

Residence Life and Education Metamorphosis Project

Department of Housing and Residence Education



Charge from Associate VP Norb Dunkel

It is time that we review RLE as a whole. Is RLE structured, purposed, and designed for today/tomorrow's University of Florida resident students? What type of personnel support will be necessary? What type of academic relationship will exist? What will be required to support and educate up to 10,000 resident students and their families at the University of Florida?

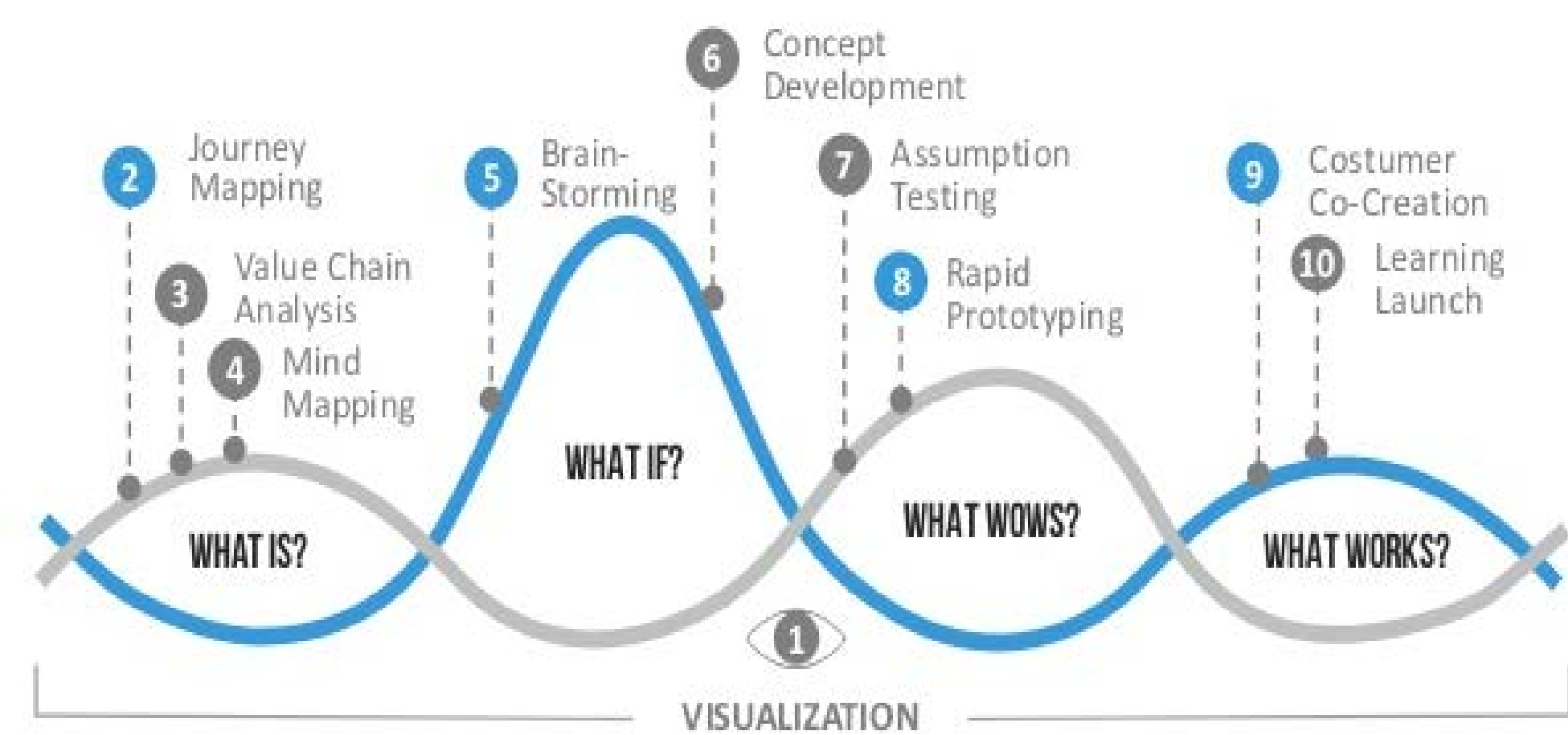
Purpose of the Metamorphosis Project

The Metamorphosis Project was designed to examine residence life and education and to develop strategic plans to align the organization systems, structure, and planning for UF Residence Life and Education. It aims to:

