



The Curb Center
FOR ART, ENTERPRISE & PUBLIC POLICY
at Vanderbilt

The Creative Campus : Higher Education and the Arts

*A report from the
Creative Campus Research Conference
at Vanderbilt University
November 9-11, 2006*

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“Higher education and the arts are two powerful, historically embedded, endlessly reinvented sectors in American life. They coincide in the society as major arenas for education, experience and knowledge-building. They coincide as major nonprofit actors in American life; they coincide as builders, as makers, as shapers of society’s values. They live together on campuses and in communities... the real wonder is that higher education and the arts have persisted, in parallel and in partnership, all these years, in so many places, without articulating their relationship or taking full advantage of it.”

From “The Creative Campus,” The American Assembly, March, 2004.

The Problem and the Opportunity

In this American society, as the quotation above illustrates, two great sectors – the academy and the arts – have a juxtaposed relationship. They exist side by side on American campuses, inhabiting the same squares and spaces, influencing communities around them, pressing the larger society with ideas and ideals. Yet they have managed not to know each other. Deans of the liberal arts and sciences and Deans of the Arts have little to do with each other. Literary scholars and cultural historians have little interaction with novelists or poets or composers, even those on campus, or with students and professors in the applied arts, and even less with commissioned performing artists or visiting filmmakers. Academicians and artists, managers of higher education and managers of culture, scholars and practitioners of the arts, have different vocabularies and many assume they hold different values as well. The relationship between the academy and the arts remains underdeveloped and largely unexplored despite their many years of co-existence.

The situation does seem to be changing. Within the last half dozen years, higher education leaders and cultural professionals have begun to converse, as they did at the American Assembly cited above. An era of building has been an important part of this change; on many American campuses, galleries, museums, theaters, performing arts centers have been renovated or built anew in an accelerating trend. The increasing professionalism of presenters on campuses has also made a difference; on many campuses, these curator/managers have made their own presence and the presence of artists newly felt. And there are other markers of change. There are new arts positions in the management ranks on many campuses from Lehigh to Stanford to New York University. There has been markedly successful fund raising for the arts on campus,

heralded by a large grant at Princeton and by a capital campaign dedicated to the arts at Yale. Arts enrollments at many institutions are unprecedented. The meeting at Vanderbilt on November 9-11, 2006 was aimed at addressing the new movement of the arts and the academy toward each other, and offering a set of fresh ideas for fortifying their relationship with better information and knowledge.

The Creative Campus movement began at the American Assembly in March of 2004 with the gathering of sixty leaders in the arts and higher education – professors and administrators, artists and funders, scholars and critics. The higher education leaders at the meeting realized that they had not mapped the cultural activity on their campuses, the financial implications of that activity, its seriousness and societal impacts; nor had they calibrated the meaningfulness of the arts to their goals of education, research and service. The arts professionals learned that there are levels of involvement within the academy to which they have not aspired – education and research functions, placement within the stated missions and priorities of their campuses, appropriate status and rewards for artists and art faculty. Despite the breadth of cultural activities on the country’s campuses, higher education had not signaled its commitment to the arts. Nor had the arts acknowledged the extent to which the academy advances artists, art forms and arts infrastructure in America. The Assembly was an eye-opener. Its participants produced a report and a set of recommendations which were widely circulated and referenced, and which seem already to be reflected in action on various campuses.

The Vanderbilt Research Conference

One major conclusion from the American Assembly meeting was that we know almost nothing about the scope of arts activity across American campuses: how it is organized, who participates, what its impact is, and how it connects to other areas of campus and community life. To address this issue, Vanderbilt University’s Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy hosted a research meeting, in cooperation with the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at Austin and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, to develop a set of questions and methodologies that might serve as the basis of an expanded national research effort. The meeting was supported by the Ford and Teagle Foundations and included a diverse mix of social scientists, artists, humanists, arts leaders, deans, provosts, chancellors and foundation officers. A full list of participants is included at the end of this report. The invited scholars were assigned to one of five working groups, each chaired by a scholar with interests and expertise relevant to the session topic. Scholars worked together for five hours on the morning of November 10 in order to produce a presentation of their “findings” for a group of plenary delegates (arts and higher education leaders, foundation officers, artists) who arrived on Friday afternoon. Each scholarly team presented their ideas, received feedback and participated in an open discussion geared toward developing and refining the research questions, challenging assumptions, and offering suggestions for new areas of inquiry.

