



Faculty Handbook 2025-2026

History

The String Theory School of Design was created to attract, nourish, and educate a neighborhood creative society. Located around the magnificent Museum Mile on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the area is a destination for outstanding museums and other cultural institutions Philadelphia is known for. With a focus on practicing and applying 21st century skills and techniques, students will be prepared to pursue careers in Design, Technology, and Entrepreneurship. After securing authorization from the state of Pennsylvania to operate as a post-secondary institution in September of 2023, the first IDeATE program cohort (Class of 2026) matriculated with the launch of the program in Fall of 2024. In school year 25-26, we welcomed our second cohort of learners, and currently have over 70 students enrolled.

Mission

The String Theory School of Design's mission is to catalyze creative endeavors through design, technology, and entrepreneurship. Learners engage leading edge creative fields, actively study design thinking processes, and deliberately practice domain-specific techniques. Marketable skills, developed in an environment prioritizing outrageous support, enable student application of authentic creative skills to communicate innovations through multi-faceted storytelling.

Vision

The School of Design envisions that its students will graduate with the confidence to engage with creative careers and/or further college and university programs through the authentic application of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that employers and higher education programs seek.

Program

The String Theory School of Design offers the IDeATE Program with 102 quarter credit hours of coursework leading to an Associate of Arts degree. IDeATE elevates content and skills from the fields of Innovation, Design, Arts, Technology, and Entrepreneurship in a cohesive sequence of courses. These courses prioritize examining models of success, practicing techniques, and applying the knowledge and skills to authentic creative work in studios and laboratories. IDeATE brings Design Thinking to life.

Strategic Plan

The String Theory School of Design was founded to ignite creativity at the intersection of design, technology, and entrepreneurship. Our campus, anchored on Philadelphia's Museum Mile, situates students within a global hub of art, culture, and innovation. Here, we live out our mission not as a static statement but as a lived practice—manifest in every policy, partnership, and pedagogical choice.



Below are the seven (7) Strategic Priorities of the college, organized with actionable goals that strengthens the IDeATE Associate of Arts program, ensures institutional sustainability, and positions the School of Design as an engine of Philadelphia's innovation economy.

The String Theory School of Design's Seven Strategic Priorities:

1. Live our mission in every policy, procedure, and learning experience.
2. Launch, build, and sustain the IDeATE Associate of Arts Program as a model of innovation in higher education.
3. Originate teaching and learning in synergy with and in service of Philadelphia's innovation economy and creative enterprise across our region.
4. Catalyze creativity and problem solving through Design Thinking and dynamic scholarship that begins with research and prioritizes making.
5. Sustain and grow our start-up program, leveraging entrepreneurial expertise to secure a healthy fiscal outlook and rich resources for the School of Design.
6. Outrageously support students to discover passions and professional purpose.
7. Optimize technology in ways that redefine learning spaces and experiences, nimbly making knowledge and skills accessible and prolific.

Program Educational Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

The IDeATE program, in alignment with our mission and vision, is dedicated to the following program and student outcomes.

IDEATE Student Learning Outcomes	IDEATE Program Educational Objectives				
	<i>Access Future Opportunities</i>	<i>Think Critically and Creatively</i>	<i>Apply Knowledge to Design Challenges</i>	<i>Apply Technique to Create Quality</i>	<i>Navigate Diverse Landscapes</i>
a) Map the Design Ecosystem	✓		✓		✓
b) Dive Deep in Design			✓	✓	
c) Construct Core Knowledge	✓	✓			✓
d) Work Wicked Problems		✓	✓		
e) Plan Strategically	✓	✓			✓
f) Innovate Solutions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Priorities in Action**1. Live our mission in every policy, procedure, and learning experience.**

Our mission, catalyzing creativity through design, technology, and entrepreneurship, must permeate everything we do.

Actions:

- Audit and align all policies, student services, and curricula with mission-centered language and outcomes.
- Embed design thinking into administrative processes, ensuring institutional innovation mirrors what we teach.
- Establish a “Mission Council” of students, faculty, and community partners to review progress annually.

Measures of Success:

- Annual review demonstrates that 100% of policies explicitly reference or support mission;
- Achievement Data: Retention rate $\geq 75\%$ (evidence of support-driven culture)
- Students can articulate the mission and its impact on their education.
 - *See Maintain of Quality, Assessment of the IDeATE Program, and the subsequent audit protocols below*
 - biennial student survey: $\geq 90\%$ affirm they see the mission lived out in courses and services..

2. Launch, build, and sustain the IDeATE Associate of Arts Program as a model of innovation in higher education.

IDeATE is our flagship program and proof point for our vision of higher education.

Actions:

- Continually refine curriculum to remain on the cutting edge of design, technology, and entrepreneurship.
- Integrate cross-disciplinary studios where students solve complex, real-world problems.
- Document IDeATE outcomes as a replicable model for other institutions.

Measures of Success:

- Biennial program review ensures all six SLOs are assessed in capstone and benchmark courses.
- Retention rates above 75%;
- Graduation rates above 60%;
- Secure at least 3 articulation agreements with aligned four-year college programs within the first two years following achievement of candidate status.



3. Originate teaching and learning in synergy with and in service of Philadelphia's innovation economy and creative enterprise.

Philadelphia is our classroom, lab, and client.

Actions:

- Formalize partnerships with local design firms, tech start-ups, museums, and civic agencies for co-op, practicum, and internship opportunities.
- Host an annual IDeATE Design Expo where students and partners present projects addressing city challenges.
- Develop pathways with regional employers to transition students into jobs or further study.

Measures of Success:

- Every student completes at least one Philadelphia-based applied project before graduation;
- 70% of graduates secure employment or transfer to four-year programs within 6 months.

4. Catalyze creativity and problem solving through Design Thinking and dynamic scholarship.

Scholarship at the School of Design starts with inquiry and culminates in making.

Actions:

- Establish a Design Thinking hub where research and prototyping merge.
- Require student projects to follow research-to-making cycles, supported by faculty mentorship.
- Elevate the annual IDeATE Innovation Expo as a vehicle for faculty and students to publish, present, and exhibit work locally.

Measures of Success:

- At least 90% of students publish or present scholarly/creative work three times a year on Design Days
- At least 75% over the next two years present products, publications, and/or presentations at annual IDeATE Innovation Expo or other regional/national conferences and expos.

5. Sustain and grow our start-up program, leveraging entrepreneurial expertise.

A healthy fiscal outlook is the foundation of creativity and growth.

Actions:



- Develop diversified revenue streams: tuition, sponsored research, education management and entrepreneurial ventures.
- Partner with business leaders for mentorship and investment pipelines.
- Explore potential for adding new degree programs and locations in response to student and innovation industry needs

Measures of Success:

- At least 2 needs assessments conducted for potential new degree programs by 2027;
- 5+ student ventures launched by 2027.
- Job placement (entrepreneurship/self-employment) or 4 Year College $\geq 70\%$

6. Outrageously support students to discover passions and professional purpose.

Our commitment is radical care and professional empowerment.

Actions:

- Implement “advising rounds” that blend academic, career, and wellness support.
- Offer professional identity courses and experiences in which students explore pathways, build portfolios, and network with mentors.
- Build alumni networks and peer mentorship programs to sustain support beyond graduation.

Measures of Success:

- Student satisfaction ratings $>90\%$;
- career services engagement by 100% of students
- alumni network participation grows 10% upon biennial review.

7. Optimize technology to redefine learning spaces and experiences.

Technology should not only support but also transform the learning journey.

Actions:

- Equip and refresh studios and labs with immersive tools (leading industry-software, AI, advanced fabrication technologies) to stay at the leading edge of technology.
- Pilot “open learning hubs” where community members access our technology for creative projects.

Measures of Success:

- $>30\%$ of capstones rated “exceptional” by external evaluators using the innovation technical proficiency mastery target;
- community engagement programs reach 40+ participants upon biennial review by 2028
- $>75\%$ of students with portfolio artifacts that align with industry or post-secondary program standards

- Engagement: integrate technology solutions in classrooms that increase student interaction and collaboration by at least 25% by 2027.

Maintenance of Quality

The String Theory School of Design will engage in regular reflection and self-renewal protocols to apply Design Thinking habits and practices to continuous prototyping and up leveling of programs in real time, and thorough quality audits of academic programs at least once every five years. Biennial Design Thinking reflections will focus on how program faculty can empathize with students to inform strategic re-design of key program elements in response to needs presented. This Design Thinking culture will also inform the audits, which will determine on a more global scale how our program, mission statement, and statement of philosophy might evolve to better meet the needs of those we serve, including students, universities, employers, and other community stakeholders. Details of the implementation of our academic audits and the results of the most recent audit will be submitted to the PA Department of Education upon request.

Biennial self-renewal protocols will be integrated into Professional Learning experiences for the IDeATE program faculty and will take the faculty collectively through the stages of Design Thinking to address the most essential student needs. The regular audit will be conducted by an audit committee formed by our faculty and staff, as well as outside consultants with the appropriate expertise. Our general audit guidelines will be designed in accordance with Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) guidelines.

Assessment of the IDeATE Program

The overall process for the systematic review of The String Theory School of Design's educational programs has been founded on the tenets of Design Thinking to include diverse constituents (including students, faculty, and external partners) in the evaluation and revisions of its programs. This continual assessment will be baked into the biennial self-renewal process but will also be part of the general audit of the academic program.

This overall process includes the following six assessment protocols designed to systematically renew and revise the String Theory School of Design's IDeATE program:

- 1) effective progress monitoring and tracking of all student learning outcomes with application of Design Thinking principles to inform improvement
- 2) Implementation of an Outcomes-Based Education model for quality improvement that engages Design Thinking as a vehicle for innovating targeted changes and iterative self-renewal.
- 3) regular course evaluations and student satisfaction surveys to inform a culture of feedback and continuous improvement
- 4) exit surveys from graduating students



- 5) Outcomes Based Education competencies surveys from university admissions offices, employers, and alumni
- 6) program evaluation reports from external evaluators.

Protocol 1: Progress Monitoring and Tracking

All courses will be assessed through competencies directly aligned to student learning outcomes using digital tracking technologies and mastery portfolios. While these are primarily designed to provide feedback on mastery for a student audience, the IDeATE program faculty also uses these to evaluate evidence of student learning outcomes as they relate to the quality of teaching and learning. Review of the qualitative and quantitative data this protocol generates provides key opportunities for analysis that informs future iterations of the Design Thinking process.

Protocol 2: Outcomes Based Education Model

The Progress Monitoring and Tracking data provided from Protocol 1 informs the establishment of an Outcomes Based Education Model, or OBE. OBE can optimize the impact on curriculum design and re-design related to student outcomes. The alignment of each course with the student outcomes will be reviewed quarterly for quicker adjustments and revised biennially to inform more thoughtful instructional design.

Protocol 3: Student Empathy through Surveys, Course Evaluations, and Interviews

All quarterly surveys, course evaluations, and any needed follow up interviews will be conducted using best practices in Design Thinking with an emphasis on empathy. The qualitative data generated from this process will feed directly into the Outcomes Based Education Model.

Protocol 4: Graduate Empathy through Surveys and Interviews

The graduating students' exit surveys will be completed at the end of the spring quarter with the Dean of Students. On the survey form for achievement, for each student outcome, there will be three choices: 3 indicates that the respondent "strongly agrees" that he/she has achieved the student outcome; 2 indicates "agrees"; 1 stands for "disagrees." There will also be a place to capture qualitative feedback on student experience and future plans.

Protocol 5: Outcomes Based Education Competencies and Quality Analysis with Universities and Employers

String Theory School of Design will also solicit feedback from universities and employers that accept and/or hire our graduates. This feedback will focus on the success and persistence of our graduates in further study and work.

Protocol 6: Feedback from External Evaluators

Should any data that surfaces require validation for a public audience, the String Theory School of Design at Particle Labs will contract with external evaluators to conduct studies that surface transferable and normed data to inform decision making at an institutional level.

Lastly, the tables below demonstrate the clear ways in which our educational objectives, student outcomes, and course content intersect to produce the results we intend to achieve and measure through our Quality Audit protocols and systems. A full and comprehensive audit using all the above protocols will be conducted at least once every 5 years.

Institutional Effectiveness Plan

Institutional effectiveness at the String Theory School of Design is grounded in the mission: To catalyze creative endeavors through design, technology, and entrepreneurship, where students practice design thinking, develop domain-specific techniques, and apply authentic skills through storytelling and innovation.

Effectiveness is demonstrated through:

1. Strategic Goals aligned with the Seven Strategic Priorities.
2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) mapped to Program Educational Objectives (PEOs) and curriculum.
3. Evidence of Student Achievement through key metrics: Graduation, Retention, Transfer, and Job Placement.

Priority 1: Live our mission in every policy, procedure, and learning experience.

Goal: Ensure that mission alignment is explicit in all curriculum, policy, and student support processes.

- Mission Link: The mission prioritizes outrageous student support and design-centered learning.
- SLO Link: All SLOs (a–f) reflect mission-driven learning, reinforced in courses like Design Thinking and Capstone Studio.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - Annual review demonstrates that 100% of policies explicitly reference or support mission;
 - Achievement Data: Retention rate $\geq 75\%$ (evidence of support-driven culture)



- Students can articulate the mission and its impact on their education.
 - *See Maintain of Quality, Assessment of the IDeATE Program, and the subsequent audit protocols below*
- Annual student survey: ≥ 90% affirm they see the mission lived out in courses and services..

Priority 2: Launch, build, and sustain the IDeATE Associate of Arts Program as a model of innovation in higher education.

Goal: Maintain curricular alignment of SLOs, PEOs, and courses to ensure students achieve program outcomes.

- Mission Link: Innovation and design entrepreneurship are the School's core.
- SLO Link: Map the Design Ecosystem (a) and Dive Deep in Design (b) anchor innovative exploration.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - Biennial program review ensures all six SLOs are assessed in capstone and benchmark courses.
 - Retention rates above 75%;
 - Graduation rates above 60%;
 - Secure at least 3 articulation agreements with aligned four-year college programs within the first two years following achievement of candidate status.

Priority 3: Originate teaching and learning in synergy with and in service of Philadelphia's innovation economy.

Goal: Provide experiential, place-based learning opportunities with Philadelphia partners.

- Mission Link: Students are prepared for design, technology, and entrepreneurship careers regionally.
- SLO Link: Work Wicked Problems (d) and Innovate Solutions (f) operationalize community-facing projects.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - 100% of students achieve Map The Design Ecosystem, connecting to the innovation economy.
 - Continual satisfaction rate of IDeATE Design Expo vendors >80%
 - Achievement Data: Job placement or 4 Year-College acceptance rate ≥ 70% within six months of graduation.
 - Every student completes at least one Philadelphia-based applied project before graduation

Priority 4: Catalyze creativity and problem solving through Design Thinking and dynamic scholarship.

Goal: Integrate Design Thinking processes into all major studios and labs.

- Mission Link: "Catalyze creative endeavors" requires structured design problem-solving.



- SLO Link: Plan Strategically (e) and Innovate Solutions (f) anchor iterative problem-solving in Design Thinking and Capstone Studio.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - At least 90% of students publish or present scholarly/creative work three times a year on Design Days
 - At least 75% over the next two years present products, publications, and/or presentations at annual IDeATE Innovation Expo or other regional/national conferences and expos.

Priority 5: Sustain and grow our start-up program, leveraging entrepreneurial expertise.

Goal: Integrate entrepreneurship training with student venture creation.

- Mission Link: Entrepreneurship is explicitly named in the mission.
- SLO Link: Construct Core Knowledge (c) and Innovate Solutions (f) are embedded in Business Building, Start Up School, and Entrepreneurial Teams.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - 5+ student ventures launched by 2027
 - Achievement Data: Job placement (self-employment/entrepreneurship) or 4 Year College $\geq 70\%$ of graduates.

Priority 6: Outrageously support students to discover passions and professional purpose.

Goal: Provide holistic advising and career mentorship integrated with curriculum.

