

The Arts at Virginia Tech

Strategic Directions and Opportunities

*Submitted to the Offices of the President and Senior Vice President and Provost
by the Chair of the Arts Strategic Planning Team*

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of “the Arts at Virginia Tech” is to supply rigorous and innovative academic programs in the arts, promote the discovery and transfer of knowledge garnered through creative research methodologies and professional studio practices, enrich the lives of faculty, students, and arts patrons through performances and engagement initiatives, and leverage technologies to enhance teaching and learning capabilities in PK-12 and higher education environments.

VISION STATEMENT

The arts are a deeply embedded and valued part of life at Virginia Tech; have a direct and lasting impact on the quality of life for our region; and contribute to the economic vitality of the Commonwealth. The arts are essential to a premier research university where students and employees, as well as surrounding community members and future generations of scholars, expect their experiences with the arts to reflect the diverse world in which they live. The goal of the arts at Virginia Tech is to develop a distinctive and innovative profile of educational, research, and outreach programs and activities that integrate the arts while leveraging technologies.

BACKGROUND

In January 1999, the Arts Blueprint for Virginia Tech documented the absence of a strong profile of the arts at Virginia Tech and called for additional support toward creating more aesthetic experiences for undergraduate students, graduate students, and the university community at large. The blueprint called for a Creative Arts Center to serve as the cornerstone for programmatic and performance efforts in the arts. It was noted that Virginia Tech was one of the few top-tier universities in the United States that does not possess either a major performing arts facility or a major art gallery. It was argued that the center would enhance Virginia Tech’s commitment to the arts as an integral ingredient in the lives and learning of our students.

Additional recommendations were included in the original blueprint, such as installing outdoor sculptures to further enhance the aesthetic beauty of campus; initiating a performing arts series with top-class performers and ensembles; establishing an art acquisition program to support major gallery and exhibition spaces; strategically place works of art in classrooms and the library to create arts learning experiences for students and faculty; and enhancing the presence of the arts in the University Core Curriculum. The blueprint recommended placing an emphasis on a visiting artist-in-residence component for periods of one or two weeks. Visiting artists would work in various curricular settings by holding master classes and seminars for students, faculty and the public and would engage individuals in collaborative works of art and learning through art.

In 2005, many of these ideas were carried forward in drafting the 2006-2012 University Strategic Plan. As stated under the Social and Individual Transformation component of the Discovery Scholarship Domain:

The dynamics of economic, social, political, technological, environmental, and cultural change are at the heart of this area of research and creative scholarship which has application in domestic and international public policy and all aspects of community life. (p. 29)

The Virginia Tech Collaborative for Creative Technologies in the Arts and Designs (CCTAD) is committed to the transformative power of the arts and to exploring the intersection between human creativity and technology. (p. 31)

Goal IV. Establish the Virginia Tech Performing and Visual Arts Center...Construct a new Performing and Visual Arts Center that will be catalytic in developing the arts. (p. 33)

In 2005, Minnis Ridenour, Senior Fellow for Resource Development, was asked to develop a strategy for advancing specific plans to construct a Performance Hall, Creative Technologies Lab, and Visual Arts Gallery. The concept of an "Arts Initiative" was developed, with a focus on enhancing the presence and practice of the arts on campus for the benefit of all.

Since 2005, the university has made significant progress in the arts in many ways, including the establishment of the Center for the Arts and conceptualizing the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT) through the Arts Policy Board. The Arts Policy Board is charged with providing policy guidance to the Provost and to the Executive Director of the Center for the Arts by providing recommendations and collaborative guidance for policy level decisions concerning the operation of the Center for the Arts and the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology. The Board membership includes:

Senior Vice President and Provost, Chair

Senior Fellow for Resource Development, Convener

Deans, Colleges of Architecture and Urban Studies and College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

Vice President, Finance and CFO

Vice President, Student Affairs

Directors, Schools of Education, Performing Arts and Cinema, and Visual Arts; and University Unions and Student Activities (UUSA).

Meanwhile, much progress remains to be made in arts programming, arts research, and in the productivity of educational programs, particularly at the master's level. Additional development is needed to evaluate financial models and sustainable funding mechanisms for the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology. A startup and incubation plan for the organizational and financial structure of this dynamic research entity will assist with the establishment of a Charter in order to receive recognition as a new Institute through the university governance process. Forecasting and planning simulations must be undertaken to assist with the scope and scale of creative research work, instructional activities, and outreach. Projected cluster hires for faculty engaged in the work of the Institute will engage all participating colleges and departments to leverage the many synergistic opportunities available.

PARTNERS

To be successful, the arts at Virginia Tech must engage a broad range of university and community partners and programs. These include, but are not limited to:

Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost

College of Architecture and Urban Studies

School of Visual Arts

Studio Art

Art History

Visual Communication Design

Fine Arts in Creative Technologies MFA program

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

School of Performing Arts and Cinema

Music

Theatre & Cinema

Creative Writing MFA program

Department of Communication

School of Education

Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT)

Center for the Arts

University Unions and Student Activities (UUSA) and other Student Affairs units

Office of the Senior Fellow for Resource Development

Information Technology

University Development

Facilities and Planning Departments

Town of Blacksburg

PK-12 Schools and School Systems

Faculty at Virginia Tech and at other Colleges/Universities who are engaged in technological advancements in higher education pedagogy

Regional Arts Organizations, including the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, and Mill Mountain Theatre in Roanoke

CAPITAL PROJECTS: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arts District

A proposed "Arts District" encompasses the southeast part of campus that includes numerous arts-related facilities on campus and downtown, and that is anchored by the nearby site for the new Center for the Arts: The Armory, the Digital Arts & Animation Studio, the Digital Interactive Sound and Intermedia Studio, 4Design (in Henderson), Theatre 101, and the Lyric Theatre. There is an opportunity to link these and the Center for the Arts with an 'Arts Walk' - a pathway around and through town and campus populated with art.

