

WHITE PAPER: CU-Boulder Institute for the Arts

Music begins where words are powerless to express. Music is made for the inexpressible. I want music to seem to rise from the shadows and indeed sometimes to return to them.

--Claude Debussy

This white paper advocates for an Institute for the Arts at the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU). The Institute will be a catalyst that will facilitate and strengthen connections between faculty and students in the arts. The Institute will focus on art making and learning and will become an incubator for creative work as well as a hub for experiments in arts pedagogy. CU faculty would be invited to be Fellows in the Institute and to participate in its programs. Faculty who work in the arts, including (but not limited to) art and art history, creative writing, critical media practices, film studies, theatre and dance, and music may self-elect to join and work with the Institute.

The Institute for the Arts would serve as an organizational umbrella to accommodate, through its resources, interdisciplinary and collaborative work both inside and outside the classroom. The vision of the Institute would be to harness the power and potential of artistic exploration and expression for the benefit of the campus and the arts themselves, and to promote creative expression, experience, and interpretation as fundamental paths to engaging and understanding our world.

What is the place of the arts in a modern university like CU? The arts are not only a crucial and intrinsically valuable component of our culture, but their continued health is required to fulfill the mission of a contemporary university. The arts are our major outlet to express what it means to be alive at this time and in this place. They are a window to the past and a connection to our future. Should not the study of art and art making play a prominent role in CU's future? Yes, and, as the Flagship 2030 strategic plan notes, CU-Boulder will become a leading model by "redefining learning and discovery," and by "setting new standards in education, research, scholarship, and creative work that will benefit Colorado and the world."

Cultivating students to think critically and synthetically is an important attribute of college pedagogy. Equally important is our ability to encourage students and faculty to dream. Flights of imagination not only help solve equations and posit new understandings about the workings of the universe but also speak more fundamentally to the question of what it means to be human. The relevance and liveliness of academia are functions of its willingness to engage with art and culture.

To fully realize the potential of the arts at CU, we must address existing obstacles to interdisciplinary teaching and collaborative creative work. These obstacles include:

- A lack of ways to encourage interdisciplinary creative collaboration
- The lack of a dedicated space to develop interdisciplinary teaching and creative links between disciplines, due to the “siloing” of departments
- The absence of a way to “count” faculty co-teaching, which limits opportunities for collaboration
- Financial disincentives created by the perceived need to capture enrollments in a particular department
- Difficulties in introducing new pedagogy or curricula across the arts
- A lack of ways to address the specific pedagogic requirements of the arts, such as smaller classes, labs, and studios
- The current programmatic separation of potential creative cohorts across the university, which leads to fragmentation of the arts
- The absence of ways to systematically expose CU students to the arts as a unified experience and as an important part of their education

The Institute of the Arts will foster artistic exploration and creative work as fundamental paths to understanding our world. All students at the university will benefit from having the arts as a major part of their education and from participation in the arts as a unified activity. The Institute would nurture interdisciplinary creative work and teaching at the intersection of many departments in order to:

- Support the interaction of students, faculty, artists, and researchers from diverse academic disciplines within the context of the creative arts
- Act as a focal point for innovative ideas and initiatives in the arts that are, by nature, interdisciplinary
- Promote the twin ideas of teaching through creative research and furthering creative research through teaching
- Encourage and assist in the implementation of curricula, symposia, workshops, presentations, performances, and other arts activities which embody and articulate new approaches to the creative process through interdisciplinary collaboration
- Seek opportunities to interact with teachers, researchers, artists, and institutions nationally and internationally whose collaborative work challenges the boundaries of traditional art forms and processes
- Engage a wide range of artistic disciplines in Institute initiatives to facilitate the development of new interdisciplinary curricula and degree programs in the arts

Faculty and student participation in the Institute will require incentives to seed activities. These will include course buyouts for those looking to co-teach and/or develop new courses, pedagogy, and new work. It is equally important that faculty and students have access to a range of resources, such as meeting spaces, production black-box and fabrication spaces, and production equipment. Finally, the Institute would offer workshops and colloquia in which faculty present work and discuss emerging pedagogy. Students also could present their projects in these colloquia. Funding would be available for guest artists and scholars to come to the Institute and work with faculty

and students. By offering space and funding to creative faculty (in the broadest sense), the Institute would be the campus's central hub for the arts.

It is worth noting that other universities have addressed some of the challenges to the arts through the creation of art institutes. These institutes include the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arts Institute, the Stanford Arts Institute, and the ASU Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. What we are proposing will have a distinctive footprint by inclusively bringing together faculty across colleges and providing a truly independent and proactive approach to creative work and teaching among practitioners and researchers. The Institute for the Arts would be a campus resource.

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