



Shift Power. Share Power.

An Engagement Framework for Transformational Change
With and For Today's Students

Who knows better about what students need and seek from their college to succeed than students themselves?

We hear so often that higher education is failing to meet the diverse needs and dreams of its students. Deep-seated systemic issues create disparities in student success. To truly address these root problems and make higher education equitable, many institutions are aiming to level the playing field for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. But are they involving the very students who experience these issues firsthand in their change process?

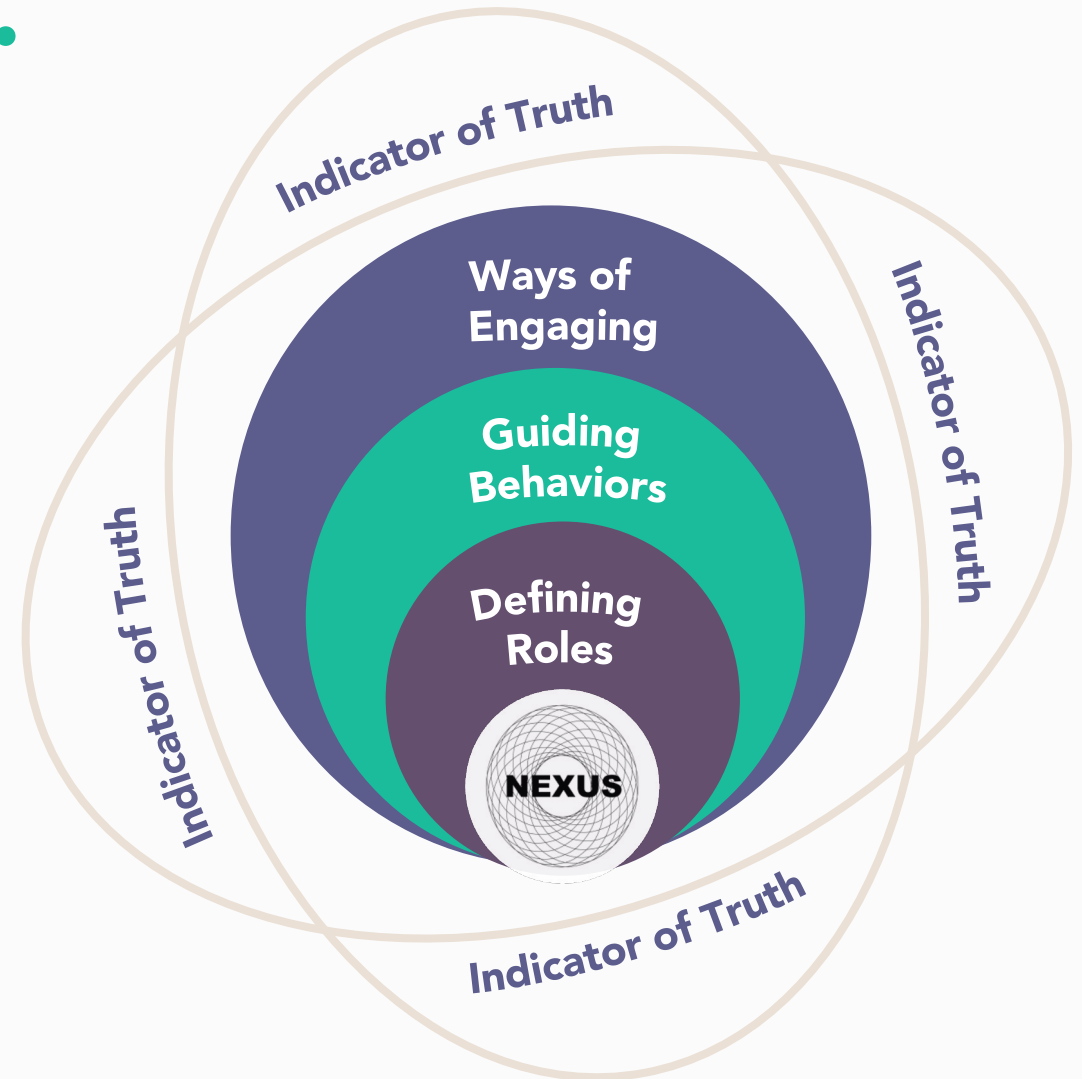
To live up to the promise of higher education as a force for good, a nationwide movement is reimagining fairness in education. This new approach:

1. Recognizes students as the foremost experts in their own experiences.
2. Acknowledges that students possess unmatched insights into systemic problems.
3. Embraces the fresh, fearless perspectives students bring to the table.

