

# Student Engagement in the Performing Arts

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A CALL-TO-ACTION FOR CAMPUS-BASED ARTS PRESENTERS

## LEVERAGING THE ARTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

## A CALL TO ACTION FOR CAMPUS ARTS PRESENTERS

A Call to Action for Campus Presenters grew out of a 2013 symposium hosted by the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. Recommendations for engaging students were informed by a series of research studies commissioned by the Hopkins Center with funding support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## A CALL TO ACTION

We, the undersigned, seek like-minded colleagues across the country for a new and sustained commitment to engaging students in the performing arts.

- We believe that an entirely new level of student involvement in the arts is achievable.
- We ask you to join us as partners in the thoughtful design, testing and implementation of student engagement programs.
- We challenge all campus presenters to assert that every student on their campus should have at least one meaningful experience with the performing arts before graduating, regardless of whether that experience occurs in a classroom, a theatre, a dining hall, or anywhere else.
- We invite you to think creatively about new approaches to engaging faculty, and to open your eyes and ears to faculty and *their* suggestions for how you might work together.
- We are committed to involving students in shaping this national agenda, and ask that you also commit to giving students a prominent role in this dialogue on your campus.
- We invite you to join us in seeking support for this work from our campus leaders, faculty partners and staff colleagues, funders, artists, our wider audiences, and our friends in national service organizations.

To take up this Call to Action and indicate your support of this national initiative, please visit the website [https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student\\_engagement](https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student_engagement) to register as a member of the Student Engagement Consortium.

## **Student Engagement in the Performing Arts: A Call to Action for Campus-Based Presenters**

The following individuals participated in a two-day symposium at Dartmouth College in June 2013 and contributed to the conceptualization of this Call to Action. Jerry Yoshitomi facilitated the symposium, which was planned and produced by the staff of the Hopkins Center for the Arts.

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## INTRODUCTION

The time has come for a serious re-evaluation by campus presenters of how to systematically engage college students in the performing arts – not just a select few students who arrive on campus with an arts background, but *all* students. The timing of this Call to Action, and the underlying sense of urgency you may infer from reading it, derive from a coalescence of several important developments in recent years: 1) a growing appreciation for the educational benefits of arts-based inquiry amongst scholars in the learning sciences and faculty in general; 2) worldwide demand for creative thinkers in the governmental, business and social sectors; 3) the emergence of new, successful approaches to arts-based interdisciplinary work on college campuses; and 4) a new generation of artists and arts presenters with instincts for collaboration, co-creation, and sharing their creative processes with scholars from different fields.

In offering this Call to Action and advocating for its adoption across college campuses, we do not argue that the arts are insufficiently valued, or assert that the arts are due a privileged place amongst scholarly disciplines. Rather, we wish to share a vision for how the arts can play a broader and more catalytic role in student learning across the academy, and provoke performing arts presenters and their partners on campus to reconsider how they might play a larger role in both artistic and intellectual life.

The Call to Action is a forward-looking outcome of a two-year investigation of student engagement in the performing arts undertaken by a consortium of eight Major University Presenter (MUP) campuses, with funding support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The partners are:

Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College (commissioning partner)  
Carolina Performing Arts, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Hancher, University of Iowa  
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana–  
Champaign  
Lied Center of Kansas, University of Kansas  
Texas Performing Arts, University of Texas at Austin  
University Musical Society, University of Michigan  
UW World Series, University of Washington

The group undertook a multi-site research effort in 2012 to gauge current patterns of student participation in the performing arts, and to discuss methods of expanding and deepening engagement.<sup>1</sup> The initiative culminated in June 2013 with a national symposium of students, faculty and campus presenters to analyze and form action recommendations out of the research.

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<sup>1</sup> Results of the study may be accessed at [https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student\\_engagement](https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student_engagement)

Based on the research findings and the resulting discussions at the national symposium, this Call to Action invites campus presenters and their partners – faculty, artists, audiences, donors, and especially students themselves - to make student engagement in the performing arts a priority. In fact, students were integral to the research and writing of this Call to Action, and must continue to have a prominent voice in this dialogue. It is their future, after all, that is most at stake.

