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DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED ARTS AND MEDIA STUDIES CURRICULUM:

One Model

by

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Abstract: The arts and media studies have received less attention than other disciplines by advocates of integrative pedagogy and learning. This paper examines one attempt to correct this oversight—the development of an integrated arts and media studies curriculum in The Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Rutgers University-Newark. The examination includes a discussion of the soon-to-be instituted interdisciplinary curriculum (Fall 2009) built around varying degrees of engagement with the urban community surrounding the campus, a brief history of how the curriculum was developed, the theoretical rationale supporting it, and a discussion of the curriculum's larger social agenda that was shaped by the ideas of Elliot W. Eisner, Stanford professor of art and education, and Richard Florida, social scientist and economist.

An Integrated Arts and Media Studies Department: One Model

The arts have long been viewed as a dispensable pastime for most and the vocation of a few. The arts are draped in a liminal flag. They are time-out, entertainment, play; they are anything but serious, save for the thoughtful art lover and the few fortunate enough to make a living as a painter, actor, videographer, writer, or critic. They are, as the Stanford professor of art and education Elliot W. Eisner (2002) points out, even viewed by a great many education policy makers, who should know better, “as nice but not necessary” (p. xi).

Many educators do not share this point of view; they care deeply about the arts, in part because they enjoy them, in greater measure because they appreciate their pedagogical value. The arts touch something in us that little else does. These educators, and others who share their vision, recognize that the arts have a fundamental role to play in expressing who we are: our relationships to place, peoples, the joys of being, and the darker side of living. They know them to be an integral part of what it means to be human, and as such the arts have much to teach us.

Baccalaureate studies in the arts and applied media have not been as well served as they might from an interdisciplinary perspective. Despite a history of some 30 years, most undergraduate interdisciplinary curricula have been generated by the natural or social sciences and to a lesser extent by the humanities.¹ This is unfortunate because arts and media studies call for and lend themselves as readily to integrative strategies as do their scientific or humanistic counterparts. Arts and media studies are predicated upon imagination and the creative, neither of which is limited by discipline. Many artists and journalists work across disciplines and employ various mediums in their art and reporting. These mediums, be they three-dimensional, photographic, wood-block printed, painted, written or time-based media, are nothing more than tools and/or techniques through which students explore their imagination and give form to their creativity. Young people in these fields should be educated with the same 21st century goals as those in other branches of the academy.²

This paper describes the development of an integrated arts and media studies curriculum in a department of arts and media studies in a liberal arts school on the mid-size campus of an East Coast state university. The ambitions of this new curriculum are lofty. With an emphasis on an exploration of the creative rather than on the more generally accepted vocational thrust of art programs, it aims to assist its largely working class students, many of whom are immigrants, the children of immigrants and/or the first in their family to attend college, to move from an insular world rooted in the mores of their home cultures and blue collar America to what the social scientist and economist Richard Florida (2004) terms the “creative society.” This is a society of business executives, lawyers, health workers, engineers, researchers, as well as artists, which is defined by creative initiative within and across professions rather than a commitment to aesthetics.

A Brief History

The Department of Visual and Performing Arts at the Newark campus of

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is part of its largest unit, the College of Art and Sciences. The department has approximately 200 majors, though as many as 700 students take classes in the department each year. These students are spread across five programs housed in a single building, each of which offers its own major: Art, Design and Art History; Journalism and Media Studies; Music; Television and Media Arts; and Theatre.

In the early spring of 2001 the Department of Visual and Performing Arts faculty and staff engaged in an extensive self-study to prepare for the periodic external accreditation review of each department that is conducted every eight to 10 years at Rutgers. The collaborative nature of a process involving full-time employees from all programs allowed for a more extensive assessment of the department's pedagogical philosophy and practice than was possible during the more frequent internal program-specific re-evaluations. During this comprehensive self-examination, faculty were cognizant of how important interdisciplinary skills are in a world where traditional disciplinary boundaries are becoming less relevant. They also realized that several factors were affording them a unique opportunity to apply interdisciplinary strategies across the department's curriculum. These factors included the range of disciplines housed in a single building, a familiarity with integrative pedagogy among some members of the faculty, the synergies between the various creative arts programs, and the expanding interface among graphic design, fine art, photography, video production, and journalism, rooted in shared digital technologies.

The faculty also realized that, unlike the pre-professional training of a fine arts school, such an initiative in the liberal arts context of Rutgers-Newark demanded a coherent intellectual and conceptual curriculum encompassing a balance between humanistic-oriented critical studies in the arts and art making.

Inspired by the self-study and by the validation of the external evaluators, a small ad hoc group of faculty began meeting informally in late spring of 2001. During these meetings discussions focused on reorganizing the programmatic offerings of the department to create a more integrated and collaborative course of study. By the beginning of 2002, the faculty group had turned its attention to defining the intellectual rationale upon which such a change would be made. In doing so, members understood the need for a more rigorous and systematic approach to integration and interdisciplinarity. It was concluded that a series of seminars, each with a clearly defined agenda and led by a specialist in the field, was the most effective and productive way to achieve this.