The five topic areas, along with the names of the working group members, are described below:

1. ASSESSING THE CREATIVE CAMPUS

Keith Sawyer (session chair), Washington University, Associate Professor,
Education

Paul Kleiman, Lancaster University (UK), Associate Director, PALATINE

Kimberly Sheridan, George Mason University, Assistant Professor, Education

T. Dary Erwin, James Madison University, Associate Vice President for
Assessment and Public Policy

Nancy Grace, College of Wooster, Professor, English

Stacy DeZutter, Washington University, graduate student

Host/Reporter: Steven Tepper; Associate Director and Assistant Professor, Curb
Center and Sociology, Vanderbilt University

Today we live in a world driven by innovation, and creativity is essential to success in both business and education. Scholars and business leaders alike have argued that our economy is increasingly driven by creative workers – people who manipulate symbols and language in order to create stories, designs, games, entertainment, news, art, catalogues, databases, and other forms of content and knowledge. Some of the most important problems facing humanity– like AIDS, cancer, malaria, nano-science, and brain research – seem to need more than small incremental advances in existing methods and theory; they seem to require entirely new approaches based in interdisciplinary collaboration. Leaders in education, especially higher education, are beginning to recognize that existing institutional structures – rigid departmental boundaries, tenure and promotion criteria that reward a narrow disciplinary focus rather than interdisciplinary collaboration, an undergraduate curriculum that emerges from negotiation between traditional academic disciplines– often end up creating intellectual barriers and boundaries that can block innovation.

How can universities and colleges create an environment that fosters innovation, both in the institution and in the students? From history, we learn that creativity across domains (science, engineering, architecture) thrives in the presence of a vital artistic scene -- think of Renaissance Italy, Fin de Siecle Vienna, or the PARC Xerox artist residencies in Palo Alto. But although the correlation between the arts and creativity in science and engineering is well known, we still have very little understanding of exactly how the arts contributes to creativity and innovation of a society across the board. The session aimed to explore this poorly understood link.

This session explored the link between the arts and creativity by focusing on specific ways that we could assess the contribution of the arts to the creative campus. The questions addressed included: How do the arts create new possibilities for learning and discovery across the campus? Under what conditions? That is, what configuration of programs, activities and talents combine to create powerful learning environments? Can we measure the value that the arts add to an institution? Compared to other activities (like sports, religion, study abroad, voluntarism), how would we know whether the arts are

more or less effective in nurturing students that can thrive in today's innovation society? How and when do the arts spur creativity in other domains – science, engineering, business?

Assessment is not a new idea in higher education; there is considerable scholarship focusing on such student outcomes as retention, classroom success, and graduate school and career placement. Positive outcomes have been linked to smaller class sizes, curriculum innovations, mentorship and advising, campus climate, scholarship and aid, and various dimensions of student engagement (from social activities to sports). Creativity and the arts – either as inputs or outcomes – have received much less attention from the assessment community. To measure the arts as an input, the working group considered 3 dimensions – the presence of artistically engaged individuals (faculty, staff, students, visiting artists, etc.), and the extent to which they engage with the university community at large; the presence of creative/artistic programs and events, and how deeply they are woven into the life of the community; and the degree to which we find interdisciplinary connections between artistically engaged individuals and faculty in the humanities and the sciences, in both research and teaching. Having defined and measured these three dimensions, the group explored how we can assess their impact not only on those student outcomes we know how to quantify (language skills, analytical ability, mastery of content, etc.), but also on the less tangible, but equally important, outcomes like creativity, curiosity and a passion for learning. The group was also interested in how we might assess the impact of the arts on institutional innovation, including both faculty research productivity and institutional agility. Having developed tools to measure these three dimensions, scholars will be in a position to examine a range of universities to identify the most creative campuses, those that are achieving notable success at deploying the arts to add value to their students, faculty and community.

The session focuses on three inter-related questions:

- How do you measure creativity and artistic vitality on a university campus?
- How would you assess the impact of the arts on recognized educational outcomes (retention, GPA, analytical reasoning), and also on more elusive outcomes demanded by today's innovation society--curiosity, creativity, and passion?
- How might we compare campuses in order to understand how the arts create value at different institutions, where goals, shared values, organizational structure and available resources vary greatly?

2. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COSMOPOLITANISM

Jason Kaufman (session chair), Harvard University, Associate Professor, Sociologist
Marco Jesus Gonzalez, Harvard University, graduate student
Prudence Carter, Harvard University, Associate Professor, Sociology
Jonathan Neufeld, Vanderbilt University, Assistant Professor, Philosophy
Caryn Musil, Senior Vice President, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives, AAC&U
Richard Pitt, Vanderbilt University, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Assistant Dean of the Graduate School
Host/Reporter: Alberta Arthurs, consultant.

In theory, the arts – as tools for self-expression, medium of communication, site of social engagement, and ritual for group identity and solidarity – may either demarcate group identities and socio-economic status or facilitate inter-group relations and understanding. In reality, we understand little about how the arts function on American campuses to either foster or frustrate efforts toward tolerance and diversity. Do the arts create bridging social capital-- leading students, faculty and members of the community to form ties outside their immediate social circle; or do they create bonding social capital, forging stronger in-group ties and affiliations? Do the arts represent an opportunity for campuses to enlarge and diversify their service to communities and groups that have not traditionally had a place on campus? Do the arts provide spiritual and cultural grounding to help students and citizens engage the much discussed “crisis of values” in America?

The session addressed the following questions:

- In what way is the role of the arts – as sources of bridging and bonding social capital – different at historically black colleges, small religious colleges, liberal arts colleges, large public universities, at relatively homogenous campuses and at more diverse, urban campuses?
- Student arts organizations are pervasive on college campuses. Are arts and cultural groups more diverse than other types of campus organizations? If so, what is the nature of that diversity (ethnic, economic, religious, etc.)? And, which types of arts groups are the most diverse? Theatre groups, the campus radio station, singing clubs? Do some students join more ethnically specific cultural groups in order to escape perceived hostility or discrimination in the larger campus environment?
- In what ways do the arts (or other creative outlets) help students, faculty and community members forge a sense of identity or develop their own unique world view? How would an “artistic” world view make sense of the so called “culture wars?” Do artists – professional and amateur-- see the world in red and blue? Do they see a “crisis in values”? Do they tend toward polarizing opinions, or are they more likely to offer nuanced and complex perspectives

on these issues? Are they more or less likely to demonize the “other” side when talking about issues with a strong moral valence?

- Does arts and cultural programming affect college recruiting? Does it support efforts on many campuses to diversify the faculty and student body? Is it an effective medium or pretext for mediating cultural and ethnic tensions on campus? Can it or does it serve as an “open door” to communities not traditionally welcomed on campus?

3. THE CREATIVE CAMPUS DIVIDEND: THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SUSTAINING, TRAINING AND PRESENTING THE ARTS AT UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES)

Ann Markusen (session chair), University of Minnesota, Director, Project on Regional and Industrial Economics

Susan Christopherson, Cornell University, Professor, City and Regional Planning

Thomas Backer, President, Human Interaction Research Institute

Michael Rushton, Indiana University, Associate Professor, Public Affairs

Michael Oden, University of Texas, Associate Professor, School of Architecture

Richard Lloyd, Vanderbilt University, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Andie Martinez, University of Minnesota, graduate student

Host/Reporter: Douglas Dempster, Dean, School of Fine Arts, University of Texas at Austin

Much has been made of late of the economic value, or “impact,” of the arts, especially for regional economies. Indeed, it has become one of the most popular and perhaps most effective forms of arts advocacy that the arts are an important market “sector” in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. This working group explored the contribution made by higher education to the creative economy – which includes the production, distribution and sale of creative products (from publishing to film); the value of creative services (from advertising to design); and the economic benefits generated for cities and communities by the presence of artists, arts institutions and events.

Universities and colleges are involved in many different types of economic “transactions” related to the arts. 1) Universities and colleges are patrons of the arts: they employ artists, commission new works, support radio stations, publish books, and build and maintain arts facilities. 2) Universities and colleges supply creative labor – training professional artists and building the human capital necessary for the emerging “creative economy” – jobs in media, design, and the cultural industries. 3) Universities and colleges serve as important markets (sometimes the only market) for artistic production across sectors– nonprofits (e.g., contemporary dance); self-employed artists (e.g., singer-songwriters); and commercial productions (e.g., independent films and documentaries). 4) Universities and colleges make direct and indirect contributions to regional economies -- revitalizing communities, creating bohemian hot spots, attracting creative class workers, and otherwise adding to the cultural and economic vitality of a community. How can we account for this range of economic activity?