The following **Shift Power. Share Power.** student engagement framework, created with design partners Kinetic Seeds and Designing for Equity, Tides Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Intermediaries for Scale, and 63 students from across the nation, aims to close the gap in student success. It's a tool to help colleges and universities make significant changes that truly grasp and address students' experiences. It guarantees that students' thoughts and participation are valued and integrated into change efforts. Students deserve to have a voice, and this framework will help make that happen.

Shift Power. Share Power.

A shared philosophy and approach to strengthening student voice and engagement in service of transformational change.



Framework Elements

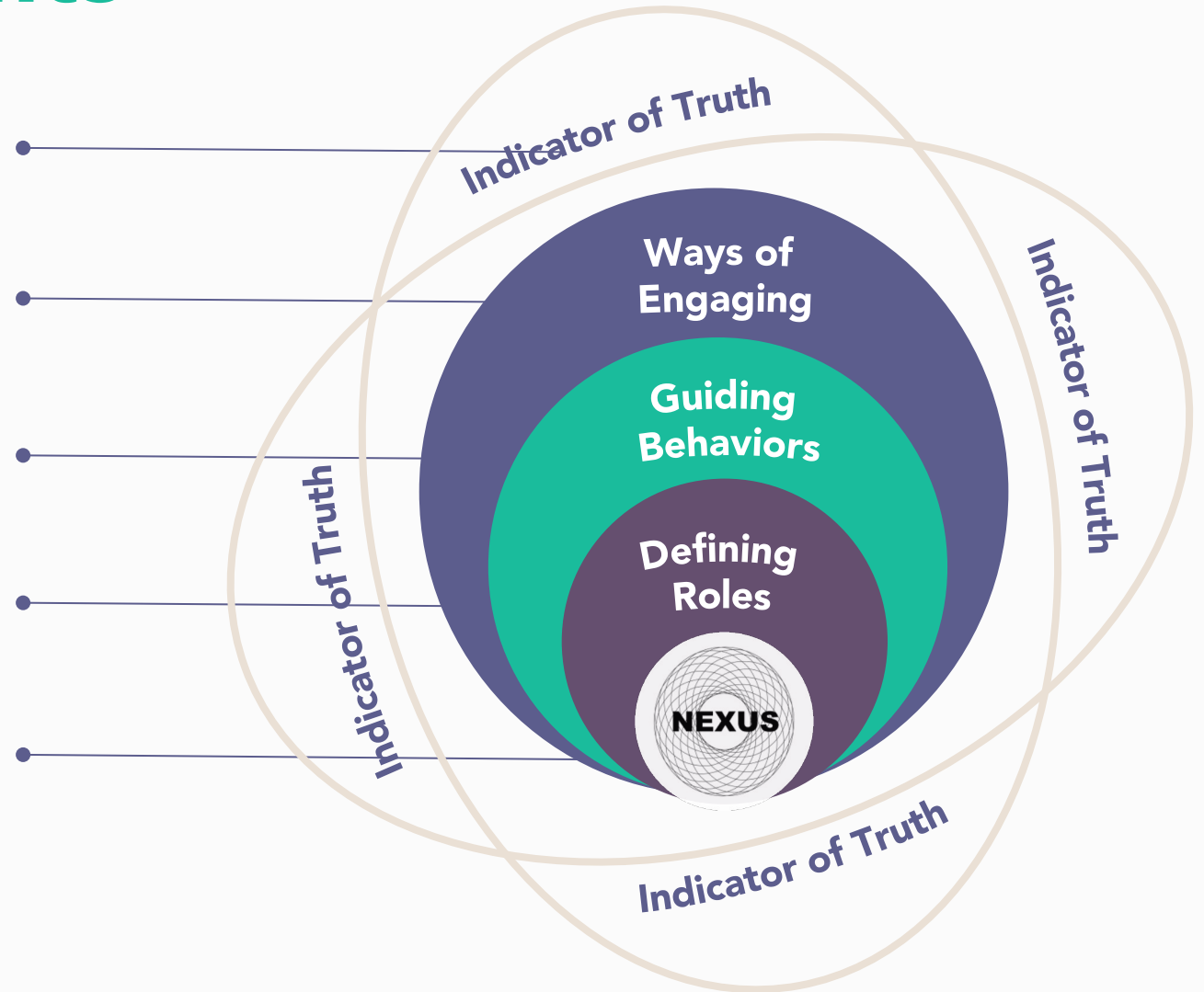
Indicators of Truth showcase what students should experience or takeaway from their engagement within transformation efforts.

