
Summer, 2022, Creative Art & Practice PIG

Participants:

Daniel Schindler, Theater and Dance (Organizer)
Kynde Kiefel, Sheehan Gallery (Organizer)
Amy Dodds, Music
Libby Miller, Art History and Visual Culture Studies and Maxey Museum
Katrina Roberts, English
Emily Somoskey, Art

Summary Conclusions

Our summer meetings of the Creative Thought & Practice PIG were useful in understanding artistic practices between the disciplines of our various artistic departments and communities on campus. We began our inquiry with this premise:

"We would like to explore if a course of study in Creative Thought & Practice would enhance the student experience, create an area of distinction at Whitman College, and build more cross-departmental opportunities for research, creative projects, and community engagement."

-From original PIG application

We all shared our own practice principles and how we related that work to our students as well as each other and the Walla Walla community. We evaluated the existing curricular structures of programs within the college. We also looked in depth at several prominent arts and design programs across the country and invited Richard Purcell-Tanner Boyer from the [Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry](#) to talk about the process they employ there to create successful interdisciplinary graduates. What we discovered in our conversations and presentations was not a need for a new major, minor, or concentration. Cross disciplinary experiences through the selection of minors, double majoring, or the IPM (Individually Planned Major) already exists as an option for students pursuing an interdisciplinary approach to their education and artistic practice. What we found most pressing was the need for increased visibility of the arts on campus to solidify the connections between our various practices which are already happening and to create new in-roads where they are lacking. The future of artistic industries is interdisciplinary, this is clear. We as educators need to work together to expose our students to this trend and encourage them to experience artistic practices adjacent to their primary interests. To these ends, we've come up with a slate of ideas on how these connections can be made more visible and fostered by Whitman College.

- Create an *Arts on Campus* link on the Whitman College main website that details all of the artists and happenings in a clean, clear format. This would give the students, faculty, staff and public a clearer idea of what is happening on campus and how they can access it.
- Create a joint Arts events calendar online [this would be connected to the web link described above], as well as a printed version for campus and the surrounding community where all of the creative events on campus can be visible. Many of the arts

disciplines are siloed in their own areas and do not readily know what is happening elsewhere. This results in times when there is nothing going on on campus as far as public events and times where there are 3 or 4 things happening that overlap; creating smaller audiences for all and conflicts for our students. If the department chairs and area coordinators can come together to schedule events on a common arts calendar, we can avoid some of the overlap and give the Whitman Community more of an opportunity to attend these events.

- Advise students on more interdisciplinary tracks of study. While this will fall mainly to individual advisors, recognizing and preparing students for a multifaceted world upon graduation through the use of the tools we already have more directly is essential in their preparation for life after Whitman. This requires individual faculty members to actively encourage student exploration in other areas where applicable.
- Create a Student Promoter Internship that handles promotions in-person, by word of mouth sharing, as well as social media announcements and coverage. Allied with this is involving student staff more in the promotion of Arts on campus, as they are the quickest form of advertisement in our experience.
- Integrate the various Arts groups/departments/programming on campus in New Student Orientation, FYS, and other built-in curriculum, as well as more specialized clubs and academic themes in a given year, so as to start a student's time here with an awareness of these possibilities.
 - Develop opportunities and models of instruction to team-teach interdisciplinary courses which would foster this kind of integration of practice in the student experience.
- Strengthen Arts programming to the larger region, local non-profits, working artists, etc., emphasizing the many creative resources that surround us, but also make the community more aware of the resources that Whitman College brings through its programming {this could be satisfied somewhat with the Arts calendar, but it seems additional interactions would solidify community partnerships in our various departments}
- Explore future development of a multi-disciplinary Summer Studio Program. This would require some additional funding or donor support, but it is a model that we have discovered in our research that would allow for artistic exploration outside of the traditional course study in an environment that would involve students and professional artists developing their work in a multidisciplinary fashion through an independent program. While this idea needs much more discussion and framing, it would be akin to other programs we've studied such as the [Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry](#) at Carnegie Mellon University, [Stanford d.school](#), and [Center For Applied Imagination SUNY Buffalo](#). This could become a program of distinction at Whitman and provide a summer opportunities for our students.

Future Objectives

We will be soliciting information and ideas from the larger Whitman community as to where they think we can improve Arts visibility and make more connections on campus as well as within the Walla Walla community. To this end, we've created a [Google Survey](#) to go out to the administration, faculty, and staff directly. The data gathered from this survey along with the information we've already generated this summer will be used to make requests for future staffing, technology, and material support to enhance the Arts experience on our campus.