While a strong belief system underlies this invocation, it is not just a philosophical position paper. The many authors and contributors to this paper also aim to fundamentally evolve practice, and thereby offer specific recommendations and strategies that campus-based arts presenters and their partners can adopt to strengthen educational outcomes and illustrate the centrality of the arts to creative thinking.

We believe that *all* college undergraduates should have at least one meaningful performing arts experience before they graduate, and that *all* college students should come to grasp basic precepts of creativity as part of their academic journeys.

## **Our Motivations are Both Personal and Professional**

Why are we so concerned about the need to engage more college students in the performing arts?

Making the performing arts more accessible to students and more central to academic life will benefit our presenting organizations in many ways. But our motivations and sense of urgency in producing this Call to Action are deeply personal and transcend organizational goals.

We envision a world in which creative expression is the bedrock of our social fabric and economic vitality, and share a concern that much of America's youth is not developing the creative competencies needed to flourish and compete.

The consequences of inaction are unacceptable. Creative competency is essential to global competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Who, then, is responsible for building the creative capacity of the next generation of scientists, engineers, artists and entrepreneurs?

Campus presenters must share this responsibility with faculty, administrators, alumni, other arts organizations, and students themselves. But we cannot be passive partners. Instead, campus presenters must reimagine themselves as leaders in forging the cross-campus relationships that will bring a new focus to student creativity, working at the nexus of an array of academic, social, and creative networks, both on campus and off.

As part of this movement, campus presenters must encourage and support a new generation of professional artists – creative catalysts – who will collaborate with students and faculty across disciplines.

We envision that young adults from all walks of life, when they matriculate into one of America’s many colleges and universities, will encounter a learning environment where the arts are an integral part of everyday thought and expression.

We want them to be welcomed into aesthetic experiences that are new and challenging, but also interwoven with popular culture and the world they know. We aspire for them to experience a wide range of performing arts disciplines and genres, both as consumers and participants – the launch of a life-long search for beauty and meaning.

We envision that they will not be asked to conform to potentially stifling codes of conduct, but invited into familiar environments where they feel valued and central to the artistic exchange. From here, they can grow to appreciate a range of arts experiences, formal and informal, participatory and observational, that suit their interests.

We want them to have access to artists, curators and arts managers who will inspire them to be curious, to welcome criticism, to appreciate divergent viewpoints, to reflect on their own creative process, and to follow unexpected pathways in their life and work, regardless of their field of interest.

We envision a time when growing numbers of faculty members in the sciences and humanities equally appreciate the value of arts-based interdisciplinary exchange, and see artists as a resource for creative problem solving.

Most importantly, we envision that every college student will graduate with a passion for creative expression in one form or another – a sense of his or her own, unique creative voice. In this Call to Action, we re-dedicate ourselves to awakening that voice.

## A Call to Action

Research in the learning sciences points to the unique role that the arts can play in fostering students' critical thinking abilities and in building the capacities of interdisciplinary teams<sup>2</sup>:

- The arts build “play” into the creative process, which is critical to early stage interdisciplinary work, and building trust.
- The arts allow for “affective learning.” Research in the fields of neuroscience, psychology and cognitive science have found that “emotion and affect” are critical dimensions of learning, driving motivation, memory retrieval, decision-making, creativity, and reasoning.
- The injection of an artistic element into a learning or research process can raise levels of anticipation and increase “epistemic curiosity.”
- Arts-based learning moves the inquiry process from the mind to the body, allowing for physical engagement or “embodied learning.”
- The arts offer an alternative means of comprehension. Interdisciplinary groups can overcome language and cultural barriers through use of strong metaphors and analogies that allow them to jointly understand a common problem or topic.
- Arts-based inquiry is often process oriented, rather than product oriented. The artist’s creative process provides a model for interdisciplinary teams to develop shared values and methods of inquiry, audition ideas, participate in continuous feedback loops, and allow ideas to be radically reformulated.
- The arts can provide students with a way of discussing difficult political, moral, and other issues, especially when they lack the disposition or the skills to engage in such discussions.

