IDEA's work and provide feedback to the SGC of progress made. Following this formative evaluation, a summative evaluation will examine macro-level accomplishments, which will tell IDEA the extent to which its strategies are shifting the institutional culture, policies and practices to better serve students. This kind of evaluation will be useful in two to three years, once IDEA has accomplished more substantive work.