The session explored such question as:

- The contribution to the larger economy and society of university-based teaching, research and professional practice in science, technology and medicine is well-understood and has resulted in considerable new resources for those fields over the past twenty years. Can this experience be considered a model for the arts and cultural faculties and schools?
- What is the role of universities and colleges in training and employing workers for the creative economy? Do we know where university-trained artists end up working during their post-educational careers? How do the artistic and creative skills learned in college help students to succeed in this new economy?
- Are professional arts training programs preparing student well for employment opportunities? Is there a supply and demand mismatch with regard to artistic training and careers? Is the research conducted by arts faculty contributing to the larger society's creativity needs?
- What is the contribution to local economies of arts and cultural programming on American campuses? And, which types of communities are likely to benefit the most from an active campus-based arts presence? In what ways do campus presentations compete with or complement offerings in the community, especially in large urban areas?
- To what extent are various arts organizations, artists, or art forms dependent on the market generated by higher education?
- How do the arts contribute to (either positively or negatively) to a university's economic wellbeing – tuition, endowment, earned income? And, how does the unique economic configuration of the arts on a campus (sources of support, revenues, budgeting) impact the nature of the programs, events, and facilities?

4. CULTURAL PARTICIPATION, LEARNING AND CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

Jillian Kinzie, (session chair), Indiana University, Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research & NSSE Institute
Larry McGill, Princeton University, Director, CPANDA
Elizabeth Ondaatje, RAND, Social Research Analyst
Barbara Toblowsky, University of South Carolina, Associate Director, National Research Center
Pamela Holsinger-Fuchs, University of Minnesota Crookston, Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Services and Enrollment Management
Rob Aaron, Indiana University, graduate student
Host/Reporter: Sandra Gibson, President and CEO of Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

Increasingly, scholars and higher education administrators are paying attention to features of student life that extend beyond the classroom – like engagement in social activities, internships, community projects, sports and discussion outside of class – and how such activities shape student success (e.g., The National Survey of Student Engagement). Arts and cultural activity are an important component of student life, comprising one of the largest categories of student organizations at most colleges and universities. But, what role does such artistic engagement have for student learning? We know very little about the “extra-curricular” lives of students with respect to participation in the arts on campuses.

In addition to understanding “student engagement,” we simply need to know more about how audiences in general connect to our campuses through the arts. This is particularly important for those non urban communities where the campus represents the primary site of artistic life for the community. How does a lively campus arts scene boost participation levels?

And, assuming the arts are an important part of campus life, how does such engagement lead to a future of life-long involvement in cultural pursuits? One of the most robust findings in the literature on cultural participation is that “going to college” is the greatest predictor of arts participation in later life. So, what happens in college that flips the “switch” in students and sets them on a life of participation? To what extent and in what ways does higher education cultivate audience and patron demand for the arts among its students and graduates?

The session addressed some of the following questions:

- What are the pathways to involvement in the arts on a college campus? How and why do students, faculty and community members get involved? What types of experiences are likely to lead to future engagement in the arts?
- For those student involved in the arts, what meaning do these activities have for their personal and intellectual development?

- What types of experiences lead to heightened intellectual and creative engagement--listening to music, watching a theatrical presentation, talking to classmates and colleagues, or listening to a lecture?
- What are the opportunities and barriers for students (both majors and non-majors) and faculty to practice and develop their artistic passions and impulses?
- To what extent and in what ways does higher education cultivate audience and patron demand for the arts?

5. MAPPING THE CREATIVE CAMPUS: UNDERSTANDING CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ACADEMY

Jennifer Lena (session chair), Vanderbilt University, Assistant Professor,
Sociology

Diana Crane, University of Pennsylvania, Professor Emerita, Sociology

Gina Neff, University of Washington, Assistant Professor, Communication

Joe Trimmer, Ball State University, Professor, English

Mark Pachuki, Harvard University, graduate student

Tad Hirsch, MIT, graduate student and artist

Host/Reporter: Elizabeth Long Lingo, Research Associate and Instructor,
Curb Center and the Owen Graduate School of Management at
Vanderbilt University

Creativity and artistic production occur in both well known institutional settings (on stages, in classrooms, in studios, etc.) and in the interstices between these formal institutions and presenters on campus. From the work of scholars as diverse as Howard Becker, Robert Faulkner, and Richard Caves, there is evidence that artistic production takes place in complicated “art worlds” –defined by overlapping networks, gatekeepers, and brokers – involving creators who are both well known and centrally located and those who work mainly on the margins of a cultural scene. Universities are microcosms of this larger cultural ecology. In order to understand the “creative impulses” of a campus, we need to explore the often invisible pathways and tracks along which creative work flows. We need to map the contours of a campus’ artistic and creative life – from campus radio to campus presenters. Moreover, the creative impulses that originate on a campus often have cascading consequences on the diffusion of new artistic ideas throughout society and the larger arts world. Over the past 100 years, many important artistic discoveries and movements began on university campuses.