The contributions of the arts to student learning are not just theoretical. We have witnessed the transformative power of arts-based interdisciplinary exchange in different fields of study, with impressive student outcomes:

- Incoming freshman writing about a new play addressing the human toll of the mortgage crisis as part of their First Year Experience (Ohio State Univ.)
- Artists making rounds with medical residents, helping students gain sensitivity to the human aspects of patient care (University of Michigan)
- Dancers working with students in landscape architecture to consider different ways of animating public spaces (Penn State)
- Theatre artists engaging students in critical analysis of the role of censorship in public discourse (Cal State Long Beach)

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, A.S. and Tepper, S.J., “[Placing the Arts at the Heart of the Creative Campus](#),” 2012, Association of Performing Arts Presenters

In summary, we believe that the arts are integral to a successful college education.

Further integration of the arts into students' lives is increasingly seen as central to the flourishing of our students, their employers, and our universities.

Campus-based performing arts presenters<sup>3</sup> are poised to take on this work, although new partnerships must be forged, and a better body of practice must be developed in order to capture this opportunity.

Historically, campus presenters have lacked a coherent framework for engaging students, relying mostly on ticket discounts. New research on student participation in the performing arts, conducted specifically for this initiative, suggests strategies for lowering barriers and opening up the arts to students both in their social lives and academic studies. The research offers a framework for engaging students – providing a new starting point in the long-running effort by campus presenters to involve students.

Campus arts presenters now have the data, the student voices, and the models of interdisciplinary collaboration necessary to bring the arts into the routine of student life. We have therefore come to an inflection point in this movement where a broader group of champions is needed to bring the arts into student life more systemically, and at a national scale.

Thus, we turn to you.

We, the undersigned, seek like-minded colleagues across the country for a new and sustained commitment to engaging students in the arts.

- We invite you to join us in believing that an entirely new level of student involvement in the arts is achievable.
- We invite you to join us as partners in the thoughtful design, testing and implementation of student engagement programs. The next section, organized into “Four Pillars of Student Engagement,” provides a wealth of ideas and recommendations, but we invite you to design your own, and share what you learn.
- To bring a simple focus to this Call to Action, we challenge all campus presenters to assert that every student on their campus should have at least one meaningful experience with the performing arts before

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<sup>3</sup> As performing arts presenters, we focus on the disciplines of dance, music, opera and theatre, and celebrate the roles that other arts disciplines play in the intellectual lives of students. All the artistic disciplines are partners in this endeavor. We do not claim a privileged place.

graduating, regardless of whether that experience occurs in a classroom, a theatre, a dining hall, or anywhere else.

- None of this is possible without faculty partners. We invite you to think creatively about new approaches to engaging faculty, and we ask you to open your eyes and ears to faculty and *their* suggestions for how you might work together.
- We are committed to having students involved in shaping this national agenda, as they have been in pursuing the research and action steps now before us. We therefore ask that you also commit to giving students a prominent role in this dialogue on your campus.
- We invite you to join us in seeking support for this work from our campus leaders, faculty partners and staff colleagues, funders, artists, our wider audiences, and our friends in national service organizations.

To take up this Call to Action and indicate your support of this national initiative, please visit the website [https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student\\_engagement](https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/student_engagement) to register as a member of the Student Engagement Consortium.

## Strategies for Campus Presenters

How can campus presenters and other arts organizations make the performing arts more integral to college students? To address this complex question, symposium participants examined the research and considered four interdependent topics, drawing on their collective experience working with students, faculty and cross-campus partners. This section describes the four pillars and the key questions associated with each pillar.

### The Four Pillars of Student Engagement

- 1. Artistic Pathways into the Performing Arts:** Providing students with a range of interesting and accessible performing arts experiences is critical to engaging them. This pillar re-examines the range of curatorial, media-based, kinesthetic and participatory programs, formats and settings through which students can engage in the arts.
  - What artists and programs will engage students without a pre-existing interest in the arts? How can campus presenters incorporate these artists into their programming?
  - How can presenters make performances more accessible to students who don't usually attend? What types of settings or educational add-ons will increase knowledge and appreciation for art forms such as classical music, modern dance, and avant-garde theater?
  - How can presenters specifically engage first year students? What types of formats, settings and artists will be accessible and inspiring for the majority of an incoming class?
  - What types of challenges do both presenters and artists face in providing "student-friendly" programs, formats and settings? How do we address those challenges?
- 2. Making Curricular Connections:** Embedding the arts into students' academic journeys is a key strategy. This pillar explores new and sustainable practices that facilitate deeper and more frequent connections between the performing arts and intellectual life on campus.
  - What are the first steps an arts presenter needs to take to build sustainable structures with faculty and academic departments? What key relationships need to be made?
  - Which academic departments are easier to connect to the arts presenter and which are more challenging? How can presenters address and overcome those obstacles?
  - What types of curricular connection programs should all campus-based arts presenters have? Are there basic models that could be transferred between universities, and if so, what would they look like?

