A picture containing text, book

Description automatically generated

Logo

Description automatically generated

**Applying *Inside Story* Ideas at Your College**

These tools are a companion to [*Inside Story: How Community Colleges Can Use Internal Communications to Advance Transformational Change*](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf)*.* Each tool or exercise is aligned with a Key from Inside Story. Use these exercises to apply the ideas from *Inside Story* at your college. They also can help you develop or update your college’s internal communications plan.

These tools should lead to conversations about a variety of topics, including current communications practices, ideas for change, and overcoming obstacles to change.

For maximum benefit, we recommend these approaches to using *Inside Story Tools:*

* **Assemble a team.** Create an internal communications team that will discuss *Inside Story* and use the tools presented here. The team should include people with a variety of roles at the college, including individuals responsible for internal communications and members of the internal audiences you most need to reach, such as full-time and part-time faculty and staff.
* **Plan your process.** We recommend that teams use *Inside Story* and *Inside Story Tools* side by side. Many teams will choose to work through each Tool as a group. For some exercises, teams may ask individuals to complete the exercise first. Then, the team lead can identify areas for discussion based on individuals’ responses.
* **Pace yourself.** Do not try to complete all of the *Inside Story Tools* in one sitting or even one semester. Your team might meet alone or hold meetings with different internal audiences to discuss the Keys to effective internal communications. Consider focusing on one Key and its accompanying Tool per meeting. For most colleges, it will be most helpful to work through the Keys and Tools in the order they are presented.
* **Involve senior leaders.** Some activities in the toolkit require input from senior leaders. For others, you may reach conclusions or develop ideas that you choose to present to senior leaders.
* **Set goals and evaluate progress.** As with all improvement efforts, it’s important to evaluate and then refine your internal communications approach. Key #2 and Tool #2 help you connect your communications goals and strategies with your college’s institutional goals. Regularly assess whether your communications actions are helping you meet both communications and institutional goals and make appropriate adjustments. For example, keep and/or expand elements that advance your goals; change or eliminate elements that do not advance your goals.

For more information, contact Andrea Sussman, founding partner,   
Next Chapter Communications, [andrea@nextchaptercomms.com](mailto:andrea@nextchaptercomms.com).

© 2022 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. All rights reserved. Permission granted for   
reproducing with credit to Next Chapter Communications, [nextchaptercomms.com](http://www.nextchaptercomms.com/).

**Contents**

Each tool expands on ideas presented in [*Inside Story: How Community Colleges Can Use Internal Communications to Advance Transformational Change*](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf)*.* The tool numbers correspond to the 10 Keys of *Inside Story.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **TOOL** | | **PAGE** |
| 1 | Assess Current Communications Practices | [4](#Tool1) |
| 2 | Develop Communications Goals and Strategies | [8](#Tool2) |
| 3 | Create a Plan for Your College’s Why | [10](#Tool3) |
| 4 | How Effective Is Your Internal Communications Structure? | [12](#Tool4) |
| 5 | How Well Is Your College Listening? | [14](#Tool5) |
| 6 | Commit to Engaging Faculty and Staff | [18](#Tool6) |
| 7A | Commit to Listening to Students | [19](#Tool7A) |
| 7B | Practice Crafting Powerful Stories | [20](#Tool7B) |
| 8 | Brainstorm Unconventional Strategies | [21](#Tool8) |
| 9 | Reframe Challenges | [24](#Tool9) |
| 10 | Finding the Resources | [26](#Tool10) |

****

Tool #1

**Assess Current Communications Practices**

This Tool aligns with Key #1 from [*Inside Story*](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf) and uses the elements of effective internal communications on pages 4–5 of *Inside Story.*

Improving internal communications begins with evaluating current practices from the perspective of those who communicate and the audiences they aim to reach.

Complete Parts A, B, and C in order.

