

# The Next 150

## Arts Task Force Report



Students perform "Terminal C" by C. Kemal Nance. 2018. Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.  
Photo by Natalie Fiol



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## Arts Task Force Report

### Arts Strategic Planning Task Force Members

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Dancer performs, *'Lament'*, from *Autumn Knight*:  
In Rehearsal at Krannert Art Museum, performance at  
University of Illinois Stock Pavilion, 2017.  
Photo by Natalie Fiol





A first year drawing student working on a charcoal drawing.  
Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design

### Executive Summary

Arts at the University of Illinois has produced tangible benefits at the local, national, and international levels. As the images in our document attest, we have an impressive track record and amazing examples of our studio works, community engagement, performances, exhibitions, and collaborations, past and present.

For the future, we know what needs to be done to increase those benefits. The return on investment to the university's mission and reputation will be substantial.

Our unique strength lies in the ways that arts researchers are leading the way in projects that involve other fields, but could not happen without arts integrative leadership. Illinois has the greatest opportunity to positively impact state, national, and global arts and creative endeavors through research, education, and engagement in the following FIVE areas:

1. **Arts-integrative research** will help all research engage the world's pressing problems.
2. **Arts-integrative curricula** will attract a more diverse and engaged student body and produce better citizens.

3. **Arts-integrative potential** involves creating new structures that identify and support internal movement and innovative practice that will sustain campus-wide interdisciplinary faculty collaboration.
4. **Spaces of synergy** will strengthen campus and public engagement driven by student interests, activities, and relationships across campus.
5. **The arts should be** an integrative and pervasive part of **Public Engagement and Diversity Advocacy**.







Painting professor Laurie Hogin speaks with area high school students attending Krannert Art Museum Day at the Museum, 2017.



*Enough to Live On: Art from the WPA*, installation at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.



The Arts Task Force was convened at the request of the Office of the Chancellor to identify existing areas of creative practice and imagine bold areas for growth. In doing so, we were charged to note our strengths, identify impediments, and determine ways in which we can creatively and robustly support the arts and creative endeavors flourishing on the campus and in the communities we want to engage.

We have proposals that are ready to implement, which represent the potential of creativity across disciplines on campus and beyond, and believe our recommendations are essential to the commitment our campus makes to its mission as a public, land-

An Industrial Design student sketching designs in his studio.  
Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design



Works from 'Where the Arts Meet Physics,' at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.  
Student exhibition curated by Smitha Vishveshwara.

We do not have to reinvent the wheel. Illinois has existing programs that could continue to serve our communities with expansive possibilities. With committed and increased support, many of the existing programs could not only continue, but do so in robust fashion.

## Value Proposition

Arts research at the University of Illinois allows students to get a broad overview or take a deep dive with world-class experts in their specialties of choice, as well as to collaborate with a rich variety of projects in other fields. However, our unique strength lies in the ways that arts researchers are leading the way in projects that involve other fields, but could not happen without leadership from arts researchers.



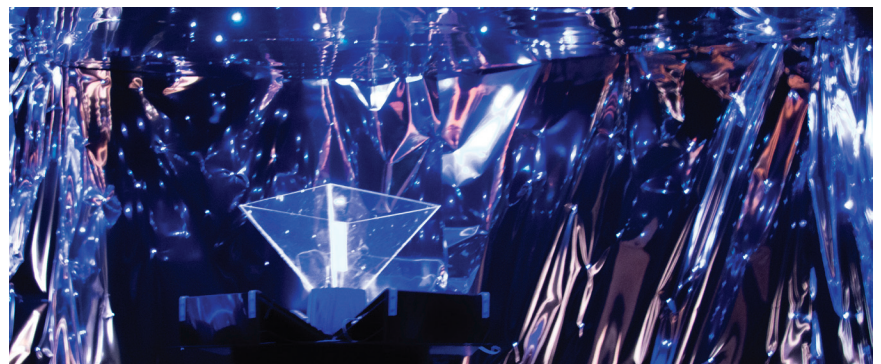


Autumn Knight, *El Diablo Y Cristo Negro*, from Autumn Knight: In Rehearsal, performance at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.  
Photo by Julia Nucci Kelly

The arts in their broadest capacity – visual, performing, design & architecture – contribute to every discipline and every sector of society. In recognition of the breadth and depth of the arts and their contribution to quality of life, creation, and innovation, Illinois needs to incorporate the arts and creative practice into EVERY aspect of institutional learning and teaching.

