

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
LEADERSHIP IN ARTS EDUCATION 2004–2009

INTRODUCTION

For nearly one hundred years, California College of the Arts (CCA) has been dedicated to educating students to shape culture through the practice and understanding of the arts. Guiding this mission has been the fundamental belief that connecting the arts to social and political life deepens the power of creative work while making a positive contribution to the communities in which that work takes place. This principle was key to the Arts and Crafts movement of the early twentieth century, and it remains a significant part of the college's commitment to education through the arts. In the last fifteen years, CCA has made a concerted effort to carry out its mission in a more robust and visible way, while ensuring the sustainability of the institution. With this strategic plan, CCA proposes a series of initiatives aimed at establishing the institution as a leader in education through the arts. In this capacity, CCA will offer its students the very best education an art college can offer, provide its alumni the greatest opportunities for creative work and public service, and give its communities the benefits of sharing the public sphere with a vibrant and dynamic cultural institution.

When CCA developed a comprehensive strategic plan in 1994, the college enrolled 900 students, was investigating the possibility of a permanent home in San Francisco, and had recently emerged from a period of economic instability and academic inconsistency. The 1994 plan set the stage for the acquisition of a major campus in the South of Market section of San Francisco, the completion of a successful capital campaign, and the development of new programs and recruiting strategies to boost enrollment. In 1997 this plan was revised to reflect the successes in facilities enhancement and fundraising, and to implement a more successful strategy of enrollment growth with a target of 1,500 full-time students (or the equivalent).

In 2003, having achieved the objectives set forth in the 1994 plan, the college began a new planning process. Throughout the year planning meetings were held with a variety of the college's constituencies: trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. In February 2004, the board of trustees adopted the finished plan.

I. VALUES AND CULTURE

As an educational institution:

California College of the Arts values the experience of creating new work as the key ingredient in the education of its students. As the college's programs have expanded over the years, this belief has remained consistent. In addition to its fundamental commitment to creative practice, CCA has always held that conceptual thinking and contextual understanding are vital components of arts education. An education through the arts at CCA unites theory and practice. It preserves the promise of a liberal education: to instill in its students the lifelong love of learning. In addition, and most crucially, CCA mandates that its students acquire the skills and habits of mind that will allow them to continue to be creative contributors to the culture around them.

As a cultural institution:

The college values its ability to be a conduit for contributions in the arts, including the fine arts, architecture, design, writing, criticism, and curatorial practice. In addition to graduating leading practitioners in these areas, CCA is a center of research, discussion, and productivity that aims to have an impact on the intersecting fields of the arts. The college values exploration, experimentation, and contemplation in cultural fields that can have a wide impact on society, as well as a profound effect on individuals. CCA values its role as a place that designers, architects, writers, curators, artists, and critics turn to consider some of the major developments affecting their fields today.

As an institutional citizen:

The college values its place in the dynamic economic and cultural region of Northern California and its role as an engaged member of the San Francisco and Oakland communities. CCA uses its expertise in education through the arts to address issues of common concern. As a leading research institution dedicated to understanding how the arts can positively affect communities, CCA develops projects of immediate benefit to its local communities and disseminates the results of its research in a national context. As a leading exhibitor of experimental contemporary arts, CCA is a source of thoughtful scholarship, criticism, and public conversation, and is itself a destination for those in the Bay Area seeking to understand the contemporary fields. The college remains dedicated to the belief that art and society mutually benefit from increasing the points of intersection between personal creative work and its social, economic, and political contexts.

II. MISSION

After broad-based discussion of the key values and purpose of California College of the Arts, the following mission statement was proposed and adopted:

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS EDUCATES STUDENTS TO SHAPE CULTURE THROUGH THE PRACTICE AND CRITICAL STUDY OF THE ARTS. THE COLLEGE PREPARES ITS STUDENTS FOR LIFELONG CREATIVE WORK AND SERVICE TO THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGH A CURRICULUM IN ART, ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, AND WRITING.

