

A Strategic Conversation about the Arts at the Maricopa Colleges

We engage in the Arts and teach the Arts because this is part of what it means to be human

Fine Arts Mission Statement

The Maricopa Community Colleges are dedicated to being leading forces in the development of educational programs and services in the Arts. In support of this, we are committed to:

- I. Developing district-wide awareness of the positive contributions of the Arts to the quality of life.
- II. Maintaining and creating an innovative curriculum and programs which will accommodate future trends and techniques.
- III. Recognizing cultural diversity through the Arts.
- IV. Establishing our colleges as major resources to the local arts community.
- V. Providing students of the Arts with an instructional environment that encourages personal growth and excellence.

The Arts are Fundamental not Incidental

When the Arts are grounded in a rigorous instruction, they provide meaningful assessment of academic progress and performance. The focus on assessment over the last decade has been an advantage for the Fine Arts. Previously the Arts have operated on the periphery of the educational core. We have been perceived as a specialized function slightly removed from the central issues around teaching and learning. This is partially due to the perceived focus on process, materials and technique. While these are essential skills that the Arts address, the tools often obscure the learning that takes place.

The recent assessment evaluations have revealed the Arts to have a greater integration into the teaching and learning core than previously imagined. When educators reviewed the methodologies for teaching and the learning outcomes in the Arts, we became aware of how many of our practices were being adopted to fit other disciplines.

What do students learn when they learn about the Arts? Why is this important?

Collaboration

The Arts may develop the talents of an individual but the culmination of this training is to act in unison or collaboration with other trained and disciplined individuals. The Fine Arts require an exceptional level of teamwork to produce a final result.

Problem Solving

Working in the Arts is more than “knowing the answer,” more often it is solving for X. Students have to identify the problem, strategize the method to solve the problem, acquire the necessary skills to complete the task, and then design the solution. At this stage in the group process, they realize theirs was only one of many solutions that could address the original question. The Arts encourage an exploration of multiple solutions that engage different styles of learning. Each individual must bring to bear personal resources that engage the learning process. These skills are then blended with the larger group. The goal is a problem solving team.

Creativity

The Arts are laboratories for risk taking. Students have to express ideas, meaning and emotion in multiple forms. Without a single correct answer, the Arts require us to explore relations from multiple perspectives. Even failure in this environment has value. An individual learns persistence, resilience, and has respect for authentic achievement. The learning occurs in the journey rather than the solution.

Workforce Development and the Arts

As the work environment evolves in the United States, the Arts learning experience is remarkably consistent with the new demands for the changing workplace. Ideas, creativity, and the ability to communicate them will be the future face of work. The process of learning in the Arts is a laboratory for a new work environment. Technology is also transforming the Arts, as it is every other aspect of our culture. Technology is also allowing us to incorporate the Arts at increasingly sophisticated levels into new products and methods of communicating.

Creative thinking, collaborative work, and problem solving are the hallmarks of a successful workplace whether it is a theatre company or a financial service provider. The experiences that a student takes from a carefully designed program in the Arts translates far beyond the final product.

The Arts have a unique ability to communicate the ideas and emotions of the human spirit. They are fundamental to communicating and understanding not only of us but also of others. The Arts have a beauty and power unique in our culture that can connect us to our history, our traditions, and our heritage. We will be known someday to future generations by the legacy we leave in our dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and literature. These are often more telling histories of a culture because they describe passions and aspirations.

The Arts are an integral core discipline to a liberal arts education.

The recent changes to the K-12 curriculum (No Child Left Behind executive report attached) have placed the Arts on a level with other core academic subjects such as math, English and reading. An increasing number of K-12 school districts are including competence in the Arts as

the fundamental methodology for learning. The challenge at the community colleges will be to prepare for this influx of students who have been exposed to the Arts on an equal footing to other disciplines. Jason Ohler (Art the Fourth R) has proposed that visual learning in the increasingly graphical, digital age will require a sophisticated level of visual understanding for what is becoming a basic form of communication. Text is quickly giving way to graphic images as our basic form of communication. The students who are prepared to use these skills will be the ones who succeed in the future.

Come for the passion, stay for a degree

Many students come to the community colleges to pursue their interests in the Arts without the intention of completing a degree. The community college programs can accommodate both the life long learner and the new student who is looking for an environment to pursue and practice the Arts. These new students begin with the Arts but often stay for a degree in other disciplines. The Arts are the stabilizing influence for these students, this is where they get the rewards and success that gives them the confidence to pursue a degree in higher education.

The Arizona charter schools that focus primarily on the Arts have also been the leaders in student retention as well. We see the same process for students who have an environment to practice their passion also leads to confidence and success in other areas.