- How can arts presenters facilitate cross-disciplinary work between departments?
  - In what ways do curricular connections enrich the academic mission of the university? How can arts presenters deepen the learning experience for both students and faculty?
3. **Supporting Student Creativity:** This pillar examines the pivotal role creativity plays in academic success and professional life, and the role of the performing arts in fostering student creativity.
- How can students (both arts and non-arts) benefit from interacting with visiting artists? What types of opportunities can presenters provide that will enable students to explore the creative process with artists through doing, not watching?
  - How can arts presenters facilitate interchanges between arts students and non-arts students? What types of interdisciplinary or peer mentorship opportunities should arts presenters support, and how can these exchanges be executed?
  - How can arts presenters support student initiatives in the arts? That is, if a student has an idea for a creative project, how can the presenter provide funding or assistance?
  - How does supporting student creativity align with the values of the research university? Who on-campus is likely to support this idea? How can the arts presenter leverage this support to increase the number of platforms for student creativity?
4. **Resourcing Student Access:** Engaging more students in and through the performing arts will require resources. This pillar focuses on building new cross-campus relationships and partnerships that provide sustainable support for student engagement.
- How can arts presenters acquire the resources needed to support new initiatives in student engagement? Who are the key advocates, on campus and beyond, who can fund these initiatives?
  - What cross-campus relationships must arts presenters build in order to generate a critical mass of support for student access to the arts? How can presenters initiate and then sustain these relationships?
  - What types of ticket subsidies or discounts should all campus-based arts presenters offer to students? Are there new or different strategies for encouraging or enabling student attendance at performing arts events? What types of funds can support new strategies?
  - What types of grants or funding programs will deepen student engagement in the arts? Are there funds that can support student-generated initiatives? How can presenters create and sustain these funds for the benefit of students?

Next, the work of the charrette groups assigned to each pillar will be summarized, including key strategies and recommendations for new or improved practices.

### **Pillar #1: Artistic Pathways into the Performing Arts**

Discussion in this charrette addressed barriers to student engagement and programming strategies to overcome them. In thinking about designing programs for students, presenters should consider the diversity of students' cultural, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the types of programs, formats and settings that will speak to students who are not acclimatized to attending performing arts programs presented in conventional settings and formats. The overall feeling is that presenters need to create new and different ways of experiencing artistic work.

#### **Overall Strategy**

The group suggests that campus presenters and their partners should commit to lowering barriers by designing a variety of entry points and pathways for young audiences. This will include innovative programs, experimental formats and settings, extended residencies, media integration, and participatory experiences.

#### **Specific Recommendations for Presenters**

*Program in alternative spaces.* Schedule performances in settings (e.g., outdoor venues, coffee houses, art galleries, bars, or study spaces) that give audience members more flexibility with seating arrangements and allow for a wider range of concert behaviors and social interactions. Create opportunities for students to interact with artists and each other during performances. Use lighting and visual effects to enhance the experience.

*Rebrand conventional labels.* Labels can stigmatize an art form (e.g., "classical music"). In some cases, this language evokes perceptions of stuffy concert halls and elderly audiences. To combat misconceptions and negative stereotyping, presenters should experiment with reframing artists and art forms with different language that breaks free of historical expectations and invites creative reimagining of what a genre is and can be. As the research shows, supporting friends and peers can be a strong incentive for attending a performance. Student ensemble performances should be embraced as a gateway for students, including those who have negative associations with a particular art form.

*Make the concert experience interactive and unpredictable.* Enliven the concert experience for both new and old audiences through imaginative and unexpected performance experiences. Turn the venue into a place where out-of-the-box things can happen. Encourage the audience to move around, change positions, or even dance during performances. Embrace a range of audience approaches

to enjoying a live performance. Curate programs comprised of a more eclectic mix of programming/repertoire, even within a single concert/program. A more flexible framework will make the experience more compelling for those who feel uncomfortable in traditional settings and will offer regular concertgoers a more diverse array of choices.