In order for the university to be a leader and attract the best students and world-class faculty, it is important to offer a strong value proposition. That is, we must provide a benefit that is specific, relevant, and unique. Existing strategies at other universities can be grouped into several categories. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- General arts: the university offers a wide range of programs to give students



'Where the Arts Meet Physics,' installation at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.  
Student exhibition curated by Smitha Vishveshwara.

- the broadest possible exposure to what is available.
- Specialist arts: often associated with prominent faculty or historical excellence. For example, if you want to study poster-making, one of the best places to do so is the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland. Their poster art has been famous for 60 years.

- Arts serving other fields: arts in healthcare, arts and science, arts in computing. For example, Stamps School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan has a 2-year Masters in Design for healthcare.

Illinois has the greatest opportunity to positively impact state, national, and global arts and creative endeavors through research, education, and engagement in the following **FIVE** areas:



**1. Arts-integrative research** will help all research engage the world's pressing problems.

- Arts leading other fields: in these projects, multiple disciplines are involved, but the arts necessarily lead the way, since otherwise the projects would not happen. This category of arts research is promising as part of the value proposition for University of Illinois, where interdisciplinary collaboration is already strongly valued.
- Archives and library collections: The world-class library at Illinois is one crucible for cross-cutting efforts in research, education, and engagement. These collections are fundamental to research and teaching in the arts.
- Significant current efforts that bridge disciplines and integrate with local communities have been and remain vital. Innovation isn't everything; we must maintain already-excellent programs.

**What is already happening:**

Illinois has phenomenal leadership in fostering social change with arts and creative endeavors, including Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths, led by Ruth Nicole Brown [solhot.weebly.com], Ryan Griffis' Regional Relationships [regionalrelationships.org]; the Dance Department's "Dance for People with Parkinsons" in partnership with KCPA; and Faranak Miraftab's work on our global heartland.

**What we can do:**

- **Campus must foster interdisciplinary faculty development** and build on this by supporting further engagement and publications.
- Faculty could be supported to spend a year in a discipline related to their respective area of inquiry enriching peer to peer as well as student experience. Similar to exchanges practiced between peer institutions, Illinois could support faculty from Art + Design for a **year-long exchange** with Anthropology or Materials Science, or a Movement Artist/Dancer in the Department of Education Policy or vice versa, for example.



Students perform "Closure for Blood, Gutters for Veins" by Cynthia Oliver. 2011. Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Photo by Natalie Fiol





Allan deSouza, Allan deSouza: Through the Black Country..., installation at Krannert Art Museum, 2018.

## 2. Arts-integrative

**curricula** will attract a more diverse and engaged student body and produce better citizens. Elite institutions across the nation are integrating arts practices in every aspect of the educational experience. Instead of following these institutions, Illinois could lead by fostering bold and imaginative thinking in our disciplinary and inter-disciplinary practices.

### What is already happening:

- FAA 110 through the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (KCPA) is a General Education course model that could be expanded and required for all students. FAA 110 offers students opportunities to attend concerts and exhibitions as well as discuss concepts, processes, and production of creative works throughout the semester. These experiences make lasting impressions on students, develop audiences

and artistic awareness, and foster creative sensibilities for those inclined to pursue practices further.

- Professor Smitha Vishveshwara has taught a special topics course, "Where Art Meets Physics" (Phys 498), in which students study quantum physics together with artists' imaginings around condensed matter.
- Other models for cross disciplinary arts-based work include Inner Voices: Social Issues Theatre <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/innervoices>; Museums in Action (ARTE 260, a service-learning course taught at Krannert Art Museum (KAM) as part of the Ethnography of the University Initiative; and Exhibition Design and Installation (IS 590), which uses the museum as a learning laboratory and training site for museum practice.

### What we can do:

- Broaden/redesign curricula so that arts are a part of every student's experience.
- Support and expand the FAA 110 platforms and similar efforts to serve more groups, extending the range and breadth of the course options and KCPA's programmatic base.
- Require participation in the arts for all students. Invest in creative integration at multiple scales – courses, assignments, service projects.
- Expand programs to include practice-based courses that introduce faculty to one another's disciplinary practices and engage students in cross-disciplinary approaches.
- Create more possibility for double majors so that students can blend complementary disciplines that serve their needs and those of a changing society.



