RELATE·INNOVATE·ITERATE

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS META-STRATEGY
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

PARTICIPATION IS CONTENT

FALL 2019

We approach a known process—strategic planning—and look for ways to imbue it methodologically and self-consciously with elements that will tip us toward innovation; intentionally "meta" in our plan strategy. In so doing, we look forward to a process from which we may derive benefit simply from engaging in it.

Onye Ozuzu
Dean

Present

In 2018, the College of the Arts at the University of Florida successfully and strategically implemented a university-wide "Faculty 500" hiring initiative. We targeted our own transformation by overtly calling out to the field to attract colleagues that will add to and evolve our collective innovative capacity. Each of the position descriptions for the searches conducted last year included the following statement, one that we referred to as our "meta-narrative:"

> *The University of Florida College of the Arts intends to be a transformative community responding to and generating paradigmatic shifts in the arts and beyond. As artists and scholars, we embrace the complexity of our evolving human experience and seek to empower our students and faculty to shape that experience fearlessly through critical study, creative practice, and provocation. We seek a colleague who identifies as a change-maker. We seek a colleague who will prepare students to access and unsettle centers of power in a radically changing world. We seek a colleague who will position emerging artists and researchers as catalysts for equity on local and global levels.*

As proud as we are of the statement itself, we are even more proud of the process by which it was developed. The statement was written through an inclusive and iterative process of input, distillation, output, feedback, and repetition. School and program directors initially engaged units in open discussions and brought back raw content. This content was distilled by the College Executive Council (made up of Deans, Directors, Dean's Office Staff, and Faculty Council Chairperson) into a series of draft statements. These statements were published in an online forum where the entire college had opportunity to respond to them. The statements and these responses were then taken in by a writing group (made up of faculty from across the college) and distilled into a draft statement. This statement was returned to the online forum for further comment. This last round of comments was taken in and used to craft the final statement.

The statement represents our capacity to collaborate across our entire college, to think aloud, to challenge one another and ultimately to deliver exceptional results in an efficient manner. We demonstrated what Adrienne Marie Brown, author of *Emergent Strategy,* calls the principle of "good enough for now." No statement written by a collaboration of over a hundred stakeholders will represent all of them uniformly. Still, we did not fall prey to writing something so innocuous and vague that no one could either be offended or motivated by it. The meta-narrative is bold, it is aspirational, and it points to a future that will need to be reasoned, critically assessed, modeled, piloted, built and probably rebuilt. It is a call to engagement.

Here we are. It is the beginning of the Fall Semester 2019. One year later, we are welcoming 21 new faculty to campus. The call of our meta-narrative has generated a resounding response. Our faculty has increased by over 20% from 110 to 140 members. The university and the college are going to engage our new colleagues in a year-long process of onboarding and introduction. In tandem with that work of settling, orienting, and stabilizing our colleagues so that they can thrive, we in the college of the arts will also be entering into a year-long process of strategic planning. We want to embrace the fresh and as-yet unassimilated power of our new colleagues' experiences and perspectives to take an important next step to actualizing the intentions in our meta-narrative. As important as it is for us to welcome and acclimate them into who and what we are and have been,

we also want to recognize and leverage this exceptional moment to intentionally drive transformation. University of Florida College of the Arts has a legacy of strategic and intentional transformation to build upon.

Legacy

The University of Florida College of the Arts originated from the School of Architecture, which was established in 1925. In 1975, the previous College of Architecture and Fine Arts was divided into two colleges: the College of Architecture and the College of Fine Arts. The college's name was changed on May 12, 2014. Former Dean Lucinda Lavelli said at the time, "We have been considering this transition for several years and believe that the College of the Arts is more encompassing of the extensive activities and offerings of our college. We have vibrant visual and performing arts programs, and the term 'fine' no longer holds the same currency that it did when our college was established." By 2014, the college also boasted the Center for Arts in Medicine and the Digital Worlds Institute. It had established a Creative B summer program serving the entire campus. The college was a founding member of the Alliance for the Arts at Research Universities. And had launched online music and art education master's programs. This all evolved alongside the perseverance and growth of 100 year programs like the Symphony Orchestra and Gator Marching Band.