*Expand mentorship opportunities.* Presenters can provide a rich array of opportunities for mentorship and creative exploration. Invite students to participate in the process of developing a new work or commission. Set up master classes or concerts where students can perform for/with visiting artists. Schedule outreach events where visiting artists take students into the community to teach kids and adults. Establish programs that connect student artists to K-12 classrooms. These opportunities will extend the reach of the artist, inspire college students, and deepen the role of the presenter as a community resource.

*Leverage social media.* Different forms of social media reach different audiences. Since posting through social media is relatively low risk, presenters should experiment with all the different options, and be aware of changes and new platforms that arise as social media evolves. Since authenticity of voice is particularly important for reaching students, students should be the ones posting and promoting events. A student voice is much more compelling than a presenter trying to sell tickets.

*Target specific student groups.* The student body is not monolithic. Different students are attracted to different types of events. Instead of trying to market to the student body as a whole, presenters should target specific student groups, organizations and professors. This technique will create pathways for collaboration and alternative events programmed in collaboration with students.

*Reimagine the residency.* A plethora of residency activities with a visiting artist can open doorways for a broad range of students. As many presenters know from experience, an intimate interaction with an artist can change someone's perception of an art form in an instant. Longer-term partnerships with artists can engage both campus and community on a deep level. Students will become familiar with the artist's work, and the artist will learn the campus culture and form meaningful relationships with specific students and professors. Schedule the artist for class visits and workshops across multiple departments. Create opportunities for students to participate on stage with the artist during the culminating performance. Collaborate with the artists to develop programs that complement the artist's strengths and preferences.

*Involve students in the curatorial process.* Engage students early in the process of programming and planning residencies. Ask students to follow artists and track exciting and innovative trends in the performance scene. Get student's opinions and ideas on interesting residency activities. Student ownership and empowerment in programming choices is as important as the faculty voice.

In sum, the traditional concert hall/theatre experience should no longer be considered as the most vital and paramount event of a professional artist's stay on campus. Class visits, workshops, performances in alternative venues, and social events with the artist should be recognized as equally valid and meaningful forms of engagement. Presenters do not need to lower the standards for artistic excellence, devalue the traditional concert, or wildly alter the types of artists programmed in a season to provide pathways for students. Increasing the focus on engagement activities outside the concert hall will lower barriers by endorsing the multiple ways a student can experience the artist's work.

### **Pillar #2: Making Curricular Connections**

A key approach to deepening student engagement in the arts, this charrette group considered how presenters can build sustainable relationships with faculty and university administrators in order to embed the arts into teaching methods and course curricula. Integrating the arts with course curricula can animate the classroom and enhance student learning across disciplines. The performing arts in particular can foster creative thinking and cross-disciplinary collaboration, and provide a model for action-based inquiry and interactive problem solving. Making curricular connections across the university can widen the presenter's student network, re-energize teaching methods for faculty, and improve student quality of life on campus.

#### **Overall Strategy**

To position the arts as essential to the educational mission of the university, presenters should adopt a more embracing sense of the role of art and artists as catalysts of creativity and innovation in all fields. This broader conceptualization of the arts should be manifested through pedagogy, student and faculty research and communications, and artistic participation. Integration of the arts into curricula will reshape discovery across the academy:

- For faculty, curricular integration offers new approaches to teaching and creates pathways for realizing ambitions for interdisciplinary exploration and scholarship.
- For students, the arts provide a means of understanding abstraction and complexity, support emotional development and empathic learning, promote appreciation of global citizenship, and instill a lifelong joy in creativity. Integrating the arts into the classroom provides a foundation for collaboration, experimentation, and creative thinking.
- For campus presenters, curricular integration moves the presenter from being peripheral to being central to the life and mission of the university. The presenter becomes a classroom, laboratory and public square. This new positioning contributes to the sustainability of the arts in the community and the world.

- For university administrators, infusing course curricula and faculty research with the arts puts the university on the leading edge of concepts such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and experiential curriculum development. This type of curricular change creates new sources of positive coverage for campuses and departments in the media, leading to better recruitment outcomes and increased donations from alumni and funders.