Cultural Development and Community Resources

The Fine Arts programs at MCCD provide another significant service with the academic mission. Students involved in either the performance or humanities courses are better engaged with arts and cultural issues in the community. These individuals value the role of the Arts and help strengthen cultural awareness in their own environments. The beneficiaries of the performance groups are also the community members. Audiences are key to completing the learning for any performance group. It is a critical part of the evaluation process.

The colleges provide free or very inexpensive but high quality performances, targeted to the local community and in return, students receive real world learning experiences. The nature of the Arts makes them a valuable asset for building community relations and maintaining a presence in the local cultural scene.

Many community colleges have become a focal point for the Arts in their communities. They fill the void between large cultural institutions such as major art museums or symphonic orchestras and smaller or private performance venues. This community relation is one that the colleges will need to cultivate to a greater degree as these programs expand.

Performing Arts Centers

A critical factor in the current health of the Fine Arts programs has been the accelerated construction of the Performing Arts Centers. These new facilities are more than just a new building. There is a ripple effect of long-term positive repercussions for each institution. The changes can be felt from the curriculum to the community. It is not coincidental that as these centers progress in planning or construction, they spark new interest in the Arts. New programs are implemented, new faculty are hired, and enrollments have increased substantially. While the PAC's have the potential to outreach to the communities, the first significant impact has been to invigorate the Fine Arts at these colleges.

Economic Impact of the Arts: (Data from Valley-wide survey of non-profit Arts organizations and Arizona Republic survey does not include private, educational or government supported operations.)

The Arts are a Vital Component of the Valley's Economy

- In FY 2000, nonprofit Valley arts organizations and their audiences had a total economic impact of nearly **\$344 million**.
- Valley arts organizations and their audiences support more than **11,000 jobs** and generate \$245 million in household income.
- In FY 2000, local and state government received **\$34.6 million** in tax revenue from arts spending in the Valley.

Valley Residents Support the Arts with their Money, they also Invest their Time and Talents

- In FY 2000, attendance at Valley arts events was **8.2 million**

Public Support of the Arts is Valuable and Vital

- Local governments also construct, own and operate cultural facilities that provide space for performances, exhibits and related activities.
- Public support helps ensure that the valley's cultural community is able to provide programming, outreach and education activities that are affordable and accessible to all Valley citizens
- The Arts represent 6% of the Gross Domestic Product in the United States

Planning Assumptions

- Higher education in the Arts will need to address the changes taking place in K-12 education and prepare for a new kind of student whose background in the Arts stresses interdisciplinary approaches and new learning methods focused on the Arts.
- We will continue to see a greater demand for higher order thinking skills.
- The Arts will continue to play a more pronounced role in business, communications, and all forms of human interaction as new technologies allow access and affordability.
- The Arts will continue the role of an experimental laboratory for the ideas and the emotions of our culture.

Summary

The Arts at the Maricopa Colleges are at an important juncture. We currently enjoy a relatively stable environment. Our enrollments have been steadily growing over the last decade with significantly higher increases over the past three years. New digital technologies and the Internet have been embraced and the demand for these courses has been outstanding. The new Performing Arts Centers are invigorating arts programs and college environments. The Arts have recognized the role they can play in the learning environments. Stability and growth have given us a solid foundation to launch future planning. Crisis planning is painful, traumatic and leaves deep scar tissue. The time to look at the future is when we are in a strong position with options and optimism. The Arts have been successful as an academic pursuit, a community outreach and resource, and now in workforce development.

We have the chance to explore the future from this new plateau and plan what the potential for the Arts can be.

Profile of the Arts in the Maricopa Colleges

The Arts in the Maricopa Community Colleges include both performance and humanities classes in the following areas: Creative Writing, Dance, Music, Theatre, and the Visual Arts. At present, all ten Maricopa Colleges include the Arts in their degree curriculum. The following table illustrates the distribution of the Arts programs by college.

Current College Offerings

	Theatre	Dance	Visual Arts	Music	Creative Writing
CGCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EMCC			✓	✓	✓
GWCC	✓	✓			✓
GCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PVCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PC	✓		✓	✓	✓
RSC			✓		✓
SCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SMCC	✓		✓	✓	

Current Enrollment figures (Full Appendix Attached)

Enrollment in the Arts Spring 2002

Courses	Enrollments
Creative Writing	396
Dance	791
Music	7002
Theatre	1189
Visual Arts	6644
District Total	16022

Appendix

1. *Champions of Change*, Executive summary of the study commissioned by the GE Fund, John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation, the Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.
2. *No Subject Left Behind*, Executive report on the Arts impact the "No Child Left Behind" legislation.
3. *Art the Fourth R*, by Jason Ohler. Article from Educational Leadership, October 2000.
4. *State of the Arts*, article from Community College Week, April 2, 2001, on the increasing visibility of art collections at community colleges and its community impact.
5. Maricopa District enrollment figures by course prefix.