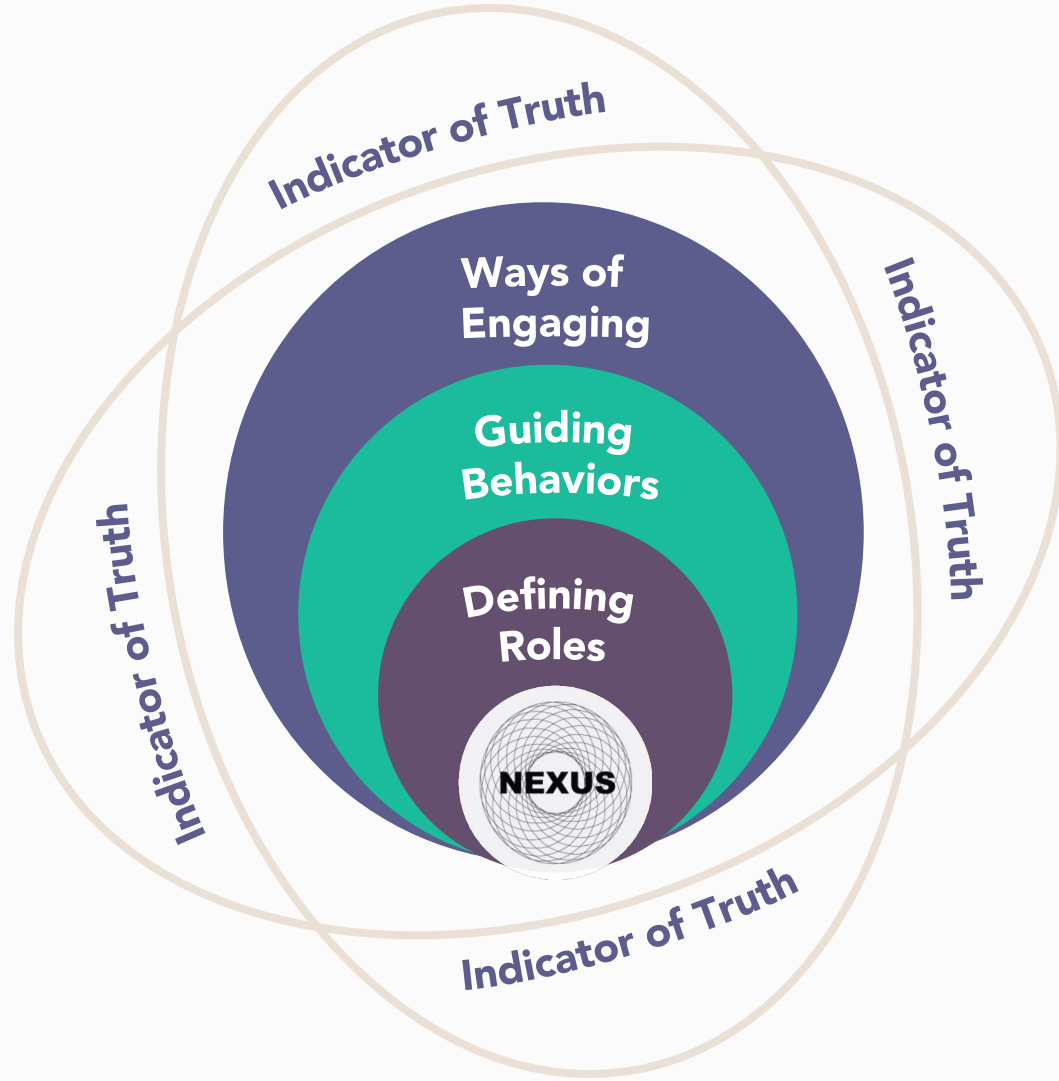
Ways of Engaging offer different opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes.

