

The University of the Arts  
Strategic Planning Group Mission Statement Workshop  
Breakout session – facilitated by Erin Elman  
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Question 1: What are the biggest changes happening in society and the world today that will have the greatest impact on our students' lives and careers?

*Specifically thinking about our students – those drawn to an urban center*

- Automation, artificial intelligence, the fact that in the not too distant future getting a job in the traditional sense of the world will be extremely difficult, the plus side to that is thinking differently because everything is changing. Never in my lifetime has the change been so extreme. The devices and things that will be the hot items haven't been thought of yet so the idea of being able to see this differently..."the best way to predict the future is to create it...the makers moment. As misfit as artists often feel this might be the moment they are the best fit for creating the future
- Student debt – how much it costs to go to college. We owe a lot to the students because they are paying a lot for it. It has to be a little bit practical, they are here because they want to learn about their passion but they need to learn how to dovetail it into a business. See pieces of business coming into the school. The gig economy isn't working anymore
- Artists are expected to be their own bookkeepers, marketers, etc. And we aren't preparing them for that
- Tuition grades and how discounting is performing – a lot of people are no longer going to college because they have sticker price shock. It will be interesting to see how that evolves over the next two year – a bubble that is going to burst
- Sustainability I would add to that question – heading towards a crisis point that the younger generation is going to feel particularly strongly. How as producers we fit into that model either as something that maintains a status pro of production or helps to address some of those issues
- As a theater maker hybridity has also been valued but now it is required. Hybridity-good at lots of things and knows how to merge and market those things. Students who can juggle, do accounting, sing and produce
- It's not enough to be a singular artist anymore – artists need to have multiple skill sets, business skills

*What do we think about society and culture and its relationship to the arts? Positive or Negative*

- In graphic design in particular there has been this great democratization of it. People who want to be designers who are willing to pay for a design education have to have a reason why people should hire you instead of asking their nephew or going to the corner store. It's been devalued.

- NY – they have just appointed a teaching artist in every segment, penal, hospital, etc
- Traditional professional practices as were developed in the last 20 years, because of accessibility or access to artists work, while they are relevant it is a lot more open than it used to be – access to an artist and artist's work
- Funding of the arts has dried up – now required even more for students/artists to generate their own funding
- For theater artists – cheaper in a diy sense, can promote through a computer – a built in audience. One positive impact from social media even though there are many negatives. How we teach collaboration and improvisational problem solving is exceptionally valued in the marketplace – would be extremely valuable to all students across the university. Dynamic to know how to fix something right in front of you
- Rosi would say 10 years we were making the argument for why you should come have an arts education to high school parents instead now they understand that but are much savvier customers – ask about what the networking opportunities are. More educated consumer about what an art education could bring but demands are high
- Higher education scorecard put arts education on the same scale as an enormous state school – enormous change that we have to deal with
- DIY culture – Philadelphia is the place for that in the sense of urban transportation. One of the few places where you have access to NY and DC and these old warehouses to house collectives and studios. Lots of groups that have expanded around the country. Create your own platform that is a change, co-operative artist gallery or even just a pop up show in your living room.
- Theater community is very similar in that there is a lot of self-generated work and support
- The diy is really great for new graduates...when I graduated as an illustrator it was hard to tell people you were an illustrator, now you can have a great instagram and people can find you
- Industrial design network is huge in Philadelphia. Ex. Yarn networks
- I think one of the biggest changes from a librarians perspective is the quantity and quality of resources and the quality of research. It used to be easier to understand when something was credible but now there is so much available immediately that it can be very hard to evaluate what you are seeing. Students have to be more discerning and work harder to find quality information or even to understand what is quality information. If you can teach a student to be skeptical (fact checking and knowing what your voice is) establishing a knee jerk reaction to evaluate is hard to do.
- Quantity of opinion is hard to go through – polarization of dialogue (cultural shift) Respond to by encouraging nuance but we'll see if that has a societal impact
- Polarization of either right or wrong or one opinion versus another opinion. Is so much driving this moment. Much less of a discourse but more of a shouting in each others faces. No room for hearing and understanding what someone is saying. Our students online profiles have existed since they were 12 and under and it follows them everywhere so if they make one mistake it can follow up.
- Reminding students how to present complications and questions.