Members of the faculty who were already working across disciplines in their teaching and research conducted several of the seminars, while others were headed by scholars from outside the department.³ Professor Sally Harrison-Pepper, a senior faculty member of what was arguably the leading interdisciplinary undergraduate program in the country at the time, the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (Western College Program) at Miami University in Ohio, headquarters of the Association for Integrative Studies (AIS), led the final meeting of the series.⁴ This meeting clarified the value of what were termed "paradigm models"—that is, themes that carry across disciplines—as a basis for developing interdisciplinary curricula. The discussions, facilitated by Harrison-Pepper, helped identify thematic paradigms such as: multiple notions of time, space, image and motion; the role of narrative in text and the visual; and the interplay between history and memory. These thematic paradigms suggested an ideal strategy for introducing interdisciplinary study to a department consisting of diverse programs and a faculty with different areas of expertise.

A formal Reorganization Committee consisting of interested faculty was formed, and another series of monthly meetings was held during the 2003-2004 academic year. The goal of these meetings was to develop curricular models for individual integrated arts and media studies courses and to design a pedagogical blueprint for the entire department. During these deliberations, two major concerns emerged. The first was how to teach interdisciplinary courses when most members of the faculty are experts in particular fields with limited exposure to other disciplines. The second was how to develop an effective interdisciplinary curriculum that would not weaken the critical and applied studies in the department's current undergraduate programs.

To address these concerns, the committee invited experts in the field of interdisciplinary studies to lead a two-day colloquium at Rutgers. In preparation for the meeting I visited Western College where I observed classes, spoke with students, and met with various members of the faculty, the Dean and Associate Dean, as well as with William Newell, Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and Director of the Institute in Integrative Studies. This visit provided me with both a greater understanding of interdisciplinary studies and how it could function in an undergraduate college. It was also during this visit that the details of the upcoming colloquium were finalized. These details were based on a combination of wanting to understand how the pedagogical interdisciplinary studies model at Western College could directly inform what we were attempting, the curricular needs of our department, and the expertise of those who were to lead the meeting.

The subsequent *Interdisciplinary Teaching: Strategies and Pedagogy Colloquium* offered valuable insights into developing curricula and teaching interdisciplinary courses.⁵ It explored ways of realizing the department's desire to combine integrative study with discipline-specific majors. And it suggested how to link the new integrated curriculum to community-based experiential learning, a major component of the university's mission.

The colloquium was a fitting culmination to the department's process of self-examination. The next task was to explore the rationale underpinning the envisioned changes and then plan the new curriculum.

An Emerging Rationale

The changes envisioned by the faculty were motivated by four distinct but complementary goals: (1) to incorporate an interdisciplinary arts and media studies component into the curriculum, (2) encourage creativity across all departmental disciplines, (3) engage the community, and (4) prepare our students to be members of the "creative society."

Incorporation of an Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Studies Component

In order to achieve the goal of incorporating an interdisciplinary arts and media studies component into the curriculum, two challenges had to be overcome. The first was to maintain a balance between critical studies and studio classes within the department. The second was to address the limited number of courses that can be taken for any major at Rutgers-Newark because of the extensive general education requirement of its liberal arts curriculum (59 of the 124 credits required for graduation must be taken outside the department). Unlike the pre-professional concerns of conservatory or fine arts schools that focus almost exclusively on skills training, the Department of Visual and Performing Arts teaches arts and media studies as part of a broad-based education that combines the studio with a comprehensive humanistic curriculum. Its goal is to prepare students to be engaged and productive citizens, no matter what profession they pursue. Rhetoric aside, the hope is to educate successful citizens first and artists, videographers, designers, musicians, or journalists second.

These challenges were offset by some built-in advantages. For one thing, the university is committed to collaborative governance by faculty committees consisting of faculty drawn from across the university; for another, all five

department programs are housed in a single building and share one main office. These organizational arrangements have facilitated frequent interaction among faculty and program coordinators. Over the years, this interaction has moved well beyond polite conversation and utilitarian concerns to include in-depth discussions about disciplines and points of common intellectual interest. The latter even led to several team-taught classes prior to the current focus on interdisciplinary teaching and collaboration, including one between a creative writing instructor and a videographer, and another with professors from the music and theatre programs.

Another advantage was that several members of the department's faculty are either conducting interdisciplinary research or have interdisciplinary training. Though no current member of the faculty has an interdisciplinary degree, several have cross-disciplinary training. For example, two are graduates of leading performance studies departments rooted in interdisciplinary scholarship, a member of the journalism faculty is both a journalist and an historian, a sculpting professor has a background in multimedia and performance art, while one video production professor merges his creative work with cultural studies, while another combines video art with extensive experience in documentary making and broadcast television techniques.

Even those faculty whose interests or experience favor traditional disciplinary approaches are curious about what integrative learning, scholarship, and creativity have to offer. They are aware research indicates that integrative teaching and learning encourages critical thinking, nurtures an understanding of ambiguity, hones reading, writing, and speaking competence across disciplines, enhances the ability to synthesize, and fosters creative expression and original or unconventional problem solving (Repko, 2008, p. 2; Rhoten et al., 2006, p. 6; Newell, 1994, p. 35). And increasingly, as Veronica Boix Mansilla (2005), principal investigator of the Interdisciplinary Studies Project (Project Zero), Harvard Graduate School of Education, points out, these are the skills needed to thrive in an ever more complex, global world that challenges disciplinary boundaries at every turn (p. 14).

Members of the faculty are mindful of the pedagogical limitations inherent in any university arts and media studies curriculum that focuses exclusively on applied studio skills and ignores critical studies. These limitations are highlighted in the integrative studies program developed by the Department of Visual and Performing Arts. This is because its new curriculum was predicated upon a balance between creative expression and the humanistic-based critical thinking abilities so necessary to negotiating across and between disciplines successfully.