Guiding Behaviors offer a directional force for trustworthy coordination of student voice and engagement activities.

Defining Roles represent the functions we must serve as students are engaged in transformation efforts.

The Nexus is the center of intention for strengthening student voice and engagement in service of transformation.

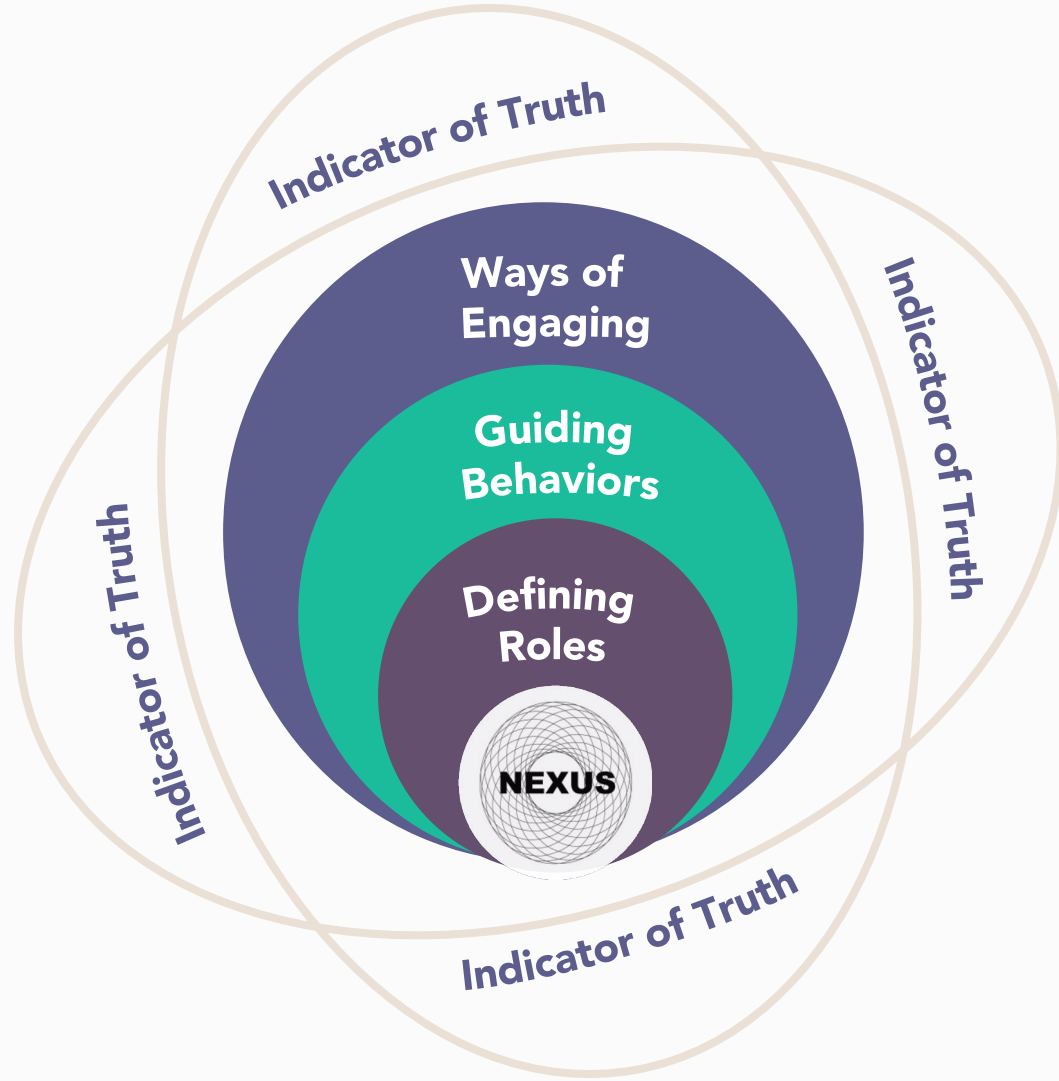




Nexus

The center of intention for strengthening student voice and engagement in service of transformation.