*One student said a mission should address our students emotional well-being. What are some changes in the world effect that aspect for our students.*

- People feel more lonely and disconnected than ever even with all the connections we are overwhelmed with. Roots aren't as deep these days
- The level of anxiety related problems with students has gone up hugely. So many students frozen and unable to make a decision. Not willing to take a risk because they don't know if it is the right thing
- Generation that comes out of a standardized testing generation so things are either right or wrong. Students want to know exactly what to do to get it right or do the best, students are doing it for the grade and not for personal development
- Students are seeing themselves as consumers – if I'm going to owe this money I want connections and good grades, etc.
- Reiterate the common about roots – spreads wide and shallow but that is fundamental change in the way we experience the world and coupled with extreme fear of the future (personal, country, planet). Nothing to hold on to and keep us planted. Feel like there is no reason to care because it is all going to go away – time of unprecedented disruption and uncertainty
- May need to redefine what roots are – maybe a new way of forming that deep structure instead of looking back.
- Purpose and values – those things when everything else goes away – there must be lines that you don't cross that are values based and purpose driven. It's maybe helping people see things differently
  - Critical thinking – being about to connect what does information mean, not just if I do this do I get an A. Nothing is black or white, everything is gray.
  - You could choose nihilism about the future or you could say the present is everything I have – “The Makers Moment”

**Question 2: What makes the arts more important than ever in this changing world? What role can the arts play in helping students face the challenges in today's challenging world?**

- Automation in the workplace and how the only job that can't be automated is creative problem solving – very powerful thing right now.
- The only way people, people do things based on information but ultimately based on feel – the arts have the ability to touch people and make them feel differently. The ultimately has economic and social impact. Comes back to the makers moment and is something that can't be automated. Emotion, feelings, transformation
- Looking at problems from a creative thinking point. That's why there are all these bridges building between medicine and business in the arts. Artists are not linear thinkers
- The arts allows someone to communication huge, unexplainable ideas in a real way

- Opportunity to learn the skills to learn, critique and evaluate. Without the arts they aren't getting exposure to those things in other places. I tell parents of young children it doesn't matter if kids aren't good artists they are learning to look at the world in a different way
- Artists by nature are risk takers – the creative process is largely dependant on failing. If you don't fail you can't learn how to succeed
- Fine arts had been critical for a gallery owner because she could deal with criticism in business versus everyone else who couldn't do that.
- There is something in the culture now that isn't 100% supportive you are seen as a hater – but we are here to make things better and critique. Critical thinking
- Artists are in the business of discrimination. Take away everything that isn't important to find a solution for something. Becomes increasingly difficult because we are overwhelmed by data – enormously helpful from artistic training to learn how to fix a problem.
- Learning how to articulate ideas and nuances.
- Aspirational aspect to the arts – we all believe that the arts are for the betterment of something, large than ourselves – there is a payoff beyond
- A better world is possible – the arts can be optimistic even when they are critical
- Making something improved
- Finding language to communicate with people – who is your audience and how are you communicating with them. Applicable in all realms. People coming out of fine arts can really be anything – learning how to make and think
- Lawyers are very creative

*Anything that is intrinsic to the arts that are critical to the moment we are in*

- Inability to accept what is – it's never finished, good enough or done. I don't know any artist to has said well this is perfect
- Art can give you a sense of community and identity – from art forum to people magainze they always ask in interviews what is on your playlist. Who we are and how we fit in the world
- Decision making – learn how important the tiny decisions are (color in design) Don't offer many psychology courses here but it is really essential to the arts. Very important to financial decision making as well – an abstract concept for a lot of people
- Really is about skill building in a lot of ways. Take a risk and then assess that risk through a critical lense and then transform it.
- I teach audio electronics to music students and there is something about mixing, mastering recording – there are a lot of websites that can do these things for you. I have a lot of students making microphones and see how things actually work. A lot of students have to learn how you can make a sound without clicking a button. Students get a look into the past. Students more and more have their laptops as instruments and they are learning to go back
- In our move to the digital cuture, the analog becomes really important in the way it enriches what we are currently do and make us think about it differently versus making us look to the past
- We are monkeys who like to touch things is always at the basis in a way

- Love for the forms of the past but not an appreciation for what we actually have and how to use them (a new sewing machine made to look old versus refurbishing an old one).  
Nostalgia

*Are students all about the making or do they care more about the showing/selling? For me it never mattered if I showed as long as I was always making. Are they compelled to be makers*

- I read letters from students who want to be here but can't afford it and they talk about how they need to be making and really want to be doing it here. Villanova isn't getting these letters necessarily – students aren't saying I really need to go to business here. At UArts students say I must be here and do this here and nowhere else – attract students who feel that this is absolutely their place
- Self-discovery and individuality and experimentation that is happening here and maybe not at other place. An avenue for self-discovery. How much of an arts school environment helping to address this. Arts as a safe haven – mental illness. For some students their art is their only way of communication

**Question 3: How, specifically, does UArts currently help student prepare for these future challenges and opportunities?**