Relevance

The University of Florida College of the Arts has, for some time, been practicing something in the vein of "dual transformation design strategy," as described by Gilbert, Crow, and Anderson in their article *Design Thinking for Higher Education* (Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2018). The strategy works to simultaneously "optimize the core organization to become more responsive to the new profile of demands it faces" and "design and implement *disruptive innovations* that provide a basis for future growth, agility, and responsivity." The synergistic and juxtaposed energies and foci of our core arts programs, in collaboration with our centers and institute, have laid the groundwork for our college to emerge in the 2020s as an institution particularly well designed for innovation and agility. We are positioned to stand out for a capacity to serve stakeholders of increasingly complex diversities, precisely what higher education is being called to demonstrate in this new age. We have maintained a broad array of traditional programmatic offerings in art, art history, design, museum studies, music performance, music education, ethnomusicology, dance, theater, musical theatre, and opera. Within these so-called traditional programs, we have also worked to cultivate innovation and contemporaneity. Examples of this include the music program's focus on contemporary composition within the context of its classical performance program, the design program's focus on human-centered design methodology and practice, the dance and art history departments' collaborations with the Center for African Studies and our national and internationally recognized impacts on Africanist art history and African contemporary dance, and the opera program, which takes opera into intimate and community settings. While working to optimize the core in these ways, we have also been a frontrunner in the implementation of disruptive innovations like our 25-year Center for Arts in Medicine and the Digital Worlds Institute. These programs have been productively disruptive in the arts, in medicine, in the rapidly evolving

and globally transformative digital space, and in the education of arts students. Our programs' curricular evolutions demonstrate a capacity for savvy recognition of how to optimize our position within the university and its stellar research and particularly STEM-focused institutional strengths. Our programs work with over 240 double majors who are combining their focus in arts with degree-seeking study in a wide range of interdisciplinary endeavors. We are being self-reflective. We pilot new initiatives when we see or hear from students that there are gaps in our offerings. Examples include the School of Art and Art History's Art and Design Pre-college Program, the COTA Entrepreneurship modules soon to launch across the college, the School of Music's new entrepreneurship concentration, and the School of Theatre and Dance's explorations into theatre management, in collaboration with industry innovator Miles Wilkin.

Innovation

> *The pace of change has become so rapid that the understanding and management of change itself is now one of our principal tasks. Think what the world — and the world of knowledge and education in particular — was like for our parents and grandparents on the one hand, and what it is for our children or our students on the other. It is obvious that we are dealing with changes so great that even the kinds of changes themselves are changing with dizzying speed. Such acceleration, not of changes, but of the rate and nature of change itself, demands that we continually develop our abilities and facilities for teaching and learning.* (Douglas Seaton, *Music and American Higher Education*, [date])

We wrote our meta-narrative because we knew that the opportunity to hire new faculty lines in the arts, at a public university in the context of U.S. higher education, at this particular moment was one that had to be embraced with a strategic appreciation of its potential impact. "Innovate or else!" This has been the rallying cry of both critics and proponents of higher education over the past decade. The student body is changing; their demographics and the technologies that define their worlds are in constant transformation. Cultures are migrating at a rate that puts even those that stay geographically in place into a state of migration as everything changes around them. Who our student body is has transformed as well, as has the world in which they are going to have to live and collectively make new for us all. We, the keepers of the research and educational system entrusted to help them prepare, know that we are operating within a system that was designed to uphold and recreate a society that was intentionally industrial, Eurocentric, and oriented toward developing a nationalistic and privileged middle class. We know, too, that that world no longer exists. We know that *we must change our system*, the educational system that we gate-keep, for us to continue to function effectively as producers of relevant new art, new ideas, new knowledge and the new educations our students need. So we interrupted ourselves. Instead of doing what we have been trained to do with the opportunity to hire, instead of hiring to plug holes in the curriculum we already have, and instead of replacing the expertise we had and have lost we decided to prioritize this more vague, but also more urgent, need. We decided to hire change-makers. Across the board, no matter the specific discipline or expertise we needed, we looked for candidates who could bring with them a fresh dose of innovation to our system. And, again, as in the process of writing the narrative, enacting this within the hiring committee structure was designed with intention. In each hiring committee, a colleague from the College of the Arts, but *not* from the program the new faculty member would join, sat as an ex-officio member in a role we called the

provocateur. We borrow the term from a performance score in Liz Lerman's 2010 work*, The Matter of Origins.*   The provocateur's role was to represent the values that the meta-narrative espoused in the context of the committee's work. So, as colleagues rightfully focused on the disciplinary and programmatic needs of the position, there was a voice, neutral to those concerns, that could remain present, reminding them of this thread. The provocateur was a self-designed radical element in a process within our system, one that is often deployed to recreate and sustain what we are and have been. Across the college, provocateurs worked with hiring committees to leverage the system's extant potential to be divergent. What we did was business as usual. We posted positions, reviewed applications, interviewed, and ultimately made great hires. How we did it — that was different.