To strengthen student voice and engagement in service of institutional transformation, higher education professionals must **shift power by intentionally collaborating and power sharing with students**, so that together they can learn, interrogate, examine, design, decide, and implement changes that advance equity and student success. This cannot be an “add-on” to existing strategies. It must be a throughline in all approaches to institutional transformation.



Defining Roles

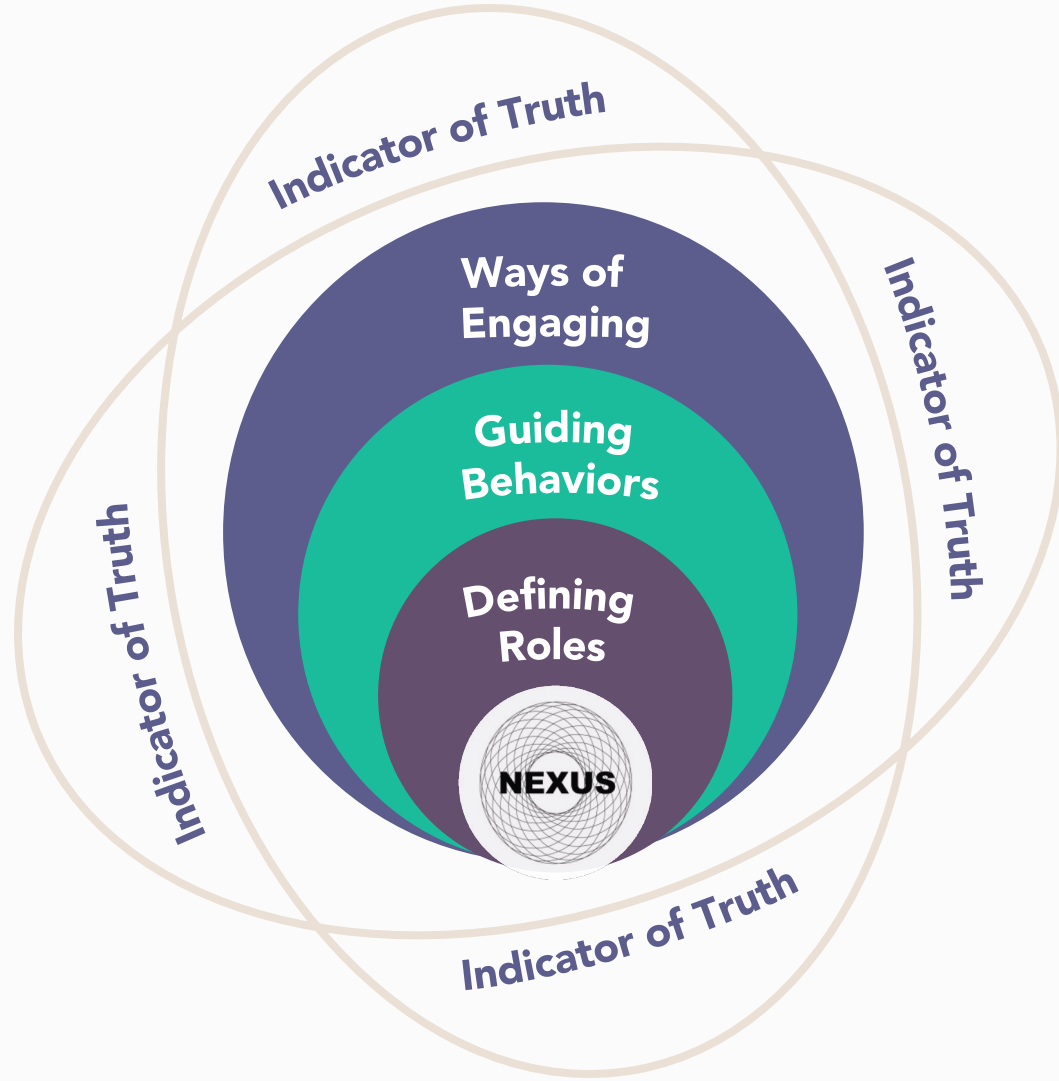
The functions leaders, faculty, and staff must all serve as students are engaged in transformation efforts.