The session addressed some of the following questions:

- Where are the creative hubs on campus? Who are the “creativity brokers?”
- Are there important gaps in the structure of creative work?
- What methods might be employed to “map” the creative activity of a campus?
- How might the contours of creative life differ across different types of institutions (large versus small; liberal arts colleges versus comprehensive, research universities; public versus private; schools with professional arts training programs versus those lacking professional training opportunities)?
- And, in what ways do college campuses serve as catalysts in the larger arts ecology – as incubators of new work and as sources for the diffusion of new artistic or aesthetic ideas? In other words, how do the ideas and creative activity on a campus diffuse to and link up with artists and arts institutions outside the academy?

An Emerging Research Agenda

From the Vanderbilt meeting, two primary, and interrelated, research areas emerged: 1) examining the relationship between the arts on campus and the education and development of students as future citizens, workers and cultural participants; and 2) examining the organization of the arts within higher education and the connection of the academy to the larger arts ecology in the U.S. and beyond.

The Vanderbilt meeting was not intended to produce a consensus document. Nonetheless, the recommendations from the five working groups coalesced around two separate but parallel agendas.

The first agenda focuses on the role and relevance of the arts in the lives of students. The second focuses on the institutional context for art and culture on college campuses and the role of higher education in the larger arts ecology. Both of these research agendas can be advanced through a multi-method approach, including institutional surveys; surveys of students, faculty and staff; journaling and diaries; ethnographic observation; in depth interviews, and case studies. Both agendas can also be advanced through a multi-campus research collaborative that will provide insight by comparing a variety of different types of colleges and universities side-by-side, as well as from aggregating data across institutions in order to understand larger national trends and patterns.

Primary Research Questions:

The Creative Campus: Cultural Participation, Student Development and Engagement

The arts play a major role in the life of college students. For one, college seems to be a key arena for gaining cultural and artistic competencies and honing artistic interests. One study has found that students gained between .25 and .40 of a standard deviation in their cultural, aesthetic and intellectual sophistication while expanding their interest in the visual and performing arts. Other studies consistently show that having attended college is the single greatest predictor of arts participation later in life. Furthermore, over the last 2 decades, there has been a steady upswing in the percentage of incoming freshman who report that “creating artistic works” or “achieving in the performing arts” is one of their lifetime goals. In the realm of recorded music, evidence suggests that college students are deeply invested in developing their musical tastes and passions – with close to 50 percent listening to more than 15 hours of music a week and the vast majority of students using music as a key currency for establishing and maintaining friendships. Finally, student-run arts and cultural organizations outnumber virtually every other type of student organization – from religious groups to groups organized around charity, socializing, politics and the professions. As scholars have long noted, universities are crucibles of identity formation. And, it seems, an important part of this identity work for many students involves developing and nurturing a creative and artistic self.

Nonetheless, we have almost no reliable research on how students connect to the arts and how such connections and cultural experiences change them. Several of the scholarly teams at Vanderbilt saw this as the single most important research lacunae that needed attention.

Specifically, the working group scholars identified two broad sets of questions. First, what is the scope and quality of student engagement in the arts? What are the various ways in which students connect with art and creativity? Who is engaged and who is not? What leads some to become more engaged as they matriculate, while others seem to leave their artistic hobbies and pursuits behind or simply never to become involved in the first place? And, what meaning do students get from their involvement and how does it shape their identity?

But, documenting the extent and nature of student engagement is one thing.... understanding and tracing its consequences is another, more difficult task. Nonetheless, scholars felt that a second, and related, line of inquiry should address the following questions: Are students with rich artistic lives and experiences more “culturally competent?” That is, are they better equipped to encounter and embrace new and different people, places and experiences? Does artistic involvement create more tolerant, more curious, or more cosmopolitan students? And does artistic involvement – both curricular and extracurricular – produce “creative competencies?” That is, do arts-involved students think or approach problems more creatively? Third, do students involved in the arts have more or less diverse social networks? And, how do these

networks change as the result of artistic engagement? Of course, different forms of cultural participation will lead to different outcomes, and explaining such variation would be a major goal of the research.