- Mission Link: “Outrageous support” is a signature element of the School’s promise.
- SLO Link: Map the Design Ecosystem (a) helps students explore passions; Dive Deep in Design (b) supports specialization.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - Advising participation rate = 100% of students.
 - $\geq 90\%$ of students report satisfaction with support services.
 - Achievement Data: Retention rates $\geq 75\%$; Transfer rates $\geq 70\%$.
 - alumni network participation grows 10% upon biennial review.

Priority 7: Optimize technology in ways that redefine learning spaces and experiences.

Goal: Expand technology-enabled learning environments (labs, AR/VR applications).

- Mission Link: Students engage leading-edge creative fields with technology as a driver.
- SLO Link: Construct Core Knowledge (c) and Plan Strategically (e) are enhanced through courses like Tech Stack, Fabrication I/II, and Visualization I/II.
- Evidence of Effectiveness:
 - Engagement: integrate technology solutions in classrooms that increase student interaction and collaboration by at least 25% by 2027.
 - $>30\%$ of capstones rated “exceptional” by external evaluators using the innovation technical proficiency mastery target;
 - community engagement programs reach 40+ participants upon biennial review by 2028;



- >75% of students with portfolio artifacts that align with industry or post-secondary program standards

Evidence & Data Collection

Data Source	Frequency	Responsible Roles/Team	Use
Graduation Rates	Annual	Registrar	Benchmark program completion
Retention Rates	Annual	Registrar	Assess student persistence
Transfer Rates	Annual	Career & Advising	Track further education outcomes
Job Placement Rates	6 months post-grad	Career Services	Measure workforce readiness
SLO Assessment (Course-Embedded)	Quarterly	Faculty/Assessment Committee	Direct evidence of learning
Alumni/Employer Surveys	Biennial	Dean	Feedback loop for curriculum relevance

Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Matrix

Strategic Priority	Goal	Mission/PEO Alignment	SLO Alignment	Evidence / Assessment Method	Achievement Data / Metrics	Timeline / Responsible Party
1. Live our mission in every policy, procedure, and learning experience	Ensure policies, curriculum, and services embody mission	Access Future Opportunities; Navigate Diverse Landscapes	All SLOs (a-f)	Syllabi review, policy audits, student surveys	≥ 90% of students affirm mission is evident; Retention ≥ 75%; 100% biennial policy review	Biennial review by Dean & Mission Council
2. Launch, build, and sustain the IDeATE AA Program as a model of innovation	Maintain curricular alignment and continuous improvement	Apply Knowledge to Design Challenges; Apply Technique to Create Quality	a, b, c, e	Program review, curriculum mapping, capstone assessment	Graduation ≥ 60%; Retention ≥ 75%; All 6 SLO present; 3+ articulation agreements	Biennial program review by Faculty Assessment Committee
3. Originate teaching/learning in synergy with Philadelphia's innovation economy	Expand applied partnerships for experiential learning	Access Future Opportunities; Think Critically and Creatively	d, f	Internship/practicum completion, employer evaluations, student project exhibitions	100% students complete applied project; Job Placement or 4 year College acceptance ≥ 70%	Biennial Employer/Partner report; Career Services
4. Catalyze creativity and problem solving through Design Thinking and scholarship	Embed Design Thinking across all studios/labs	Think Critically and Creatively; Apply Knowledge to Design Challenges	e, f	Capstone rubrics, faculty evaluations, student publications	≥ 90% students present Design Days; ≥ 75% students/faculty publish or present annually @ Expo	Capstone assessment each quarter; Faculty biennial reports
5. Sustain and grow our start-up program, leveraging entrepreneurial expertise	Foster entrepreneurial ventures and financial sustainability	Access Future Opportunities; Apply Knowledge to Design Challenges	c, f	Business plan evaluations, venture incubation tracking	5+ Student ventures by 2027; Job placement (entrepreneurship/self-employment) or 4 Year College ≥ 70%	Biennial report, faculty/entrepreneurial,
6. Outrageously support students to discover passions and purpose	Provide holistic advising and mentoring	Navigate Diverse Landscapes; Apply Technique to Create Quality	a, b	Advising participation, student satisfaction surveys, portfolio reviews	Advising 100% participation; Student satisfaction ≥ 90%; Retention ≥ 75%	Advising reports each term; Student Experience
7. Optimize technology to redefine learning spaces and experiences	Expand technology-enabled studios and classroom tools	Apply Technique to Create Quality; Access Future Opportunities	c, e	Tech proficiency rubrics in Fabrication, Visualization, Tech Stack; course delivery reports	≥ 30% exceptional on capstone mastery targets; 40+ community engagement partners; 25% growth in classroom tech; >75% industry products	Biennial Technology Review; Faculty/IT collaboration



Location and Hours

The School of Design is located at 1600 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA. The School of Design is open to students and faculty from 7:30 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday during the school year.

How to Apply

All applicants for the IDeATE program must complete the following:

1. **Application and Fee:** Complete an application for admission and submit it online. There is no fee to apply.
2. **Personal Statement:** All applicants are required to submit a 250 to 500 word, typed personal statement that describes their reasons for choosing a Design-focused education, any influences that led to this choice, and any career goals aligned to this study.
3. **Transcripts:** An official high school transcript is required of all applicants. Students currently completing their senior year of high school may also be asked to submit their most recent senior grades along with their transcripts. Applicants not holding a high school diploma must submit an official GED completion certificate prior to enrollment.
4. **Test Scores:** String Theory School of Design uses the AccuPlacer series of standardized testing to determine readiness for college level work. Testing may be waived for dual enrollment high school students and high school graduates demonstrating readiness for college level coursework through review of their high school transcript. For all other high school graduates, readiness for college-level course work is evidenced by an AccuPlacer Reading score of 240 or above, a Writing score of 240 or above, and a Mathematics score of 240 or above. Those lacking the requisite scores may be admitted provisionally at the discretion of the Admissions team, but may be required to enroll in pre-requisite courses, which will not count toward the Associates degree.
5. **Portfolio Review:** Building a portfolio requires careful planning. Students will want to show work that not only reflects their current abilities but also their readiness for creative work in a Design school environment. A portfolio of creative work is required for admission. This is a personal statement about the prospective student, and their visual training, interest, and aspirations. Each portfolio is reviewed by an admissions representative and is an important part of the way the school can learn more about the prospective student and their talents. It is critical that students adhere to all details regarding contents and



presentation of their portfolio, and meet submission deadlines as outlined in the IDeATE Program application.

6. **Recommendations:** Recommendations are generally optional, but may be required based on a student's previous academic performance. Letters may be written by high school teachers, employers, or others who have had contact with the student and can attest to their abilities and level of commitment to higher education. Recommendations should be submitted online.

Portfolio Requirements and Process

Review Process.

1. To offer opportunity to qualified design students, regardless of academic history, portfolios are first reviewed independently from other application academic documents. Portfolios are reviewed by at least two faculty and scored high - medium - low. This data is then considered with the rest of the application documents.
2. The portfolio is a design project. How the applicant chooses to format, present, label, and sequence the work is considered in the portfolio evaluation.
3. The portfolio is both reflective and projective. It presents an applicant's growth to date, their current ability levels, and their development capacity into a professional designer and/or entrepreneur.

Contents:

1. The portfolio should demonstrate breadth, depth, and growth over time. Strong portfolios present a range of media types and subject matter. Strong portfolios present a particular focus of interest within that range. The admissions committee recommends chronological sequencing of the work.
2. The portfolio should present an applicant's capacity to see and think spatially, to ideate, to think critically, to problem solve, and to offer a view of how the world might be, rather than is.
3. Include the following: 10-15 unique project work products.
 - a. Static Images: A maximum of 3 images per project.
 - b. Video: Maximum length 60 seconds per project.
4. Portfolio content may include, but is not limited to: animation, architecture/interior design, fashion design, graphic design, industrial design, observational drawing (still life, portrait, landscape), painting, photography, product design, sculpture, sketching, short films/video.
5. Drawings should be based on observed subjects, not photographs.
6. Design project presentations should focus on the process rather than the final product. Include sketches, drawings, prototypes, study models, and final models.



Descriptions:

1. Portfolio artifacts must be original work created by the applicant. If the work is the product of a team or group effort, the applicant's role and contribution must be clearly defined in the descriptive caption.
2. Each artifact image must include a descriptive caption including the following information: project title, date of completion (month/year), medium, approximate dimensions (static work) and/or length (video).

Submittal Process:

1. Upon receipt of complete application documents, candidates will be issued a link to a secure Google Drive folder. All portfolio items should be placed into this folder by the stipulated deadline.
2. Label each file as follows:
itemnumber.applicantlastname.applicantyearofbirth.subject.
For example: 01.einstein.1879.sketches, 02.einstein.1879.models, etc.
3. Please confirm that all files are common file types with the proper extensions, ie. .jpeg, .pdf, .mov, etc.
If we can not open the file, your portfolio work will not be reviewed.
4. Alternate: Physical portfolios may be submitted in lieu of digital portfolios. Please contact the admissions office for the submission process. Physical portfolio dimensions should not exceed 11" x 17" x 2".

Admissions Deadlines

The IDeATE Program's rolling admissions process allows applications to be reviewed year-round.

Notification of Admissions Decisions

Applicants will be notified by letter or email of the admissions decision within one month of receipt of all required admissions materials.

Dual-Enrollment Applicants

Students attending area high schools participating in high school dual-enrollment programs that have an agreement with the String Theory School of Design may register for courses in the IDeATE Program. Dual-enrollment students must complete an abbreviated admissions process facilitated by their high school's college counseling office before registering.

Open Houses

Open houses are a great way to experience our creative environment and unique approach to learning. These one-day events are scheduled periodically and give prospective students the opportunity to talk with Deans, faculty, and current students. Contact the admissions office or visit the website to inquire about the next open house.



Units of Credit

One quarter credit in a class is equivalent to 1 hour of class time per week for 10 weeks. At the School of Design, an academic year consists of three 10-week quarters, with an average of about 15 quarter credits per quarter for full time enrollment. Students must also successfully complete (with at least one evaluation of a 3 or above on each aligned competency) all appropriate degree requirements in sequence and consistently achieve and maintain appropriate academic standards. All credit-bearing courses completed at the School of Design will show on the student's final transcript.

Limitations of the Faculty Handbook

This handbook is intended to serve as a general explanation and guide of String Theory School of Design's policies and procedures. It is not intended to be an express or implied contract between String Theory School of Design and any Employee. Employees of the college are Employees "at will," which means that any individual may voluntarily leave employment at any time, and the college may terminate the employment at any time, for any reason.

EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE SPECIFICALLY NOTED, NO POLICY OR PROVISION OF THIS HANDBOOK IS INTENDED TO CREATE A CONTRACT BINDING THE EMPLOYEE, THE SCHOOL OR STRING THEORY SCHOOLS TO AN AGREEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT FOR A SPECIFIC PERIOD OF TIME. AN EMPLOYEE'S EMPLOYMENT CAN BE TERMINATED BY EITHER THE EMPLOYEE OR THE EMPLOYER AT ANY TIME, FOR ANY REASON, WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE. ALL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN THIS HANDBOOK ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR MODIFICATION AT THE EMPLOYER'S DISCRETION AT ANY TIME, AS CIRCUMSTANCES MAY WARRANT.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY STATEMENT

The college is firmly committed to the policy of providing equal employment opportunity to all Employees and applicants for employment in a manner consistent with applicable local, state, and federal laws and administrative directives. This policy statement is the written expression of the college's desire and intent to assure equal employment opportunity to all. This means that in matters affecting employment and application for employment, the School will take action to ensure that each Employee and applicant is accorded equal treatment with respect to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment including recruitment, hiring, placement, training, promotion, compensation and benefits. Therefore, all recruiting, hiring and promoting for all job classifications are made without regard to age, gender, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, Veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions, Veteran status, familial status, Domestic/Sexual Violence Victim status, genetic information, or any other legally protected characteristic. Commitment to this policy applies uniformly to all administrative levels. This



policy statement will hereinafter be referred to as the **"Equal Employment Opportunity Policy"**.

The Board of Trustees of the College has authorized the President of the College to take action necessary to ensure that this policy is implemented.

To implement the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, the College commits to:

Employment

The college will be identified as an equal opportunity employer in all recruitment advertising.

The college will use, for employment referral purposes, only those employment agencies and organizations that do not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion, sexual preference, national origin or disability, and may require written statements from such agencies and organizations regarding their own equal employment opportunity policies.

The college will post in conspicuous places available to Employees, agents, applicants for employment, and other persons, notices describing the college's non-discrimination policy.

Service

The college will not deny any person service because of age, gender, race, color, religion, sexual preference, national origin, disability, ability to verbally communicate or ability to communicate in English, nor will segregate those served on any such basis.

Compliance

The college will comply with its Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and with all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations.

EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

The School does not offer tenured or guaranteed employment. Successful completion of the orientation and review period does not guarantee continued or permanent employment. Either the school or the employee can terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause, with or without notice.

If employed by the School, employees are expected to follow this Handbook's policies and procedures. Employees understand that the School can terminate at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice, Employee's employment with the School. Only the President of the School or the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the College has the authority to enter into any agreement, which will be in writing and executed by all parties thereto, contrary to the foregoing "At Will" policy or for employment for a specified period of time.



EXCEPTIONS TO THE EMPLOYMENT AT WILL POLICY

No one except the Board of Trustees can enter into any kind of employment relationship or agreement that is contrary to the previous statement. To be enforceable, such relationship or agreement must be in writing, and signed by the President, and approved by the Board of Trustees.

DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

While the School may elect to follow its progressive discipline procedure, the School is in no way obligated to do so. Using progressive discipline is at the sole discretion of the school in an employment at will workplace.

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND DEFINITIONS

An Employee is a person hired as an Employee by the School, who receives compensation for work performed on the School's behalf for a period of time and at a specified schedule of pay arising under a specified job description.

The School recognizes five (5) classifications of an Employee:

The President of the College ("President") is responsible for the effective operation of the general administration of all instruction and operations of the School and for advising and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees of the School with respect to such activities. S/he shall perform all the duties and accept all of the responsibilities usually required as prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, laws, and regulations of the United States, and the policies, rules, and regulations established by the Board of Trustees of the School. The President is appointed by and held accountable to the Board of Trustees of the School.

The Vice President is appointed by the President and held accountable to the Board of Trustees of the School. Additionally, "Executive Administration", as used throughout this Employee Manual, means the President, Vice President, and Dean.

Dean: The Dean is the chief academic and administrative officer of the String Theory School of Design. The Dean provides leadership in fulfilling the mission of the School, ensuring that all academic programs, student services, and institutional operations reflect the School's commitment to design, technology, and entrepreneurship. Responsibilities include overseeing academic programs, curriculum development, and assessment of student learning outcomes, leading faculty recruitment, development, and evaluation, ensuring compliance with accreditation standards and state/federal regulations, supporting students through a culture of "outrageous support," promoting



their academic success, career readiness, and well-being, building partnerships with industry, community, and cultural organizations to advance the School's vision and connect students to opportunities, and serving as the primary representative and advocate of the School to external stakeholders.

Faculty: Faculty are the instructional and academic staff responsible for teaching, mentoring, and guiding students in alignment with the mission of the String Theory School of Design. Faculty members are central to the learning experience, fostering creativity, critical inquiry, and professional readiness through curriculum delivery, studio practice, and applied research. Faculty design and deliver courses consistent with approved curriculum and student learning outcomes. They assess and document student performance, providing timely and constructive feedback. Advising and mentoring students in academic, creative, and professional development as well as contributing to program development, curriculum review, and accreditation processes are responsibilities of all faculty. They engage in professional practice, scholarship, and/or creative work to remain current in their fields and participate in faculty meetings, committees, and governance to support institutional effectiveness. All faculty must uphold academic integrity, inclusive practices, and the culture of "outrageous support" central to the School's mission.