Responsible Co-creator acknowledges that while students should play a profound role in transformation efforts, they are not responsible for the outcome. That burden is shouldered by us.

Tireless Seeker recognizes that the lived experience of students is vibrant and alive with stories. We ask humbly, take only what is given to us, and use it with the utmost care and respect.

Privilege Deconstructor leads with equity-mindedness. We question social structures that aim to preserve a hierarchy of human value, reflect upon processes that produce inequities, and take action to disrupt the status quo.

Conscientious Change-Agent tames the inclination to act with urgency, by incorporating initiative, responsibility, vigilance, and love into our practice to end the harm educational systems have caused systematically marginalized students.



Guiding Behaviors

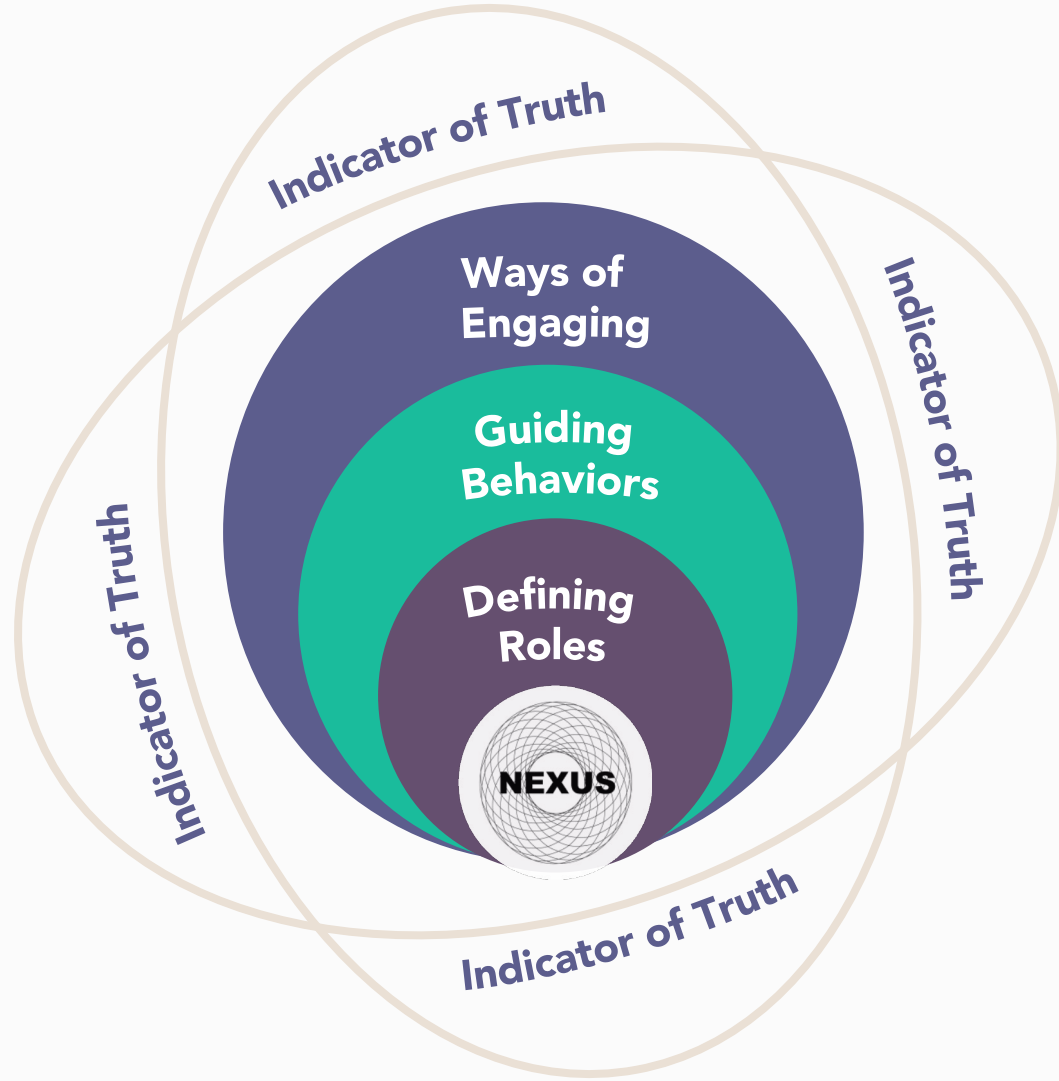
Directional force for trustworthy coordination of student voice and engagement activities