The mission highlights the breadth of our programs and underscores our commitment to education through the arts. Some of the key ideas or values that emerged in the discussion of the mission focused on identifying the kind of students who would most benefit from a CCA education. These are:

- Students whose creative work displays an innovative approach to materials, conceptual sophistication, and craftsmanship
- Students with a capacity for self-exploration who engage the diverse culture around them and make use of this contextual understanding for their art making
- Students who think strategically and adopt entrepreneurial ideas to further their creative work

III. VISION

California College of the Arts will build on its accomplishments to become a leader in education through the arts.

In order to fulfill this vision we must:

- Attract a talented, highly motivated, and diverse pool of applicants who value creative practice as a way of learning
- Retain students at levels that allow the development of disciplinary cohorts and a vibrant campus community
- Provide a rigorous, innovative curriculum that ensures breadth of learning while providing a profound experience in a field of creative work
- Educate students in the development of skillful making, rigorous conceptualization, contextual and critical thinking, innovative problem solving, and strategic and entrepreneurial capacity
- Equip graduates for professional achievement, lifelong learning, and service to their communities
- Attract and retain a faculty of accomplished professionals in the arts who are dedicated, excellent teachers
- Support, celebrate, and publicize the professional accomplishments of faculty members and staff
- Create and maintain campus facilities that offer an optimal teaching environment
- Recruit and retain a productive, creative staff that values the college as a positive place to work
- Develop and maintain a campus culture that values experimentation, rigorous work, diversity, and the pleasures and educative capacities of the arts
- Enhance our leadership role in the exhibition and critical appraisal of contemporary arts
- Deepen our involvement in local communities to achieve positive change and to understand the impact of the arts on society

IV. CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Changing Role of Art Education

The world of art education has changed significantly over the last several years. There is now widespread recognition that people have very different cognitive styles or ways of learning, and that for many people the process of making is an effective vehicle for liberal education. Thus, while many who apply to California College of the Arts will intend to continue their artistic practice as a way of earning their livelihood, many students who have found creative endeavors satisfying through their high school years will now consider art school as a college choice, even though they may not be certain that they want to be professional artists. The traditional role of a liberal arts education has been to provide students with a broad understanding of their cultural context and prepare them to make informed judgments about their future; today, an art college can perform this role as well as a liberal arts school. CCA can build on the strengths of its studio environment to provide this potential audience with a place for dedicated studio work and considered judgments of the highest order.

In addition to creative practice, students require a variety of contextual skills to make their education as profound and productive as possible. At CCA, a rigorous exploration of historical, literary, and other cultural issues is an essential facet of an education through the arts. Coursework in the liberal arts provides students with the skills they need to engage the culture around them and find a meaningful role in it.

Rising Importance of Design

In recent years, design has become a field of intense concern among an increasingly broad sector of the public. Quality design and concerns about design aesthetics are now part of popular culture, and there is widespread recognition of the problem-solving capacities of designers and artists. At CCA these capacities can be deepened and sharpened, and designers and artists can work together in intense, productive collaborations.

Economic Factors

CCA's business model is based on continued enrollment growth as the primary source of funds for facility and program improvements, and for the annual increased costs of basic operations, including financial aid. However, the rate of enrollment growth that CCA has experienced over the last four years (from 1,100 students in 1999 to 1,500 in 2003) may not be sustainable if we control financial aid costs. Without robust enrollment growth, there will not be sufficient funds for scholarships, technology, improved student life programs, and increased faculty salaries.

Fundraising must expand significantly to bridge this gap, creating a financial aid endowment and a fund for capital improvements. The planned fundraising initiative in conjunction with CCA's centenary celebration is a crucial part of this plan.

Enrollment Growth

The college has the flexibility and scrappiness of a young institution, with the tradition and stability of a school that is almost one hundred years old. CCA has a strong educational model that emphasizes the role of creativity in the world. This, combined with a more recent emphasis on education through the arts, presents us with opportunities to attract a diverse and talented pool of students—both freshmen and transfers. The college has achieved high retention rates over the last few years, and it has been able to add first-rate professors and visiting artists to a strong group of teacher-practitioners.