### Specific Recommendations for Presenters

*Share curatorial control with faculty.* Perhaps the single most controversial strategy, this type of collaboration empowers faculty, giving them authority in the programming, and deepens the presenter's role in furthering the academic mission of the university. An example is the new curatorial fellow position at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, through which a faculty partner curates three programs each season.

*Foster relationships with centers for teaching.* Encourage faculty members to integrate the arts into their curricula and provide them with the training and information necessary to do so. Non-arts faculty may feel uncomfortable incorporating something unknown into course syllabi. Presenters, therefore, should work with their centers for teaching on campus to enable and empower faculty to take charge and be creative (e.g., Hancher's collaboration with the Center for Teaching at the University of Iowa).

*Make faculty engagement an ongoing and integral part of the campus presenter's job.* Presenters should aim to make faculty as excited about their upcoming season as students and community members. Presenters should cultivate faculty as they would donors, through social engagements, private briefings and consultations, artist interactions, and ticket access programs.

*Advocate to administrators.* Presenters must gain administrative support for the value of arts integration in the classroom. To align with faculty interests and priorities, arts-based inquiry and interdisciplinary research involving the arts should be considered for tenure and promotion. Presenters must be sensitive to these issues as they engage with administration and faculty for further arts integration. Presenters can also play a crucial role in mediating the administrative and financial challenges of cross-disciplinary, cross-college collaborations and teaching.

*Assist faculty in developing courses.* The arts are uniquely positioned to address some of society's most complex and controversial issues. Presenters can share their knowledge and skills in arts-based learning to help faculty facilitate these conversations, and can help to create courses that leverage the power of the arts to facilitate meaningful dialogue around sensitive or difficult issues of the day. For example, the Hopkins Center for the Arts' *Class Divide* project resulted in the

creation of new coursework exploring different aspects of socioeconomic difference.

*Advocate for required courses with a performing arts component.* Presenters should work with university administrators and faculty to design, test and install recurring, sustainable courses and other student experiences incorporating performing artists. These may be introductory seminars or “common experiences” for first-years, a culminating experience for seniors, or an experiential course for a cross-section of years and majors. The idea here is to provide baseline arts experiences across cohorts of students, or even the *entire* student body.

*Create a recognized academic credential for performing arts involvement.* Students who actively participate in curricular integration should receive recognition in addition to the benefits of the process. Examples include a performing arts minor, certification, or fellowship. Students who earn the credential would use it on their resumes, and may even be given some sort of badge at commencement to recognize their achievement in creativity and the arts.

*Recruit and empower graduate students.* Graduate students are the future generation of teachers and researchers, and most are eager to experiment. They teach undergraduates at all levels and could incorporate the performing arts into assignments or labs. In addition, many universities have graduate pedagogy courses, so arts integration in the classroom could be incorporated into existing syllabi.

*Create an information clearinghouse.* Presenters and faculty that are doing this work should share their models and results with other campuses. Since university presenters often program some of the same artists, sharing ideas and initiatives can help push curricular integration forward. A clearinghouse could include best practices, syllabi, shared online courses and other online materials.

Ultimately, university-based presenters should become brokers of interdisciplinary work and creativity who support arts integration across the academy. This work can revitalize student learning and participation and enable cross-disciplinary exploration and scholarship. In order for this strategy to have a significant impact at the university, presenters must gain administrative advocacy, generate momentum on the campus, identify “blockers” and partners, and then develop sustainable practice. This will require presenters to build new skill sets.

### **Pillar #3: Supporting Student Creativity**

In the complex and interconnected 21<sup>st</sup> century world, creative thinking is an increasingly important skill for college graduates. But whose job is it to teach

students about creativity? Creativity is often mischaracterized as an elusive, unexplainable personal quality. But there is a science and rigor to creativity, and creative skills can be learned. Students need more opportunities to learn about creativity and explore their creative processes in safe, open environments. They must come to understand that creativity does not belong on a pedestal; it is accessible to everyone. Campus-based presenters can become the enablers of creative investigation and collaboration by establishing structures that help students understand and cultivate their own creativity.