Staff: All other Student Services Support Staff and Administrators of the College are defined as employees who provide essential administrative and student support services but do not hold faculty teaching responsibilities for core classes. This classification includes Student Services personnel (Advisors, Creative Learning Catalyst, LEAP Designer, Librarian, Media Production Designer, Program Manager/Registrar) and non-instructional staff who contribute to the daily operations, student success, and institutional functions of the School.

College Calendar 2025-2026:

The School of Design academic year begins in September and ends in August of the following year. Three academic quarters, Fall, Winter, and Spring, are each 10 weeks in length. Formal classes are not in session during the Summer quarter, leaving time for students to apply their learning in internships and work opportunities.

STSoD Academic Calendar 2025-2026		
Quarter	DATE	Description
	August	



Summer	8/18/2025	Faculty In Service Day-First Day for Faculty
Summer	8/19/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/20/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/21/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/22/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/25/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/26/2025	Faculty In Service Day
Summer	8/27/2025	New Student Orientation
Summer	8/28/2025	New Student Advising Rounds
Summer	8/29/2025	Labor Day Weekend-School Closed
	SEPTEMBER	
Summer	9/1/2025	Labor Day-School Closed
Q1	9/2/2025	Quarter 1 Classes Begin & Add/Drop Window Opens
Q1	9/9/2025	Add / Drop Window Closes
Q1	9/23/2025	Rosh Hashanah – School Closed
Q1	9/25/2025	Open House
	OCTOBER	
Q1	10/2/2025	Yom Kippur – School Closed
Q1	10/10/2025	Mid-Quarter Q1 Grades Due
Q1	10/13/2025	School Holiday - School Closed
	NOVEMBER	
Q1	11/3/2025	School Closed-Faculty In Service Day
Q1	11/11/2025	Veteran's Day – School Closed
Q1	11/14/2025	Quarter 1 Classes End
Q1	11/17/2025	Fall Design Week
Q1	11/18/2025	Quarter 1 Grades Due / Fall Design Week
Q1	11/19/2025	Fall Design Week
Q1	11/20/2025	Fall Design Week
Q1	11/21/2025	Fall Design Week
Q1	11/24/2025	Thanksgiving Break-School Closed
Q1	11/25/2025	Thanksgiving Break-School Closed
Q1	11/26/2025	Thanksgiving Break-School Closed



Q1	11/27/2025	Thanksgiving-School Closed
Q1	11/28/2025	Thanksgiving Break-School Closed
	DECEMBER	
Q1	12/1/2025	Fall Design Day
Q2	12/2/2025	Quarter 2 Classes Begin & Add / Drop Window Opens
Q2	12/19/2025	School Closed – East/West/Vine Campuses Teacher In Service – East/West/Vine Campuses
Q2	12/22/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/23/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/24/2025	Christmas
Q2	12/25/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/26/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/29/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/30/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	12/31/2025	Winter Break - School Closed
	JANUARY	
Q2	1/1/2026	New Years
Q2	1/2/2026	Winter Break - School Closed
Q2	1/5/2026	Return From Winter Break
Q2	1/16/2026	Mid-Quarter Q2 Grades Due/ Keystone Winter Wave
Q2	1/19/2026	Martin Luther King Jr. Day - School Closed
Q2	1/26/2026	School Closed- Faculty In Service Day
	FEBRUARY	
Q2	2/13/2026	Presidents Day Weekend - School Closed
Q2	2/16/2026	Presidents Day Weekend - School Closed
Q2	2/17/2026	Lunar New Year-School Closed-Faculty In Service Day
Q2	2/20/2026	Quarter 2 Classes End
Q2	2/23/2026	Winter Design Week
Q2	2/24/2026	Quarter 2 Grades Due / Winter Design Week
Q2	2/25/2026	Winter Design Week
Q2	2/26/2026	Winter Design Week



Q2	2/27/2026	Winter Design Day
	MARCH	
Q2	3/2/2026	Innovation Expo
Q3	3/3/2026	Quarter 3 Classes Begins & Add / Drop Window Opens
Q3	3/13/2026	School Closed-Faculty In Service Day
Q3	3/20/2026	Eid al Fitr - School Closed
Q3	3/30/2026	Spring Break – School Closed
Q3	3/31/2026	Spring Break – School Closed
	APRIL	
Q3	4/1/2026	Spring Break – School Closed
Q3	4/2/2026	Spring Break – School Closed
Q3	4/3/2026	Spring Break – School Closed
Q3	4/6/2026	Easter Monday - School Closed
Q3	4/10/2026	Mid-Quarter Q3 Grades Due
Q3	4/13/2026	School Closed
	MAY	
Q3	5/15/2026	Quarter 3 Classes End
Q3	5/18/2026	Spring Design Week
Q3	5/19/2026	Quarter 3 Grades Due / Spring Design Week
Q3	5/20/2026	Spring Design Day
Q3	5/22/2026	Memorial Day Weekend - School Closed
Q3	5/25/2026	Memorial Day - School Closed
Summer	5/26/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	5/27/2026	Eid-Al-Adha – School Closed
Summer	5/28/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	5/29/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
	JUNE	
Summer	6/1/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	6/2/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	6/3/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	6/4/2026	Summer Quarter Studio Time and Internship Interviews
Summer	6/5/2026	Senior Awards
Summer	6/12/2026	Graduation



Tuition and Fees

The String Theory School of Design seeks to make a college education accessible for all students by offering affordable tuition rates.

Full-Time Tuition per Year: **\$8,109.00**

Tuition per Quarter Credit Hour: **\$159.00**

Technology Fee: \$500.00

Registration Fee: \$109.00

Refund Policy

The School of Design has established a tuition refund policy that allows a refund of tuition and fees when a student withdraws from the college or from a course(s). The refund is a credit to the student's account and may result in adjustments to financial aid. If a credit balance is created on a student account, the credit balance will be refunded.

Effective Date of Withdrawal	Refund Amount
Before First Day of Quarter	100%
First Calendar Week	100%
Second Calendar Week	75%
Third Calendar Week	50%
Fourth Calendar Week	25%
Fifth Calendar Week	None

Transportation

Subway

The Broad Street Line (BSL) is the nearest subway line, with the Race-Vine station just a short walk from the school. The BSL provides quick and direct access to major parts of the city, including connections to other subway lines and regional rail services.

Bus

Several SEPTA bus routes serve the area around String Theory School of Design's Vine Street Campus. The most convenient routes are:



- Routes 4 and 16: These routes stop at 16th and Vine, right near the college entrance.
- Routes 32 and 33: These routes run along 15th Street, just one block away, providing additional options for students.

Please check the SEPTA website or app for the latest schedules and route information.

Bicycle

String Theory School of Design provides secure bike parking on the 8th floor. Vine Street and 16th Street both have bike lanes that make cycling to school safe and convenient.

Indego Bike Share

For those who do not own a bike, the Indego Bike Share program is an excellent alternative. There is an Indego station located at 15th and Callowhill, just a few blocks from the school. Bikes can be rented on an as-needed basis, and passes are available for frequent riders. You can check bike availability and docking station locations through the Indego app.

Academics

Degree Program

The String Theory School of Design offers the IDeATE Program with 102 credit hours of coursework leading to an Associate of Arts degree. IDeATE elevates content and skills from the fields of Innovation, Design, Arts, Technology, and Entrepreneurship in a cohesive sequence of courses. These courses prioritize examining models of success, practicing techniques, and applying the knowledge and skills to authentic creative work in studios and laboratories. IDeATE brings Design Thinking to life.

Academic Courses

Graduation Requirements:

Students seeking to complete the IDeATE program and earn the Associate of Arts degree must meet the following requirements:

1. Earn a minimum of 102 credits, inclusive of the prescribed IDeATE curriculum.
2. Satisfactory completion of required IDeATE courses including Core coursework required for transfer credits with a minimum GPA of 2.0 and evidence of achievement of all forty (40) mastery targets by end of program
3. At the beginning of the second year (fourth quarter), students must submit to the program dean a one-page preliminary proposal for design studies leading to the Capstone Studio project. The proposal identifies the following:



- a. A proposed capstone project, including a rationale for relevance, outline schedule, and deliverables.
 - b. The proposed capstone project's applicable design field discipline(s).
 - c. Proposed capstone project advisor and co-advisor, with signature confirmations.
4. To begin the final quarter's Capstone Studio (sixth quarter), students must submit to the program dean at the end of the fifth quarter a final proposal for program approval. The final proposal includes the following:
 - a. The capstone project, including a rationale for relevance, schedule, and deliverables.
 - b. The proposed capstone project's applicable design field discipline(s).
 - c. The necessary materials and resources to complete the capstone project.
 - d. A list of all String Theory School of Design faculty and external consultants supporting the project.
 - e. Approval signatures from the capstone project advisor, co-advisor, faculty, and external consultants.
5. Upon program dean approval of the capstone project, the student may proceed with the sixth and final quarter.
6. To complete the Capstone Studio, students must present their capstone project and defend their findings to the faculty in a forum open to the school community.

Academic Assessment, Standards, and Policies

Mastery Credits

The School of Design uses a mastery-based grading system, as follows:

3.9 - 4.0 Exceeds Mastery	3.0 - 3.8 Mastery	2.0 - 2.9 Developing	1.0 - 1.9 Insufficient Evidence
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Whole number mastery grades (1 - 4) are recorded for each mastery credit aligned to each product, performance, or assessment, with points used to compute a synthesized mastery course grade for each student at the end of each quarter. Students must earn a mastery target course average of 3.0 or higher to receive full credit for a course and evidence readiness for any future learning for which this course serves as a prerequisite in the IDeATE program. Students who receive a mastery target course average of 2.0 or higher may progress in the program, but will be required to evidence mastery of those



mastery credits not-yet-met before graduation. Students who receive a mastery course grade lower than 2.0 must take the course again and may be placed on academic probation.

IDeATE Program Assessment Essentials

The following guidelines are designed to help enculturate you to String Theory School of Design's innovative ways of assessing students that are grounded in cognitive science, are catalysts for learning, and minimize gatekeeping and using grades as rewards. At String Theory School of Design, students are evaluated holistically on competencies (what they know and can do) through products, performances, and assessments aligned to mastery targets. These targets evaluate the quality of the products and performances with attention to course and program goals, domain-specific skills, product design and market conventions, cognitive skills, technical proficiency, content knowledge mastery, and dispositions that empower future professional and personal success.

Definitions

Term	<i>Product</i>	<i>Performance</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
IDeATE Definition	Something submittable	Something observable	Something designed to measure something
Examples	Digital art and media Physical art and media Market products Project plan Essay (or other writing) Lab report Team deliverable Data collection/analysis Calculations Empathy maps Graphic organizer Model/graph Display Packaging ...any other " <i>thing</i> ."	Skill demo Socratic seminar Science lab Pitch Team facilitation Safety protocols Collaboration Tool use Networking Presentation Process Engagement Peer support Live performance ...any other " <i>show</i> ."	Inventory Test Quiz Performance task Survey Design Challenge Interview Project Calibration Quality assurance Portfolio Artifact evidence Adjudication Contest ...any other " <i>measure</i> ."
Evaluation methods	• Rubrics • Narrative feedback • Peer evaluation • Self evaluation • Success checklist	• Anecdotal records • Checklists • Equity Maps (or other app data) • Photo or video	• Rubrics • Scoring • Narrative feedback • Success checklists • Authentic outcomes



	• Market response • Ratings	- capture • Critique circles • Reflection	• Licensure • Badges • Employment • Program acceptance
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Essential Concepts

Please consider these essential ideas when assessing student work in the IDeATE program.

- All assessments and feedback should be useful for improving future work and optimizing learning.
- Feedback should be ongoing and as immediate as possible.
- Assessment must have a positive impact on the student's own sense of their power to learn.
- Students should have many opportunities for self-assessment based on contextualized criteria.
- Students should know all of the criteria for assessment before they begin work on a product or performance.
- Consider using authentic community resources – a design client, an architect, a graphic artist, a product developer, an engineer, a social entrepreneur – to provide feedback on work quality.
 - **Allow students opportunities to improve their work and their progress towards and beyond mastery. Retests, multiple submissions, rapid prototyping, and product revisions are not only allowed, but desirable! The only hard deadlines are the weekly deliverables and quarter assessment submission date.**
- The exception to the above deadline flexibility is when assessing Work Ethic. Courses with this mastery target explicitly evaluate timely submission of work as part of the rubric.
- Final mastery target assessments logged in Academia should reflect the level of evidence (insufficient/emerging, developing, mastery, exceeds mastery) the student has demonstrated and can confidently reproduce.
- Remember to balance positive encouragement and constructive feedback.
- The products and performances that students create for courses must align with one or more mastery targets. There are no “grades” given for a product or performance. The products and performances become evidence of mastery, and in aggregate, achievement of course learning goals.
- Remember to look for evidence of mastery beyond just the course expectations or assignments. If a student struggles with the format or design of the assignment and can show actual mastery (preserve the high bar on evidence!) in



a different way, that is great. Mastery is mastery. Be flexible on method and focus on evidence!

- Weekly at faculty meetings, we will collect faculty nominations for any student that exceeds mastery in a target that week.

Mastery Assessment System

IDeATE uses a mastery-based grading system, as follows:

3.9 - 4.0 Exceeds Mastery	3.0 - 3.8 Mastery	2.0 - 2.9 Developing	1.0 - 1.9 Insufficient Evidence
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Whole number mastery grades (1 - 4) are recorded for each mastery credit (evidenced by products, performances, or assessments) with points used to compute a synthesized mastery course grade for each student at the end of each quarter, which is communicated on the quarter report using the descriptors above, not numbers. At the transcript level, evaluation points for each mastery target collected from all courses **also** compute a synthesized mastery target grade for each mastery target, which creates a clear profile of each student's strengths across the program. Lastly, on the transcript, all mastery course grades are multiplied by the credits assigned to each course to create each student's final GPA. Developing and Mastery scores are calculated at the high point of the range in the table above. Insufficient evidence does not yield credit and counts as a 1.0 for GPA purposes. Exceeds Mastery scores are calculated at a 4.5 for GPA purposes to right-size the magnitude of each significant achievement.

Why and How to Use the Mastery Map

The program-wide [Mastery Map](#) is the go-to resource for calibrating evidence of mastery, and for cataloging how mastery targets are distributed across each of the courses in the IDeATE program. In addition to the mastery targets assigned to each course in the program, there are two courses in the program –Ideation Workshop (Ideation Stations held for 90 minutes daily with different experiential routines each day of the week) and Lyceum (a week-long course that captures the learning during each quarter's Design Week), which, while having consistently measured targets for all students, have the potential to be aligned to all 40 mastery targets in the eight competencies of Inquiry, Design, Critical Thinking, Knowledge, Collaboration, Communication, Engagement, and Technical Proficiency.

When and How to Use the Mastery Target Rubrics

All rubrics in the Mastery Map are generalized descriptions of the evidence aligned to each target's mastery **at the completion of the program**. Professors customize the rubrics by adding context on what evidence of success looks like for each course. These course specific customized rubrics are what get entered in Canvas to give targeted and explicit feedback to learners on products, performances, and assessments they submit. For example, the Illuminate course, the Design Thinking course, and the Entrepreneurial Teams course in Quarter 1 **all** use the mastery target Empathy for the Design competency. The generalized rubric for Empathy from the Mastery Map appears below:

Competency Design			
Mastery Target Empathy: Self-assessment through descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
Artifacts and reflections demonstrate at least one attribute of empathy: • The ability to see the world as others see it. • The ability to suspend judgment • The ability to understand another's feelings • The ability to communicate your willingness to be with that person in their feelings..	Artifacts and reflections demonstrate at least two attributes of empathy: • The ability to see the world as others see it. • The ability to suspend judgment • The ability to understand another's feelings • The ability to communicate your willingness to be with that person in their feelings.	Artifacts and reflections demonstrate at least three attributes of empathy: • The ability to see the world as others see it. • The ability to suspend judgment • The ability to understand another's feelings • The ability to communicate your willingness to be with that person in their feelings.	Artifacts and reflections consistently demonstrate all four attributes of empathy: • The ability to see the world as others see it. • The ability to suspend judgment • The ability to understand another's feelings • The ability to communicate your willingness to be with that person in their feelings.