Over the last five years the college has directed a consistent growth strategy, led by a cohesive management team with faculty and trustee support. As an enrollment-driven institution, we have used financial aid as an important recruitment tool, but we have seen the discount rate climb as a result. The college has a growing endowment, but it is relatively small. A major goal of this strategic plan is to establish a framework for diversifying the revenue base through increased endowment and contributed support.

The facilities in San Francisco and Oakland are attractive and flexible, combining increased technological resources with more traditional studios. The CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts and Center for Art and Public Life have had a dramatic impact on our curriculum and on our relations with the San Francisco and Oakland communities. We can do more to bring their success to a wider audience, which should lead to increased enrollment.

Location

The San Francisco Bay Area presents enormous opportunities. It is a center for first-rate institutions of higher education, and there is a deep history of support for artistic experimentation in the region. Northern California is at the core of creative economies, and the possibilities for partnerships with design, technology, cultural, and entertainment organizations are extensive. As part of the Pacific Rim, the Bay Area offers possibilities of mutually productive exchanges with Asia and Latin America. Although this is a very expensive region in which to live, it remains attractive because of its natural beauty, diverse economic opportunities, rich cultural life, and numerous individuals and organizations that actively encourage and support the arts.

Other Challenges

There are several challenges that we must meet. Alumni support has improved over the last few years but still needs to expand to make us competitive with peer institutions. Student engagement is strong within programs but needs to grow to include allegiance to the larger CCA community. As CCA attracts a broader range of students who learn through making, we have a greater responsibility to provide a rigorous academic component in the humanities and sciences. We have made a series of excellent faculty hires in this area, but more needs to be done.

V. GOALS

GOAL 1: Enhance national visibility through academic excellence

Characteristics

- California College of the Arts acknowledges and draws attention to the creative work of its students, alumni, faculty, and staff, and underscores the ways that education in the arts has made a difference in their lives
- CCA faculty continue to combine excellent teaching with active, visible professional work in their respective fields
- The CCA curriculum is rigorous and diverse
- The facilities at the college support academic program development
- The CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts presents dynamic, original exhibitions that attract international attention
- The Center for Art and Public Life documents its work in community to draw national attention to how the arts can positively address important issues in society
- The college clearly articulates how its resources and achievements make it a leader in education through the arts
- The college draws on the particular cultural, economic, and natural resources of the Bay Area to attract quality students and faculty and to launch their work in the world

GOAL 2: Maintain a sustainable business model

Characteristics

- The college is a tuition-driven institution but has growing budgetary support from endowment and contributed revenue sources
- The college funds an increasing percentage of facilities and program enhancements through fundraising to supplement the economic margins created by increased enrollment
- Student recruitment aims to create a mix of traditional first-year students, transfers, and second-degree students
- Tuition increases allow the college to keep pace with increasing costs and to reinvest in programs
- Contributed sources for scholarships provide significant relief to the operating budget
- The college improves the efficient, year-round use of its facilities with schedule changes and increased summer programming

GOAL 3: Strengthen internal and external community relations

Characteristics:

- CCA offers a small college educational experience in which students develop close relationships with faculty and peers
- Students are devoted to the college as a whole as well as to the specific programs in which they major
- Recently increased housing capacity results in more student life programs
- Faculty are deeply involved in the governance of the college
- Staff and faculty value their participation in the college's mission
- Staff, faculty, and students are often deeply involved in community projects
- Students and alumni often go on to first-rate graduate programs and are eager to participate in the creative economy
- Alumni are actively involved in the life of the college

VI. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The following are some of the general objectives and strategies California College of the Arts will put in place in order to make progress on our three overarching goals. Specific departments will develop annual targets and standards of measurement by which to evaluate success. CCA managers will use the priorities established in this plan to guide the annual budget process. At the end of each fiscal year, management will evaluate whether funds were spent in accordance with these priorities. This evaluation will be shared with staff, faculty, and trustees.

GOAL 1: Enhance national visibility through academic excellence

Objective A: Recruit, retain, and support talented and motivated students who are prepared to benefit from an education in the arts.

Strategies:

1. Increase the size, quality, and diversity of the applicant pool
2. Offer financial aid at a level to ensure that CCA recruits and retains its desired student population
3. Create a student experience and campus culture that values diversity, increases yield on recruitment, and strengthens retention

Objective B: Develop a distinctive CCA curriculum with clear, cross-college standards, strong individual programs, and compelling electives.