Squires Student Center, Campus

In the medium- and longer term, the facilities in Squires will need to be significantly upgraded, or replaced, and class and rehearsal rooms, storage, and laboratory space used by the Music Department

need to be significantly upgraded, renovated or replaced. The Perspective Gallery, Recital Salon (238 seats), Studio Theatre (225 seats), and Haymarket Theatre (460 seats) are essential facilities for existing programs and also need upgrading.

College Avenue/Roanoke & Otey Streets

A significant opportunity exists for the development of the current parking lot across College Avenue from Squires. A mixed-use development could accommodate arts-related offices and programming space, together with retail and graduate housing; a parking structure could provide revenues that – after debt service – could be set aside to support the arts. The Media Building might also be considered as part of a core downtown Arts District.

Outdoor Sculpture Space

An outdoor sculpture initiative requires a clearly defined acquisition program for large sculptures with potential for national or international significance. A number of potential locations for such pieces have already been identified (*Master Plan for Outdoor Public Art, 1999*), and a sub-committee for Public Art on Campus, chaired by Larry Hincker, was established in 2010.

Arts in Place

This initiative would aim to increase the acquisition and exhibition of 2-D and 3-D art in campus settings.

Residence Hall

An Arts-themed residential learning community could support and enhance the overall strategic goal of developing a distinctive approach to integrative arts at Virginia Tech.

Accommodations for Visiting Artists

Currently, the university has no accommodations for visiting artists. Creating and maintaining such a space is a priority for expanding Visiting Artist programs.

Storage Space

There is a current need for better/expanded storage space for the university art collection.

Screening Facilities

There is an imminent need for additional screening facilities; one to accommodate 75, one to accommodate 300.

Proscenium House

There is a projected need (College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences) for a proscenium house with 500-600 seats.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal 1

Strengthen learning through the arts by providing a robust array of academic programs that are rigorous and sustainable and by embarking upon innovative programmatic opportunities that integrate the arts.

- Objective 1: Systematically review existing undergraduate programs in the arts with the goal of utilizing reinvestment strategies to further enhance the programs of: Visual Arts, Art History, Theatre Arts, Cinema, and Music.
- Objective 2: Expand enrollment in master's programs and establish additional MFA programs that meet the rising demand for merging the arts with technological and scientific applications. Key areas for strategic investment might include visualization, animation, interdisciplinary arts, gaming, medical arts technologies, material culture, digital cinema production, digital music applications, technological applications in education, and 3-D architectural, ecological, and geospatial simulation.
- Objective 3: Provide support to the professional development and recognition of exceptionally talented faculty who serve as creative scholars.
- Objective 4: Enhance university resources that support sustainable academic programs in the arts. In particular, scholarships and assistantships for master's students, additional faculty lines, visiting scholar support, and endowed chairs and professorships in the Arts are needed.

Goal 2

Strengthen discovery through the arts through the creation of an integrative interdisciplinary Institute that will pull together a group of academic faculty and their associates (research associates, scientists, visiting artists, graduate students, undergraduate students, and staff) to pursue research goals that draw upon two or more disciplines and leverage innovative technologies.

- Objective 1: Support an incremental build-up over five years of approximately 20 FTE positions dedicated to translational research facilitated by the Institute.
- Objective 2: Support and encourage technology transfer from the Institute to regional and national industries and organizations by awarding seed money for promising projects and assisting with intellectual property agreements that reward faculty engaged in such projects.

Goal 3

Strategically advance transformative educational learning models and creative educational research methodologies to PK-12 and higher education classrooms and learning environments.

- Objective 1: Leverage expertise to enable the delivery of education research discoveries and instructional products that engage Virginia teachers and students in PK-12 school systems and faculty and students at Virginia Tech and other colleges/universities throughout the Commonwealth.

Objective 2: Create unique opportunities for PK-12 students to develop creative and critical thinking skills through the merger of arts and technology, with a focus on improved learning and performance in all subject matters.

Objective 3: Forge partnerships with other universities, PK-12 schools, cultural institutions and leading corporations to obtain and administer large-scale projects that position the Commonwealth for a significant presence in the fast-growing sectors of creative and cultural enterprise.

Goal 4

Provide exceptional facilities and space that advance new methods of performance, teaching, research, and student and community engagement.

Objective 1: Complete the Center for the Arts, a complex of new and renovated facilities that will feature first-class performance and exhibition spaces with adjoining educational research laboratories. The building will include a 1,260 seat performance hall, gallery spaces, and will house the research center/institute.

Objective 2: Increase student, faculty, staff, and community access to new and traditional art forms at the international, national, community, and campus levels.

Objective 3: Support initiatives that foster reflection, conversation, and learning about other cultures and philosophies through artistic expression and creative scholarship.

Objective 4: Increase program linkages and partnerships across the university with local and regional affiliates to enhance visual and performing arts programming that spur community and economic development efforts (for example, summer festivals).

Objective 5: Increase acquisition of arts space to bolster the range and reach of exhibits and events on campus, surrounding communities, and the Commonwealth.

Objective 6: Develop an arts-themed residential community where students can immerse themselves in a living/learning program.

Goal 5

Strengthen individual cultural awareness and increase arts participation of university citizens, surrounding community members, and arts patrons.

Objective 1: Provide opportunities for social interactions and culturally based artistic expression for university students, employees, surrounding community members, and arts patrons.

Objective 2: Strengthen cultural understanding and interchanges for students and faculty.