Illuminate is primarily an English Composition course, and Empathy will be assessed through such products as journal entries, demonstrated understanding of Chapter 2 of the anchor text, entitled "Listen Empathetically to Light the Path," empathy mapping, empathetic interviews, and stories/testimonials for the Design challenge products (vending machines). Contextualized rubrics for these products might look like the following:

Illuminate: Empathy Rubric for Journal Entry #1: Childhood Story

(also assessed on Growth Mindset)



Competency Design			
Mastery Target			
Empathy: Self-assessment through and descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
Journal entry #1 demonstrates one of the following:	Journal entry #1 demonstrates two of the following:	Journal entry #1 demonstrates three of the following:	Journal entry #1 demonstrates four of the following:
• Taking the perspective of yourself as a child AND the perspective of at least one adult in the story • Absence of editorializing or judging the experience • Descriptive language about the emotions you and others felt • Personal voice that demonstrates care for the people represented in the story.			

Illuminate: Empathy Rubric for Chapter 2 Quiz Essay

(also assessed on Humanities Knowledge)

Competency Design			
Mastery Target			
Empathy: Self-assessment through and descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
Chapter 2 Quiz Essay demonstrates one of the following:	Chapter 2 Quiz Essay demonstrates two of the following:	Chapter 2 Quiz Essay demonstrates three of the following:	Chapter 2 Quiz Essay demonstrates four of the following:
• Explanation of how empathy creates solidarity through perspective taking. • Explanation of Nancy Duarte's take on how and why torchbearers start with listening and stay out of judgment • Example of how feeling with people makes leaders stronger • Reflection on what you need to work on personally to engage in empathetic listening to light the path			



Illuminate: Empathy Rubric for The Story of Snacks: Empathy Mapping

(also assessed on Entrepreneurial Mindset)

Competency Design			
Mastery Target			
Empathy: Self-assessment through and descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
Empathy Map demonstrates one of the following:	Empathy Map demonstrates two of the following:	Empathy Map demonstrates three of the following:	Empathy Map demonstrates four of the following:
- Perspective taking entries for what the subject does, says, thinks, and feels. - Low inference language (free of judgment) for what the subject does and says. - Strong examples and specific, descriptive language for what the subject might be thinking and feeling. - Reflection on what you considered to accurately represent the subject in the empathy map			

Design Thinking is primarily an innovation methodology course, and Empathy will be assessed through such products as Empathy Maps, User Camera Study, and projects aligned to the Design Challenge. Contextualized rubrics for these products might look like the following:

Design Thinking: Empathy Rubric for User Camera Study

Competency Design			
Mastery Target			
Empathy: Self-assessment through and descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
User Camera Study photo submissions demonstrate one of the following:	User Camera Study photo submissions demonstrate two of the following:	User Camera Study photo submissions demonstrate three of the following:	User Camera Study photo submissions demonstrate four of the following:
- Photographs are submitted by at least three users with diverse perspectives. - Secure permissions and create a safe environment for the user to share their authentic perspective in photos. - Strong examples and specific, descriptive language for what the user expressed in the interview debrief of the camera study. - Reflection on what you considered to accurately represent the user's perspective in interpreting the photographs.			



Entrepreneurial Teams is primarily an entrepreneurship course focusing on how individuals fulfill different roles in close collaboration on teams to actualize business ventures, and Empathy will be regularly assessed as part of a weekly feedback cycle on team experiences as teams give each other feedback on how the empathy of individuals impact a team's capabilities. A contextualized rubric might look like the following:

Entrepreneurial Teams: Empathy Rubric for Team Challenges

(also assessed on Global Fluency and Career Planning)

Competency Design			
Mastery Target Empathy: Self-assessment through and descriptive feedback on curated and annotated artifacts and reflections of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others.			
Emerging	Developing	Mastered	Exceeded
Student's approach to team challenges demonstrates one of the following:	Student's approach to team challenges demonstrates two of the following:	Student's approach to team challenges demonstrates three of the following:	Student's approach to team challenges demonstrates four of the following:
• Student amplified the strengths of others on the team and invited ideas from all perspectives. • Student critiqued ideas and not people. • Student adaptively responded when others showed emotion during the process. • Student demonstrated care for others on the team.			

Looking at the contextualized rubrics from the lens of each of the Q1 courses that assess the mastery target Empathy, it is clear how each of them is derived from the program rubric. It is also clear that the rubric applies explicitly to the work that students do aligned to the purpose of each course and its learning goals.

Thinking even more broadly across the entire IDeATE program, five courses (Design Thinking, Illuminate, Entrepreneurial Teams, Contemporary Social Problems and Entrepreneurship, Business Ethics) evaluate the Mastery Target: Empathy. In aggregate, the evaluation across these five courses (with contextualized rubrics and related products/performances/assessments) plus any evidence shown during Ideation Station Workshops and quarterly Lyceum courses lead to mastery of the target over the two years of the program. The degree to which this mastery of the Empathy mastery target is evidenced in aggregate over two years is shown on each student's final transcript, and helps tell the story of each student's relative strengths with respect to skills, knowledge, and dispositions.

Important Course Level Considerations

The goal for assessment at the course level is to make it organic and meaningful and frequent via a habitual integration into the learning experience. By creating the contextualized mastery target rubrics in advance of the course launch, the professor's primary role in assessment is to provide strong descriptive feedback to the students in real time about their work, and to help them understand those successes in the context of mastering targets. By using enough frequency of verbal, real-time feedback, by tracking evidence of mastery using contextualized rubrics in Canvas, and by having reflective norming conversations with students before final assessments get entered in Academia, student can confidently tell the story of how their work in a course contributed to their mastery of knowledge, skills, and dispositions aligned to success.

- Give some kind of mastery target level assessment feedback in Canvas at least twice a week.
- Assess every course mastery target at least three times for each student.
- Course learning goals inform the course design, experiences, and content, but DO NOT need to be assessed directly. They are mapped to mastery targets through Academia.
- NOTHING is averaged during the quarter at the course level.
- Final whole number (1-4) assessments are entered in Academia at the end of the quarter based on the level of mastery the student evidenced.

When and How to Use Canvas for Assessment

Use Canvas for the following assessment purposes:

- Upload Syllabus
- Upload and share curricular materials.
- Class discussions.
- Product, performance, and assessment level feedback - upload contextualized rubrics to be scored on a 1-4 level for each mastery target aligned to a product, performance or assessment. DO NOT AVERAGE ANYTHING at the course level. These are just to track for progress towards mastery, not scores.
- Communicate with students about individual progress, especially descriptive feedback.
- Communicate with cohorts about course content.

When and How to Use Academia for Assessment

Use Academia spreadsheets provided by our Program Manager/Registrar for the following assessment purposes:



- Course level summative (but not averaged!) assessments
- Use the CSV document provided quarterly for each mastery credit aligned to your course
- Enter a 1-4 score for each student at the mid-quarter and end-of-quarter deadlines that reflects the level of evidence (insufficient, developing, mastery, exceeds mastery) the student has demonstrated and can confidently reproduce. THIS IS NOT AN AVERAGE OF ASSESSMENTS. Ask: What is the best this student has evidenced in this course and could they replicate that in the future?
- Submit the CSV document to the Program Manager/Registrar to record the quarterly assessment levels.

Repeated Courses

Students who do not complete coursework aligned to graduation competencies or receive a mastery course grade lower than 2.0 must take the course again or evidence development toward mastery on course targets through summer quarter remediation. All courses in the program sequence are required for graduation.

Withdrawals from Courses

Students who withdraw from a course are refunded tuition according to the published schedule of withdrawal refunds in concert with our academic calendar and must take the course again. All courses in the program sequence are required for graduation.

Advising

Advisors engage students in analysis of their own progress and performance at least twice quarterly. In these evaluations, advisors support students in a personalized way to ensure that capstone projects, studio choices, and design shop opportunities align fully with their passions and professional goals.

Advising is the primary structure for building strong relationships and knowing our students and families well.

- Annual advising rounds (on August 29th this year!)
- Two individual 20 minute advising sessions with each advisee per quarter (scheduled during office hours or during 2:30 - 3:30 time block)
- One 30 minute group advising session with all of your advisees each quarter
- Daily group advising sessions with all of your advisees each day during Design Week (Lyceum)

Academic Advising

Once accepted and enrolled, the Dean will assign to each student an academic advisor who, in consultation with the student, will plan a program of study and studio work that aligns with both that student's individual passions and with the IDeATE program and the String Theory School of Design guidelines. Students will learn about the course progression, including an understanding of how innovation drives teaching and learning and clear maps of the requirements each student must meet. Advisors engage students in analysis of their own progress and performance at least twice quarterly. In these evaluations, advisors support students in a personalized way to ensure that capstone projects, studio choices, and design shop opportunities align fully with their passions and professional goals.

Writing Center and Tutoring

The String Theory School of Design will house a writing center, functioning as an academic lab, for academic support with tutoring support available for reading, writing, mathematics, and technology support. Tutors for all subjects are available upon request. Through partnerships with local universities, paid positions will be posted for students needing support in specific areas. Turnaround is determined by availability.

Curriculum Development Timeline: 2025–2026 Academic Year

To support timely instructional planning, cross-program coordination, and continuous improvement, all faculty are expected to adhere to the following deadlines for syllabus submission and Canvas product/performance development (Quarter Planning Document).

Quarter 1

- Initial Submission Due: July 28, 2025
 - Submit:
 - Finalized Syllabi
 - Canvas Products/Performances for Quarter 1 courses
- Feedback Implementation Deadline: August 18, 2025
 - Revise and resubmit based on feedback
 - Submit updated Quarter Planning Documents to confirm program alignment

Quarter 2

- Initial Submission Due: October 6, 2025
 - Submit:
 - Finalized Syllabi
 - Canvas Products/Performances for Quarter 2 courses
- Feedback Implementation Deadline: October 27, 2025



- Revise and resubmit based on feedback
- Submit updated Quarter Planning Documents to confirm program alignment

Quarter 3

- Initial Submission Due: January 26, 2026
 - Submit:
 - Finalized Syllabi
 - Canvas Products/Performances for Quarter 3 courses
- Feedback Implementation Deadline: February 17, 2026
 - Revise and resubmit based on feedback
 - Submit updated Quarter Planning Documents to confirm program alignment

Additional Notes

- All deliverables must be submitted via the designated shared drive or LMS folder.
- Canvas deliverables should reflect IDEATE-specific competencies and performance-based assessments.

Student Orientation

[Orientation - Families/Students - August 27 2025](#)

Student Orientation at IDEATE College is a cornerstone of the student experience, designed to introduce new students to the College's culture, values, and expectations. Orientation equips students with essential information about academic programs, resources, policies, and support services while fostering connections with peers, faculty, and staff. Faculty play a key role in orientation by welcoming students, providing guidance on course expectations, and modeling the IDEATE College commitment to creativity, innovation, and excellence. Participation helps ensure students begin their academic journey prepared, confident, and engaged.

Project Blocks:

Your course may include a Project Block component. This is a separate meeting time for students to create content (products and performances) for your course and the Design Challenges. In some cases, you may be assigned to facilitate a Project Block.

Even if you are not facilitating your Project Block directly, you are still responsible for overseeing and evaluating the student products and performances related to your course content.

These products and performances must be clearly outlined in your Quarter Planning Document and communicated to the staff member facilitating the Project Block.

Students have three-four Project Blocks per semester. Courses with 4.5 credits, meet twice per week (per quarter). And courses with 3 credits meet once per week.

Integrating Project Blocks with Course Content

As the faculty member for the course, you are expected to align the Project Block with both course objectives and the broader Design Challenge. Specifically:

- One of the two weekly Project Block sessions should focus on a product or performance directly tied to your course content for 4.5 credit courses
- The other project block session (or the only project block session for 3 credit courses) should support products or performances connected to the overarching Design Challenge.

This structure ensures that both course-specific learning and interdisciplinary collaboration are meaningfully supported.

Additional Operational Responsibilities for Dual Enrollment Students

Additional Operational Responsibilities of 2025-2026 IDeATE (subject to change)

To ensure smooth daily operations and maintain a safe, accountable learning environment for dual enrollment students through our agreement with the high school, all faculty and staff are required to adhere to the following procedures:

- **eHall Pass (Electronic):** Must be used by faculty, staff, and dual enrollment students whenever entering or exiting any class.
- **Yellow-Lanyard Hall Pass (Visual):** Required when dual enrollment students enter the hallway to provide visible authorization.
- **Academia Attendance:** Faculty must record attendance every class period using the college's attendance system for all students.
- **Student Supervision:** Dual enrollment students must never be left unattended during class or transitions—this is a critical safety concern.
- **Weekly Campus Emails:** All faculty and staff are expected to read and stay informed through weekly communications, including partnership communications for dual credit/dual enrolled students



- **Safety Procedure:** Follow all established safety procedures, including the elopement protocol for dual credit/dual enrollment students

Quarterly Performance Reports Policy

Reporting Deadlines

- **Mid-Quarter Mastery Reports:**
Faculty must complete and submit these reports by the **end of Week 5** each semester. The IDeATE Program Manager will distribute the necessary report templates and documents.
- **End-of-Quarter Mastery Reports:**
Faculty must complete and submit these reports by the **end of Week 10** each semester. The IDeATE Program Manager will provide the required documents.

Communication and Scheduling

Calendar invitations for both Mid-Quarter and End-of-Quarter report submissions will be sent to all faculty to ensure timely completion and compliance.

COURSE MANAGEMENT

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential for mastery in a competency-based learning environment. The String Theory School of Design emphasizes active participation, hands-on practice, and collaborative problem-solving, which are critical to achieving course competencies and program learning outcomes.

- Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, studios, labs, and required project sessions.
- Competency-based programs require students to engage fully in learning activities to demonstrate mastery of each learning outcome.
- **Recording Attendance:**
 - Faculty will record attendance at the start of each class session.



- Attendance records are used in conjunction with competency assessments to monitor student progress.
- **Impact of Absences:**
 - Absences may delay the demonstration of competency and mastery in course outcomes.
 - Students who miss more than 2 class sessions (20%) in a 10-week course without approved documentation may:
 - Be required to complete additional competency assessments.
 - Be placed on an academic warning for risk of not achieving course mastery.
- **Excused Absences:**
 - Excused absences include illness, family emergencies, religious observances, or other documented situations approved by the Dean or faculty.
 - Students must notify the instructor before or immediately after an excused absence.
- **Make-Up and Competency Completion:**
 - Students are responsible for completing missed products, performances, projects, and assessments.
 - Faculty will provide alternative learning opportunities to ensure students can demonstrate mastery of competencies.
- **Course Withdrawal or Failure Due to Attendance:**
 - Excessive unexcused absences may result in course failure or withdrawal.
 - Decisions will be made in consultation with the Dean and based on evidence of student mastery and engagement.
- **Monitoring and Support:**
 - Academic advising will track attendance patterns and intervene early to support student success.
 - Students demonstrating consistent attendance challenges may be required to meet with faculty or the Dean to develop an individualized success plan.

ACADEMIC WARNING NOTIFICATION

- **Mid-Course Warning (Week 5):**
 - Issued to students who demonstrate early signs of difficulty in evidencing competencies.
 - Early indicators may include:
 - Multiple unexcused absences



- Poor performance in products, performances, or competency assessments
- Insufficient participation in required studio, lab, or collaborative work
- End-of-Course Warning (Week 10):
 - Issued to students who are at risk of not demonstrating mastery by the end of the course.
 - Students receiving this warning may need to complete additional assessments, remedial work, or develop a learning plan to demonstrate competencies.

Notification Process:

- Warnings are issued in writing via email and entered into the student's academic record.
- Faculty must provide specific details: which competencies are at risk, suggested strategies for improvement, and available support resources.

Student Responsibilities:

- Meet with the instructor or academic advisor to discuss the warning and a corrective plan.
- Complete any recommended interventions or make-up work (in the form of a product or performance) in accordance with course timelines.
- Monitor progress and communicate with faculty regarding any ongoing challenges.

