

Developing a Theory of Change for Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life

Assumptions (The Way Things Are)

- There are powerful anti-public and anti-democratic trends, forces, and interests in society, and in academic institutions, disciplines, and fields. They include discourses and practices, ideology and politics, policies and structures/architectures, costs and money.
- There is a growing elitism in the arts, humanities, and design. They are also increasingly devalued and instrumentalized
- There are powerful democratic cultural aspirations, ideals, values, and talents, widely held in our society. But they are often unexpressed or undeveloped due to a lack of opportunity and invitation, or to forces that generate and reproduce cynicism and hopelessness, or to criteria that are embedded in acculturation processes (e.g., curriculums in professional fields of study, tenure and promotion)
- Colleges and universities are increasingly recognizing that communities have valuable expertise and knowledge. But they are not yet valuing it adequately. In many cases, they are actually co-opting it.
- A democratic, full participation culture is valuable for reasons that are non-instrumental, as well as instrumental.
- There is a rich history of struggle, filled with examples of women and men who spoke, wrote, created, performed, and worked to build a just and democratic culture and society.
- There is amazing civic work underway across the country, and an emerging democratic revival movement. People working in arts, humanities and design fields, both in and out of higher education, are making indispensable contributions.

Vision Values (The Way Things Should Be)

Vision:

- Publicly engaged artists, designers, scholars, and other community members working with institutions of higher education to enrich civic life for all.

Values:

- Collaboration, participation, dialogue, and transparency
- Creativity and innovation in developing and mobilizing knowledge with communities
- Cultural diversity, inclusion, and social equity
- Reciprocity in campus-community partnerships, research and creative activity, teaching and learning, and assessment

Mission and Core Strategies (How to close the gap between what is and what should be)

Mission:

- Imagining America **advances knowledge** and creativity through publicly engaged scholarship that draws on humanities, arts, and design.

Strategies:

- **Organize**, following the organizing philosophy that civil rights leader Ella Baker promoted: find people who are already working, learn from them, and help them move into **positions of leadership**.
- **Embolden and leverage the power of the arts, humanities and design**
- Facilitate and sustain a **critical discourse** to build and sharpen each other's theory, knowledge, and practices
- Activate a **critically hopeful** prophetic stance and voice (e.g. "America Will Be" - Langston Hughes)
- Work to change key **policies** (e.g., tenure and promotion, arts and humanities policies, etc)

Core Leadership

- Publicly Engaged Artists, Humanists, Designers, and Scholars
- Staff
- Governance (Host institution/NAB)
- Member Institutions
- Presidential Leadership Team

Core Activities/Programs to Implement Strategies

- Annual Conference
- **Institutes**
- Action Research Initiatives and Commissions (Research Groups, Collaboratories)
- Communications - Website, Blog, Videos, Op Eds, and Social Media
- PAGE
- Journal
- Membership and Consortium Development, through Campus Visits and Other Means
- Work at Host Campus and Community

Focus Question:
1) What is Imagining America's **foundational** Theory of Change(TOC)?

Assumptions about **the world as it is**

led to the establishment of

Vision and Values for **the world as it should be**

Foundational Mission/Organizational Strategies

M I S S I O N

Drives

- I. Cultivate/Organize Leadership
- II. Embolden cultural disciplines
- III. Facilitate Critical Discourse
- IV. Activate Prophetic Stance and Voice
- V. Policy Change

informs

expressed through

Core Activities/Programs to Implement Strategies

- Annual Conference
- Journal
- Communications
- PAGE
- Host Campus and Community
- Action Research Projects
- Institutes
- Campus Visits

each which have

Target Groups

carried out by

Core Leadership/Agents of change

- Publicly Engaged Scholars
- Staff
- Governance
- Presidential Leadership Team
- Member Institutions

Transforming Higher Education as a means to revitalizing civic life and agency