Both sets of questions, the scope of participation and its consequences, should be considered in comparative perspective. First, how does arts participation differ from other forms of participation on college campuses, including religious, social and athletic participation? Second, how does engagement vary across different institutional contexts – liberal arts versus research-one campuses? Community colleges versus 4-year schools? Universities and colleges located in urban settings versus those in small towns? Lastly, questions about student engagement and development need to be considered in terms of institutional leverage. In other words, which types of programs, policies and practices – curricular and extra-curricular -- result in what types of engagement and learning? Is there anything universities can do, or are already doing, that can significantly influence the scope and quality of student engagement with arts and culture?

The Creative Campus: Higher Education and the Larger Arts Ecology

As the 2004 American Assembly report noted, U.S. universities and colleges may be the single most important patron of the arts in America. They own and operate museums and galleries, performing arts centers, theatres, and countless other arts presenting facilities. They hire artists to teach and give master classes. They invest in public art. They train artists, designers, architects, and other creative professionals. They commission new work and present critically acclaimed work from across the globe to local audiences. They preserve and archive artistic works. They publish poetry and catalogs of important collections and exhibits. And, they fund countless student-run cultural organizations.

Nonetheless, the scholarly teams reinforced the message in the 2004 Assembly report that there is an alarming paucity of data about the extent of this activity, how it is organized and supported and its connection to the larger arts ecology.

First, what is the scope of the cultural assets owned and operated by universities and colleges? How many arts facilities and venues? What is the size and value of artistic collections? Second, what is the extent of formal, institutionally-sponsored arts events? On average, how many presentations, exhibits, and performances take place each year? Third, how many artists, arts teachers, and arts administrators are employed? Fourth, how many arts courses are offered each year? How many majors? How many students enroll in arts courses? Of course, within each of these broad question categories, there are dozens of more specific and nuanced items. In the absence of any baseline information, this type of inventory is essential as a starting point for research on the creative campus.

Second, how are these cultural assets (events, venues, and people) organized, how are they connected within the university and across disciplines, and how are they integrated into the curriculum? Who are the creative brokers on campus? Where are the key

bridges and gaps that connect or impede the flow of creative work? What areas of campus life are seen as the most creative and most vital and how do the arts fit into these perceptions?

Third, what are the emergent and informal forms of art and creativity that exist on colleges and universities? How do these activities support or enhance the cultural vitality of a campus? And, how are these activities connected and supported?

Fourth, how do universities and colleges serve as innovators in the larger arts ecology? Historically, what is the role of universities and colleges as incubators and catalysts of new artistic movements? Do universities and colleges continue to serve this function? Are they still critical to the development and diffusion of new artistic ideas? What is the role of universities and colleges in legitimizing new movements? And, what is the role of universities in sustaining certain art forms that might otherwise not have a viable, external market – such as various forms of modern dance, literary arts, documentary film making and new music composition?

Fifth, what is the relationship between university arts programs (both presenting and training) and the creative economy? Are universities and colleges adequately preparing arts students for the demands of the cultural industries – both for profit and nonprofit arts enterprises? What happens to fine arts majors, graduates of arts schools and conservatories? Do arts schools and departments have formal relationships with external arts and cultural leaders and institutions? And, what is the role of universities and colleges in nurturing creative scenes and sustaining the arts ecology in small towns and rural communities?

Like the research on student engagement and participation, this institutional-based analysis of the arts and higher education will benefit from comparisons across schools that vary by size, location, mission and demographic make-up. Additionally, comparisons over time will be especially informative. For example, how has the role of the university as catalyst and innovator changed over the last century? And, how do the arts compare to other disciplines on campus? What can we learn by examining how other fields – like engineering and science -- connect with their external environment?

Method and Approach

Participants at the Vanderbilt meeting agreed that in order to collect the in depth and comparative data that is needed to advance our understanding of the role of the arts in higher education, we will need to enlist a variety of colleges and schools to take part as lead research institutions. This group of 12-15 campuses would be designated at the Creative Campus Research Collaborative (CCRC). Each institution will have a creative campus research coordinator, each will administer several related surveys (both institutional and student based), and each will use ethnographic and documentary techniques to better understand the artistic lives of their campuses. It was also suggested that each campus be lead by one scholar and one artist or arts leader on campus. The

precise research agenda would be worked out during a planning phase, but participating campuses and scholars might consider the following projects:

Extend the survey of student engagement. Following the Vanderbilt meeting, several universities have joined together to work with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to add a battery of questions about arts engagement to the existing survey. The new questions are being tested this spring and Jillian Kinzie (project coordinator at NSSE) is optimistic about opportunities to refine these questions and expand the field of institutions for which such data is collected. Thus, a first research priority would be to work with NSSE to add meaningful arts questions to the existing survey of student engagement, which is asked of more than one million college students every year. Not all institutions will choose to add the arts questions. But, we can begin with the CCRC group as well as several dozen other institutions that have a particular interest in collecting more arts participation data.