Part A

Identify your college’s top three strategic goals — ideally, goals that are related to transformational change or that require culture change. Write them here:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strategic Goal 1:** |  |
| **Strategic Goal 2:** |  |
| **Strategic Goal 3:** |  |

Use the following chart to indicate how important each element of communications is in terms of accomplishing the strategic goals you identified and being true to your college’s mission. If you think of additional aspects of internal communications that are important to your work, add them using the blank rows at the bottom of the chart.

| ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS **How important is each of these elements to accomplishing our college’s goals?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicate your answer in the right column using this key:** | | | | |
| 1. Very important | 2. Moderately important | 3. Slightly important | 4. Not important | |
| **Element** | | | | **Your answer** |
| 1. **Supporting one or more goals.** There should be a clear reason for taking the action. | | | |  |
| **2.** **Engaging audiences and inspiring them to act.** An internal communications action should focus on what the college wants audiences to do with the information it shares. | | | |  |
| **3.** **Facilitating a conversation.** An internal communications action should be part of a larger strategy and include a mechanism to gather feedback. It should use feedback loops so audiences know what happens next. | | | |  |
| **4. Going beyond the usual suspects.** An internal communications action should draw in people who aren’t typically involved so the college has the expertise of more people and makes sure all voices are heard, particularly those that have been marginalized in the past. | | | |  |
| **5. Using a variety of channels.** An internal communications action should not rely solely on email. It should have content that is tailored to different channels and reach each audience through channels they already use. | | | |  |
| **6. Being organized, relevant, and timely and helping audiences set priorities.** An internal communications action should help audiences manage the flow of news and content they receive every day. | | | |  |
| **7. Going beyond full-time employees.** An internal communications action should engage part-time faculty and staff as much as their full-time colleagues. | | | |  |
| **8. Including the student voice.** Students may not be the primary actors in change management, but their educational experiences matter most, and their voices should be elevated as part of these conversations. | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |

Part B

Identify whether your college’s interactions with internal audiences typically reflect the elements of effective internal communications. Make sure individuals who are part of your internal audiences take the lead in answering these questions.

| ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS **How often do our internal communications reflect these elements?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicate your answer in the right column using this key:** | | | | |
| 1. All or most of the time | 2. Sometimes | 3. Rarely | 4. Never | |
| **Element** | | | | **Your answer** |
| **1.** **Supporting one or more goals.** There should be a clear reason for taking the action. | | | |  |
| **2.** **Engaging audiences and inspiring them to act.** An internal communications action should focus on what the college wants audiences to do with the information it shares. | | | |  |
| **3.** **Facilitating a conversation.** An internal communications action should be part of a larger strategy and include a mechanism to gather feedback. It should use feedback loops so audiences know what happens next. | | | |  |
| **4. Going beyond the usual suspects.** An internal communications action should draw in people who aren’t typically involved so the college has the expertise of more people and makes sure all voices are heard, particularly those that have been marginalized in the past. | | | |  |
| **5. Using a variety of channels.** An internal communications action should not rely solely on email. It should have content that is tailored to different channels and reach each audience through channels they already use. | | | |  |
| **6. Being organized, relevant, and timely and helping audiences set priorities.** An internal communications action should help audiences manage the flow of news and content they receive every day. | | | |  |
| **7. Going beyond full-time employees.** An internal communications action should engage part-time faculty and staff as much as their full-time colleagues. | | | |  |
| **8. Including the student voice.** Students may not be the primary actors in change management, but their educational experiences matter most, and their voices should be elevated as part of these conversations. | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |

Part C

Compare your answers in Parts A and B. Use them to assess your current practice.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS **Assessing Our Current Practices** | |
| **List the elements you identified as very or moderately important** (responses 1 or 2 from Part A) | **List the elements your audiences said happen all or most of the time** (response 1 from Part B) |
| **Based on the answers above, which aspects of your current practice are working well? List them here**. | |
| **How might you build on these practices that are working well? Write your ideas here.** | |
| **Based on the answers above, what are some areas for improvement in your current practice? List them here.** | |
| **Reflect on your current communications efforts. Are there aspects of your current practice that may not be the best use of time and resources? If so, list them here.** | |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #2

Develop Communications Goals and Strategies

This Tool aligns with Key #2 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Your college’s internal communications plan should be grounded in the college’s strategic goals. This exercise will help you connect your institutional goals with your communications goals and strategies, which are essential parts of any communications plan.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institutional goals** | What the college hopes to accomplish |
| **Communications goals** | What the communications team hopes to accomplish to support the college’s goals |
| **Communications strategies** | How the communications team will accomplish its goals |
| **Communications actions (or tactics or activities)** | How the communications team will execute its strategies (e.g., using specific various communications channels or vehicles). Note: This exercise does not address communications actions/tactics/activities. |

This example shows an institutional goal along with a communications goal and communications strategies that support it.