The balance between the creative and cognitive also served the department's ambition to expand the classroom to include various levels of involvement with the urban setting and communities neighboring the campus. It was hoped that this integration of studio skills, critical reasoning, and involvement with the larger community would develop what educational researchers have termed intentional learners. These are students who can move between and across disciplines artistically and in their critical thinking with a "high level of self-awareness, understanding their own processes and goals as learners and making choices that promote connections and depth of understanding" (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, p. 6).

During the process of exploring how best to achieve pedagogical balance and develop intentional learners, the faculty realized that their curricular interests were in keeping with current trends towards interdisciplinarity in educational reform. The National Institute of Education report *Involvement in Learning*, for example, called for the expansion and reinvigoration of liberal arts education to ensure it "addressed not only subject matter but also the capacities of analysis, problem solving, communication and synthesis" (1996, p. 396). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has taken up this challenge, producing at least two major reports echoing the sentiments of the National Institute of Education (one in 1985, the other in 1990);⁶ it also launched a multi-institutional integrative initiative in collaboration with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that culminated in a national conference on undergraduate education in October 2005.⁷

Drawing upon the work of arts educator Danielle Boutet, members of the faculty working on the new curriculum were convinced that there is solid justification for interdisciplinary teaching and learning in the arts and its related fields. Boutet posits that the creative activity at the heart of the arts offers ready access to what she identifies as the "generative process," that is, the act of creative thinking and making underlying any artistic activity. She maintains that this access is made possible because interdisciplinarity engages students across the creative spectrum of mediums, tools, techniques, theories, and language, rather than limiting them to the specialization of a single discipline (1993, p. 70).

Interdisciplinary arts courses must, as already pointed out, include both applied studio and critical thinking components. And, as suggested in the 1990 AAC&U report cited above, they have to provide a correspondence between the breadth of information and mediums students are exposed to, a deep knowledge of the various disciplines engaged, and a synthesis that

privileges interdisciplinary learning (in Klein & Newell, 1996, p. 406). These courses must also utilize what is generally recognized as the highest level of curricular integration and analysis in which instructors integrate material from the various arts and media subject areas into a "single coherent entity" based on a comprehensive knowledge of the epistemologies and methodologies of the disciplines involved (Armstrong, 1980, pp. 53-54; Boix Mansilla, 2005, p. 19).⁸ As the findings of interdisciplinary researchers and practitioners in fields other than the arts suggest, the success of any integrative paradigm is predicated upon one of the cornerstones of the department's new curriculum: a balance between a disciplinary education and an integrative pedagogy that in part draws upon that training (Newell, 2005, p. 249; Boix Mansilla, 2005, pp. 16-18).

Despite this necessary balance, interdisciplinary teaching and learning provide the opportunity for exploring, applying, and understanding the creative impulse across mediums and disciplines. This opportunity is in keeping with the call from leading organizations such as the AAC&U for increased creativity and innovation in undergraduate education.⁹ It also frees arts and media studies learning from being viewed primarily from a vocational perspective.

Encouraging Creativity Across Department Disciplines

In the Introduction to his groundbreaking book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), Elliot W. Eisner argues that conventional educational pedagogy and policy have all too often marginalized arts education. In making his case, Eisner points out that schools consider their central mission to be cultivating the mind and that the best way to achieve this is by emphasizing the hard sciences, computation, reading, and writing (p. xi). In this limited understanding the arts are intellectually undemanding, emphasize the emotive over reflection and highlight craft above cognition. Eisner's challenge to this thinking is predicated upon years of research which, though focused primarily on K-12, is equally pertinent to undergraduate education. His findings indicate that arts education not only imparts an appreciation of life's aesthetic dimension, it also plays a significant role in mental development. The arts nurture insight into complex and subtle ways of thinking because they furnish what is ultimately a cognitive tool, the means of processing experience. What we see, hear, smell, touch, or feel, and how we in turn respond to it aesthetically are not simply passive functions of what we take from the world; they are a mental construct assembled from a combination of experience, craft, and the intellect (pp. 1-24).

Eisner's findings are supported by other major studies. One, funded by the federal Department of Education and conducted by the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York, queried whether learning about painting and sculpture helped students in other areas of study. Comparing those who had taken part in the museum's Learning Through Art program with those who had not, researchers found that participants in the program performed better in literacy and critical thinking skill tests than those who were not in the program (Kennedy, 2006). The 2004 Rand Corporation report, *Gift of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*, which was commissioned to help inform public policy on the arts, reached similar conclusions. It found that in addition to documented economic and social benefits the arts impact cognition, especially as it relates to learning and academic performance in areas such as creative thinking and devising learning strategies (McCarthy et al., 2004, pp. 8, 34). Equally, though less easily quantified, the authors found that cognitive development is an intrinsic value of the arts because the latter "regularly challenge us and contribute to our intellectual growth by requiring us to be receptive to new experiences and to relate them to our own knowledge of the world" (p. 48). As Eisner (2002) puts it, art is "not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our disposition, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture" (p. 3).