Re-iterating

It is in this spirit that we turn toward a year of strategic planning. The college's current strategic plan will conclude in 2020. We will take this academic year to work together to write the five-year plan that will complete a half-century arc and take us to our 50-year anniversary (1975–2025). We intend to build on our experience with our meta-narrative as if it was a pilot, an experiment for instigating innovation in what is our normal work. In this process, we look forward to extending the pilot into a more ambitious project, writing a meta-strategy to guide our work, our systems changes, and the allocation of our resources for the next five years. We approach a known process—strategic planning—and look for ways to imbue it methodologically and self-consciously with elements that will tip us toward innovation; intentionally "meta" in our plan strategy. In so doing, we look forward to a process from which we may derive benefit simply from engaging in it. The ways in which we design our discussions with current and new colleagues from within and across our disciplines we hope will evolve us inherently, even as we take steps deliberately toward producing a document at year's end.

We will begin, tomorrow, at our College of the Arts Fall Symposium with a series of faculty- and staff-led panel discussions focused on six prompts. These discussions are intended to surface threads of values, that is, overarching themes that will ultimately function for our meta-strategy process the way the meta-narrative functioned for the hiring process last year.

Fall Symposium: Six Moderated Discussions

1. **Students First**
   What does it mean to hold a "students-first" commitment? How much do we know about our students' experience during their time in our programs? How might we best gather that information, and how does or could it influence our crafting of that experience? What does putting students first mean in the context of our institution's research designation? In what ways is our teaching resonating with research? How do our pedagogical methodologies stay relevant and effective, given ongoing cultural and demographic changes? Are we responding to trends toward lifelong learning over episodic learning? Are we preparing our students to thrive in the context of increasingly complex cultural and other diversities? Are we and should we be aware of and contributing to the social and emotional well- being of our students? What

roles do "risk taking" and "safety" play in higher education in today's world? In the arts? What kinds of tools/support/training do faculty need to be better positioned to successfully navigate through these complex terrains?

2. **Data Informed Decision Making and Adaptive Systems**
    We are increasingly living in a context tuned and fine-tuned by algorithms gleaned from ongoing data analysis. The profound ethical concerns regarding this, not withstanding, we have become used to an environment that is more and more tailored to our individual tastes and moment-to-moment interests and desires. Are *we* collecting data? How? Are we using data to tune the ways that we manifest and evolve our services for our constituents? If so, how? And could we be doing so better?   Are we making data-informed decisions in our communications strategies? In our programming choices? In our pedagogical choices? Are we collecting data on our audiences and using it to develop them? Are we collecting data from our students and alumni and integrating it into curriculum design or development strategy? Does data analysis inform the way that we direct our resource allocations?

3. **Foregrounding Public Impact**
    Is impact beyond campus, conference, and presentation important to us? To our students? To the evolving condition of art and creative practice in higher education?   Do we have the resources and effective strategies to cultivate public impact? If not, what are they, and what can we do to cultivate them? How does, could, or should making public impact include our students?   Is this a necessary and integrated component of our curricular and pedagogical designs?   Where we are working with community, are we perceived as trustworthy and accountable partners? How do we centralize and organize our community programs? How do we nurture our community relationships? What are our values, our ethos, and our standards for public impact?

4. **Creating New Knowledge in the World**
    How does our institutional research designation affect our disciplinary practices? What is the relationship or tension between the demand to push and expand those disciplines and to produce graduates who can perform within given industries? What sorts of knowledge do we generate in our disciplines but for which we often are not credited? How is evolving technology influencing research? How is collaboration affecting research? How is community engagement affecting research?   How does research and the cultivation of new knowledge impact colleagues who work outside of the tenure track? How does it impact our staff? How does it impact students? To what extent is new knowledge a part of all of our work as members of our college? Do we or could we have a research agenda as a college?

