



## **Adaptations: Working in Art Departments at Public Liberal Arts Colleges**

*June 2017*

### **KEY CONTRIBUTIONS OF ART DEPARTMENTS TO LIBERAL LEARNING**

1. Art departments are central to the liberal arts experience. They promote creative problem solving through creativity, collaboration, and community-based work. The type of creativity manifested in COPLAC Art departments -- drawing on multiple disciplines to identify problems and to implement and evaluate innovative solutions -- is a key leadership skill in a democratic society. ☐
2. Art departments visibly model the creative process (made up of precise research, revision, and critique) which promotes innovation through risk taking, resiliency, and a focus on written, oral, and visual communication that maintains an awareness of the audience.
3. Art departments make community engagement visible: between faculty, students, and alumni; between department and institution; between campus and town/region. ☐
4. Art departments have a cohesive voice when discussing the value of visual literacy and how its study and ☐methods lead to employment. In addition to traditional roles and careers, visual literacy is valued by Fortune 500 companies and innovative startups.
5. Art departments promote independence and competency. They mentor majors through a rigorous senior capstone experience. In turn, accountability is demonstrated to external and ☐internal audiences. ☐
6. Art departments highlight location. They use local archives and special collections. They emphasize ☐community-based and community-engaged work. They enrich localities. ☐
7. Art departments close gaps between theory and praxis, between student and alumni, between town and gown, between classrooms and future workplaces. Art departments unite their locations and current knowledge, alumni, ☐scholars, artists, curators, museums, archives, galleries, and maker spaces. ☐
8. Art departments look outside their own campus traditions to those of other COPLAC institutions to see how ☐degree programs are designed, faculty loads are arranged, credits are determined, etc. ☐

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FACULTY AND STAFF**

1. Members of the administrative staff work to understand the structural value of Art departments to our shared liberal arts mission as well as to the formation of democratic society. Art departments highlight innovation and informed controversy.

2. Members of the administrative staff articulate (together with the Art department, the Admissions Office, and the Advancement Office) the value of innovation and informed controversy within the liberal arts context. We train the next generation of entrepreneurial, democratic citizens.
  - Art departments create safe spaces in which to encounter sensitive topics, heal, and effect collaborative change.
3. Members of the administrative staff actively tell the Art department's stories inside and outside the university by:
  - Raising the profile of student and faculty work -- in student recruitment, in assessment portfolios, in promotion and tenure credit, in standards for sabbatical, in alumni features in advancement publications, etc.
  - Making physical space visible and available:
    - In order to demonstrate the apprenticeship model, ensure that faculty have space to work alongside our students.
    - In order to demonstrate intentional participation in the Liberal Arts, ensure that building/classroom exteriors state: "In this space students, faculty, and staff are performing liberal arts values by...."
4. Members of the administrative staff are intentional in supporting an Art department's efforts to "close the gap" by targeting funding for:
  - National participation: Faculty and staff to attend COPLAC Summer Institutes and to belong to the Council of Undergraduate Research (at the "enhanced institutional membership" level) and to attend the National Conference for Undergraduate Research.
  - Digital Humanities courses and projects in which students and faculty collaborate.
  - Ensuring that, in this digital era, student and faculty artist-scholars have access to well-supported technology.
  - Training faculty in successful grant writing and administration.
  - Training faculty to understand emerging student-related issues and how to address them in the classroom.
  - Balancing the needs for small studio classes with courses with larger enrollments.
  - Study trips to museums, galleries, and maker spaces.
5. Members of the administrative staff help identify and cultivate community partnerships
  - It helps art build bridges to inter and intra groups -- within the institution, within local communities, within COPLAC.
  - It communicates that Art is a vehicle for change.
6. Members of the administrative staff make the supervision of high impact experiences visible, viz., that internships, capstones, senior theses are given financial compensation or credit toward teaching load, etc.
7. Members of the administrative staff actively and collaboratively include Art departments in recruiting and retaining students.