

Leading ASU into the Future

A Guide for Leaders

Over the last 15 years, ASU has relentlessly aimed to transform itself and redefine higher education. Sustaining this momentum while guiding the institution through constant change, ambiguity and uncertainty is the work of leaders who think like designers. Anchored by the institution's charter, leaders at ASU design systems, processes, and new initiatives within their spheres of influence, keeping the university on a trajectory of innovation as it evolves into the future.

This Leadership Guide identifies nine dimensions that define leadership at ASU with questions that are intended to inspire, provoke thinking, conversations and action. It is for those in formal leadership roles as well as those who lead in many ways without titles or positions. It is for those who want to measure their success by the culture and capacity they build in their units and people they lead. It is for leaders who want to build an enterprise that is innovative, adaptive, agile and ready for change well beyond their own tenures.





1. Think expansively, think differently

Imagine how things could be. Anticipate what the future may bring and translate into action.



2. Support ongoing adaptation

Identify adaptations that will sustain the institution over the long term. Develop prototypes and experiments and make adjustments regularly.



3. Be innovators and institution builders

Advance innovative ideas and build institutional structures, practices and routines that will sustain the institution over time.



4. Nurture a culture that values inclusion and innovation

Create and support a culture where creativity flourishes and diverse groups of individuals thrive.



5. Champion collaboration

Advance ideas by leveraging the knowledge assets of the institution and by addressing barriers that discourage interdisciplinary and cross-functional collaboration, both between and within units.



6. Develop a pipeline of leaders

Identify talent early and invest in the next generation of leaders for the institution. Actively engage as a mentor or coach for leaders in the pipeline.



7. Lead with courage

Take risks, advance bold ideas, challenge the status-quo and established conventions while bringing people along.



8. Execute with influence

Operate beyond authority alone. Find ways to leverage people and mobilize resources to move efforts forward.



9. Engage with empathy

Recognize the needs and perspectives of users before designing solutions. Attend to the needs of people on teams to create productive work environments.



1. Think expansively, think differently

ASU's charter offers leaders an invitation to imagine how things could be. Leaders anticipate what the future may bring and interpret what that means for those around them, focusing on both the external context and the reality within the institution.

- What problems do we want to solve? How will you hire for and onboard new people to this way of thinking and being?
- How will you engage your teams to identify trends that will influence higher education globally, and your area specifically?
- How can you challenge conventions and allow bold ideas to emerge?
- How can you engage people who "think differently" in the design process, even if they will not play a role in executing an idea?
- How can the institution advance the ideals set out in the charter for maximum, sustainable impact?



2. Support ongoing adaptation

ASU consciously embraces an evolutionary model of growth. To identify adaptations that will sustain the institution over the long term, leaders engage their units in making continuous adjustments to operating models, structures, processes and activities in response to new information and changes in the external environment and to stay true to the spirit of the charter. To advance ideas at scale and speed, ASU leaders develop prototypes and experiments, test them early, gather feedback and make adjustments on an ongoing basis.

- How will you determine when to launch a new idea, discontinue one that is not working well and say 'no' to those that do not serve the university?
- How will you engage faculty and staff to build and maintain an agile environment?
- How can you build a positive environment of experimentation that builds resiliency rather than chaos?
- What does it mean to prototype something that is not a product?
- How can you create routines and processes that capture lessons learned from adaptations?



3. Be innovators and institution builders

ASU's successes and growth so far are not random outcomes. They are the results of design decisions. To sustain the institution on this trajectory of innovation, leaders need to advance innovative ideas and build institutional structures, practices, and proactive routines that will support and sustain the institution for the long term.

- How can you balance launching new, innovative ideas with advancing structural and operational efficiencies for long-term impact?
- Do you intentionally build teams of people with strengths that complement yours so the unit can both innovate and build for the future?
- How will you identify and address systemic barriers to innovation?
- What does it mean to think like a leader vs. an administrator? What differences in behavior indicate this mindset shift?
- How do you move from ideas to execution? What metrics will you use to define success?



4. Nurture a culture that values inclusion and innovation

Designing an institution to stay on a path of innovation for the long term requires leaders who create and support a culture where creativity flourishes and diverse groups of individuals thrive.

- How can you create a sense of community and belonging in your unit?
- In what ways does the culture of your unit signal to people that the institution values them?
- How can you leverage the diversity of your unit for richer ideas and solutions that are more creative?
- What can you do to support risk-taking and experimentation?
- How do you create spaces for individuals to contribute ideas and have their voices heard?



5. Champion collaboration

Successful leaders advance ideas by leveraging the knowledge assets of the institution and by addressing barriers that discourage interdisciplinary and cross-functional collaboration, both between and within units.

- What structural, procedural and social barriers in your unit inhibit collaboration across teams and disciplines?
- Fusing intellectual disciplines requires patience and consistent effort. How can you support efforts so that truly transformative outcomes emerge from interdisciplinary collaborations?
- How can you facilitate information sharing across the institution?
- How might you reward interdisciplinary work within your unit?
- How can you engage with partners outside the institution to advance pioneering solutions?



6. Develop a pipeline of leaders

Sustaining a culture of design and innovation over time requires an intentional effort to identify talent early and invest in the next generation of leaders for the institution. The primary responsibility for developing the next generation of leaders falls to those currently in leadership roles.

- How can you ensure that succession planning is happening in your area?
- How can you provide developmental support to high potential individuals in your unit?
- How will you mentor and coach leaders in your unit?
- What developmental opportunities offered by the institution could you leverage to advance talent in your unit?
- What processes can you establish in your unit so developing the next generation of leaders becomes a norm?



7. Lead with **courage**

A fast-paced, innovative institution needs leaders who take risks, advance bold ideas, challenge the status-quo and established conventions while bringing their people along with them. ASU leaders demonstrate courage in the face of uncertainty, complexity, volatility and failure.

- How will you challenge status quo, question assumptions and conventions, and identify new possibilities?
- How can you engage others to push past discomfort and disagreement and move towards solutions?
- How will you deal with fears of your own and of the people you lead?
- Are you willing to make unpopular decisions when necessary?
- How will you move forward from setbacks on important issues?



8. Execute with **influence**

Leaders who are called to design the institution need to operate beyond authority alone. Find ways to mobilize resources and inspire people to execute through their strengths independent of authority level.

- How can you identify and engage key influencers to support your efforts?
- What are opportunities and constraints in your area?
- How will you acquire resources, through traditional and non-traditional means, to advance new ideas and support your unit's goals?
- How can you effectively manage up and manage across?
- How can you leverage your personal network within and outside the institution to advance key efforts?



9. Engage with **empathy**

Innovative solutions are rooted in the needs of the communities we serve. Leaders recognize the needs and perspectives of users before designing solutions. Empathy also extends to understanding people and their needs within a leader's sphere of influence.

- What do people you lead need from you? How can you find out?
- How will you recognize and invite different perspectives to advance new ideas, both within the institution and in efforts that engage people from outside?
- How can you create safe spaces for people to discuss issues that are important to them?
- How do you create an environment that encourages well-being for faculty, staff and students?
- What mechanisms exist within your unit to understand the needs and perspectives of faculty, staff and students, those for whom you will design and execute solutions?