- The art of criticism and critique is what we do well and do best. The ability to take and give criticism. Foster a critical voice in an individualized way. Helping the student to grow based on their interests and strengths
- CAMD – internship requirements: practical experience in a broad spectrum of career paths. Teaches them many times what they don't want to do – demystifies a professional experience and build connections for post graduation. Most curriculum builds professional practices throughout – some have requirements
  - Internships are a great reality check – the academic world isn't the real world
- Writing skill and critical thinking/analyzing is something we do fairly well even though I know its not what students what students are here for or want to be doing. 1<sup>st</sup> year writing they do a good job of allowing students to navigate and find their voice in writing
- Teach them to be good self-reliant adults by virtue of living in a city and not having a lot of housing available for upper classmen. They learn how to navigate the world of rent, utilities, etc. (Life skills)
  - Are they thrown into that or are they prepared to do that? By-product

*Any personal experiences?*

- When I went here...my middle brother was at the top of his class and always doing well, I was a goof off and barely passed but when I came here and got exposed to so much thinking I was inspired but when my brother came here it was hard for him because there weren't a lot of rules and instead a lot of questions. I do think when you are with...it's like a candy store of ideas, exchange and cultures. Seeing the world completely differently from the homogenous environment I grew up in.
- Working with students as themselves and mentoring them to be the best they can be – the faculty put in a tremendous amount of work and time to do that

- In the commencement survey students speak to their relationships with their faculty many times. They felt cared about by staff and felt this environment really nurtured them. Every student who graduates from here has a unique transcript
- Hugging at commencement, it's personal
- Opening Act – showcases all aspects of the university, incredibly emotional and moving...it makes you think there is no orientation/starting meeting in the country like this. We don't do a great job talking to world about what makes us unique but we really are
- I keep realizing how small we are – we can be more of a family, more personal relationships.
- Understanding students – their drive, their interests and honing their personal voice versus the flurry that is information/technology now
- Incorporate graduate students well with undergraduate students

*If we had the money and resources, what more could UArts be doing to prepare students for these future challenges and opportunities?*

- Some things are currently happening: facilities/infrastructure shift for example
- Holistically, responding to sense of community and student anxiety,...we are in the heart of Philadelphia, if we could create a green campus in the center of this large metropolis. Speaking to our values – that we are prioritizing ideas of sustainability. Actually recycling with our recycling containers, community spaces that our students use that they want to use them because they are beautiful. A way to engage the public and putting our values as our face. Would make a huge difference on many levels. Seriously reflective of a core value
- Wish that we had a more permeable relationship with the community – near neighbors and citizens of the city. Students to engage with the city more and support the community. Requires a lot of resources.
- Foster more collaborative practices but without forcing students to do it
  - A large percent of students said collaboration was something that really brought them to UArts
  - Didn't quite work with the UCC – need to be aware of the students who aren't quite ready for that
  - Would be nice to have a cross-discipline requirement at the end that could help students learn something new. Ex. Critique. Challenge is finding a way to do it that isn't just paying lip service to it
  - Haven't really defined for ourselves the nuances between collaboration, interdisciplinary, cross disciplinary, intradisciplinary, etc.
  - Would be nice to coral people for useful reasons ex. An artist needs a logo to showcase themselves. Network for students to connect with each. UArts gig economy website type thing
- Haven't really defined what research means at this university for students and faculty
- One common location for entrepreneurship, business and careers – robust career center that involves alumni as well. Alumni work together to help each other and future students. Sharing job opportunities, etc.

- Have a venue space that everyone can use. House shows. Brought professionals in to listen to students and they were amazed – would be nice to bring the city in to see student work on a regular basis. Showcase their work. Some kind of ticketing software so we can engage them and bring them back
- Right now we have so many gatekeepers preventing the public from accessing exhibitions/performances (guards, elevators, etc.) – make student work more visible, accessible, welcoming
- Art alliance – jewel box of beaux arts building that has a long history as a stand alone institution that we have just merged with. Now a space that we have to imagine what it could be used for – could be a place to engage the public, courses, etc. Need to really utilize it as an extension of our campus
- UArts doesn't leverage its history as much as it could.
- Diversity...real desire from students to have a place to go to talk about these issues and do programming with resources (a center – could be conceptual, physical, etc).
  - I think sometimes we get to hung up on the diversity of making versus the diversity of perspectives...ex. grad student who is a black queer artist described how moving it was to speak to his first professor who was black...this shouldn't be the case
  - Need more money and resources to resolve these issues in faculty, administration, meetings, etc.
  - Socio-economic, geographic, gender, sexuality, etc.
  - Multi-pronged approach: diverse faculty + staff, curricular diversity (ex. art history needs to show non-western perspectives), diversity in the culture (intentionally mindful)
  - Programs we could start to foster diversity in the arts for example. Foster fellowships at the university for diverse artists and cultivate future leaderships. Mentorship and an intentionality of mentorship for underrepresented populations in the arts
- Out of date equipment
- Safest/cleanest facilities
- Safe archive
- Learning commons – redefine what the 22<sup>nd</sup> century library will be