Eisner's research also suggests why arts education is a potential means of teaching creativity across disciplines, or what Boutet (1993) terms the generative process: It stimulates the creative imagination while also imparting the tools for negotiating and processing it (p. 70; Eisner, 2002, p. 4). The generative process also cultivates "playing with the possible" as it privileges ambivalence over certainty (p. 10), stimulates complex and subtle forms of thinking in its challenge to linear logic (p. 35), favors flexibility over rigidity (p. 196), and encourages initiative as well as teaches creative problem solving (p. 30). In short, the best of arts education boosts mental versatility, hones the means of articulating the imagination, embraces synthesis, and demands seeing the world through an other-than-conventional lens.¹⁰

In making the case for this broader application of arts education, Eisner cites the unnamed chief executive officer of a large corporation who advocates arts education because he regards it as the means of learning what he terms "higher level skills." The executive maintains that reading, writing, and math are only the basic prerequisites for the higher-level art-generated skills. These he identifies as "the ability to allocate resources, to work

successfully with others, to find, analyze, and communicate information; to operate increasingly complex systems of seemingly unrelated parts, and finally, to use technology" (p. 34).

Interdisciplinary teaching and learning is at the heart of what the CEO regards as critical abilities for today's workforce. His words also speak to the fundamentals of Eisner's vision for arts education. With its emphasis on skill acquisition, traditional arts education in the academy tends to be focused on a single discipline. However, it is increasingly important that arts and media students learn both the creative basics and the integrative strategies underlying them.¹¹

Engaging the Community

The Rutgers-Newark campus is in an urban setting on the edge of downtown Newark. The city in the northern part of the state, five miles west of Manhattan, is the largest in New Jersey, with an inner-city population of almost 300,000 set in a metropolitan area approaching 2 million inhabitants. Located in a city of 17th century Puritan origins with a rich history of industrial success, devastating riots, economic decline, and a current resurgence, the campus enrolls some 11,000 students. The majority of these students are undergraduates and, according to the *U.S. News & World Report*, Rutgers-Newark has been the most ethnically diverse nationally ranked university campus in the country since 1997. Most of its students are commuters who come from modest means and view college as an essential foundation for upward social mobility.

Given its location and Chancellor Steven J. Diner's commitment to connecting the campus with the community, Rutgers-Newark is engaged in numerous partnership initiatives. These partnerships range from investment in downtown Newark, a metropolitan research center charged with informing urban policy and improving the quality of inner-city life, involvement in city schools, a community law clinic as well as the renowned Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience that promotes research and public scholarship across the region.¹² Other initiatives incorporate a student-centered educational component that marries service to the community with real-world experience and civic engagement.

The Department of Visual and Performing Arts draws its vision for community engagement from two sources. The first is Campus Compact, the national coalition of college and university presidents "dedicated to

promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education” (Campus Compact, 2009, ¶ 1). The second is Irwin Altman, a leading proponent of service learning. Altman champions “socially responsive knowledge,” a term he uses interchangeably with service learning and that he characterizes as “linking the curriculum to community needs, and engaging students in direct, academically-based problem solving on social issues” (Altman, 1996, p. 374).

Altman’s socially responsive knowledge is one part of a three-part pedagogical model he and his colleagues at the University of Utah view as necessary for preparing the “good citizen” of the future (p. 374). The first two parts of Altman’s model, foundational and professional knowledge, are ubiquitous. Foundational knowledge combines discipline specific content with general education cross-disciplinary learning and is what many refer to as liberal arts education. Its counterpart is professional knowledge, which is vocationally-oriented learning that is the major concern of applied fields such as architecture, video production, graphic design, and business.

The third part of Altman’s educational vision is socially responsive knowledge. Though less widespread than its foundational and professional counterparts, it is no less important because it draws upon foundational and professional knowledge while also providing students with an understanding of community responsibility and civic involvement that are the foundations of good citizenship. Socially responsive knowledge is also an example of cognitive-affective learning. This is learning that engages not only the intellect but also emotional investment as part of the pedagogical process. This balance between objective (rational) and subjective (emotional) strategies of knowledge accumulation has been the subject of research in recent years which suggests it is a most effective form of learning.¹³ Equally important for the department’s curricular ambitions, the real-world engagement that socially responsive knowledge demands invariably leads to interdisciplinary learning. This is because, as the 2004 *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain* report from the AAC&U notes, students involved in community partnership projects are frequently required to be creative in addressing unscripted issues. Engaging these issues calls for what the authors characterize as “multiple areas of knowledge and multiple modes of inquiry, offering multiple solutions and benefiting from multiple perspectives” (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, p. 13). In other words, the task of integrating between the academy and society is similar in many ways to the task of integrating across disciplines.

Prepare Students for Socioeconomic Mobility

Initiative and creative thinking unfettered by disciplinary norms are central to the social thesis laid out by Richard Florida (2004) in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Unlike Eisner, who is concerned with the pedagogical implications of creative expression, Florida casts creativity in economic and social terms. For Florida, creativity is “the ultimate economic resource,” which is the root source of the relatively new but significant social group, “the creative class” (2004, p. xiii). As noted, this class consists of scientists, engineers, artists, musicians, designers, knowledge-based professionals, health care workers, and others. It is not defined by traditional norms, such as what its members produce or the sector of the economy in which they are employed. Rather, it is characterized by initiative and consists of those “whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technologies and/or new creative content” (p. 8). Membership calls for complex problem-solving skills, independent judgment, cognitive flexibility, and innovative ideas.

This formerly unidentified creative class has grown exponentially in recent years to the point that today it is the dominant economic and social class. In 1900 fewer than 10 percent of American workers were engaged in creative work; by 1980 this figure was still relatively small at 20 percent, but by 2004 it comprised nearly a third of the workforce and continues to grow (pp. xiii-xiv). Its members are generally better paid than other workers, have greater job flexibility, have on- and off-the-job autonomy and independence, and have a better quality of life measured in terms of job satisfaction and lifestyle than members of the two other major social classes Florida identifies, the manufacturing and service classes (pp. xiv-xv).