***EXAMPLE***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **College program or initiative: Implementing Guided Pathways** | | |
| **Institutional goal for this program or initiative** | **Communications goal** | **Communications strategies** |
| Develop program maps for guided pathways with faculty taking the lead in this work. | Inspire faculty to participate in mapping by communicating the impact of guided pathways and explaining the essential role of faculty in mapping. | * Use data to show the need at our college and the impact of guided pathways at other colleges. * Have students tell faculty about challenges they have faced and explain how guided pathways would improve their experience. * Provide examples of mapping processes other colleges have used. * Quote faculty members who can speak reliably about this work. |

Use the chart below to begin developing communications goals and strategies that support your college’s institutional goals.

1. Choose one program or initiative and write it in the box at the top of the chart.
2. In the left column, write at least two goals the college has established for that program or initiative. (Use one row for each goal; add rows if needed.)
3. In the center column, write one or more communications goals that support the institutional goal.
4. In the right column, write one or more communications strategies that your team can use to execute each strategy.

Duplicate this chart if you want to develop communications goals and strategies for additional programs or initiatives.

***YOUR COLLEGE***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **College program or initiative:** | | |
| **Institutional goal for this program or initiative** | **Communications goal(s)** | **Communications strategies** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #3

Create a Plan for Your College’s Why

This Tool aligns with Key #3 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Note: This exercise requires the input of the college president.

Assess the Status of Your College’s Why

Answer these two questions:

1. If you walked through campus and talked with 10 randomly picked people, how many of them would be able to articulate your college’s mission and values?
2. Are students the star of your college’s mission and values?

If you are satisfied with the answers, then skip this Tool. If you are not satisfied with your answers, then this exercise can help you develop a plan to address your concerns.

Develop a Plan for Your College’s Why

Use the information below to complete the chart on the next page.

**1. Current Status**

Which of these best describes your college?

* Our college’s mission and values are well defined but poorly known.
* Our college’s mission and values are poorly defined, are outdated, or need to be revised for another reason.
* Our college’s mission and values do not put students at the center of our work.

**2. Goal(s)**

Identify what you would like to accomplish for your college’s Why. Don’t be afraid to think big, but be aware that any work involving mission and vision likely will require input from a range of people in the college. Examples of goals for this effort include:

* Updating the mission and values, if needed.
* Better communicating the college’s mission and vision to everyone on campus.
* Weaving the college’s mission and vision into existing conversations and activities so it is better connected to new and ongoing activities.
* Better using the mission and values to make the college’s work more coherent.
* Better using the mission and values to drive action.
* Better using the mission and values in hiring so new employees fit with the college’s culture.

**3. Action(s)**

Identify one or more actions your team will take. Examples of actions include:

* Proposing a process to help faculty, staff, and students learn, internalize, and use the college’s mission and values.
* Engaging senior leaders in a discussion about the need to clarify the college’s goals and mission. If they agree, beginning to engage the broader campus community.
* Engaging senior leaders in a discussion about the need to revisit the college’s goals and mission. If they agree, beginning to engage the broader campus community.

**4. Next Steps**

What are the steps to implement your action(s)? Be clear about who will be responsible for each step and when it will happen.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action Plan for Your College’s Why** | | | |
| **1. Current Status** |  | | |
| **2. Goal(s)** |  | | |
| **3. Action(s)** |  | | |
| **4. Next Steps** | | **Who is responsible?** | **When will it happen?** |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |
|  | |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #4

How Effective Is Your Internal Communications Structure?

This Tool aligns with Key #4 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Colleges with coherent internal communications have clear, established structures for sharing information with internal stakeholders. See pages 11–12 and page 14 of *Inside Story* for examples of colleges’ internal communications structures.