Strategies:

1. Empower a strong curriculum committee for the systematic evaluation of departmental and cross-college programs
2. Develop compelling first-year program, all-college junior review, and all-college capstone experience with clear learning outcomes
3. Enhance curriculum that promotes diversity, leveraging CCA's location in the Northern California economic and cultural context

Objective C: Recruit, retain, and support faculty whose professional work is highly visible and whose teaching effectiveness is first-rate.

Strategies:

1. Increase faculty salaries, technological support, and library and facility resources
2. Attract highly qualified faculty for permanent, adjunct, and visiting positions
3. Cultivate strong faculty governance and participation within the campus community

Goal 2: Maintain a sustainable business model

Objective A: Increase enrollment to 1,850 by 2009 through enrollment growth and improved retention while maintaining academic quality.

Strategies:

1. Increase freshman enrollment by 20 students annually, maintain transfer enrollment, and increase graduate enrollment in newer programs
2. Increase first-year retention to 82 percent and continuing (year-round) student retention to 83 percent through enhanced student life and student housing
3. Expand Extended Education programs

Objective B: Control costs

Strategies:

1. Increase efficient use of facilities, resources, and personnel
2. Maintain tuition discount rate under 30 percent and increase revenue per FTE
3. Develop partnerships with off-campus entities that can extend our mission

Objective C: Sustain annual fundraising and launch centenary initiative.

Strategies:

1. Increase endowment fundraising, especially for scholarships, while sustaining unrestricted giving
2. Increase capital fundraising, especially for technology and facilities improvements
3. Increase donor base, especially individuals and alumni

GOAL 3: Strengthen internal and external community relations

Objective A: Enhance student life activities and create community-building experiences.

Strategies:

1. Create facilities that promote the development of a student community on each campus, including co-curricular aspects of the residence halls
2. Recognize college wide student achievement
3. Develop an extensive career planning program for students and alumni

Objective B: Strengthen faculty, staff, and alumni participation in campus culture.

Strategies:

1. Increase participation in faculty and student governance and in alumni volunteer opportunities
2. Recognize and make visible the achievements of faculty, staff, students, and alumni
3. Enhance communication to faculty, staff, and alumni concerning educational and outreach initiatives

Objective C: Enhance community outreach program and promote diversity and respect for difference on campus.

Strategies:

1. Unify program around expertise in education through the arts
2. Underscore and support diversity across the curriculum
3. Enhance geographical and socioeconomic diversity among board of trustees, students, faculty, and staff

VII. PEER INSTITUTIONS

With the vision to be a leader in education through the arts, California College of the Arts will compare itself with a set of peer institutions for the purpose of assessing CCA's competitiveness. For collegewide benchmarking, the following characteristics were identified:

- Independent college of art and design
- Undergraduate-graduate mix
- Quality across subject areas
- Geographical distribution
- Location in major metropolitan center

Art Center College of Design
California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)
Maryland Institute College of Art
Otis College of Art and Design
Pratt Institute
Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Specific programs may choose additional institutions—e.g., Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) or San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI)—with which to compare themselves.

VIII. BENCHMARKS

Input Measures

- Net tuition per FTE
- Diversity
- Grade point average
- Portfolio ranking
- Percentage of international students
- Percentage of out-of-state students
- Percentage of Southern California students
- Student-faculty ratio
- Class rank percentile
- Number of donors at all giving levels
- Dollars donated from all sources
- Cost per dollar raised
- Percent of operating budget covered by contributions
- Endowment value

Output Measures

- Reduce percentage of operating budget financed from tuition
- Reduce facilities cost per FTE
- Increase retention and graduate rates
- Improve career and graduate school placement
- Appear consistently on national rankings of programs
- Improve faculty and alumni recognition
- Expand visiting artist/scholar programs
- Increase endowment value
- Create technology capital fund
- Increase percentage of alumni donors
- Increase percentage of alumni volunteers
- Increase percentage of donors who renew and upgrade