The ethnically diverse student body at Rutgers-Newark tends to view university education as a path to socioeconomic mobility. Aware of this, the faculty sees the new curriculum as a way to facilitate the creativity that will assist students in achieving their goals. Arts education in general fosters creative thinking and problem solving while encouraging the relationship between cognition and application. Such an education in an interdisciplinary setting shifts the emphasis from specific mediums to the more encompassing generative process. The emphasis on synthesis, connections between and across disciplines, creative initiative, and socially responsive learning in a department that strives to balance integrative learning with disciplinary knowledge is intended to prepare its graduates to become members of a class at the cutting edge of a broader creative society, with less regard for a particular vocation than for trained potential waiting to be fashioned by the challenges of a particular profession.

The New Curriculum: A New Department

The culmination of what began as an investigation of how to integrate arts and media studies education at Rutgers-Newark is a new core curriculum and a new department name. The new curriculum that is being phased in, starting in Fall 2009, combines an integrated sequence of classes, shaped in large part by projects drawn from the urban region surrounding the university, with discipline-based majors in arts and media studies. To highlight this pedagogical shift and better reflect the department's current range of disciplines, members of the faculty decided that the Department of Visual and Performing Arts should change its name to the Department of Arts, Culture and Media (AcM).¹⁴ Following approval from the full faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Chancellor's Office, and the Rutgers Board of Governors, the name change takes effect as of the 2009 Fall semester.

Core Courses

The integrated classes, designated the AcM Sequence, consist of a required core of four courses that must be taken in sequence by all department majors. Three of these classes combine students from different majors. Each course in the sequence has clearly defined learning outcomes, but the topic that shapes the content of individual classes may vary from year to year and section to section, depending upon the faculty teaching. The classes incorporate dual learning outcomes; one that focuses on the incremental accumulation of integrative problem-solving skills that move students from an introductory level of comparison to fully realized integration, and the other that promotes the increasing involvement of students in the surrounding urban setting and communities.

The first of the AcM Sequence classes, Introduction to Arts, Culture and Media, introduces students to the department's disciplines, integrative learning, and the urban region as a site of learning. Most students entering the department as potential majors are drawn to a specific major within it and, typically, have little more than a casual acquaintance with other disciplines in AcM. However, as the Interdisciplinary Teaching: Strategies and Pedagogy Colloquium, the visit to Western College, and much of the literature made clear, interdisciplinary learning is predicated upon an understanding of the disciplines involved. Alternatively, in keeping with a single discipline focus, most majors have little experience or understanding of integrative learning. The introduction to interdisciplinarity, which includes

Boutet's essentialist notion of creativity, is designed to help students appreciate the creative process underlying art and media making, regardless of the medium involved. The class also exposes students to what will become a major source of learning in subsequent classes: the community beyond the campus walls.

A typical class, developed as part of the department's investigations during the planning process, engages the city as a subject of study through the lens of the various disciplines in the department. The role of design, visual arts, music, performance, current events, and history in the city's life, architecture, urban planning, people flow, and stores form the substance of a class that meets regularly off campus in and around the city. Each meeting explores a different aspect of Newark, often in lectures and discussions led by leading local specialists from the city's most influential cultural institutions, such as the Newark Museum, the New Jersey Historical Society, and the Newark Public Library. The city thus becomes "a lecture hall without walls" in which students are exposed to Newark from multiple disciplinary perspectives while also being able to appreciate those elements of each perspective that informs the other.

Since it was agreed that all AcM students will combine a disciplinary major with their integrative studies, the Reorganization Committee felt that the second class in the sequence, Studies in Arts, Culture and Media, should focus on exploring the potential for interdisciplinary perspectives within each of the majors. All of the majors have developed a class that fulfills the Studies in Arts, Culture and Media requirement. A typical example is Imagery and Culture, a critical studies course in the Video Production major. Through a combination of lectures, seminars, and media screenings, the class explores multiple disciplinary viewpoints on the confluence of media and culture. It examines the role of imagery in popular culture, television, film as well as the Internet, and how these images impact perceptions of race, gender, consumer behavior, politics, and social roles. Investigating connections between a particular discipline and interdisciplinary inquiry is more important in these major-specific classes than exploring the university's relationship with the various communities surrounding it.

The third course, Colloquium in Arts, Culture and Media, merges what the students have learned in the first two classes about an integrative approach to problem solving with a project that engages the urban region surrounding the university rather than using it merely as a passive site of learning. An important component of this class involves teaching students various

methodologies and strategies of community engagement in preparation for the final course in the AcM Sequence. Having lacked an expert in community-based engagement strategies, the department has just hired a new tenure-track assistant professor with several years experience in public scholarship initiatives. This person will be responsible for developing and maintaining community-oriented pedagogy and relationships with community partners for the department.¹⁵

A major aim of this third class is to explore the relationship between applied studio skills and humanistic-based critical thinking. This was identified in our research as being necessary for negotiating across and between disciplines in the arts and media studies. The class also seeks to help students become intentional learners as they apply what they are learning in the academy to real-world problems in the community. Suggestive of the third course in the sequence is one examining personal experiences of immigration that was offered in the department recently as a prototype experiment for the new curriculum. The class consisted of readings and lectures drawn from immigration, cultural, and performance studies as well as from acting workshops, and seminars on how to develop scripts from oral histories. It also involved teaching students the basic skills of oral history collection and how to record interviews with family members and neighbors about their personal immigrant experiences. Midway through the semester, students brought these learning experiences together as they developed a play script from the oral histories they had collected. The course culminated in several performances of the script, which were presented by the students as part of the department's regular theatre season. The class required students to integrate the disciplines of cultural, performance, and immigration studies with those of creative writing and impersonation. The strategies of critical inquiry and humanistic scholarship informed interview techniques, playwriting, and production while the empathetic insight rooted in performance techniques informed both oral history collection and the scholarship students read and discussed during the semester. In addition, the class introduced students to engaging the community as part of their educational experience and showed them how to use creative expression as a means of community engagement.