Faculty Responsibilities:

- Monitor student performance continuously.
- Submit mid-course warning notifications by the end of Week 5.
- Submit end-of-course warnings no later than Week 10.
- Document all communications and interventions.

Support Services:

- Students receiving a warning will have access to academic advising, tutoring, workshops, and counseling as appropriate.

Outcomes of Warnings:

- Academic warnings do not automatically result in course failure.
- Failure to demonstrate mastery of competencies by the end of the course may result in:
 - Remediation or extended course work
 - Course failure, as determined by faculty in consultation with the Dean

INCOMPLETES

Should circumstances arise that impede a student's ability to complete a course to a mastery level conducive to earning credit within the course timeline, a faculty member may recommend an incomplete for the course, which, when approved by the Dean, acts as a placeholder on a student's quarter report and transcript until that student can submit evidence towards mastery. A plan and schedule for evidencing growth or mastery toward course aligned targets must accompany the request. If the student submits evidence on that timeline, the course mastery targets will be updated to a full course assessment in the transcript. An incomplete may only remain on a transcript until the completion date designated on the plan. After that date, the Incomplete turns into a course master level of 1.0 and no credit will be awarded.

GRADE CHANGES & GRADE APPEALS (Mastery Target Level Changes)

Because String Theory School of Design is a mastery-based program, there are no formal "grades" to change or appeal. All mastery target levels are subject to change based on submission of new evidence of growth or mastery by students and faculty members. All official mastery-level changes must be approved by the Dean of the College. Because assessment engages students directly using this mastery method, the appeal process is ongoing. As with any concern about any procedural or process at the college, students may submit a grievance should a concern arise that faculty and administration can't resolve to satisfaction.

Faculty Meetings

- **Meeting Time:** Tuesdays at 2:30 PM - 4 PM
- **Location:** 8th Floor Conference Room
- **Agenda:**

An agenda document will be shared prior to each meeting. Faculty are encouraged to add topics they wish to discuss directly to the agenda document before the meeting.

ACADEMIC HONESTY/DISHONESTY**Academic Progress Policy**

For the purposes of calculating satisfactory progress, withdrawals made within the refund period will not count toward the calculation of progress when the student has not begun attendance in the course.

Academic Probation Policy

Students who do not maintain satisfactory course completion and/or master credit proficiency may:



1. Be put on full-time academic probation. Students on academic probation of any kind must meet with a counselor before registering for any term.
2. When the student has met the minimum cumulative completion rate and the mastery credit proficiency requirements, he/she will be removed from academic probation.

Repeated Courses

Students who do not complete coursework aligned to graduation competencies or receive a mastery course grade lower than 2.0 must take the course again or remediate unmet mastery targets. All courses in the program sequence are required for graduation.

Withdrawals from Courses

Students who withdraw from a course are refunded tuition according to the published schedule of withdrawal refunds in concert with our academic calendar and must take the course again. All courses in the program sequence are required for graduation.

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires all colleges and universities to develop and enforce standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress prior to awarding any federal financial aid funds to students. The standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) were established to encourage students to successfully complete courses for which federal financial aid is received, and to progress satisfactorily toward degree completion. The SAP standards apply to federal financial aid programs, including Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), Federal Work-Study, Federal Direct Subsidized/Unsubsidized Loans, Federal Direct PLUS Loans. The SAP standards are separate from, and in addition to, academic standards required by the College for continued enrollment. While String Theory School of Design does not yet provide publicly funded financial aid, we anticipate doing so in the future and engage with SAP standards.

The criteria used to determine SAP are mastery credit proficiency, cumulative completion rate (or pace), and maximum time frame for completion of educational objectives. At the end of each term, the Dean of Students reviews students' academic progress. All periods of enrollment are reviewed, including semesters during which no financial aid was received.

QUALITATIVE REQUIREMENT

Students must earn a cumulative mastery level of 3.0 or higher at least once on each program mastery credit to meet the qualitative requirement for SAP in the IDeATE Program. This recognizes that students who receive a mastery course grade of 2.0 or higher may progress in



the program, but will be required to evidence mastery of those mastery credits not-yet-met before graduation within the appropriate completion rate.

QUANTITATIVE REQUIREMENT—COMPLETION RATE (PACE)

All students must complete and pass at least 75% of credit hours attempted. A student's completion rate is calculated by dividing hours earned by hours attempted. The minimum completion percentage required by the SAP policy changes according to the number of credit hours the student has attempted:

Student Life Beyond the Classroom

Student Activities

The School of Design has an innovative approach to student activities. The School of Design aims to create a dynamic student life through intentional experience design of co-curricular activities. All students are welcome to participate in these activities, and because these activities are extensions of the curricular program this participation can amplify student academic and artistic development.

Experience Design Student Team (XD STeam)

A key student organization at the School is the Experience Design Student Team (XD STeam). All students enrolled at the School of Design are members of XD STeam and eligible to vote on all initiatives and decisions impacting students. Officers, elected annually by the members, lead the XD STeam in creating an innovative, engaging, and fun student experience, and support the creation and implementation of clubs, activity, and event opportunities aligned to the unique interests of the students in each cohort with faculty support.

Student Government Association (SGA)

The purpose of the Student Government Association is to foster leadership skills, develop positive relationships amongst students, organize social and service activities for members, and encourage student-faculty cooperation. All students enrolled at the String Theory School of Design are members of the SGA and will be eligible to vote on matters presented to the student body. Officers, elected annually by the members, lead the organization to fulfill its objectives.

Design Magazine and Social Media Team

The School publishes a Design eMagazine, which provides students who enjoy both writing and designing the opportunity to demonstrate their talents, and provide informational, inspiring, and entertaining content for their community. The magazine, developed by a student editor and his or her faculty advisor, is available online.

Innovation Expo



Annually, the String Theory School of Design will hold an Innovation Expo. This public networking event will highlight innovations in the Philadelphia Innovation District. IDeATE students will prepare for this experience and use the opportunity to discover passions, synergies, and prospects for future career engagement.

Internships

Because the quarter credit system is compacted, IDeATE students who take initiative and opt in have the opportunity to use their summer quarter to engage in a full-time (30-hour) innovation industry internship spanning a total of at least 20 days and offering participants the opportunity to engage in practical work experience. The internship can be in a wide variety of fields connected to Design, Technology, and Entrepreneurship, enabling students to choose a field which best suits their passions and career interests. The String Theory School of Design will work to connect students to internship opportunities that most closely align with their talents and skillsets, creating potential for future employment upon graduation.

Career Counseling

The String Theory School of Design's approach to career counseling is integrated fully into the program experience and is amplified by key partnerships and structures. These partnerships and structures will grow over time to become an innovation pipeline for Philadelphia's Innovation Economy. Because the program itself functions as a Design Shop for local industry and service initiatives, and because of partnerships with local universities, students encounter networking and career experience daily and amass a body of work to inform the college and career search process.

Conduct and Legal Policies

Anti-Hazing Statement

School of Design is committed to an equitable environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Hazing is ...

"Any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization The term shall include, but not be limited to, any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual, and shall include any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental

health or dignity of the individual, or any willful destruction or removal of public or private property. For purposes of this definition, any activity as described in this definition upon which the initiation or admission into or affiliation with or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be "forced" activity, the willingness of an individual to participate in such activity notwithstanding."

Hazing of a student, whether on school grounds or not, is a crime if committed by any person or by a student to warrant notification to the Police Department. This may result in a criminal investigation and criminal charges to be filed against the student or person.

Grievance Policy

The String Theory School of Design is committed to providing and maintaining a positive and pleasant environment conducive to learning and working for all members of the community. Occasions may arise when members of the school community disagree, or when unanticipated problems may surface, for which resolution and grievance procedures of the School should be followed, so that such matters may be handled in a reasonable, fair, expeditious and professional manner.

At all steps of the grievance and resolution process, no less than fair, frank and respectful treatment is expected.

Informal Resolution

Most issues can be resolved informally by direct discussion with the involved party. If a concern is with a student's assignments or performance in a particular course, the student is encouraged to contact the teacher directly to discuss the concern.

Formal Resolution

In the event that any student wishes to skip informal resolution, or feels that it did not produce satisfactory results, a formal process is available. Formal grievance and resolution may be sought if the Student feels that the rules of the School have been improperly applied or interpreted, or that staff applied unfair practices. No person will be retaliated against or penalized for making a complaint.

Step 1: Complaints should be presented in writing to the Dean (signed and dated) as soon as practicable after the incident or cause of the complaint. Within three (3) working days, the student will meet with the Dean to discuss the problem. The student will be allowed to present any information, documents or witnesses for consideration as part of this conference and investigation. All information pertaining to this conference and investigation will remain confidential. A written response from the Dean will be sent to the student within three (3) working days of the conference, summarizing the outcome of the investigation and corrective or remedial action, if any.



Step 2: Unresolved complaints should be submitted to the President, who is the designated ombudsman of the School's Board of Trustees. The President will review the complaint, the Dean's response, the information presented as part of the investigation, and will meet with individuals involved as necessary. The President will make a written decision in five (5) business days, summarizing the outcome of the review and any required corrective or remedial action.

Step 3: Upon notice to the President, further appeal may be made to the Board of Trustees of the School, with submission to the Board President the original complaint and responses of the Dean and President. A Grievance Committee, appointed by the Board of Trustees, will review the complaint, responses of the Dean and President, information presented as part of the investigation, and will meet with individuals involved if necessary. The Committee will make a recommendation in ten (10) business days to the Board to consider and vote upon the matter. The decision of the Board of Trustees is final.

Students may address any grievances to the Pennsylvania Department of Education and/or the institutional accreditation body, should they feel their concern was not handled in a satisfactory manner at the school level.

Personal Property

School of Design does not assume responsibility for loss of or damage to students' personal property, including belongings left in classrooms, studios, or exhibitions. At the close of each quarter, students are required to remove from studios all valued artwork. Artwork not picked up by the last day of classes in any spring quarter will be discarded.

Theft/Damages

The School of Design will exercise reasonable care of students' personal property but cannot be responsible for theft, loss, or damage. Students are expected to protect the equipment and possessions of the School, other students, and all employees. Theft, vandalism, and property damage should be reported to the Dean of Students. Theft, vandalism, and damage to property to and/or loss of School of Design property by students is grounds for expulsion from School of Design.

Use of Student Artwork

The School of Design reserves the right to use student artwork and classwork for reproduction in digital or video programs, for exhibits, admissions recruitment, accreditation assessment, or any other form of electronic or printed media prepared in support of the School's Mission and Statement of Educational Goals and Outcomes. This also includes work by former students and alumni produced during their career at School of Design. Students will be notified by the School of Design to submit works requested by such use, and completion of that use, will be notified as

to where and when they can retrieve their work. The School of Design reserves the right to permanently retain artwork submitted for course credit.

Use of Images of Students

The School of Design reserves the right to use any photographs, film or video taken of students during routine classes or events at the School without consent from or compensation to those pictured for promotional purposes. These images may appear in any promotional materials and on the School of Design website, social media pages, advertisements, newsletters, or any other form of electronic or printed media.

Academic Expectations and Responsibilities for Students

Since the String Theory School of Design is an academic community, its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Essential to the success of this educational mission is a commitment to the principles of academic integrity. Every member of the String Theory School of Design community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times. Students, as members of the community, are also responsible for adhering to the principles and spirit of the following Code of Academic Integrity.

Academic Dishonesty Definitions

Activities that have the effect or intention of interfering with education, pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of a student's performance are prohibited. Examples of such activities include but are not limited to the following definitions*:

Cheating: using or attempting to use unauthorized assistance, material, or study aids in examinations or other academic work or preventing, or attempting to prevent, another from using authorized assistance, material, or study aids.

Example: using a cheat sheet in a quiz or exam, altering a graded exam and resubmitting it for a better grade, etc.

Plagiarism: using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment.

Example: copying another person's paper, article, or computer work and submitting it for an assignment, cloning someone else's ideas without attribution, failing to use quotation marks where appropriate, etc.

Fabrication: submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise.

Example: making up data for an experiment, fudging data, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.



Multiple submission: submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement.

Misrepresentation of academic records: misrepresenting or tampering with or attempting to tamper with any portion of a student's transcripts or academic record, either before or after coming to the college.

Example: forging a change of grade slip, tampering with computer records, falsifying academic information on one's resume, etc.

Facilitating academic dishonesty: knowingly helping or attempting to help another violate any provision of the Code.

Example: working together on a take-home exam, etc.

Unfair advantage: attempting to gain unauthorized advantage over fellow students in an academic exercise.

Example: gaining or providing unauthorized access to examination materials, obstructing or interfering with another student's efforts in an academic exercise, lying about a need for an extension for an exam or paper, continuing to write even when time is up during an exam, destroying or keeping library materials for one's own use, etc.

* If a student is unsure whether their action(s) constitute a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, then it is that student's responsibility to consult with the instructor to clarify any ambiguities.

Rights and Responsibilities

Faculty

- It is the responsibility of faculty to know and execute School of Design policies regarding academic integrity in a fair and diligent manner.
- It is the responsibility of faculty to inform students of class expectations and assessment guidelines in a timely manner.
- It is the right of faculty to work within the School of Design in an environment of discernible, structured guidelines of due process concerning matters of academic integrity.
- It is the right and responsibility of faculty to participate in a fair and equitable process concerning any allegations of violations of academic integrity.

Students

- It is the responsibility of students to familiarize themselves with School of Design and class policies regarding academic integrity, and to seek clarification if needed.



- It is the responsibility of students to comply with the School of Design and class policies regarding academic integrity.
- It is the right of students to be informed of any alleged violations and possible sanctions concerning academic integrity.
- It is the right of students to receive due process concerning alleged violations of academic integrity, including an appeal process.

Violations of Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity can include, but are not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is an intentional effort at deception or gaining an unfair advantage in completing academic work. Plagiarism is the act of appropriating the work of another person and passing it off as one's own. Any student who assists another in an activity that constitutes a violation of academic integrity is also responsible and accountable for such a violation.

The following list is not exhaustive, but includes some common examples of plagiarism and cheating:

- copying original ideas, images, words, or design elements and using them without proper citation or permission of the author
- creating a bibliography with fabricated sources or citing sources as references that were not used in the preparation of the report or essay
- deceiving the instructor to get more time for an assignment or examination
- hiring someone to write an essay or complete other assignments
- collaborating with classmates or others on an assignment when the class rules explain that only individual work is permitted
- using unauthorized electronic devices or software during an examination
- allowing other students to copy exam responses or homework assignment answers so that they can pass it off as their own work

Violations of academic integrity will open a student to disciplinary action.

Student Code of Conduct

The School of Design students are subject to appropriate rules of proper conduct. The School of Design reserves the right to suspend or dismiss a student whose attendance, academic performance, or conduct, whether on or off college premises, is judged unsatisfactory.



Student Bill of Rights

It is the policy of the School of Design that each student shall be guaranteed the following rights and freedoms; enumeration of the rights or registration at the School shall in no manner be construed to nullify or limit any other constitutional or legal rights or freedoms possessed by students as citizens or residents of the United States or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

1. The right to participate freely in School of Design-sponsored services and activities consistent with the School's Policy on Discrimination; that is, without discrimination based on any classifications that deprive the person of consideration as an individual.
2. The right to be evaluated in the classroom solely on the basis of academic achievement and fulfillment of educational requirements.
3. Consistent with federal and state laws, the general right of protection from the release of non-directory information to persons outside the String Theory School of Design community of academic, organizational, and disciplinary records without the express consent of the student or a court order.
4. The right of protection from the placement of non-School of Design financial obligations on the student's School of Design account without the express consent of the student.
5. The right to be free from disciplinary action by the School of Design for misconduct except under reasonable rules which have as their substantive basis the protection of some clear and distinct interest of the String Theory School of Design as an academic institution.
6. The right to due process in any action brought or taken by the School of Design against the student which can reasonably be expected to affect the student's status with the School or any of its constituent parts or agencies.
7. The right to protection from ex post facto regulations.