**3. Arts-integrative potential** involves creating new structures that identify and support internal movement and innovative practice that will sustain campus-wide interdisciplinary faculty collaboration.

**What is already happening:**

□ **Multidisciplinary support through multiple centers and programs – Center for Advanced Study, IPRH, KCPA, KAM, Dance, Theatre, Physics, Sousa Archives and Center for American Music**

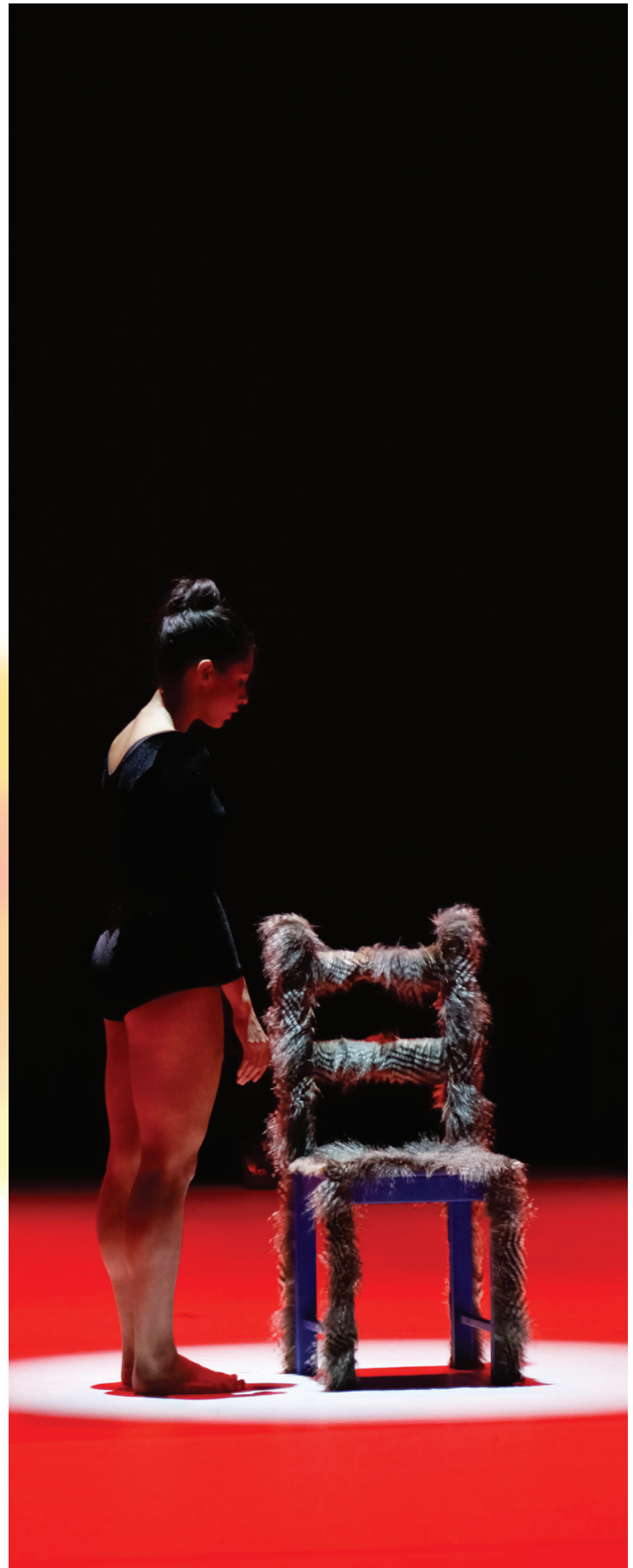
Professor Smitha Vishveshwara, Physics, works to create “a science-art bridge,” among several units on campus. Insights from physics offered inspiration and a basis for art works. The project, “Quantum-Cosmic Voyages” included a performance production in collaboration with dance Professor Kirstie Simson, actor/director Latrelle Bright, and performance at Krannert Art Museum (KAM), the Champaign Public Library, and KCPA. This multi-year project is supported by the Center for Advanced Study (CAS), Physics, KAM, KCPA, Dance and Theatre.

□ **Unit for Criticism Programs and the Arts**

The Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory’s goal of promoting “experiments in theory and interdisciplinarity” makes arts practice and scholarship central to its activities. The Unit regularly brings in writers, visual artists, and music scholars such as Viet Nguyen, Nick Sousanis, and Alejandro Madrid, who have given readings, lectures, and run workshops.