The final requirement in the sequence, Advanced Seminar in Arts, Culture and Media, is a team-taught capstone experiential learning course that requires students to apply the skills learned in the first three classes to a community-based project. The class is taught by two instructors drawn from different programs in the department and, using the Harrison-Pepper

model, each instructor examines the same theme from both a disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective. This theme then forms the basis of a more intense engagement with the community than the courses that preceded it. Integrative learning in the class is predicated upon the team-taught combination of instructor disciplines. Budgetary constraints have prevented us from offering a team-taught class during the exploratory phase of our curriculum planning. We were, however, able to experiment with a class taught by an instructor from the Theatre Program that approximates the community component of much of what will be required. The thematic question at the heart of the class was, "What is the nature of justice?" This theme was explored through a specific example, the immigration detention system in and around Newark. Humanistic readings and oral histories once again played a role, but the students' engagement with the community was broader and in much greater depth than in the third course in the sequence. The class included a service learning component, for example, that placed students in immigrant rights, advocacy, legal, and support organizations. From these experiences and oral histories (recorded with detained immigrants, officials in the detention system, service providers, and families) students created a play script that was performed with much of the same integrative teaching and learning components explored in the previous AcM Sequence class. Unfortunately, the final section of the class (which was to include post-performance panels led by those who provided the oral histories and students from the class) was not realized as planned due to a combination of financial and practical exigencies.

Major and Distribution Requirements

In addition to the AcM Sequence, students choose a major from among the five offered in the department. This means that AcM students will have three requirements for graduation:

1. *General Education/Distribution Requirements* – currently 59 credits including electives
2. *AcM Sequence* – 4 credits:
 - a. Introduction to Arts, Culture and Media
 - b. Studies in Arts, Culture and Media
 - c. Colloquium in Arts, Culture and Media
 - d. Advanced Seminar in Arts, Culture and Media

3. *Major Requirements* – number of credits vary:
 - a. Art (with concentrations in either Fine Art or Graphic Design)
 - b. Journalism and Media Studies
 - c. Music
 - d. Theatre
 - e. Video Production (formerly Television and Media Arts)

The Future

Budget cuts have delayed implementation of the planned curricular changes described above for more than two years. A new Dean has given the go-ahead to launch AcM in Fall 2009 as part of his larger vision for the college. Even so, with the current national fiscal situation and a state university supported with shrinking state funding, it remains to be seen how supportive he can be.¹⁶

As I write this in early March of 2009, we still have not had a chance to test our ideas beyond the prototype classes developed and taught as we formulated the new curriculum. Nor have we had the opportunity to address some of the faculty concerns about interdisciplinary pedagogy. Those who have been committed to integration from the beginning remain so, while planning has not persuaded the more skeptical members of the faculty of its pedagogical value. Nevertheless, all are convinced by the research that confirms the importance of arts and media studies education to the 21st century. The new curriculum was developed to approach arts and media studies in innovative ways. It employs integrative pedagogy, emphasizes the creative impulse underlying art making rather than discipline-specific art education, embraces models of socially responsive knowledge, and promotes the creative in preparing students for a broad range of professions and social mobility. If AcM's ambitions for its graduates are achieved, many of them will become part of the creative class and be successful in their quest for upward social mobility. To test our model, we will track our graduates over a period of years.

In the meantime we intend to assess our short-term aims. Each major has designed a discipline-specific assessment plan. The Theatre Program, for example, has an assessment tool in place designed to address student outcomes as well as ways in which these outcomes are measured. These outcomes include that students demonstrate: (1) an understanding of the historical and cultural dimensions of theatre, (2) a solid grounding in basic theatre skills, (3) a thorough knowledge of one's particular concentration, and (4) the abil-

ity to apply theatre-related skills to the world outside the academy. These outcomes are measured by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics. The metrics include graded written and oral exams, collective faculty evaluation of students' production-related work, a capstone course that incorporates written and applied components that are assessed through a combination of written and oral exams as well as collective faculty evaluation of the student's studio work, and an exit interview with a senior faculty member following graduation that assesses each student's progress throughout their theatre studies.

We are also developing a way to assess the integrative component of the curriculum. This tool draws heavily upon Boix Mansilla's "Assessing Student Work at Disciplinary Crossroads" (2005).¹⁷ Grounding her work in the definition of interdisciplinary understanding offered by her and her colleagues at Project Zero, "as the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking drawn from two or more disciplines to produce cognitive advancement" (p. 16), Boix Mansilla identifies four pertinent assessment questions that address student interdisciplinary understanding:

- Is the work informed by disciplinary expertise?
- Is the work grounded in carefully selected and adequately employed *disciplinary insights*?
- Are disciplinary insights carefully *integrated* so as to *leverage* student understanding?
- Does the work exhibit a clear sense of purpose, reflectivity, and self-critique? (pp. 17-18)

Instructors will use these questions to assess the degree of integrative learning throughout AcM Sequence of classes.