Standards of Confidentiality of Student Records

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The String Theory School of Design collects information about students for the express purpose of fulfilling the educational mission, and retains student records for designated periods of time. The String Theory School of Design recognizes its obligation to inform students of the existence of these records, of policies regarding its secure handling and proper use, and of the students' rights under both policy and law. This policy describes how student information is collected at String Theory School of Design, how that information might be used by the String Theory School of Design, and how individual students can request changes to the way their personal information is used or shared.

EXPECTATIONS OF PRIVACY and DIRECTORY INFORMATION

The String Theory School of Design recognizes the privacy concerns of students, and has instituted policies and processes to secure information collected from students. For the purpose of this policy, a student is defined as an individual currently or previously enrolled in an academic offering of String Theory School of Design. For newly admitted students, this policy becomes effective when the student has been admitted and their information has been entered into the Student Information System. Information included in the application becomes a part of the student's educational records. Note that records originating at another institution will also be subject to these policies.

These records may include personally identifiable information ("PII") provided by the student, such as information related to racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, health, biometrics, or criminal background. Such sensitive information is subject to special controls described below.

Information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed is known as "Directory Information." The String Theory School of Design defines Directory Information to include: a student's name; address; mailbox number; phone number(s); date and place of birth; name of parent or guardian (if applicable); name of spouse (if applicable); class level; dates of attendance; degrees and awards received; the most recently attended educational institution; and, participation in sports and in officially recognized activities listed by the student.

Directory Information may be disclosed without the permission of the student. Each student has the right to limit the access of off campus parties, excluding government agencies in certain situations, to information that would normally be released in the Student Directory. Students



who wish to exercise this right may do so by making the request to the Registrar, using their String Theory School of Design email account.

Notification of Rights under the FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR § 99) affords eligible students certain rights with respect to their education records. (An “eligible student” under FERPA is a student who is 18 years of age or older or who attends a postsecondary institution at any age.)

These rights include:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day String Theory School of Design receives a request for access. A student should submit to the registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official, a written request that identifies the record(s) the student wishes to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the school official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. A student who wishes to ask String Theory School of Design to amend a record should write the school official responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record the student wants changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the String Theory School of Design decides not to amend the record as requested, the School will notify the student in writing of the decision and the student's right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to provide written consent before the String Theory School of Design discloses PII from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. The String Theory School of Design discloses education records without a student's prior written consent under the FERPA exception for disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by String Theory School of Design to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202.



Student educational records subject to the preceding actions are defined as records, files, documents, data and other materials that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by the String Theory School of Design or by a person acting for the String Theory School of Design pursuant School policy.

Student educational records do not include records of instructional, supervisory, and administrative personnel and ancillary educational personnel that are in the sole possession of the maker and that are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a substitute. Other exclusions include:

- Notes of a professor/staff member concerning a student and intended for the professor's/staff member's own use are not subject to inspection, disclosure, and challenge.
- Records relating to an individual who is employed by an educational agency or institution not as a result of his/her status as a student that:
 1. Are made and maintained in the normal course of business;
 2. Relate exclusively to the individual in that individual's capacity as an employee; and
 3. Are not available for use for any other purpose.
 4. However, employment records relating to String Theory School of Design students who are employed as a result of their status as students (e.g. federally-funded work study, graduate assistants, resident assistants) are considered educational records.
- Records on students that are made or maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other recognized professional or paraprofessional acting or assisting in that capacity are not subject to the provisions of access, disclosure, and challenge. Such records, however, must be made, maintained, or used only in connection with the provision of treatment to the student and are not available to anyone other than the persons providing such treatment or a substitute. Such records may be personally reviewed by a physician or other appropriate professional of the student's choice.
- Alumni records.

Educational records, or the contents thereof, will not be released to the student, parents, or any third party so long as a financial indebtedness or serious academic and/or disciplinary matter involving the student remains unresolved. This limitation does not preclude the student from having personal access to the records - merely from obtaining the release of the information.

The student may not have access to the confidential financial statement of parents or any information contained in such statements.

A student may waive his/her right to access to confidential letters of recommendation that he/she seeks for admission to any educational agency or institution; for employment; or for application for an honor or honorary recognition. The student must be notified on request of all such individuals furnishing recommendations, and the letters must be solely for the stated purpose for which the student was notified and for which he/she waived his/her right of access. Such waivers may not be required as a condition for admission to, receipt of financial aid from, or receipt of any other services or benefits from such agency or institution.

Disclosures of Information that the String Theory School of Design May Make Without Consent

The String Theory School of Design may disclose PII from students' education records, without obtaining prior written consent of the student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in the FERPA regulations (see 34 CFR § 99.31, and following).

The String Theory School of Design may disclose PII from the education records in the following circumstances:

1. Institutional officials whom the String Theory School of Design has determined to have legitimate educational interests may receive student records pertinent to their professional responsibility. An official includes a person employed by the String Theory School of Design in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person serving on the board of trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee.
2. Provided that the conditions listed in the FERPA regulations are met, officials also may include contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom String Theory School of Design has contracted institutional services or functions for which the school would otherwise use its own employees, and who is under the direct control of the String Theory School of Design with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records. Any official's access to education records is restricted, where practical, to that portion of the record necessary for the discharge of assigned duties in the service of legitimate educational interest.
3. An institutional official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities for String Theory School of Design. Legitimate educational interests are defined as objectives that are essential to the general process of higher education prescribed by



the body of policy adopted by the governing board. In addition, String Theory School of Design recognizes that certain co-curricular activities that are generally supportive of overall goals of the institution and contribute generally to the well-being of the entire student body and specifically to many individuals who participate in these activities may constitute legitimate educational interests. Access to certain limited student education records may be granted to officials who support such programs and activities, subject to strict oversight policy.

4. Upon request, the college also discloses education records without consent to officials of another institution in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer. In addition, String Theory School of Design may return records to the apparent creator of those records in order to verify authenticity.

5. Authorized representatives of federal and state government, such as agency officials requesting information in connection with the audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity of federally supported education programs, or in connection with the enforcement of federal and state legal requirements that relate to such programs. Except when collection of personally identifiable data is specifically authorized by federal and state law, any data collected and reported with respect to an individual student shall not include information (including Social Security number) that would permit the personal identification of such student.

6. In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid.

7. Information that will not permit the individual identification of students may be released to organizations of educational agencies or institutions conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. Similarly, information may be released to accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions.

8. To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes.

9. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena pursuant to a judicial, legislative, or administrative proceeding.



10. To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency. On an emergency basis, information about a student that is, in String Theory School of Design's judgment, necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or others may be released by a designated officer of the college to any person whose knowledge of the situation is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or others.
11. To a victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense (subject to the requirements of § 99.39). The disclosure may only include the final results of the disciplinary proceeding with respect to that alleged crime or offense, regardless of the finding. Information concerning registered sex offenders may be released in a manner consistent with federal and state regulations.
12. To the general public, the final results of a disciplinary proceeding (subject to the requirements of § 99.39), if the school determines the student is an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or non-forcible sex offense and the student has committed a violation of the school's rules or policies with respect to the allegation made against him or her.
13. To parents of a student regarding the student's violation of any Federal, State, or local law, or of any rule or policy of the school, governing the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance if the school determines the student committed a disciplinary violation and the student is under the age of 21.

Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the student, FERPA regulations require String Theory School of Design to record the disclosure. Eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures.

Student Records

Student Information Changes

Students assume responsibility for keeping the School of Design informed of changes in last name, address, email address, and telephone number. Changes should immediately be communicated to the Program Manager/Registrar. Changes to a student's name should be accompanied by official documentation.

Transcripts

Unofficial transcripts are available to current String Theory School of Design students free of charge. Most students access them directly through their Academia account, without making a request from our office. If you need support or have questions, please contact our Program Manager/Registrar at info@stringtheorydesign.org

Confidentiality

This policy complies with the Pennsylvania Right to Know Law of 1957 and the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. School of Design collects and retains information about students for certain periods of time. The School recognizes the privacy rights of individuals to exert control over what information may be disclosed, and at the same time, balances that right with the School's need for information. Student information considered part of the public record (directory information) includes name, address (local and permanent), telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, student activities, dates of attendance, awards received, date of graduation, enrollment status, credit load, and most recent educational institution attended.

Students who do not want this information made public must notify the Registrar.

A student has the right to:

- Inspect and review their own education record
- Request an amendment to the record
- Request a hearing with the President and Registrar (if the amendment request is denied) to challenge the contents of the education record on the grounds that the record is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the rights of the student

Involuntary Leave of Absence

Policy Statement

The String Theory School of Design may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence for reasons of personal or community safety.

Purpose

The School of Design is committed to protecting its community members from the risk of physical harm and preserving the integrity of its learning environment. Separation of a student from the School and its facilities may be necessary if there is evidence that the student is engaging, has engaged in, or threatens to engage in, behavior that either poses a danger of harm to self or others, or disrupts the learning environment of others.

This policy is meant to be invoked in circumstances when a student is unable or unwilling to request a voluntary leave of absence, and such a leave may be necessary to protect the safety of that student and/or others or the integrity of the School's learning environment. In addition, an involuntary leave process may be initiated if it is determined that there is a significant risk that the student will harm themselves, and the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable and realistic accommodations and/or on-campus supports.

Before an involuntary leave is considered, efforts will be made to encourage the student to take a voluntary leave, thus preserving, to the extent possible, confidentiality and privacy. A readmission process may still be required of a student electing a voluntary leave to determine their readiness to return to school. However, if deemed necessary and appropriate, involuntary leave procedures will be implemented. Once a student has been placed on involuntary leave from the School, they must follow all readmission procedures for an involuntary leave of absence in order to be reinstated. Additionally, financial obligations are not waived by such withdrawals.

This policy will not be used in lieu of disciplinary actions to address violations of the Student Code of Conduct, nor does it preclude the removal or dismissal of students from the College as a result of violations of other rules, policies or regulations.

Placing a Student on Involuntary Leave of Absence

Any student who is currently enrolled at the String Theory School of Design may be placed on an involuntary leave of absence from the School and withdrawn from all courses on an interim basis following the commission of one or more of the following acts:

- Engages, or threatens to engage, in behavior which poses imminent danger of causing substantial harm to self or others, and/or



- Engages, or threatens to engage, in behavior which would cause significant property damage, and/or
- Engages, or threatens to engage, in behavior which would directly and substantially impede the lawful activities of others, and/or
- Engages in behavior that negatively impacts the emotional and/or physical welfare of any member of the School community, and/or
- Exhibits behavior that interferes with a student's ability to function in an academic environment or seriously interferes with the educational pursuits of others, and/or
- Commits a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and lacks the capacity to comprehend and participate in the School's disciplinary process.

Procedure

The Dean may be alerted to a student's behavior through submission of a formal report to the Dean, as well as from a variety of other sources on campus including faculty, staff and other students. The Dean will forward the case to the School of Design Administration for review according to the following procedure:

1. If an involuntary leave is recommended based on the information provided, the Dean's designee will notify the student that an involuntary leave of absence is under consideration.
2. The Dean's designee reserves the right to immediately suspend a student from the College on an interim basis, pending an investigation and subsequent hearing, if the student appears to constitute a threat of harm to himself/herself, others or the College community. The student will be notified in writing if this action is necessary.
3. The student will be given the opportunity to appear personally before the Dean's designee within 48 hours from the effective date of the notification to discuss the following issues:
 - a. The reliability of the information concerning the student's behavior; and/or
 - b. Whether or not the student's behavior poses a significant danger of causing imminent physical harm to the student or others, or of directly and substantially impeding the lawful activities of other members of the campus community.
4. The Dean's designee will discuss with the student the implications of and procedures relating to an involuntary leave of absence. A copy of this policy will be provided to the student. At any point in this process and when appropriate, the Dean's designee will encourage the student to take a voluntary leave of absence, thereby eliminating the need to complete the process for an involuntary leave.



5. Following this meeting, the Dean's designee may either continue or cancel the interim suspension. If the suspension is canceled, the procedures described in this policy may still be continued. If the interim suspension remains in effect, the next stages of the procedure will be followed, and every effort will be made to expedite the process. The interim suspension will remain in effect until the School of Design Administration has rendered its decision.
6. If an involuntary leave is needed, the Dean's designee will forward the case to the School of Design Administration for review to determine if an involuntary leave of absence is required.
7. The Dean will assess, specifically, whether the student engages in or is likely to engage in behavior that poses a danger of causing harm to self or others or disrupts the learning environment. The Team can choose to meet with the student and interview witnesses. The Team will make a written recommendation to the Dean's designee regarding an involuntary leave of absence. The Dean's designee will make the final decision and will provide written notice of this decision to the student.

Appeal

Within five business days from delivery of the School of Design Administration decision, the student may request, in writing, that the Vice President review the decision. The student shall state in writing the specific points he/she wishes the Vice President to consider. Within five business days of receiving the appeal, the Vice President will inform the student of the decision in writing, which will be final. The Vice President may:

- Affirm the decision;
- Send the matter back to the School of Design administration for further consideration;
- Affirm the decision, but modify the disposition; or
- Reinstate the student.

Notification

The School of Design reserves the right to notify a student's designated emergency contact, if on record at the School, that an involuntary leave of absence has been issued. The student's designated emergency contact may be asked to make arrangements for safe removal of the student from the college environment. The School may notify a student's designated emergency contact if the student poses a threat of harm to himself/herself or others.

Process for Returning from an Involuntary Leave of Absence



After the period of time for an involuntary leave of absence has expired, a student may request to return to the School. To do so, the student must submit a letter to the Dean requesting to return. In addition, the student must have a community mental health clinician/service provider complete an evaluation for seeking reentry. Both documents must be submitted before a review can occur. Once all materials are received, the Dean will make a determination regarding the student's ability to return. The Dean will communicate the results to the student in writing.

Information Systems Policy

The School of Design's information system includes laptops, iPads, networks, wireless access points, services, internet access, printers, copiers, telephones, email, and voicemail systems. These are facilities, property, and resources of the School of Design. The following policy sets forth the appropriate technology use for the School of Design. The School of Design reserves the right to modify this policy at any time.

Acceptable Use

Modifying or disrupting the School of Design network infrastructure is not permitted - such as unauthorized connecting or disconnecting of devices to hubs, switches, access points, or wireless devices to the network. School of Design's information systems are not to be used in any way that is disruptive, offensive to others, or harmful to morale. Accessing or transmitting sexually oriented, racist, or otherwise offensive material and/or use of computer, internet, and electronic resources in violation of state and federal law and/or School of Design policies will subject offenders to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from School of Design.

Copyrights and Licensing

The String Theory School of Design will comply with applicable copyright laws. Software may not be copied for use on another computer, whether at school or at home, and illegally copied software may not be brought onto campus. Only software approved by and/or acquired through School of Design is authorized for use on school networks and computers. The School of Design does not tolerate illegal downloading or sharing of copyrighted materials, including but not limited to music, pictures, videos, and literature. School of Design will monitor for illegal downloading and/or redistribution of protected material, and will fully cooperate with law enforcement regarding such activities. Offenders will be subject to legal prosecution and/or appropriate disciplinary action from the School of Design.

Individual Responsibility

School of Design is not responsible for lost information or work for any reason. Each student is responsible for ensuring that their work is safeguarded. School of Design strongly recommends

that assignments and work be stored in multiple locations such as laptop, external hard drive, etc., and that these devices be kept secure. Student files stored on the School of Design network may be deleted after the end of each quarter.

Security and Privacy

Passwords are to be used by individuals to provide restricted access to personal information. Changes to system access must be requested through the IT department. Passwords may not be shared in order to prevent unauthorized access. You may not use another person's password or access other people's accounts or information. School of Design cannot guarantee the confidentiality of its computer, internet, and electronic resources; thus, users should exercise caution in employing School of Design electronic resources to communicate confidential or sensitive information. Unauthorized local or remote access to any of the School of Design's systems will not be tolerated. Any such intrusion will be considered trespassing, and offenders will be subject to legal prosecution and School of Design disciplinary action. Students may be asked to sign an acknowledgment of the school's Acceptable Use policies. Violators of this policy shall be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from School of Design.