Develop a new longitudinal survey instrument designed to 1) track student engagement; 2) examine the social and psychological outcomes of such engagement; 3) map the perceptions, relationships, and activities of students as they relate to art and creativity. Each of the CCRC institutions would survey approximately 200-300 students on their campuses. Surveys would first be administered in the second semester of students' freshman year. The instrument would then be repeated, with the same group of respondents, in the middle of the sophomore year and in the last semester of the senior year. Such a longitudinal study is necessary in order to understand how engagement in the arts changes over the course of a college career, and how such arts participation influences social and aesthetic relations and perceptions. Based on the results of the NSSE, administered at each participating CCRC campus, the research team could over-sample those students who have particularly high levels of engagement and those who became more engaged with the arts over the course of their freshman year.

Document perceptions, relationships and activities (e.g., "mapping" the creative campus). This work will build on the battery of questions asked at three different universities in the spring and fall of 2005 as part of a "pilot" effort to map creative activity on campus. One of the interesting findings from this first effort is that creativity appears in different places on different campuses. While Alabama students highlighted homecoming events as the most creative events on campus and Vanderbilt students pointed to a social service event called Alternative Spring Break, Ball State students rejected institutionalized arts and favored ad hoc organizations and informal discussions at mealtimes as primary sites for creativity. This exciting early mapping work could be extended to all of the institutions in the CCRC using the student survey described above as a core methodology. The instrument will be refined based on what was learned in the pilot phase and based on the suggestions offered at the Vanderbilt research conference. One way in which the survey might be enhanced is by adding a battery of questions about the perceived "climate for creativity" – perhaps reformulating many of the questions in the KEYS survey (see the work of Theresa Amabile at Harvard) or other surveys used by organizational scholars to assess the climate of creativity in businesses.

Extend the mapping instrument to faculty and staff. To truly understand how the arts are organized and how they connect across the campus, we need to ask the “mapping” questions of faculty and staff as well. Thus, a sample of faculty and staff will receive the sections of the longitudinal survey that deal specifically with documenting perceptions of creative and artistic people, spaces and events on campus.

Develop a “creative competencies” instrument. One of the research questions noted above is whether students who are actively engaged in the arts develop higher level creative thinking skills and capacities. Psychologists Robert Sternberg has recently designed a set of exercises and questions that assess the creative abilities of college students. One recommendation would be to administer a version of the Sternberg test to a select group of students at each of the participating colleges and universities in the collaborative. Again, the sample might be selected based on results of the NSSE arts questions, paying particular attention to including students with both high and low arts involvement.

Track campus conversations. One of the findings from the initial mapping project was that for many students informal conversations with other students and faculty were important locations for creativity and discovery. Nonetheless, there is almost no information about the nature and content of these conversations. What do our students talk about outside of class? How do certain ideas or topics diffuse across the campus? Do our students talk about their artistic experiences, passions and interests? Do these discussions – both the content and the participants – change over the course of a college career? Do the conversations of “arts-inclined” students differ significantly from those of students who are less active in the arts? Scholars could work with a smaller group of institutions (drawn from the research collaborative) in order to use journaling and diary techniques, enhanced by the use of new hand-held technologies, to document and map campus conversations.

Use ethnographic and documentary techniques to render a portrait of the creative campus. In addition to the use of formal survey instruments, one of the Vanderbilt working groups suggested employing more varied approaches to capturing the artistic and creative impulse of a campus. In particular, community members (faculty, staff, students and local residents) could be asked to provide “narratives of creativity” – focusing on particularly meaningful artistic engagements or passions – using diaries, blogs, and digital media productions. Videos, public art projects, still photography, Web sites, and exhibitions spaces could be employed to tell the story of the arts on campus. Ethnographic swarms –teams of students and researchers-- could be sent to document particular events, again using a range of media, to capture a “day in the life” of a campus or the range of creative activity that animates a campus over a longer period of time.