Plans for assessing the third and equally important component of the new curriculum, community partnering and civic engagement, are less advanced than those for the majors and the interdisciplinary component of the new curriculum. This is because the person most responsible for overseeing and sustaining the department's community engagement and pedagogy is not joining the faculty until Fall 2009. We have also chosen to focus on the disciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects of the curriculum because they are most pressing. Community engagement will only become a significant component of the AcM experience in several semesters when the cohort of new majors has completed the first two courses of the AcM Sequence. Preliminary discussions have identified what a successful engagement experience

for both students and community partners might look like as well as how we could go about evaluating these experiences in terms of pedagogical and civic goals. With guidance from our new hire and current assessment literature, we are planning to finalize an assessment strategy for community engagement during the Fall semester.¹⁸

For Now

Care must be taken in drawing conclusions from this curricular experiment that is still in its early stages. Yet given that the curriculum is the result of several years of research and consultation with interdisciplinary experts, it may still be useful to summarize in closing the premises that have guided our efforts:

- The interdisciplinary nature of the creative arts should be a focus across the curriculum;
- Interdisciplinary arts and media studies courses need to incorporate both applied, studio, and critical thinking components;
- Topic-based curricula are an effective tool for linking critical and applied studies in a single, interdisciplinary course;
- The necessary interplay between disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and learning in the arts and media studies needs to be applied in both critical and applied course work;
- Team teaching, especially in senior interdisciplinary arts and media studies classes, is one way to ensure a balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and learning. This balance is predicated upon each instructor having expertise different from his or her colleague and on both of them designing the interdisciplinary curriculum together;
- Experiential learning linked to community-based projects provides a cognitive-affective learning environment, most especially for arts and media students whose learning focus is on the studio rather than the lecture hall;
- It is essential to develop assessment tools and strategies and then make curricular adjustments based on the findings they yield.

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Odin Teatret (Routledge, 1993, 1995) and *Negotiating Cultures: Eugenio Barba and the Intercultural Debate* (Manchester University Press, 2002). He edited *Performer Training Across Cultures* (Harwood/Routledge, 2001), and has also published numerous articles on theatre in various journals. Professor Watson spearheaded the research and implementation of the new integrated arts and media studies curriculum in his department.

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Notes

¹ Established baccalaureate interdisciplinary arts programs do exist. The better known include The Interdisciplinary Arts and Performance Program at Arizona State University-West, the Department of Integrative Arts at Penn State University, Emerson College's Institute for Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies, and the Interdisciplinary Studies in the Arts Program at the University of Illinois, Chicago. These pale in comparison to the number of interdisciplinary undergraduate programs in other areas, however. As early as 1996 Alan F. Edwards Jr., cited over 400 undergraduate interdisciplinary programs across the country (1996). None of them was a stand-alone arts program.

² I am concerned with baccalaureate integrative studies in this paper. There are numerous examples of programs and/or published research that explores integrative arts studies at other educational levels. Project Zero at Harvard University has conducted groundbreaking research in the field of K-12 education, with some consideration of undergraduate education. The *Journal of Transformative Education* has included material on integrative arts education from time to time, mostly at the K-12 level, while the renowned Getty Center for Education and the Arts focuses its attention on arts education K-12. Ellen T. Harris' "The Arts" in the *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum* (1996) makes passing reference to integrated arts programming. The AIS Website (www.muohio.edu/aisorg) provides listings of master's and doctoral programs across the country, some of which incorporate arts-related studies.

Of special note is the graduate interdisciplinary arts program at Columbia College in Chicago. This program, founded in 1976, is a model and members of its faculty have advised several undergraduate integrative arts programs, including the one at Arizona State University-West and our own Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Rutgers-Newark.

³ Apart from Professor Sally Harrison-Pepper, seminar leaders from outside the department were: the artist and literary critic Dr. Ellen Frank, formerly of Stanford University; CUNY Distinguished Professor Stuart Ewen, a leading researcher of both visual culture and media studies; the Rutgers' historian and Director of the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, Clement Price; and the philosophy professor and musicologist David Rothenberg from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

⁴ Sadly, the Western College Program has been closed. It no longer accepts students and will cease offering courses entirely in 2010, when the last cohort graduates. The current plan is for it to be reopened, in a form yet to be determined, as part of the College of Arts and Sciences, with new faculty, students, administration, and a new curriculum.

⁵ Professor Pauline Gagnon from the University of West Georgia, the 2007-2009 AIS Board President and a consultant for AIS, led the colloquium; Professor Sally Harrison-Pepper, mentioned earlier, and Professor Andrew Garrison, also a member of the Western College Program faculty as well as a psychotherapist in private practice, rounded out the leadership team.

⁶ The first of these AAC&U reports in 1985, *The Integrity in the College Curriculum*, called for curricula capable of enabling faculty to escape departmental confines, to attain contextual understanding, to assess multifaceted problems, to gain a sense of the complexities and interrelationships of society, and to examine the human, social, and political implications of research (Klein & Newell, 1996, p. 396). In keeping with these findings, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning* report produced in 1990 recommended curricular coherence that emphasizes the synthesis and connections across disciplines (p. 396).