□ **Critical Technology Studies at National Center for Supercomputing Applications**

A number of new arts-integrative research projects are currently housed and supported at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA in the Culture and Society thematic area, led by Donna Cox. Cox’s Advanced Visualization Lab has long played a key role in communicating science to a wider public, combining the arts, scientific research, and high-performance computing to create what it calls “cinematic scientific visualizations.” Faculty members Jodi Byrd (English, GWS) and Ben Grosser (Art + Design) co-founded the Critical Technology Studies Lab at NCSA (CTS) in 2015. In 2017, CTS member Veronica Paredes (Media and Cinema Studies, ICR) began transforming an NCSA space (formerly called the “Creativity



Student performing in “like this” by Renee Wadleigh. 2012.  
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.  
Photo by Natalie Fiol



Lab”) into the Experimental Media Arts Lab (XMAL). Anita Say Chan (Media and Cinema Studies, ICR) and the IPRH research cluster Recovering Prairie Futures: Midwestern Innovation and Interdisciplinary Design Developments also contribute to CTS.

- The Department of English offers both an undergraduate major and a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and is a space where arts-integrative work is front and center. The program has many award-

winning faculty and alumni. Since 2004, Creative Writing has collaborated with the School of Art + Design to produce the literary journal *Ninth Letter*, which has won over 30 awards for design and content.

#### What we can do:

- Just as diversity and engagement should be an integral aspect of the campus, **artists should be embedded in every unit/ discipline.**
- Faculty in the IPRH research cluster Recovering Prairie

Futures are developing plans for an “Entrepreneurship and the Arts” certificate, which would include several relevant courses that explore the intersection of local histories and industries, entrepreneurship, arts and curriculum.

- Ensure continued support for projects like *Ninth Letter* and others that demonstrate potential for local, national and international impact.



A first year student working on a project for his 3D Design class. Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design



Dance students performing ‘Excerpts of UTF8’ by guest artist Sahar Azimi, 2011. Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Photo by Natalie Fiol





Graphic Design professor Stacey Robinson speaks with area high school students attending Krannert Art Museum–Day at the Museum, 2017.

#### 4. Spaces of synergy for campus and public engagement driven by student interests, activities, and relationships across campus.

##### What is already happening:

- **The Robert E. Brown Center for World Music (CWM)** is an ideal, and currently virtual, space for the synergy of student interest, activities and relationships across campus. The Center for World Music promotes understanding and appreciation of the world's performing arts through varied programming including active study of performance with tradition-bearing artists; concerts and lectures by leading world music practitioners and scholars; educational engagement programs in local schools and communities; and an online community and campus world music and performing arts events calendar.
- CWM is currently dependent on partnering with numerous campus venues to realize its activities (i.e., Spurlock Museum, Krannert Center, Krannert Art Museum, Center for Advanced Study, and International Area Study/Title VI Centers.)

##### What we can do:

- Support CWM plans to develop artist-in-residence programs. The community is already here and interested.
- Establish a physical center completely dedicated to supporting School of Music and campus-based world music ensembles with facilities for learning, rehearsal, performance, recording and storage. There is currently no student-run center for gathering, practicing ethnic and geographic specific music practices as well as space to house and support student productions at multiple levels.
- Establish a game studies program that would not take the form of a centralized degree-granting department, but instead would be an **interdisciplinary consortium** resting upon many degrees, courses and research initiatives in multiple programs across campus.



## 5. The arts should be an integrative and pervasive part of Public Engagement and Diversity Advocacy.

Among the most vibrant and visible of current arts-based public engagement projects in FAA are activities at the KAM, the KCPA, the Center for World Music (CWM), Japan House, and the School of Music. These include programs that make faculty research in visual art and design, dance, theatre and music accessible to a wide variety of audiences with varying interests. Many of them also engage these audiences in actual, creative production.

