



LEARNER-CENTERED DESIGN AND PERSONAS

CONCEPT

Learner-centered design: Problem solving that puts real people at the center of development processes to create products/services tailored to the audience ([HBS Online](#)).

Persona: A representation of the learners we were trying to reach.

INSIGHT

Personas are a game-changer for designing offerings, as they humanize target populations.

THE ALAMO COLLEGES STORY

OPPORTUNITY UNDERSTAND LEARNERS | INCLUSIVE MARKETING

Alamo Colleges needed to ensure that the value proposition for our micro-credential initiative matched the needs of our target population - potential new learners stuck in dead-end jobs, eager to improve their social and economic mobility, and not currently served by traditional offerings.

We needed to align with Alamo Colleges' mission of "empowering our diverse communities for success" by ensuring the communities we serve could see themselves through our messages and marketing. Our aim was to connect learners to Alamo Colleges' offerings and have those learners see each Alamo Colleges program as relevant and achievable.

PIVOT CREATE PERSONAS

We worked with [Education Design Lab](#) (the Lab), to develop personas that would help us embed learner-centered design into our micro-credential initiative.

We designed three specific personas: Ariana, Tashia, and AJ.

We engaged in multiple design sessions with the Lab and reviewed sample personas. We developed our set of personas by:

- identifying our learners,
- assessing their needs, and
- creating learning environments to support success.



Meet Ariana

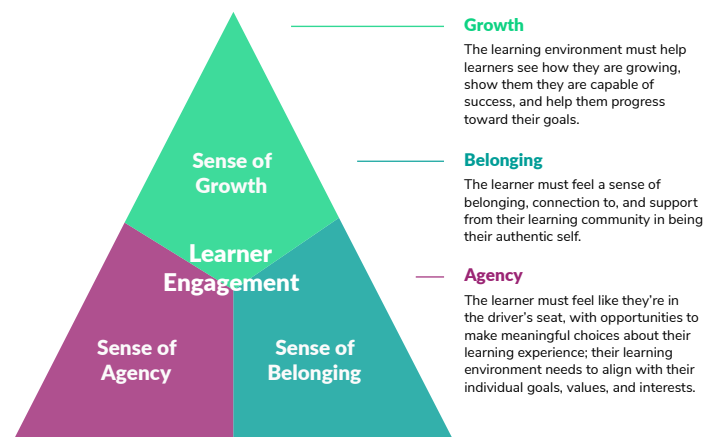
- 25 year-old Latina female
- Lifelong San Antonio resident
- English as Second Language
- Lives at home with her mother and three siblings
- Some college, no degree—completed four (4) courses
- Works two jobs
- Must work and fit in school
- Wants to own her own business
- Does not know where to begin

APPROACH GROUND EFFORTS IN PERSONAS

Personas guided our planning and implementation process. We persistently utilized personas at each stage of the process and came back to them every time we encountered an obstacle. The personas helped us to be consistently learner-centered. We shared the personas with employers, colleagues, and partners to help others understand who we were trying to serve and how these stakeholders could contribute to the process. Personas also helped faculty and administrators embrace learner-centered design, specifically for the purpose of reaching unserved and underserved segments of our community.

FRAMEWORK LEARNER IDENTITY + LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Each persona was developed using the Lab's **Learner Engagement Framework** (see visual) as our baseline tool. This framework is based on the ethic that "a learner's ability to engage deeply in their learning is an outcome of the relationship that exists between each learner's unique identity and their learning environment" (**Education Design Lab**). The framework also aligns to Alamo Colleges' focus on learner assets rather than deficits.



HOW TO DEVELOP PERSONAS

1. Center your persona work in your organization's diversity, equity and inclusion work.
2. Identify the target population you want to serve.
3. Use design sessions and the Learner Engagement Framework to develop personas that represent your community, especially those not taking advantage of your offerings.
4. Make personas visible to all staff and faculty.
5. Create a culture in which personas are central to each individual's, team's, and department's planning and curricular design.
6. Update personas as your organization learns more about your new learners.



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