Safety and Security

Generally

The School of Design's safety and security policies go into effect any time an emergency impacts the school. In the event that an emergency or crisis situation occurs, students, staff, and faculty should use common sense and good judgment in their responses to the situation. The safety of all who inhabit the School is the highest priority during any emergency. Please report any emergency situations to the Dean of Students.

Fire, Snowstorm

If the fire alarm should sound, students should proceed to the nearest exit, close all doors behind them, and leave the building utilizing previously provided escape routes. The elevators should not be used to exit the building. After leaving the building, students should verify that their classmates have all left. All occupants must leave the building if the fire alarm sounds. No person is allowed to return to the building until the fire department has declared the area safe. In the event that it is not possible to re-enter the building, students should await communication from the Administration concerning the status of the situation.

In the event of snowstorms, dismissals, delays, and cancellation of school events will be communicated by the Administration via email and other program-wide information systems.

Earthquakes, Tornadoes, Building Collapse



In the event of an earthquake or tornado, if indoors, please remain indoors. Stay away from windows and glass. Door frames may be warped by moving walls and jam shut, and glass may shatter. Evacuate the building immediately after the ground stops shaking, or in the event of a building collapse, follow fire evacuation guidelines. Account for all students if possible. Avoid all power, telephone, and overhead lines. Do not smoke and do not re-enter the building until emergency authorities give clearance. The following definition of terms apply:

- **Tornado Watch (or Severe Weather Warning):** Severe weather conditions, which could possibly produce tornadoes. A Tornado Watch or Severe Weather Warning generally covers a large geographic area.
- **Tornado Warning:** Very severe weather conditions that have produced an actual tornado or a funnel cloud, which, if it touches the ground, becomes a tornado. A Tornado Warning is usually for a specific area and more localized than a Tornado Watch.

The campus security staff monitors reports of severe weather and will issue a School-wide announcement only if the area around the college is an imminent threat.

Bomb Threat

Bomb threats are usually made by telephone, note, or letter. All bomb threats are taken seriously and handled as if there may be an explosive in the building. If you find or receive a bomb threat, follow these steps:

1. Ask questions: Where is the bomb? When is it going to detonate? What does it look like? Permit the caller to say as much as possible without interruption.
2. Take notes on everything said and on your observations about background noise, voice characteristics, etc.
3. Keep the caller on the line as long as possible.
4. After the call, discreetly notify the President, the Dean of Students, or your professor. In the event no one can be reached, call 9-1-1.

Intruder(s)/Violence

Any person who observes an unauthorized visitor on the premises should contact building security. All visitors must wear identification indicating that they have permission to be in the building. In the event that an intruder or violent act is observed, faculty and staff should proceed with safety measures.

Shelter in Place

If it becomes necessary to “shelter in place,” essential supplies have been compiled and will be provided.



Emergency Communications

In the event of an emergency (including weather related events) School of Design will communicate with the community to provide accurate information for every person's general safety and security. The School may use any of the following messages to communicate campus-related information:

- Email
- Text/SMS to cell phones
- School of Design website
- External media outlets, as deemed necessary

Email is the primary method of communication for most warnings that may be significant but do not require immediate action. Emergency notifications will be delivered through Alertus, and may be sent via text/SMS messaging. Emergency notifications are required for incidents that necessitate immediate action on the part of the recipient. Each member of the School will be enrolled in the emergency alert system at the beginning of each quarter. School of Design requires that everyone verify their information each quarter to ensure accurate delivery of notifications.

Personal Injury

School of Design is not responsible for personal injury occurring on the School's property or in connection with School of Design-related activities.

Medical Emergencies

If a student on School of Design property is rendered unconscious or otherwise unable to participate fully in decisions about emergency medical attention, institutional procedure is as follows:

- Never move anyone who has been injured in a fall or who is unconscious or exhibiting unresponsive behavior
- Call 911. Ask for an ambulance or the Police. Request transfer of the injured person to the emergency room
- Once the 911 operator assures you that help is on the way, return to the emergency situation and stay there until the ambulance arrives
- As soon as possible within this process, notify one of the following administrative personnel of the emergency (in this order): President, Dean of Students, Dean of School of Design, Vice President.

Costs arising from all emergency medical attention initiated by the School of Design on behalf of an injured or ill student will subsequently be the responsibility of the ill or injured student or their family. Students should be aware that the School of Design does not provide students with medical insurance.

ID Cards and Access Cards

All students, faculty, and staff are issued ID cards with an access tag that allows access to the building during regular business hours. Students, faculty, and staff are required to have their ID cards with them whenever they are in the building. A lost ID card should immediately be reported to the Program Coordinator so that the lost card can be deactivated and a new card can be issued.

Controlled Substances

The School of Design policy prohibits the illegal possession, use, or sale of drugs or other controlled substances on its property. Where appropriate or necessary, the School of Design will fully cooperate with law enforcement agencies. In addition, alcoholic beverages are not to be sold, served, used or possessed in any of the facilities of the School.

Smoke-Free Buildings Policy

Smoking, including the use of nicotine-delivery systems, is, without exception, prohibited in every School of Design building or facility.

Anyone who wishes to smoke must do so outside of the School of Design facility. Smoking is prohibited within 25 feet of any entrance, exit or loading dock, or as posted otherwise. Smoking is also prohibited on adjacent stairways, ramps or landings leading to any entrance, exit or loading dock.

Selling and Soliciting

School of Design buildings and facilities are provided for use exclusively by students, faculty, staff and the administration, and only for the educational purposes of the School of Design. No individual or company may solicit or sell on campus for personal gain.

Selling or soliciting for charitable, political, social, religious or other causes by nonstudents is prohibited on School of Design property. Distribution of literature (handbills, tracts, leaflets, etc.) by outside agents for external agencies is also prohibited on School of Design property.

Crime Act



Information regarding the Crime Act (commonly referred to as the Clery Act) is available from the Administration and on the String Theory School of Design website.

Inclusive Language

Throughout this Course Catalog, every effort has been made to use inclusive language which does not discriminate with regard to gender.

Nondiscrimination Policy

SUMMARY OF POLICY

The String Theory School of Design requires equal educational opportunity for all students enrolled in the educational programs and activities of the School including, but not limited to: course offerings, athletic programs, guidance and counseling, and tests and procedures, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, social or economic status, parenthood, marital status or disability.

The School of Design promotes a learning environment that encourages fulfillment of each student's potential in regard to his/her program, consistent with the School's goals and with equal opportunities for all students. Students will respect the rights of other students to receive an education in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and free from discriminatory practices. No student has a right to violate another student's rights. The String Theory School of Design considers acts of discrimination, harassment, and bias to be unacceptable and counter to its core mission and values. Nothing in this policy should be regarded as suppressing such intellectual freedom so long as any disagreements, arguments and/or debates are conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.

Harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and bias incidents in any form, including, but not limited to, those based upon race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, socioeconomic status, and/or any characteristic prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status, etc). (collectively referred to as "Protected Category/ies") are prohibited by the String Theory School of Design.

The School will respond swiftly and equitably to all allegations of discrimination, harassment, or bias incidents based on a Protected Category (as described above) and will take all appropriate steps to end the discrimination, harassment or bias incident, prevent its recurrence and address its effects.

Retaliation in any form will not be tolerated against an individual who makes a report with the college or participates in an investigation of any such report.

The School adheres to all federal, state and local requirements for intervention, crime reporting, and privacy provisions related to discrimination, harassment and bias incidents.



SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all faculty members, students, professional staff, trustees, officers and other members of the School community. This policy also applies to visitors, volunteers, non-employee associates and third parties doing business or providing services to the School, including vendors, independent contractors, and consultants.

All students and employees of the String Theory School of Design are responsible for their actions and behavior as it relates to the School and each other, whether the conduct in question occurs on campus, in the surrounding community, or in another location. As such, this policy applies to all prohibited conduct that affects the School's educational environment and community wherever it occurs, including on campus, off campus, and online.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The School of Design does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, and any other characteristic prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status) in its educational, extracurricular, athletic, or other programs or in the context of employment.

STATEMENT OF PRIVACY

The School of Design is committed to protecting the privacy interests of all individuals involved in a report of discrimination or harassment. In any report, investigation, or resolution of an allegation made under this Policy, every effort will be made to protect the privacy interests of the individuals involved in a manner consistent with the need for a thorough review of the allegation and the protection of any individual or the broader campus community.

All resolution proceedings are conducted in compliance with the requirements of FERPA, the Clery Act, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act, and Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, String Theory School of Design policy, and all applicable federal, state and local laws. No information shall be released from such proceedings except as required or permitted by law or by this policy.



EXPRESSION, SPEECH, AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Students and Faculty may exercise the right of freedom of expression through speech, assembly, petition, and other lawful means and have the right to advocate change of any law, policy, or regulation. The exercise of this right may neither interfere with the rights of others, nor may oral or written student or faculty opinions be used to present material that falls into one or more of the following categories:

- Materials that reasonably lead the School to forecast substantial disruption or interfere with school activities or that endangers the health or safety of students;
- Material that is libelous or slanderous statements that are inaccurate or false and that injure the person as to his/her reputation, cause personal humiliation, mental anguish and suffering, or other injuries;
- Material that advocates the commission of a criminal act or is a criminal act, as defined by the Criminal Code of the United States, Pennsylvania, or the City of Philadelphia; and/or
- Material that is obscene as defined by Pennsylvania law

DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

The School of Design prohibits discrimination, harassment, and bias incidents.

Bias Incident:

Bias incidents include conduct or behavior (verbal, nonverbal, or written) that is threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, and is based on a person's identity or affiliation such as race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, or any other characteristics prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status, etc.).

All bias incidents will be evaluated under this Policy to determine whether they constitute discrimination and/or harassment.

In addition, by its very nature, bias will be deemed an aggravating circumstance to any violation of School policies, including the Student Code of Conduct, regardless of the category. In those circumstances, bias-related violations may result in a more serious action up to, and including, permanent separation from the School of Design.

Examples of Bias Incidents: defacement of posters or signs, intimidating, or harassing comments or messages, vandalism to personal or School property, or similar acts, if there is evidence that the target or victim was chosen because of a factor such as race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, socioeconomic status and/or any characteristics prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status, etc.).



Discrimination:

Discrimination is conduct that is based upon factors such as race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, or any other characteristics prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status, etc.) and that:

- adversely affects a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment or participation in a college activity; or
- is used as the basis for or a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment, education, living environment or participation in a college activity.

Harassment:

Harassment is unwelcome verbal, written, electronic, or physical conduct when that conduct is:

- based on a Protected Category as defined here; and
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, demeaning, or offensive working, academic or social environment. The effect will be evaluated based on the perspective of a reasonable person in the position of the Complainant.

Even a single or isolated incident may create a hostile environment if the incident is sufficiently severe. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a hostile environment, particularly if the harassment is physical.

Forms of Harassment: In some cases, harassment is obvious and may involve an overt action, a threat or reprisal. In other instances, harassment is subtle and indirect, with a coercive aspect that is unstated.

Harassment can take many forms:

- It can occur between equals (e.g., student to student, professional staff to professional staff, faculty member to faculty member, visitor/contracted employee to professional staff) or between persons of differing power status (e.g. supervisor to subordinate, faculty member to student, coach to student-athlete).
- It can be committed by an individual or may be a result of the collective actions of an organization or group.
- It can be committed against an individual, an organization or a group.

Examples of behavior that may create a hostile environment and will be considered as evidence of discrimination or harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted or inappropriate innuendo, or suggestive comments, humor and jokes, racial slurs or derogatory language directed at another person's race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability,



age, status as a veteran, socioeconomic status and/or any characteristic prohibited by law (i.e., creed, marital status, citizenship status);

- insults and threats based on a Protected Category and other verbal, written or electronic communications of a discriminatory nature that an individual communicates is unwanted and unwelcome
- Non-academic display or circulation of written materials or pictures degrading to an individual(s) or group's Protected Category.
- Making educational or employment decisions based upon stereotypes about individuals based upon race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran, socioeconomic status and/or any characteristic prohibited by law (e.g., creed, marital status, citizenship status) (For example, no one should be assumed to be able or required to act as a representative for their culture or faith).
- Abusive, disruptive or harassing behavior (verbal or physical), which endangers another's mental or physical health, including but not limited to threats, acts of violence, or assault based on a Protected Category and/or in the context of a hate crime; and,
- Engaging in derogatory verbal and other expressive behavior of a racial, cultural or religious nature in instructional settings.

Hate Crime:

A hate crime is generally defined in federal and state statutes as a criminal offense committed against a person or property that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against the victim's identity or group affiliation. See Ethnic Intimidation Act (Act 154 of 1982, 18 Pa. C.S. §2710).

Preponderance of the Evidence is the standard for determining whether a violation of this policy has occurred and means that more than 50% of the evidence supports the finding. A Preponderance of the Evidence is equivalent to "more likely than not."

Retaliation:

Retaliation is defined as acts or attempts to retaliate or seek retribution against the Complainant, Respondent, or any individual or group of individuals involved in a report, investigation and/or resolution of an allegation of discrimination, harassment or bias Incident. Retaliation can be committed by any individual or group of individuals, not just a Respondent or Complainant. Retaliation may include continued abuse, violence, or other forms of harassment.

STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AND SELF-DEFENSE

The String Theory School of Design promotes a physically safe and inclusive environment where violence in any form is not tolerated. Accordingly, responding to violence with violence is also a violation of this policy, unless such violence is a direct response of self-defense.

Library Services: <https://stringtheorydesign.org/library/>



Cafeterias and Cafes

- Our Vine Street campus shares a cafeteria with dual-credit partners.
- The cafeteria provides nutritious food for all students and staff.
- All cafeteria procedures must be followed by students and faculty.

Technology Center

The Technology Center is a central hub for digital innovation, applied learning, and technical support at the String Theory School of Design. It provides faculty and students with access to cutting-edge tools, software, and collaborative workspaces to support teaching, research, and creative projects across the disciplines of design, technology, and entrepreneurship.

Purpose:

The Technology Center and Library exists to:

- Facilitate experiential and competency-based learning through technology-enhanced studios and labs.
- Support faculty in integrating emerging technologies into curriculum and pedagogy.
- Provide resources for student projects, fabrication, visualization, and digital storytelling.
- Promote innovation, collaboration, and problem-solving across courses and programs.

Resources and Capabilities:

The Technology Center and Library offers:

- **Hardware:** High-performance workstations, laptops, VR/AR equipment, 3D printers, CNC machines, laser cutters, and digital fabrication tools.
 - **Software:** Industry-standard applications for design, visualization, data analysis, business modeling, and collaborative project management.
 - **Learning Spaces:** Hybrid classrooms, collaborative labs, and flexible studios optimized for individual and group projects.
- Support Services:** Technical support for faculty and students, workshops, training sessions, and guidance in best practices for technology integration.

Faculty Responsibilities:

Faculty are expected to:

- Incorporate the Technology Center's and Library's resources into course design to enhance student learning outcomes.
- Schedule and supervise student use of specialized equipment and labs.
- Collaborate with Technology Center and Library staff to develop innovative instructional materials and projects.
- Ensure that students follow safety protocols and proper use guidelines.



The Technology Center and our Library advances the School's mission by enabling students to:

- Access future opportunities through mastery of current and emerging technologies.
- Apply knowledge and technical skills to authentic design challenges.
- Innovate solutions and create high-quality, portfolio-ready work.

The Technology Center and Library are available to all faculty and enrolled students. Hours of operation, reservation procedures, and training requirements are maintained by the Technology Center staff and communicated at the start of each term.

Tech support request procedures

Tech Support Requests: Faculty can submit technology support requests through the Technology Center. Support is available for hardware, software, and classroom technology issues.