Note: This Tool focuses only on structures for sharing information; subsequent Tools focus on feedback and engagement.

Use **Chart A** to assess key functions of your college’s internal communications structure.

* Indicate how often your key audiences experience each outcome of strong internal communications. If you think of additional outcomes that are important to your work, add them using the blank rows at the bottom of the chart.
* Review your responses to determine if your college’s structure is working well, needs a few tweaks, or needs an overhaul.

Use **Chart B** to plan next steps for developing an internal communications structure or improving/expanding the one you have, including who will be responsible for each step and when it will happen. Next steps might include reviewing data about whether audiences read or respond to current internal communications, rethinking how your college uses email and other communications vehicles, and considering your timing for sharing information with various internal audiences.

Chart A

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| OUTCOMES OF STRONG INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRUCTURES **How often do our internal audiences experience these outcomes?** | | | | |
| **Indicate your answer in the right column using this key:** | | | | |
| 1. All or most of the time | 2. Sometimes | 3. Rarely | 4. Never | |
| **Element** | | | | **Your answer** |
| 1. Audiences receive the information they need in a coherent way that does not overwhelm them. | | | |  |
| 2. Audiences receive information that is targeted to their specific needs. | | | |  |
| 3. Audiences know when to expect regular communications. | | | |  |
| 4. The people most affected by decisions learn about those decisions first. | | | |  |
| 5. Audiences read, watch, or listen to the information we share. | | | |  |
| 6. Audiences respond to the information we share. | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |
|  | | | |  |

Chart B

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Next steps for your internal communications structure** | **Who is responsible?** | **When will it happen?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #5

How Well Is Your College Listening?

This Tool aligns with Key #5 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

How well is your college listening? Use the charts on the following page to identify areas where it may be helpful to be more intentional about getting feedback and following up with audiences — and to plan your next steps. See pages 15–17 of *Inside Story* for examples of how colleges ask for and follow up on feedback.

Identify your college’s top three strategic goals — ideally, goals that are related to transformational change or that require culture change. You can repeat the goals you used for Tool #1.

Complete one pair of charts for each strategic goal.

**Chart A**

* Write the goal in the box at the top of the chart.
* In the left column, list activities your college uses to engage faculty and staff in accomplishing this strategic goal. Remember to think about the full range of faculty and staff — full-time and part-time, but also across all areas of the institution, such as the business office, the physical plant, food service, and the bookstore.
* Use the remaining columns to indicate whether your college gathers feedback related to this activity and if your college follows up on what it hears.

**Chart B**

* List next steps for listening related to this goal, including who will be responsible for each step and when it will happen. Next steps might include identifying new ways to listen, establishing feedback loops, helping faculty and staff engage with senior leaders, and so on.

Chart A for Strategic Goal 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Goal 1:** | | |
| **Activities related to this goal (one per row)** | **Answer Yes or No. Does your college:** | |
| **Gather feedback?** | **Follow up on feedback?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Chart B for Strategic Goal 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Next steps for listening:  Strategic Goal 1** | **Who is responsible?** | **When will it happen?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Chart A for Strategic Goal 2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Goal 2:** | | |
| **Activities related to this goal (one per row)** | **Answer Yes or No. Does your college:** | |
| **Gather feedback?** | **Follow up on feedback?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Chart B for Strategic Goal 2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Next steps for listening:  Strategic Goal 2** | **Who is responsible?** | **When will it happen?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Chart A for Strategic Goal 3

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Goal 3:** | | |
| **Activities related to this goal (one per row)** | **Answer Yes or No. Does your college:** | |
| **Gather feedback?** | **Follow up on feedback?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Chart B for Strategic Goal 3

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Next steps for listening:  Strategic Goal 3** | **Who is responsible?** | **When will it happen?** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #6

Commit to Engaging Faculty and Staff

This Tool aligns with Key #6 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Note: This exercise requires the input of senior administrators.

The chart below lists a variety of ways college presidents and other administrators engage faculty and staff on their campuses, as reported on pages 19–22 of *Inside Story.* It also has a few blank lines for ideas of your own.