- Complete a holistic review of RLE's current structure
- Complete an inventory of the current resources committed to residence life and education
- Determine the needs of the University of Florida's future resident students
- Design an organizational structure to support future student needs
- Design a residential curriculum to support future student needs
- Define the type of personnel support that will be necessary
- Determine what academic relationships will be needed and create a plan of action

Framework: Design Thinking

Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.



Methodology

- Review of quantitative data, i.e. EBI, SERU, NASPA Residence Life Study
- Qualitative research, i.e. ethnographical research
- Environmental scan

Data Collection and Analysis

Ethnography was used as the methodological approach. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants.

- 20 Individual Interviews
- 5 Focus Groups: 1 Graduate Staff Group, 1 Residence Life & Education Professional Staff Group, 1 SLE Professional Staff Group, 1 Other Professional Staff Group, 1 Building Services Staff Group
- 6 Video Dairy: Student Staff including RAs, peer mentor, and peer advocate were invited to participate in a video dairy to talk about their experience as student staff.
- Thought leader interviews occurred with a group of senior executives from national and international universities.

Parents interviews
Graduate and Family Housing resident interviews
Data was analyzed to identify reoccurring themes reflecting student experience and student needs. Dozens of narratives and journeys have emerged, ultimately leading to a set of findings, personas and empathy maps used to pinpoint just where growth opportunities exist within RLE.

The environmental scan revealed key traits and trends of GenZ:

- The next generation is unique.
- Delivery of education is shifting.
- The UF student demographic will continue to change (with reductions in white students, increase in Hispanic, Asian, out of state and international students).

Insight Meeting

Through a facilitated process and by diving into the research findings, insights meeting participants developed a set of actionable insights around the experiences of students living on campus.

- Prospective students feel overwhelmed by the amount of information available and amount of time to make a decision
- The need to belong to a group is paramount for all people
- When the experience does not align with expectations, even in a small way, this has a high impact
- Facilities are crucial components of positive residents' experience

These actionable insights were prioritized to support the Department of Housing and Residence Education around two guiding principles which stakeholders identified from the research.

- Re-evaluate the role of the RA
- Values, vision, purpose in alignment with student needs and the institutions new strategic plan.

Design Meeting

During this stage, we start to consider new possibilities, trends and uncertainties. We start to envision what a desirable future might look like. This stage leverages what we've learned in the first stage to imagine these possibilities" (*Innovation Management*, 2013).

- During the design session participants worked individually and in small teams to ground themselves in the findings that emerged from What is?, identify challenges, brainstorm ideas, and begin developing solutions.
- The design session culminated in the development of 32 concepts and an additional one-hundred or so ideas that can be further shaped and combined in the next phase of the project.

Team Work Groups

Four team were built focusing on four areas emerging from the data:

- Life skills
- Soft skills
- Community
- Resource integration

Each team is comprised of RLE professional staff, a student, and some teams have campus partners. Once we had a team in place for the ideas that emerged from the larger group sessions--those around the development of life skills, soft skills, community and resource integration.

- Concepts generated from the design session were used by interdisciplinary work teams, including students, to develop priority concepts, test assumptions, built prototypes and run learning launches to gather feedback from shareholders.
- The What wows? phase of Metamorphosis will identify which strategies and tactics can most effectively align with the institutional mission to impact recruitment, retention and persistence to graduation for the University of Florida's on-campus students.

Conclusion

- This project has created a significant opportunity for Housing and Residence Education to become a design-thinking organization and continue to position themselves as committed and qualified to meet the needs of current and future students.
- This project will likely result in a new organizational structure for Residential Life and Education, and newly defined roles and responsibilities for staff.