Develop and administer an institution-based survey to document and assess the creative assets of a campus. In order to gather baseline data on the presence of the arts on campus, it is important to collect information at the institutional level (rather than at the individual level of students and faculty). Working with the American Association of Universities and other higher education associations, the research team will develop a

battery of questions designed to identify and classify the range of artistic investments, programs, events, people and facilities on a campus. Such an instrument will track performing arts spaces, museums and galleries, relevant library collections and art holdings, artistic commissions, institutionally-sponsored artistic presentations and exhibits, faculty and teaching positions in the arts, student organizations, and all other physical and human capital that comprise the “arts system” on a university or college campus. This survey might be administered to members of the leading higher education associations (AAU, ACE, AAUC), as well as to the institutions represented in the CCRC.

Produce rigorous case studies to illuminate best practices and identify the historic and current role played by universities and colleges in the development and survival of certain artistic movements and disciplines. As we develop assessment tools – both institutional and student/faculty surveys – a few schools will undoubtedly emerge as super-creative campuses. Scholars could conduct more detailed case studies of these successful models. The goal of such studies would be to elucidate the policies, programs and strategies employed by these institutions in order to nurture their creative and artistic core. Particular attention would be paid to how the arts are integrated and connected across campus and the values and norms that underlie much of this creative work. Second, case studies could be conducted of proto-typical university-community collaborations. What are some examples of programs where the arts are a particularly strong bridge linking university faculty, staff and students with the community? How are campus-based creative assets used to stoke and support the local creative economy and to spur a local arts scene that might not otherwise exist in the absence of the university/college? At least one of these case studies might focus on the role of the creative campus in rural or small-town communities. Third, historians and artists might be recruited to understand how, historically, universities and colleges have served as seed beds for artistic innovation and new artistic movements. Conference participant Diana Crane has written about the role of universities in the rise of the avant-garde visual arts movement in the first half of the 20th century. Similar studies could be conducted to shed light on literary movements as well as historical developments in dance, theatre, and new music composition. Finally, case studies could be designed around contemporary art forms – like poetry, documentary filmmaking, certain forms of musical composition and dance -- whose survival is dependent on the market and demand created within universities and colleges.

Conclusion

The Creative Campus research agenda would focus on performance and creative activity on campuses, on student accomplishment and outcomes, on connections between artists and scholars across campus and with the larger community and on the work of administrators and fund- raisers. The project will address the multiple and varied ways in which creativity and the arts manifest themselves on campus, offering both a birds-eye view of higher education and the arts as well as detailed analysis, case studies and programming at a more grounded level.

The research collaborative suggested above is not the first of its kind. Coalitions of universities and colleges have come together to study a variety of key concerns facing higher education – diversity initiatives and the retention of minority students; student health and counseling; the assessment of critical thinking among college graduates; workforce preparation; and distance education, to name a few. The time is right to invest in a research collaborative that can highlight the critical link between the arts and higher education. Increasingly, university leaders have identified creativity and the arts as important areas for investment – both because the new economy requires more creative graduates and because college students themselves are arriving on campus already heavily invested in their own creative and artistic identities. Furthermore, the arts system in America is undergoing significant changes and transformations. Cultural participation is shifting; technology is changing how the arts are produced, distributed and consumed; nonprofit arts organizations are facing new constraints and competition; large media companies are increasing their market share; government support of the arts is shrinking; and foundations are looking for new partners in attempt to achieve greater leverage from their cultural investments. In this changing landscape, universities and colleges may take on an even more important role as sustainers, trainers and presenters of the arts. They may also see their role eclipsed if they do not move forward with policies and strategies that are based on good, reliable research and data.

The creative campus initiative, beginning with the American Assembly report in 2004, has generated a great deal of enthusiasm and support among leaders in both higher education and the arts. College presidents are giving speeches about the role of the arts and the importance of creativity; key periodicals and journals in higher education are devoting space and attention to writing about and documenting the creative campus; foundations are investing in innovative programming to connect better the arts to campus life and to understand more fully the consequences of artistic training; university provosts are joining together to study and promote the performing arts on their campuses and to work collaboratively to commission new artistic work; and dozens of scholars, from a range of academic disciplines, have signaled their interests and enthusiasm for (and lent their expertise to) the emerging research agenda outlined above.

University leaders are prepared to invest in the arts. They are eager to better utilize their existing cultural assets to advance their own institutional missions. But such investments must be based on more than assumptions; they must be based on example (model projects), on informed advocacy of the sector and - especially - on analysis and documentation.