Make time to reconsider our own organizational design and professional capacity to create opportunities—in all shapes and sizes—for strengthening student voice and engagement in transformational change.

Expose our intentions and actions transparently because we know that engaging directly with decision-makers bears risk for some students and that their act of sharing takes courage and vulnerability.

De-escalate patterns of harm with the understanding that this is not an extraction process to validate our own thinking, but rather a demonstration of mutual reciprocity where we offer our open-hearted selves to learn from— and grow with— today's students.

Acknowledge and embrace the discomfort that naturally arises from critique and challenge—while welcoming the gift that students are presenting—as we dare to try something new.



Ways of Engaging

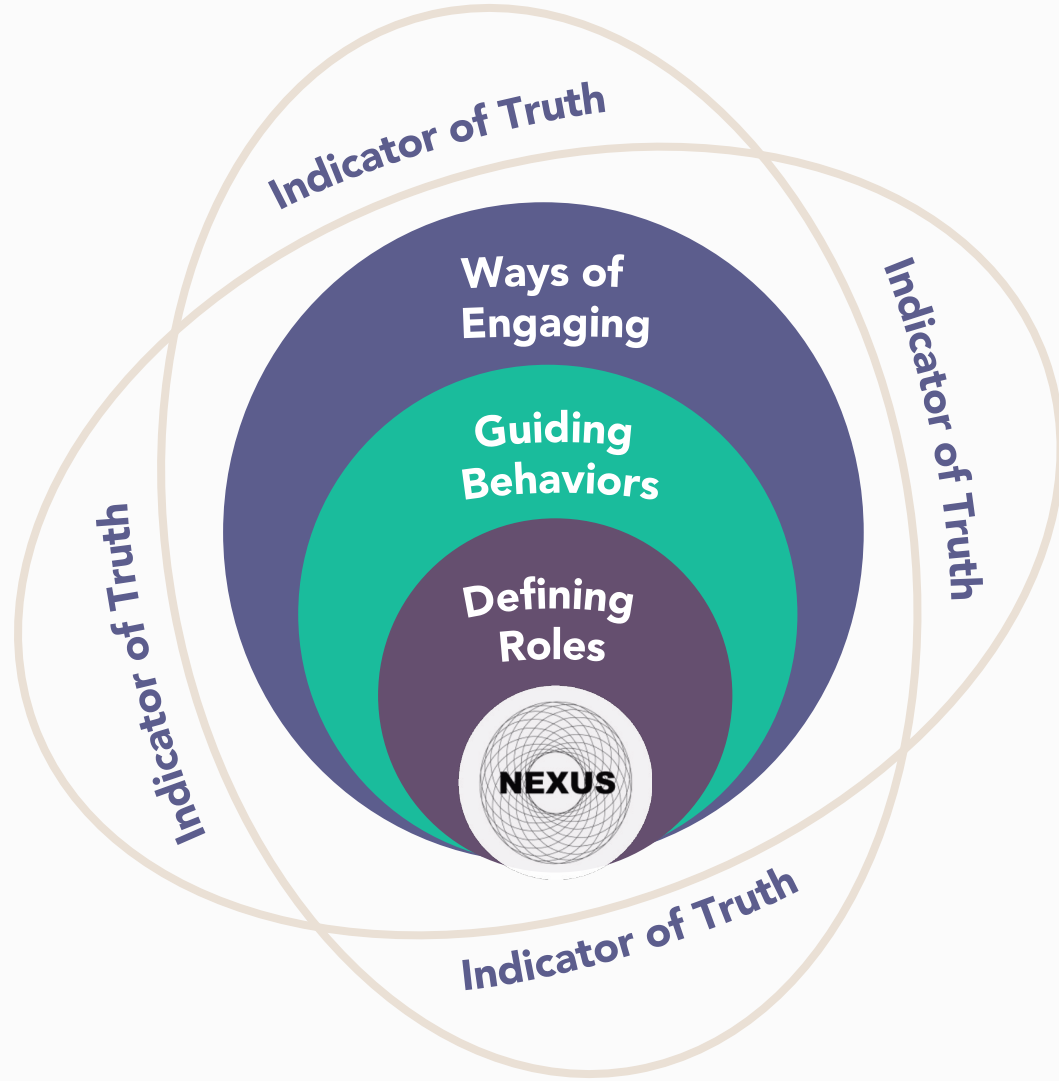
Opportunities for students to participate in decision-making processes in ways students deem fit.

Informative participation means we make decisions based on an understanding of the lived experience of new majority learners gleaned both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Co-creative participation means we engage students fully as partners playing an active and collaborative role in the development and testing of new ideas and strategies.

Student-led participation means we proactively put students in the driver's seat of change-making efforts as academic and administrative level expertise become resources for students to drawn upon.

Decision-maker participation means students have a recognized and formalized role in decision-making processes.



Indicators of Truth

Showcase what students should experience or takeaway from their engagement within transformation efforts.

Culturally appropriate and accessible opportunities that meet students where they are at, are sensitive to their values, acknowledge safety concerns, and encourage participation in a variety of formats/modalities.