5. **Transformation in the Interest of Justice and Equity**
    We are living in a time when the narratives of *still unresolved* struggles for equality, equity, and justice as described in movements for black and brown liberation, women's rights, lgbtqia empowerment, and inclusion of the spectrum of human abilities, among others, are being co-

opted for new methodologies of social control. Our online data traces are being crafted into communications weaponry in new battles for human identity, dignity, and freedom in the mix with the meta-consciousness that is social media, big data, and deep learning. Are data rights the next and most urgently threatened human right? And looming in the not-so-distant future, the still-contested environmental crisis, rooted as it is in the colonial legacy of land rights that defines our own institutional land-grant status, threatens to dwarf all struggles for human justice. Is the educational experience we are designing relevant to these conditions? Are we helping our students prepare to be critical analysts, improvisers, performers and problem solvers *both* in theory and cultural studies courses *and* in the kinesthetic and practice-focused contexts of studio, stage, screen and virtual reality? Are we getting them ready to absorb evolving and emerging information about the nature and roots of mounting threats to humanity and freedom and stay nimble enough to relate, innovate, and iterate creatively?

The University of Florida is a highly competitive admissions environment. The Gainesville Sun reported the following with respect to our Fall 2019 class:
   a. The admission class profile has an average grade point average of 4.45, with a median GPA between 4.3-4.6. The average SAT score is 1,388, with a median score of 1,330-1,460. The average ACT score is 31, with a median between 29 and 33 all improved from class profile academic measures a year ago.

We can predict at least three things based on these stats alone (even given overlapping and complicating intersectional identity factors). First, we have bright and highly motivated learners in our classrooms. Second, many of our graduates will have access to positions of power and influence. How are we helping them prepare to direct their impacts? And, third, many residents of our state and beyond do not have access to study with us, and that lack of access is being mediated by factors like race, class, gender, ability, technology literacy, and language, among others. What effect do these limitations on our student body's demographics have on the learning environments of the students that do get in? What are we doing to mediate access and inclusion of broader diversity in the College of the Arts?

6. **Defining and Re-Defining Excellence**
   Is excellence the goal? Let's assume that it is. In the context of some of the complexities of the changes in our culture that we have described so far—demographics, technology, institutional structures, limitations on access, and our ever evolving vision of the world that our graduates will be living in—what type of excellences are important? How do we define them and how do we institute a practice of redefining them on an ongoing basis? How does our research designation influence our definitions of excellence? Are our excellence standards defined by industry standards, or is excellence defined by the drive to innovate and produce the next new thing? Do the communities that our students come from, and go to, have a say? How do we value messiness and failure in tandem, or in keeping, or as a part of our valuing of excellence?

The Year Ahead

The six moderated discussions in our College of the Arts Fall Symposium will yield content that will be captured and posted in online forums for ongoing discussion and refinement. It will also be provided to six working groups that will help generate the actual content of the meta strategy. A call will go out for self-nomination to these groups. A cohort of provocateurs, comprised of some of our recent hires, will circulate through working groups to represent the work that the college as whole does in the Fall Symposium to generate the themes. The working groups will meet throughout the fall, each focused on one of six pillars of the meta strategy. The six pillars currently are defined as follows:

- Adaptive and Distinctive Curricula

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as Functional Catalyst

- Shared Governance

- Student Experience Lifecycle

- Research and Creative Work

- Resource Cultivation and Allocation

Each working group will include faculty, staff and students. By the end of the semester, the group produces two brief reports, an analysis of our *current state* within that pillar, as well as a second analysis of our *future state* and some recommendations on how to get there. Each group will also host a town hall during the semester, to invite community input, and they will engage groups of faculty and staff in standing meetings to gather specific information for their ongoing work. On December 4, each working group will make a short presentation to the college based on their current-state and future-state reports. They will absorb feedback and make final edits, and the 12 reports will be posted in an online forum for any additional response. In the Spring, a central writing group will convene, take the reports and online responses and begin to draft our meta-strategy. Drafts of the writing group's work will be made available again in our online forum for feedback and response. The writing group's final draft and college feedback will then be taken up by Deans and Directors for finalization in summer 2020 and prepared for college adoption at the Fall 2020 Opening of College.

Thank you in advance for your curiosity, drive, collaboration, and engagement of our shared endeavors. We in the Dean's Office will work to support structures for this process that will centralize and inspire the ideas and voices of faculty and staff. Participation is the content. It will become what we make it.