### What is happening:

- There is a lack of trust among local communities and no sustained support for community integration. While the University aims to be a trusted source of knowledge and reliable people, it is not currently trusted or perceived as reliable in many circles. There have been too frequent missteps, miscommunications, and outright misuse of power over the years. Rebuilding that trust will take all of us.
- Inconsistent and short-term thinking has characterized public engagement on campus.
- The Imagining America (IA) consortium, of which the University of Illinois has been a member since the early 2000s, is a helpful resource for planning engagement policies, curricular programming, and faculty development. Current IA involvement is through the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH).
- The School of Art and Design engages with Stratton Elementary School through the Stratton Academy for the Arts. (This program replaced Saturday School, which served a broader public for many years but was unsustainable with current resources.)
- One of the keystone programs of Japan House is the large scale *Matsuri* event, a Japanese festival held on the grounds at the beginning of the academic year, which grew from an initial 2,500 attendees to the current approximately 4,000.
- KCPA and Dance support and facilitate the Mark Morris Dance Group Shadow Program and Faculty Repertory class which performs in public schools and senior homes every year.
- The Department of Dance offers Creative Dance for Children on Saturdays. The program was founded in 1948 and continues to serve the local community.
- Every fall, the Department of Dance offers talks/ demonstrations in local schools, introducing youth to contemporary dance by a variety of choreographers.



Southside Elementary KAM–WAM students perform in the Gelvin Noel Gallery at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.





A printmaking student preparing ink for screen printing.  
Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design

- The **Flatlands Dance Film Festival**, established in 2014 by Jan Erkert and Mark Rhodes, now directed by Rebecca Ferrel, is an annual curated competition presenting dance films from across the globe. (Art Theatre, Spurlock)
- KAM has a long-standing public school partnership program, Krannert Art Museum–Week at the Museum (KAM–WAM), through which students engage in extended cross-curricular learning at the museum. In 2017, KAM served as many as 2,600 school children from Urbana and Champaign.
- The arts for “educated eating” public engagement in Sangamon. Developed in 2008, it is still in use today.
- The Sousa Archives established American Music Month with Congressional Resolution 459 that was passed in 2004, and has been celebrating the breadth of America’s diverse musical heritage each November since then. This year’s celebration will focus on the banjo, race and identity. In addition, the Center develops, sponsors, and produces the annual One Community Together programming for the Sweet Corn Festival which this year will be their

tenth year. They also produce the annual jazz film festival each April, and 2018 is the 5th year of doing this. The Archives promote America’s history and culture through Music educational programming for all the local elementary schools in the region.

- We applaud the revival of the **Public Engagement Portal**, [engage.illinois.edu], though it could use more support.

**What we can do:** The arts are extremely well-positioned, and perhaps uniquely so, to represent an institution that values social health, creativity, and knowledge.

- **Rebuild trust in community relationships.** Acknowledge failures, initiate and sustain support for model programs. In order to rebuild trust we must acknowledge our part in the erosion of trust and neglect of local community for superficial interests.



- **Invite community members to teach us and share in knowledge building.** Local leaders and activists have long been involved in community uplift and their experiences and organizations deserve attention and, when possible, support from the University, which is hosted by these communities.
- Engage the design community in creation of a new mascot. Laura Hetrick (Art Education) examines fan culture research and could be instrumental in this arena.
- Support efforts like William Patterson's Ghetto Genius project– located in C-U, which encourages young people in marginalized communities to see STEAM through their own cultural lens, and inspires them to address issues in their communities that could be resolved with a STEM/Arts/Humanities background. National Society of Black Engineers, Engineering Honors Society, Illinois faculty, and professionals in the community serve as the instructors and support team for the participants.
- The Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) is another national organization that may be useful to strategic planning for public engagement.
- To support student success, host art/design conferences with associated trade fairs, where companies pay to have booths. Large media companies like Pixar, for instance, are eager to hire storytellers, and a big institution is necessary for them to get the numbers of qualified people they want. They currently look for these students in Latin America and Europe.
- We can demonstrate the value of public and community engagement by **giving it weight in the Promotion and Tenure process** for junior faculty whose work resides in that arena.
- The November 2017 Public Engagement Report recommends a set of advisory groups (<https://blogs.illinois.edu/view/7831/601858>). The Office of Undergraduate Research, the Odyssey Project (through IPRH), and the Education Justice Project (EJP) are on-campus entities that were not mentioned in that report but which have a track record of effective engagement (there are others, too) and should be involved in internal planning.
- **All hands on deck for public engagement.** Artists are essential but can't work alone.