### Overall Strategy

Create a “generous ecosystem” for student creativity on the university campus. Ideally, the process should be a wide-ranging and fluid conversation that can adapt to the specific needs of the campus and each generation of students. The result will be deep engagement through mentorship, time, attention, responsibility and play.

### Specific Recommendations for Presenters

*Focus on student-centered & student-driven initiatives.* To truly explore their own creative potential, students must have substantial latitude in defining projects and designing their own creative explorations.

- “Student-centered” means providing the environment and resources that will facilitate and support student exploration and inquiry.
- “Student-driven” means enabling or funding student-directed ideas and projects, which may involve helping students achieve goals that are not directly related to the presenter’s goals.

*Activate student curiosity.* Present students with problems, challenges or opportunities that demand creative ideas and innovative solutions. For example, presenters can identify a local dilemma or a global crisis and develop a cross-campus theme around the issue. This strategy could also involve establishing or supporting ‘travel abroad’ programs that involve an arts component.

*Provide mentorship from faculty and staff.* Create a collaborative support network, through which student can access faculty and staff mentors on a fluid basis. Perhaps the presenter could recruit a cohort of faculty members across the university to serve as “interdisciplinary ambassadors,” who agree to guide students in arts-based interdisciplinary research and projects.

*Create the structures that facilitate student-directed projects.* Students need space, equipment and funding to make comprehensive and rewarding initiatives possible. Once a support system with resources and supporting staff is in place, the presenter should step out of the way and let students develop their own projects. As the projects takes shape, faculty or visiting artists can offer support through workshop or other intensive interactions.

*Make the creative process iterative and visible.* In order to dispel the notion that creativity is a skill accessible to an elite group of ‘gifted’ people, students must be exposed to the creative process of others. Experiencing an artist’s process through multiple stages is instructive and encouraging, and can provide a foundation for students to explore their own process. Exposure to artists and their creative processes also serves to mitigate the negative perceptions that some students have about attending live performances in theatres and concert halls.

*Reduce the fear of failure.* To thoroughly develop as creative individuals, students must be comfortable experiencing failure and learning from the shortcomings of unsuccessful projects. The campus needs a flexible, honest and safe space where students, faculty and staff can fail repeatedly through various iterations of pilots and experimental initiatives. This may mean resetting expectations for “success.”

*Develop rich student employee and internship programs.* Professional development experience is an important skill as students prepare to enter the workforce. Presenters can design employment opportunities for students that require initiative and creative thinking. Strong student employment programs support one-on-one mentorship, regular evaluations, and opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration. Having students in the office and backstage will affirm that the presenter is a student-centered organization.

Supporting student creativity is a long-term strategy for presenters with the potential for profound, life long outcomes for students. It is also a long-term audience development strategy that will recast the presenter in the eyes of campus stakeholders as a student and faculty resource for creative learning and growth. A presenter’s support of student creativity may also be viewed as a long-term effort to build an ecology of “micro-institutions” on campus – a proliferation of student-led creative enterprises. The questions and curiosities of students could lead to programs, classes, workshops, think tanks and even micro businesses. The aim would be to foster a rich and flexible support system for students to pursue cross-disciplinary interests and explore their creative potential. Presenters need to consider the space, time and resources necessary to make this type of ecosystem feasible on a university campus, and what partners and resources they need to fulfill this vision.

#### **Pillar #4: Resourcing Student Engagement in the Performing Arts**

To make the preceding recommendations feasible, presenters must find the financial resources, partners, and campus advocates willing to commit resources (time, money, intellectual capital) to deepening student engagement in the arts. Because the resource landscape will be quite different on each campus, this charrette group explored a range of potential avenues for generating support for student engagement programs and activities. Without being overly prescriptive,

the following recommendations offer some general possibilities that could be adapted to the specific needs of each campus.

### Overall Strategy

Build the cross-campus relationships and partnerships that will provide sustainable support for student engagement. These resources fall into two primary categories: financial and human.

### Specific Recommendations for Presenters

For Financial Resources:

*Designated student fees.* A portion of student tuition fees could be directed towards student engagement in the arts – either a portion of student activity fees, or a designated cultural or “creativity” fee. Some campus presenters already access tuition to underwrite free and discounted tickets.

*Endowment support.* Endowment support already helps fund subsidized tickets or arts education programs at certain universities. This funding could be re-allocated to incorporate additional arts engagement initiatives, such as extended visiting artist residencies.