Working with senior administrators, choose at least two ideas that your college’s senior leaders will commit to doing on a regular basis. For each idea your college will pursue, write the name of the person who will do it in the center column and note the frequency with which they will do it in the right column. Then add these actions to individuals’ calendars to make sure they happen.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Possible ways to listen  (choose at least two)** | **Who will do this?** | **How frequently? (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually)** |
| Monthly meetings or town halls for all faculty/staff that include extensive time for questions |  |  |
| Annual meetings with each department on campus |  |  |
| Stopping in to departments for no reason other than to listen |  |  |
| Book groups to discuss books related to upcoming changes or equity |  |  |
| All-faculty and all-staff retreats to look at data and solve problems (like Amarillo College’s General Assembly, described on page 20 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
| Large-team gatherings to make big decisions (like Valencia College’s high-bandwidth meetings, described on page 20 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
| Courageous conversations (like San Jacinto’s Equity Chats, described on page 33 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #7A

Commit to Listening to Students

This Tool aligns with Key #7 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Note: This exercise requires the input of senior administrators.

The chart below lists a variety of ways colleges listen to students on their campuses, as reported on page 23 and 25–26 of *Inside Story.* It also has a few blank lines for ideas of your own.

Working with senior administrators, choose at least one idea that your college’s senior leaders will commit to doing or supporting on a regular basis. For each idea your college will pursue, write the name of the person who will do it in the center column and note the frequency with which they will do it in the right column. Then add these actions to individuals’ calendars to make sure they happen.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Possible ways to listen  (choose at least one)** | **Who will do this?** | **How frequently? (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually)** |
| Student surveys |  |  |
| Student focus groups |  |  |
| Town hall events that focus on hearing from students on issues related to upcoming changes or equity |  |  |
| Involving students in marketing efforts (like Rockland Community College’s Street Team, described on pages 12 and 25–26 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
| Involving students in surveying and conducting focus groups with students (like Rockland Community College’s Street Team, described on pages 12 and 25–26 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
| Courageous conversations (like San Jacinto’s Equity Chats, described on page 33 of *Inside Story)* |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Logo

Description automatically generated**

Tool #7B

Practice Crafting Powerful Stories

This Tool aligns with Key #7 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Note: This activity can be done in a small group or at a large gathering. At a large gathering, divide participants into groups of six or eight people. Each person will need paper and a pen. Allow 45 minutes to one hour; a larger group will need more time.

In this activity, participants will practice crafting one- to two-minute stories related to a change effort. Before the gathering, identify one or two topics for your stories. For example, if your college is developing academic maps, you might need stories about students who lost time because they did not know which courses to take. If your college is going to start using a corequisite education model, you might be interested in stories about faculty members’ or students’ experiences with developmental education.

1. Explain the goal for the activity, including the topic(s) for stories. Using “The Art of Crafting a Powerful Story” on page 27 of *Inside Story*, discuss the elements of an effective story, the tools that support effective stories, and how to maintain respect in telling stories. Ask participants to contribute their thoughts about what makes stories powerful.

2. Invite participants to take a few minutes to brainstorm ideas for stories related to the topic(s). For this part of the activity, participants will work alone. Give participants prompts to help them think of ideas. You may need to tailor prompts based on your goals, but these provide a starting point:

* What about [topic] do you find most compelling or concerning?
* When have you seen students experience problems because of [topic]?
* When have you seen students succeed because of [topic]?

3. After participants have had time to think on their own, ask them to divide into pairs. Each person should tell their partner a one- to two-minute story, and each person should give their partner feedback. Allow enough time for both people to tell their stories and for the pairs to discuss them.

4. Have the groups of six to eight come back together, and ask participants to share their now-refined stories with their small group. Allow time for discussion and further refinement.

5. If time allows, reconvene the larger group and invite a few people to tell their stories. You also can ask people to write or record their stories so others can hear them as well.

Logo

Description automatically generated

Tool #8

Brainstorm Unconventional Strategies

This Tool aligns with Key #8 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

The three charts in this Tool will help you think through the many ways your college currently communicates with internal audiences — and explore less conventional ways to engage them.

