

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STATEGIC AFFILIATION - Peter Laipson, PH.D.

Creating an Innovator's Pathway Shared Innovation

The Affiliation's primary goal – the “north star”- is to improve the experience of western Kansas students, businesses, and communities. One way to do that is through shared practices, drawing on the experience of each school to improve the curricular offerings and student services at each of the affiliates. Another is through shared programs, helping students continue their education with additional credentials or degrees by facilitating the seamless transfer between and among institutions. A third way is through shared innovations, creating entirely new solutions to the complex and challenging issues faced by our students and the region as a whole.

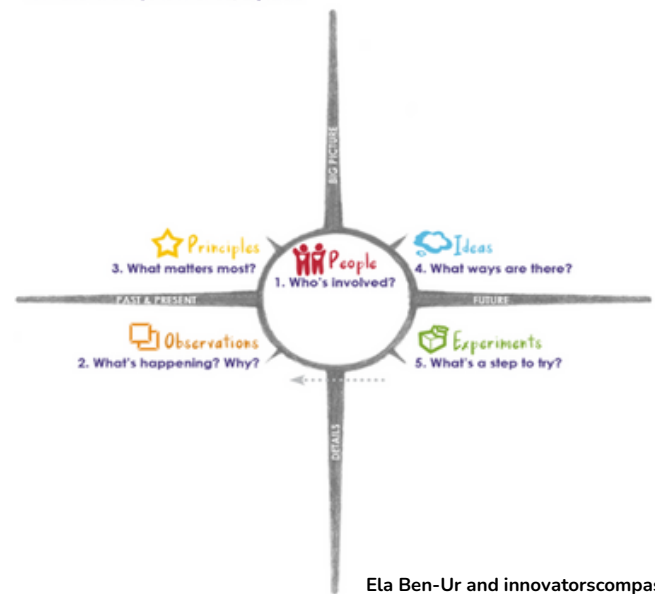
This last is the most promising work but also the hardest. It's demanding, requiring thoughtful insights, keen analysis, and creativity. And it's messy: not only are the solutions unclear, but so often, are the problems. Finally, it requires both a high tolerance for failure and persistence since many new practices don't gain traction, and even the best ones need multiple tweaks to be realized successfully.

The value of taking a “Design Thinking” approach to innovation

So, how can our schools become innovative? There is no single path, but the principles and protocols of design thinking offer a useful strategy. Design thinking is an approach to problem-solving most widely associated with the [Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford](#), also known as the d.school, and widely popularized by the design group [IDEO](#). It stresses careful attention to the experience of “users,” those closest to and most affected by a process or product; ideation, or the generation of many, varied possible solutions to problems identified; rapid prototyping and testing of those solutions; and

ongoing redesign, or iteration, in the service of constant improvement. One of the most approachable and helpful design thinking tools is the [Innovator's Compass](#), created by Ela Ben-Ur, a former member of the IDEO staff.

The Innovator's Compass™



The Innovator's Compass

The Innovator's Compass simplifies the process of design without making it simplistic. It invites Compass users to move through four quadrants, each focused on a different element of the design process. The first, **Observations**, asks users to record as much insight as possible – from conversations, surveys, observations, and reflections – about the experiences of those closest to the question on which the compass is focused. The second, **Principles**, asks users to distill the many observations expressed in the prior quadrant to a set of key concerns. The third quadrant, **Ideas**, asks users to generate a wide range of possibilities, from the ordinary to the outrageous, to meet the needs expressed in the Principles and Observations quadrants. The fourth quadrant, **Experiments**, asks users how they might test some or all of the generated ideas

to see what happens, expecting the results to inform new ideas and further experiments. The goal throughout is to help Compass users understand and empathize with those most affected by a particular concern, imagine multiple ways to address it, and test possible solutions to problems before committing to them fully.

Design Thinking at the January Affiliation Summit

At the Summit in January, participants engaged in a first exercise with the Innovator’s Compass, an exercise that was itself a kind of experiment. The initial feedback was promising, so I’m hopeful that leaders of the Implementation Teams will share the tool with their colleagues and that the principles of design thinking will stimulate new ideas to help realize the full potential of the Affiliation.

Industry Partner Spotlight

Jaron Caffrey, Director of Workforce and Healthcare Policy, Kansas Hospital Association

Collaboration between Fort Hays State University and our technical college partners is paramount in fostering a well-rounded and adaptable workforce. The inclusion of industry representation on affiliation implementation teams is crucial for fostering practical relevance and bridging the gap between academia and the real-world needs of various sectors. Industry professionals bring firsthand knowledge of current trends, challenges, and technological advancements, ensuring that academic programs remain aligned with the evolving demands of the workforce.

To that end, Jaron Caffrey, Kansas Hospital Association Director of Workforce and Health Care Policy serves as an important member of the Nursing and Allied Health Professions Implementation Team. Representing the Kansas Hospital Association, Jaron brings expertise on workforce needs, strategies, and healthcare policy to the affiliation discussions. His role on the affiliation team provides insight into the healthcare challenges and policy issues specific to the region. It helps bring academic and healthcare leaders together to facilitate networking and information-sharing to advance their organizations and the communities they serve. His enthusiasm and passion for advancing healthcare in Kansas are evident, and they catalyze our affiliation team’s efforts.



Strategic Affiliation Initiative Timeline