*Alumni.* Target alumni who had transformational performing arts experiences as college students and want future students to have that opportunity. Finding these people can be a challenge, but they can be generous and active donors. Associating student arts engagement programs with donors who students recognize and respect can increase interest.

*Student Affairs resources.* Student Affairs staff specifically focus on student engagement in all areas of campus life. Student activities funding or student grants might be directed towards arts-related projects. Student Affairs may be willing to support an orientation activity or event.

*Online donations or fees.* While purchasing tickets online, patrons might be invited to contribute a small amount (e.g., \$.50 to \$1.00 per ticket) towards student engagement (e.g., a “creativity investment fund”). This donation could either be voluntary or a required fee, where even student patrons would be required to pay it. Since online sales are becoming increasingly popular because of convenience, this could be an effective way to raise funds.

*Reallocating current assets.* Sometimes existing revenue is the best (or only) resource available. Analyze how the organization is currently using resources, and consider how to allocate a portion of existing funds towards student engagement initiatives.

*General university funds.* Campus-wide relationships can lead to fiscal support through general university funds. These funds could support campus-wide projects or faculty proposals, for example.

*Corporate sponsorships.* Seek out local and national companies who want to get their brand in front of students. Determine which corporations place value on creativity, and then design a sponsorship program for them.

*Student fundraising.* Students participate in causes that are important to them. Student-planned fundraising events could raise funds while increasing student awareness and interest in arts participation. Presenters have had success with events such as dance marathons and chili cook-offs. Donors might provide matching fund incentives.

For Human Resources:

*Advisory groups.* Presenters can recruit faculty, deans, high-level administrators and campus-wide staff for advisory boards or steering committees focused on increasing the presence of the arts on campus.

*Student Affairs staff.* Form partnerships with campus staff that interact with students on a regular basis and might be able to identify students who would be candidates for artist interactions and other creative projects. This group includes student activities, residential life, undergraduate and graduate advisors, counseling and mental health professionals, and others. These individuals frequently are looking for rewards and incentives for students, such as free tickets.

*Student employees or student ambassadors.* Student employees, interns and volunteers already have some level of investment in the presenter, and can be valuable advocates on campus. Create incentives for affiliated students to share Facebook posts about student engagement opportunities. A well-structured student employee program can produce an instrumental team of arts activists that will push arts engagement forward on the student level.

*Campus administrators.* Engage administrators in the process of planning and seeking out resources for student engagement. Share examples of student outcomes and best practices on other campuses to build advocacy and support across the university.

*Faculty.* Integrate tenure and promotion into arts engagement activities to leverage faculty support and involvement. Form partnerships with unexpected faculty in non-arts departments for residencies and workshops, particularly science faculty who are interested in increasing scientific literacy through the arts.

*Student artists.* Use university students to help fulfill existing programs and grant requirements for K-12 engagement. College students will learn to be teachers and mentors, and the younger students will get excited about performances and events involving the college students. By extension, parents, neighbors and family friends will then get involved. Additionally, since there is a high correlation between high school arts participation and arts participation in college, engaging K-12 students will lead to involved college students in the future.

*“Interdisciplinary arts institute.”* Establish a faculty-driven arts scholarship program that is separate from the performing arts presenter and more focused on an academic mission (e.g., [Stanford Arts Institute](#)). This type of structure could generate high involvement across campus. Faculty, staff, deans, administrators, and the presenter would all play roles in this enterprise. This type of center could create tenure-track opportunities for faculty involved in the institute and open up general funds to support engagement projects and research grants.

A large amount of fiscal support for arts engagement can be generated from a campus-wide initiative, so forming partnerships and relationships should be the first step in finding the necessary resources. Convening campus partners around the WolfBrown research might be a first step in finding and cultivating campus advocates and partners. Once faculty and staff across the university are involved, presenters can begin to find the sustainable funds to support existing programs and pilot new initiatives. Incorporating creative thinking instruction in the classroom and in faculty research can open up new sources of funding and generate support outside the presenter’s typical base of donors and advocates. In addition, shifting the presenter’s focus to students and curricular connections might move the performing arts presenter from being an auxiliary or self-supporting operation on campus to a university or state-supported department.