Identify Current Internal Communications Approaches

Use the following chart to list your current internal communications vehicles and approaches. On the left side, list the conventional vehicles, such as email, newsletters, websites, videos, social media, presentations, convenings, meetings, and informal conversations. On the right side, list the less conventional approaches your college currently uses to engage internal audiences. (For examples of other colleges’ less conventional strategies, see pages 28–29 of *Inside Story.*)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Identify current internal communications approaches** | |
| **More conventional vehicles** | **Less conventional approaches** |
|  |  |

Brainstorm Ideas for New Communications Approaches

Use the following chart to begin thinking more broadly about communications. Brainstorm ideas for new, less conventional approaches your college can use to engage internal audiences. Do not worry about how effective each idea might be. Just list ideas.

|  |
| --- |
| **Brainstorm ideas for less conventional approaches** |
|  |

Determine Next Steps

Evaluate the ideas and approaches in the first two charts. Is it time to update, discontinue, or expand any of your current modes of internal communications? Should you pursue any of the new, less conventional ideas you brainstormed? Using the bullets below as your guide, complete the chart on the following page.

*Note: This exercise is not designed to create a full communications plan. The goal is to generate ideas, evaluate them, and make a plan to act on the ones you want to pursue so good ideas do not get lost.*

* Column 1: Write each current vehicle or new idea (one per row).
* Column 2: What action will you take? Choose one of the following:
  + Continue as is
  + Update/revise
  + Pursue in the short term
  + Pursue in the long term
  + Drop
* Column 3: Add details about planning next steps, as needed.
* Column 4: For ideas that need further action, indicate who is responsible for next steps.
* Column 5: For ideas that need further action, indicate the timing for next steps.

| **Determine Next Steps** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1. Current vehicle or new idea** | **2. Action:**   * **Continue as is** * **Update/revise** * **Pursue in the short term** * **Pursue in the long term** * **Drop** | **3. Details** | **4. Who?** | **5. When?** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Logo

Description automatically generated

Tool #9

Reframe Challenges

This Tool aligns with Key #9 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

We often think about how to step around the unexpected danger zones in our work. But for strong communications, the better play is to seek them out and address them. On pages 31–36, *Inside Story* provides examples of colleges seeking out rumors and addressing them, collaborating and compromising, addressing equity, and standing firm when the situation warrants it.

Strong communicators reframe challenges as opportunities to learn and improve. When colleges approach transformational change with this mindset, stakeholders at all levels of the college will feel uncomfortable at times. But communicating effectively can help all parties make peace with this discomfort so they can continue to advance the college’s agenda.

Use the following chart to identify ways you can use internal communications to address challenges related to implementing change.

In the left column, list challenges related to implementing transformational change at your college. Then think about communications actions that can help address each challenge, including current actions and new ideas.

As you work through this exercise, you may find it helpful to prioritize challenges (e.g., most to least urgent) or categorize them (e.g., personnel-related, budget-related, and so on).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Challenges related to implementing transformational change** | **Communications actions that can help address these challenges** | |
| **Current actions** | **New ideas** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Logo

Description automatically generated

Tool #10

Finding the Resources

This Tool aligns with Key #10 from [Inside Story](https://www.nextchaptercomms.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Next-Chapter-Inside-Story-12102021.pdf).

Internal communications is an investment that ultimately pays dividends in the student experience. It helps colleges better serve their missions, their employees, and their students.

Internal communications also requires resources. Some colleges invest money to hire staff, set up robust internal communications structures, and host college-wide events that promote collaboration. Other colleges focus more on using staff time, particularly the time of senior leaders, to engage faculty and staff members.

What new internal communications activities, structures, or staffing might help your college with its transformational change efforts? Use the left column of the chart below to begin brainstorming ideas. Use the right columns to begin estimating the investment (time and/or money) that the new ideas would require. Use ballpark figures or ranges for these estimates. This activity is designed to begin a discussion, not create a budget.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **New internal communications activities, structures, or staffing** | **Estimated investment required** | |
| **Time (who/how much)** | **Money** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |