

The Life Design Academy

A learning ecology that incubates ideas and designs a life worth living.

Why: Our intention is to help people design the best life possible.

What: The Life Design Academy is a learning community that invites fellows to turn city problems into personal projects by cross-pollinating paths with like-minded people who have projects.

Who: We have designed a spiral curriculum, complete with practicums and laboratories for participants at every level of life design. Fellows in the Life Design Academy include a wide range of folks who are:

- 1) Unclear on what their purpose in life is;
- 2) Clear about their purpose and want to transition to honor it on a full-time basis; and
- 3) Fulfilling their purpose full-time and want to take their endeavors to a deeper level of intentionality, make a broader impact and heighten their thought leadership.

The Life Design Academy is curated by Awakenings, Inc. and in partnership with Leadership Education at Duke Divinity, and Impact Hub Houston.

The Faculty: The Life Design Academy has five departments, Science, Art, Literature, Social Engineering, and Business. Each department will be led by a faculty of community members and partners we love and have led with in the city of Houston. Although they may not consider themselves academics, they are practitioners of thought leadership and experience that certify their capacity to host learning communities.

When:

YEARLY: Fellows are invited to explore a problem in the city and consider a project from their area of interest or professional ability that serves that problem. LDA will have five primary departments; *Science, Art, Literature, Social Engineering, and Business*. Each fellow will join a cohort within their department with whom they will journey for the year as they broaden their world view and direct the nature of their project.

QUARTERLY: Each quarter, The LDA will produce two exciting experiences.

1) *The LDA Renaissance Conference*: The entire academy will meet for a day-long LDA Renaissance Conference each quarter that features two 2-hour practicums and laboratories from each department. A fun lunch between the practicum and laboratory provides opportunity for students to learn from experts in professional disciplines that are different from their own to bring resonance, perspective and context to their own area of project incubation. For instance, a member of the business school may take a sculpting practicum from the School of Art in the morning of the conference and a James Baldwin practicum from the School of Literature after lunch. They will use cognition that is different from their own to make a difference in the way they see and pursue their work in the world.

2) *Multi-Sensory Progress Archiving*:

Following the Renaissance Conference, fellows will submit a quarterly assignment in multiple forms of presentation styles. From written abstracts to podcasts submissions to films, folks will track the development of their overall projects.

MONTHLY: Each department will take turns hosting a lecture and practicum from a local thought leader and vocational practitioner who leads the world from our city. The entire city will be invited to these lectures that highlight the work and life of a local leader.

WEEKLY: We will observe the Sabbath as a day of rest away from the normal rigor of life, and be refreshed by a weekly multi-sensory gathering that is rooted in sacred truth and propelled by professional and academic acumen, with a different modality and expression from week to week. After a one-hour Solace and Serenity Gathering and a community meal, the LDA will offer courses that are themed from Sunday to Sunday from 11:30am-1pm.

- 1st Sundays: Corporate Worship Gathering with a Truth Communication, Artist in Residence Suite of Music, films, etc.
- 2nd Sunday: Contemplative Practice: Our Contemplative Designer, Tia Norman, leads us through theological reflection and contemplative practice with a Suite of Music from an Artist in Residence.
- 3rd Sunday: Led by a comedian in residence, established innovative entrepreneurs will lead students through a practicum to develop principles and practices for developing their project.
- 4th Sunday: Led by a poet in residence, we will experience Cross-Pollinating Salon Meals and Conversations. Each meal will be a curated journey with a Thought Leader and questions of provocation to which they will respond.

Where: Awakenings, Inc. has been invited to join the Impact Hub Houston community as an anchor tenant. While the Impact Hub space is being built out, we are partnering with Rec Room Arts, a non-profit arts incubator, theater and bar as the launchpad for the Life Design Academy.

Outcomes

Cross-Pollination

Each participant can develop their project within an area of interest or focus, i.e. art, science, business, etc. In addition, they gain the benefit of cross-pollinating with other departments and fields of study. An artist can explore Human Anatomy with a surgeon, and an entrepreneur can learn from a sculptor.

The Life Design Academy's education model multiplies the width of the project, by helping connect with those who have the same interests and fields of study. The LDA multiplies the depth of the project, by connecting with those with different interests and gaining an inter-disciplinary perspective. Thus, each person becomes more rooted in their own understanding of their project, and why it exists.

A Gift to the City

Each year, we will submit to the city a Reliquary of Problems and Solutions that each project will explore. Each project represents the observation of a problem that everyone sees, and a solution that only the individual sees. Each project is submitted to the city for archival each year. Throughout the 12-month incubation period, each student of the academy will submit 4 assignments documenting the problems and solutions of each project, in the form of a written document, film, photo-essay, etc. The city will have records of each student's working responses to the problems they see.

Proof of Concept for Thought Leaders

Thought Leaders are given an opportunity to fully own their thought leadership and become rooted as a thought leader in our culture. Many of our faculty have unknowingly become impactful, essential experts in their respective fields, and have been so focused on their work that they are unawares. They are then then given the opportunity to develop their thought leadership in small, digestible chunks as originally-developed and designed lectures and practicums that happen monthly and quarterly. The 12-month cycle will result in providing "Proof of Concept" that these thought leaders can then use to demonstrate the effectiveness of this academic model for future opportunities.

Benefit to Partnering Institutions

This Life Design Academy can serve as proof of concept that is evidence to educational institutions. These institutions now have evidence of a new way to educate citizens through indigenously-designed local academies and an academic model that draws upon an ancient village of learning models.