Dancers perform *El Diablo Y Cristo Negro*, from *Autumn Knight*: In Rehearsal, performance at Krannert Art Museum, 2017.  
Photo by Julia Nucci Kelly





A painting student working in her studio.  
Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design

## CHALLENGES

In Illinois, shrinking public support for higher education is evidence that politicians in Springfield feel that revenue for our mission is not popular among their constituents. Locally, our University is too often a target of outright hostility, despite tremendous achievements, essential services, and the campus' unique role as the current and historical engine in the regional economy. The effects of these budget cuts have impeded and limited important work; in fact, the loss of public support has been devastating especially to campus endeavors and activities that do not originate with an obvious, short-term profit motive.

As with any project, expanded activities in the arts will require resources, including time, space, and incentive in the form of structures and protocols that allow benefits of such activities to accrue directly to the participants, including revenue generation for the home units. Further,

- There is a lack of arts presence in institutes and centers.
- Campus support for the arts is currently limited to modest campus support for FAA.
- Arts activities are supported on an event by event level rather than promoting sustained engagement.

- The disparity between the perception of the arts' contribution on campus (the way we tell the Illinois story) and its national and international reputation/esteem is significant and palpable.
- The campus does not capitalize on its deep well of prominent artists/creative endeavors.

## OPPORTUNITIES

What are our OPPORTUNITIES in Arts-related research and education over the next five to ten years?

- Develop a **portfolio of sustained, long-term projects** that integrate research, education, and public engagement through interdisciplinary arts-inclusive work.
- **Invest in a campus-wide Arts Laboratory** where students, community members, scholars and artists create new, locally-embedded works that address challenges on the global stage.
- **Increase the digital presence** of the arts on campus by amplifying their visibility on the Illinois homepage, featuring arts practitioners as examples of Illinois excellence, and integrate arts into online offerings in conjunction with the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning.



### Conclusion: A Different Model for the Institution?

The Arts are a logical place for the university to begin the long-overdue process of re-designing itself for the information age. There are several initiatives that would contribute to that agenda, but underpinning them all is that we need to move away from a disciplinary model that privileges giving students access to content. In 850 CE, when the Western world was inventing the modern university, content was hard to come by, so it was logical for students to spend time internalizing the content of their chosen fields.

In a period where university students have unprecedented access to information, the situation has changed. We should consider swapping the emphasis from content to process, and focus the undergraduate experience on the four modes of knowledge production that the university uses: the sequential, aggregate, generative, and exploratory expressive. These are currently emphasized, although not exclusively used in, respectively, the Sciences, Humanities, Design & Engineering, and the Arts.

This change could be best be facilitated by complementing the current disciplinary structure with project-based learning that emphasizes use of the different research strategies that correspond with the modes of knowledge production. Project-based learning

can have the advantage of being more closely connected to contemporary public concerns, helping skeptics recognize the university as relevant. It can represent a more equity-based entry point for education, since projects often require diverse knowledge and skillsets that can originate in under-represented groups. Finally, it is a place for emerging voices to be heard.

The Arts are in a strong position to contribute to this change because of their long experience with project-based learning involving multiple areas of expertise. For example, a single theatrical performance involves costume, makeup, stage design, lighting, scriptwriting, dramaturgy, directing, acting, perhaps music, dance and various forms of new media, all in a context created by architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning.

After this re-design, we would have a semi-structured curation of projects that involve students in varieties of knowledge production as they interact with existing departments, programs, and classes. This model will allow students to learn a multiplicity of approaches available. Its interactive and more porous structure would give our students the strongest possible entry point into a world facing profound challenges. It could have the added benefit of reducing redundancy in research methods, where similar approaches have been



*Global Africa Community Forum in World on the Horizon: 'Swahili Arts Across the Indian Ocean', installation at Krannert Art Museum, 2018.*

Photo by Julia Nucci Kelly





Professor Stephen Cartwright helping a student during his Furniture Design class.  
Photo courtesy of the School of Art + Design

independently invented in multiple fields, without necessarily engaging in cross-communication about the experiences that have produced best practices.

As seen above, there are multiple places where creative endeavors are taking place and need to continue at an even more robust pace. Colleges, centers, units, programs, and institutes are but a beginning. Communities and a porous relationship between the material, the digital, and the imaginary are integral components of a vibrant and creative Illinois. Who better to make manifest the transformative potential of integrative research, community engagement and curriculum than robustly supported, visionary artists? This is what we do.



Students perform 'Kama Begata Nihilum' by John Toenjes and Janice Dulak. 2014. Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.  
Photo by Natalie Fiol





**The Next 150**