⁷ The AAC&U spearheaded the Integrative Learning: Opportunities to Connect project in collaboration with The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This project, begun in Fall 2003, identified 10 campuses across the country that have made significant progress in integrative education and funded expansion of their various initiatives. These expansions were intended as models for integrative education in other institutions with similar ambitions. The project culminated in a national conference on undergraduate education in October 2005 with the same title. The meeting, to quote from the conference website, was predicated upon “Fostering students’ abilities to integrate learning—across courses, across disciplines, over time, and between knowledge and practice — [because this] is one of the most important goals of the 21st century academy” (AAC&U, 2009, ¶ 1). For more details

on the Integrative Learning: Opportunities to Connect project see http://aacu.org/integrative_learning and *Peer Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer/Fall, 2005), published by the AAC&U. Meanwhile, the AAC&U has retained its concern with integrative learning. It is, for example, organizing a conference, “Integrative Learning: Addressing the Complexities,” October 22-24, 2009, in Atlanta. AIS is once again an academic partner in sponsoring this conference.

⁸ Armstrong identifies four levels of integration: the first in which students take courses in different departments for a specific major; the second where students have the opportunity to exchange interdisciplinary experiences in a seminar-type setting organized by their college; the third where faculty offer courses focused on interdisciplinary topics from disciplinary perspectives; and the fourth and highest level of integration described in this paper (1980, pp. 53-54).

⁹ The Spring 2006 issue of the AAC&U's *Peer Review: The Creative Imperative* (Vol. 8, No. 2), which had its origins at the organization's 2005 national conference, is, for example, devoted exclusively to exploring the importance of and demand for greater creativity in undergraduate education.

¹⁰ Other researchers go further. Steven J. Tepper, the associate director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University, argues that an arts-rich environment is a catalyst to creativity across the entire university campus, not merely within the domain of the arts (2006, p. 5); and in her survey of current research into creativity, Tori Haring-Smith, maintains that there is a correlation between the fostering of it on the university campus and “initiatives that promote diversity, cross-cultural contacts, interdisciplinary conversations, inquiry-based learning, collaborative research and teaching opportunities, opportunities for students to engage in independent research and student-life programming. . . .” (2006, p. 27).

¹¹ Our curricular initiative is focused entirely upon arts and media students. It would be possible to offer interdisciplinary arts and media studies classes as part of the college's general education offerings. This possibility has not been explored/developed because our departmental concerns are all-consuming and because Rutgers' current fiscal situation could not support the additional class sections that would be needed to service general education enrollments.

¹² Links to details about the various community partnership initiatives can be found on the Rutgers-Newark website: <http://www.newark.rutgers.edu/>.

¹³ The Carnegie Foundation and the American Association for Higher Education funded a study of cognitive-affective learning, the CAL Initiative, in conjunction with several institutions under the leadership of Oxford College of Emory University. The study followed many years of research into the importance of emotions in intellectual inquiry by the likes of Parker Palmer, Alexander Astin, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Daniel Goleman as well as the British-

based Society for Effective Affective Learning (SEAL). The CAL Initiative led to the foundation of a peer-reviewed online journal, *The Journal of Cognitive Affective Learning* (JCAL). The journal, which first appeared in 2004, has published one of the most extensive bibliographies on cognitive-affective learning and those who have informed it: <https://www.jcal.emory.edu/view-article.php?id=55&layout=html>, as well as information on the Cal Initiative: <https://www.jcal.emory.edu/viewarticle.php?id=31&layout=html>.

¹⁴ Since it has been the subject of discussion almost every time changes to the Department of Visual and Performing Arts have been presented in a public forum, the “AcM” abbreviation deserves some explanation. The lowercase “c” was chosen because it visualizes the relationship between critical and applied studies in an arts and media studies department where applied skills play a major pedagogical role.

¹⁵ The hire was made in response to advice from senior people in the field who all emphasized that sustaining university/community partnerships over time demands a specialist charged with maintaining them. AcM has been most fortunate in that the person we have hired not only has several years experience of initiating community outreach for Rutgers-Newark in a previous position but also has a graduate degree in interdisciplinary studies from Emory University.

¹⁶ The university suffered a budget cut of just over 10 percent in state funding in 2008-2009, which led to layoffs, cutbacks, as well as severe reductions in departmental and adjunct faculty budgets. The university is currently anticipating a further 5 percent cut this coming year, which will reduce state support to 1997-1998 funding levels.

¹⁷ There is a body of literature devoted to learning assessment, but much of it is concerned with K-12 and has limitations for assessing integrated or community-based learning in an undergraduate setting. There is, however, some specialist literature that either focuses on assessment or touches on it in the context of a wider discussion. In the field of college-level integrated studies these include several works already noted in the reference section of this paper: Repko, 2008; Rhoten et al., 2006; Boix Mansilla, 2005; Huber and Hutchings, 2004; and Klein and Newell, 1996. See also: Field, Lee and Field, (1994); the journal *Issues in Integrative Studies*, 20, 2002, which contains several articles on assessment and is available online: http://www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg/pubs/issues/toc_vol20.shtml; and the unpublished 2004 self-study done by Western College School of Interdisciplinary Studies at Miami University, Ohio. The AIS Website also has information on assessment: <http://www.muohio.edu/aisorg/>

¹⁸ The best resources for assessing community-based learning are: Gelmon, Holland, and Driscoll, 2001; The Bonner Program: *Assessing Service Learning* (2009); and The Curriculum Project, *Culture and Community Development in Higher Education*, 2009.

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