Increased agency, autonomy, and authority in decision-making processes that affect their student experience.

Fair compensation that is both monetary and supports the development of new skills and competencies that fosters students' ability to become change-agents in the world.

Amplified sense of belonging that generates feelings of security and support such that students can bring their authentic selves to this effort of transformation.

Model Equity with Student-Centered Transformation

These are crucial times. The challenges posed by COVID-19 and ongoing racial and civil unrest have underscored the urgency of addressing the injustices prevalent in our society. Higher education has the potential to bring about positive change for all, but we must actively support equitable transformational change that benefits every student. The first step in this process is to address existing power structures.

By adopting a new model of power-sharing with students, we can pave the way for equity in higher education. This involves recognizing students as experts in their own experiences, acknowledging their invaluable insights into systemic issues, and embracing their innovative perspectives. Together, we can chart a path toward a more equitable future for higher education, where the voices and experiences of all students are valued and included.

Authors of this Framework

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Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge [Tides](#) for sponsoring the development of this framework. We express our deepest gratitude to members of [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Intermediaries for Scale](#) (IFS) initiative, the IFS Student Voice Committee, and especially the students who generously shared their time, experiences, and expertise to inform the key elements of the framework.

Access the Full Report

Flanagan, C., & Dixon, J. (2022, August). [*Shift Power. Share Power. An engagement framework for transformational change with and for today's new majority learners.*](#)

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