Learning & Professional Development: The Technology Center offers workshops, training sessions, and resources to help faculty integrate technology into teaching and curriculum.

On-Demand Support: Faculty can request assistance or discuss technology needs during scheduled faculty meetings with the Dean or on an as-needed basis.

Campus Safety

- Click [HERE](#) to view our Safety Report for the 2024-2025 school year.

Tenure Policy

The String Theory School of Design is a new institution. We are in the process of evaluating policies regarding faculty tenure.

Policy on Fostering a Climate of Respect and Inclusion

The String Theory School of Design is committed to cultivating a climate that fosters mutual respect, open dialogue, and collaborative engagement among students, faculty, staff, and administration. This commitment reflects our belief that diversity of backgrounds, identities, ideas, and perspectives is essential to innovation, creative growth, and academic excellence.

Policy Statement

We affirm that every member of our community—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or cultural belief, socioeconomic background, or point of view—has the right to be treated with dignity and to fully participate in the academic and creative life of the institution.



To that end, the School shall:

1. Promote Respectful Engagement

- Encourage open, constructive dialogue in classrooms, studios, meetings, and common spaces
- Address differences with curiosity and empathy rather than judgment
- Uphold civil discourse, especially around challenging or unfamiliar topics

2. Support Inclusive Teaching and Learning

- Equip faculty with tools and training to create inclusive syllabi, assignments, and learning environments
- Encourage student voice and representation in curriculum and critique processes
- Value a range of expressive and cultural practices in creative work

3. Ensure Equitable Practices

- Review policies, procedures, and communications regularly for fairness, consistency, and accessibility
- Foster equitable decision-making in hiring, admissions, grading, and discipline
- Offer clear and confidential channels for reporting bias, harassment, or discrimination

4. Celebrate Diversity of Thought and Experience

- Program events, lectures, exhibitions, and critiques that reflect a broad spectrum of voices
- Support interdisciplinary collaboration across artistic, technological, and cultural domains

Shared Responsibility

Creating and maintaining a respectful climate is a shared responsibility. All members of the IDeATE community are expected to:

- Demonstrate active respect for the experiences of others
- Intervene constructively when witnessing exclusionary behavior
- Reflect on and challenge personal biases
- Contribute to a culture where feedback is generative and disagreement is approached respectfully

Accountability and Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Academic Affairs in collaboration with student and faculty representatives. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the college's Code of Conduct.



Faculty and Staff Evaluation Policy and Procedure

The IDeATE teaching evaluation process supports continuous professional growth by reviewing faculty and staff evidence of mastery aligned to program competencies and student outcomes. This process is designed to recognize strengths and identify growth opportunities through reflective portfolio-building, regular feedback, and collaborative goal setting.

Policy Overview

All full-time faculty and staff undergo an annual evaluation process overseen by the Dean, emphasizing evidence-based reflection and goal-oriented development. Evaluations are anchored in the same program competencies that define student learning outcomes, ensuring alignment between teaching practice and program goals.

Evaluation Components

1. **Mastery Targets and Program Competencies**

Evaluation focuses on faculty/staff demonstration of mastery targets linked to core competencies of the IDeATE program. These competencies encompass instructional effectiveness, student engagement, curriculum design, professional collaboration, and innovation in practice.

2. **Growth Target and Glow Target**

Each faculty or staff member selects:

- A **Growth Target**: an area for focused professional development
- A **Mastery Target**: an area of demonstrated strength to maintain and leverage

3. **Evidence Portfolio**

Participants build an electronic portfolio throughout the year containing artifacts such as lesson plans, student work samples, assessment data, peer feedback, self-reflections, and professional development records aligned to each mastery target and competency.

Evaluation Procedure

Step	Description	Timing	Participants
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Initial Meeting: Evaluation Orientation	Review evaluation process, timeline, expectations, and portfolio-building guidelines. Discuss and finalize individual Growth and Glow targets.	Beginning of academic year	Dean, Faculty/Staff member
Mid-Year Review Check-In	Progress review of portfolio development and target achievement. Provide formative feedback and adjust goals as needed.	Midpoint of academic year	Dean, Faculty/Staff member
Final Portfolio Submission	Submit completed electronic portfolio with evidence aligned to all mastery targets and competencies. Include reflections on Growth and Glow targets.	End of academic year	Faculty/Staff member
Final Evaluation Meeting	Dean reviews portfolio and meets individually with faculty/staff to discuss strengths, growth, and future goals. Formal evaluation documented.	End of academic year	Dean, Faculty/Staff member

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Faculty/Staff Members:**
 - Proactively select meaningful Growth and Glow targets aligned with their practice
 - Gather and organize evidence throughout the year
 - Engage openly in meetings and feedback processes
 - Use evaluation outcomes to inform ongoing professional growth
- **Dean:**
 - Facilitate orientation and check-in meetings
 - Review submitted portfolios thoroughly and provide constructive feedback
 - Conduct final evaluation discussions and document outcomes
 - Support faculty and staff development through resources and coaching

Documentation and Confidentiality

All evaluation materials, including portfolios and meeting notes, are confidential and stored securely by the Dean's office. Evaluation results are used solely for professional development and personnel decisions per institutional policy.

[IDeATE Faculty Performance Review](#)



Portfolio of Evidence:

Each faculty and staff member develops a portfolio over the course of the academic year, documenting achievements and growth in relation to the college's core competencies. For each competency, individuals select:

- One "Grow" mastery target: an area for professional development and improvement.
- One "Glow" mastery target: an area in which they demonstrate particular strength and excellence.

Review Process:

- Portfolios are reviewed twice annually: a mid-year check-in to provide feedback and guidance, and a final end-of-year review to assess overall progress and performance.
- Faculty and staff are encouraged to reflect on their portfolio entries, identify strategies for growth, and highlight accomplishments that align with the mission and vision of the IDEATE program. This reflection process can also help faculty identify work to share in regional and national conferences and presentations (Strategic priority #3).

This performance review framework promotes continuous professional growth, accountability, and alignment with the college's overarching commitment to innovation, creativity, and excellence in design education.

Conflict of Interest Policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability by preventing actual or perceived conflicts of interest in all professional, academic, and operational activities of the String Theory School of Design. It applies to all constituents, including faculty, staff, administration, and students.

Members of the String Theory School of Design community must avoid conflicts of interest and situations that give the appearance of conflict in the discharge of their responsibilities. All decisions must be made in the best interest of the institution and free from personal, financial, or external influences that could impair objectivity or create the perception of bias or favoritism.

Definition of Conflict of Interest

A **conflict of interest** occurs when a personal, financial, professional, or other relationship or interest could:

- **Influence** a person's ability to act in the best interests of the school;
- **Interfere** with objective judgment in carrying out duties or responsibilities; or
- **Create the appearance** of compromised integrity or preferential treatment.

Conflicts may be **actual**, **perceived**, or **potential**, and may involve:

- Outside employment or consulting
- Business or vendor relationships
- Personal relationships with students, colleagues, or contractors
- Use of institutional resources for personal gain
- Gifts or favors that could influence professional judgment

Disclosure Requirements

All faculty, staff, and administrators are required to:

- Disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest **annually** or as they arise
- Recuse themselves from decisions or actions where a conflict exists

Students who serve in paid roles or on leadership boards must also disclose relevant relationships that may impact fairness or impartiality.

Procedures

1. All personnel must complete and submit a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form at the start of each academic year if there is a need to disclose any potential conflicts of interest.
2. If a new potential conflict arises, the individual must disclose it in writing to the Dean within 10 business days.
3. The Dean (or a designated review committee) will assess the disclosure and determine whether a conflict exists, and what actions—such as recusal, divestment, or reassignment—are required.
4. Failure to disclose a conflict or comply with required mitigations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or academic standing, as outlined in institutional policies.

Confidentiality

All disclosures will be handled confidentially and with respect for all parties. Records of disclosures and resolutions will be maintained securely by the college administration as appropriate.



Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

String Theory School of Design – Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Date: _____

1. Description of Potential Conflict:

(Provide details of the financial, personal, or professional interest that could create a conflict)

2. Relationship to Institution Activities:

(Explain how the conflict relates to decision-making, resource allocation, teaching, or evaluation)

3. Proposed Action:

- ☐ I will recuse myself from discussions/decisions related to this matter
- ☐ I have no action required at this time, but disclose for transparency

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Office Use Only:

- Reviewed by: _____
- Action Taken/Notes:

Implementation Notes:

- This form should be submitted as soon as a potential conflict is identified.
- A centralized record should be maintained by the Dean's office.
- Meeting minutes should note recusals where relevant, even if no formal form is submitted.

Integrity in Communications Policy

The String Theory School of Design is committed to upholding the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, and transparency in all forms of communication—public, promotional, and internal. This policy ensures that all messaging reflects the institution’s values, complies with ethical standards, and fosters trust among students, families, staff, and the broader public.

All public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials, and internal communications must be truthful, clear, and free of misrepresentation. Communications must accurately reflect the institution’s mission, programs, policies, outcomes, and operations.

No constituent of the School—administration, faculty, staff, or affiliated agents—may knowingly or negligently communicate misleading, exaggerated, or false information in any format, whether written, verbal, digital, or visual.

This policy applies to all:

- Marketing and advertising content (print, web, social media, email, video, etc.)
- Public statements and press releases
- Admissions and recruitment presentations or materials
- Internal memos, reports, announcements, and newsletters
- Data representations related to student outcomes, faculty credentials, program success, or accreditation status

Guiding Principles:

1. Truthfulness
All claims—about programs, outcomes, faculty expertise, student success, or partnerships—must be factual, verifiable, and supported by accurate data.
2. Transparency
Communications must clearly disclose policies, procedures, costs, admissions criteria, and any material conditions that affect a student’s or employee’s experience.
3. Consistency
All faculty and staff must coordinate with the Program Manager or designated leadership to ensure messaging is aligned and institutionally approved.
4. Responsiveness
Inaccurate information, once discovered, must be corrected promptly and communicated to affected parties.

Compliance with Laws, Regulations, and Commission Policies

The String Theory School of Design is committed to full compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as the policies and procedures of its accrediting body (the Commission). This policy ensures that institutional operations remain lawful, ethical, transparent, and consistent with the standards of accountability expected by regulators, stakeholders, and the public.

String Theory School of Design shall operate in full compliance with:

- All applicable federal and state educational regulations
- Local laws and ordinances
- Requirements of the school's accrediting Commission
- Policies governing institutional transparency, consumer information, and operational accountability

This includes, but is not limited to, accurate and timely disclosure of required information to students and the public.

Ethical Recruiting, Marketing, and Practices Policy

The String Theory School of Design is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and integrity in all aspects of recruiting, marketing, and institutional practices. This policy ensures that all communications, representations, and interactions reflect the School's mission, values, and commitment to student success.

1. Ethical Recruiting Practices:

- All recruiting efforts must be honest, accurate, and free from misleading information regarding programs, admissions requirements, costs, or outcomes.
- Recruitment staff and faculty shall provide prospective students with clear, complete, and up-to-date information about courses, programs, accreditation, career outcomes, and financial obligations.
- Any incentives or inducements offered to prospective students must comply with applicable laws and institutional policies and must not create conflicts of interest.
- Recruitment processes shall respect diversity, equity, and inclusion principles, ensuring equal opportunity for all prospective students.

2. Ethical Marketing Practices:

- Marketing materials—print, digital, and social media—must accurately reflect the School's programs, services, and outcomes.
- All claims about program quality, graduate success, partnerships, or opportunities must be verifiable and supported by factual evidence.



- Marketing strategies must avoid exaggeration, misrepresentation, or coercive tactics that could mislead students or the public.

3. Institutional Practices:

- All employees involved in recruitment, marketing, and public representation of the School are expected to adhere to this policy and report any suspected violations.
- Policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws, accreditation requirements, and industry best practices.
- Ethical practices extend to partnerships, collaborations, and external engagements, ensuring that all agreements uphold the School's standards of integrity and responsibility.

4. Accountability and Oversight:

- Administrators are responsible for monitoring recruiting and marketing practices and providing guidance to staff to maintain ethical standards.
- Any violations of this policy may result in corrective action, up to and including termination, depending on the severity of the breach.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the String Theory School of Design administrative team to ensure effectiveness and alignment with evolving technologies, regulations, and accreditation requirements.

Regulations Affecting Students

Students enrolled in the above program are expected to follow all regulations designated in each of the sections above in the catalog.



Biennial Review

The College will conduct a biennial review of its policies to ensure effectiveness and consistent implementation. The biennial review process shall include the following steps:

1. **Assessment of Policy Effectiveness:** The College will evaluate the policy to determine its effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes.
2. **Consistency in Implementation:** The review will assess whether the policy has been implemented consistently across all relevant departments and processes.

In addition to the scheduled biennial reviews, the College Administration reserves the right to initiate a review or revision of any policy at any time, should it be deemed necessary. Any revisions will be prepared in accordance with the College's policy development practices.

All documents related to the biennial review, including findings and any subsequent revisions, will be retained on file to ensure compliance with relevant standards and regulations.



Statement on Federal Discrimination Act

String Theory School of Design does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, age, creed, ancestry, veteran status, marital status, disability, or any other classification protected under applicable law in the administration of its educational programs, activities, or with respect to employment.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs, serving as the Title IX Coordinator, is responsible for the overall implementation of this policy. Questions or concerns regarding compliance should be directed to the Title IX Coordinator.

String Theory School of Design complies fully with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Copies of the Act and the guidelines adopted by the School are available for inspection in the Office of Academic Affairs during regular business hours.

Center on Disability (COD)

The Center on Disability (COD) is committed to supporting students with health, mental health, physical, learning, attention, or sensory disabilities. Our services are designed to help you succeed academically by providing the following:

- **Academic Accommodations:** We determine appropriate academic accommodations tailored to your classes.
- **Resource Connections:** We connect you to both campus and community resources that support your educational goals.
- **Assistive Technology:** We introduce you to assistive technology that can help you effectively manage your coursework.
- **Faculty Communication:** We facilitate communication between you and your faculty regarding your specific learning needs.
- **Goal-Oriented Activities:** We develop activities that align with and support your educational and personal goals.

Eligibility for Accommodations To receive support from the COD, you must provide documentation that establishes your eligibility for the requested accommodations. Appropriate documentation should include:

- **Relevance and Timeliness:** Information that is current and pertinent to the College setting.
- **Professional Documentation:** A typed report or letter prepared and signed by a licensed professional qualified to diagnose or treat the condition for which you are seeking services.
- **Detailed Information:** A clear diagnosis, along with the nature and impact of the disability within an educational environment.
- **Suggested Accommodations:** Recommended accommodations, including a rationale for how they might benefit you in your academic endeavors.

Submission of Documentation To ensure timely services, it is recommended that you submit your documentation to the COD at least six weeks before the start of the semester. Please send

your documentation to the Dean of the College.

For more information, please contact us by phone at (215) 334-4222.

Required Public Information

The institution shall make available, clearly and accessibly, all required public information including:

1. Accreditation Status

Applicant Status for Accreditation (MSCHE)

String Theory School of Design is currently engaged in the process for determining its readiness for candidate for accreditation status with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). MSCHE is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) to conduct accreditation and preaccreditation (candidacy status) activities for institutions of higher education, including distance education, correspondence education programs, and direct assessment programs offered at those institutions. The Commission's geographic area of accrediting activities in throughout the United States. MSCHE accepts complaints and third-party comments for institutions engaged in the application and candidacy process. MSCHE provides an online form for the submission of complaints or third-party comments on the complaints page of its website. Please visit MSCHE's website at www.msche.org for more information.

- <https://stringtheorydesign.org/accreditation-and-public-notices/>

2. Program Offerings and Curriculum

- Course Catalog:

3. Student Outcomes and Performance Metrics

- Graduation rates, job placement data (if applicable), licensing or credentialing pass rates

Policy Review

This handbook and its policies shall be reviewed biennially by Academic Affairs in consultation with the compliance teams and the President's Office to ensure continued alignment with all governing regulations and accreditation standards.