

Montclair State University

Project Title

Creative Learning

Applicant Organization and Contact Information

Office of Arts and Cultural Programming
Montclair State University
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Project Overview

Peak Performances @ Montclair focuses on innovative artists committed to transcending traditional boundaries between art forms and between the arts and other disciplines. The primary goal of the Creative Campus project at Montclair State University (MSU) is to integrate the creative approaches of Peak Performances artists into the intellectual and cultural environment of the campus. The focus of the project is the development and implementation of a semester-long course designed to develop students' creative abilities, which will draw on Peak Performances artists and their work as catalysts for exploring and understanding creative processes across disciplines.

Key Outcomes

- Increase students' understanding of and confidence in their creative abilities in their academic and personal lives
- Illuminate parallels in creative processes across disciplines
- Demystify notions of artistic creativity as separate from students own creativity.

Project Partners (Campus and Community)

Montclair State University Arts and Cultural Programming, Research Academy for University Learning

Artists (Visiting Artists, Faculty Artists, Student Artists, Community Artists)

These artists will participate in extended residencies, during which artists will work with students to create new work and with faculty to create a Creative Learning Course as permanent addition to the MSU curriculum: Wayne McGregor Random Dance, F.A.R., Robert Whitman, Passport, Robert Wilson, Hakame

Project Summary Narrative

The goal of the *Creative Learning* project at Montclair State University (MSU) is to integrate the creative approaches of Peak Performances artists into the intellectual and cultural environment of the campus, in order to foster students understanding of and confidence in their creative abilities in their academic and personal lives.

The key partnership is between Arts and Cultural Programming (ACP), MSUs presenting arm under the banner Peak Performances @ Montclair, and the Research Academy for University

Learning (RAUL), the academic unit charged with developing deep learning initiatives across campus. The primary output is the development of a semester-long course, called Creative Learning, inspired by the Integration of Abilities approach created by Paul Baker. Baker's ideas were quickly seen as applicable across disciplines and essential for developing students' full creative potential.

This project represents an evolution from engagement with students on a performance-by-performance basis to a more comprehensive integration into the academic life of the campus. Integral to the course will be interactions with Peak Performances artists creating new work co-commissioned by ACP. By opening their creative process, these artists will serve as catalysts and resources in both the classroom and the theater, as well as with a faculty working group headed by RAUL to develop and evaluate the course. The artists have been selected on the basis of their well-established relationships to research, interdisciplinary approaches, and the integration of technology and the arts.

Wayne McGregor Random Dance will participate in a two-year residency, covering the development of the course in year one and delivery of the first semester of the course in year two. Recent work of the company's R-Research unit has focused on exploring creative thinking through McGregor's choreographic process. MSU will co-commission a new full-length work, F.A.R., choreographed by McGregor using tools created as a result of recent collaborations between the R-Research unit and cognitive scientists. Throughout 2010-11, the company's R-Research director, Scott deLahunta, will collaborate with the faculty working group on course development, providing insight and expertise based on the company's research into creative process.

Robert Whitman is an American artist best known for performance pieces incorporating new technologies and combining visual and sound images, actors, film, slides, and evocative props in environments of his own making. Whitman will create Passport, a multi-site, simultaneous performance piece that incorporates digital broadcasting technology, to premiere in spring 2011.

The Creative Learning course will be developed in year one by an interdisciplinary group of faculty working with ACP, RAUL, and visiting artists the group thus far includes faculty from psychology, mathematics, communications, theater, and dance. The course will focus on the process of creation and the commonality of creativity across disciplines. The course will become an ongoing part of the University's curriculum. For long-term sustainability, the project will include faculty professional development in course methodology and philosophy and the development of an artist residency model that establishes Peak Performances as a campus-wide resource for creative engagement.

The project aligns with the University's institutional goal to integrate deep learning and creativity into the curriculum and with the presenting goal to support exploration of creativity in an interdisciplinary setting by capitalizing more fully on the knowledge and abilities brought to campus by visiting artists.

Expected Outcomes and Evaluation

The primary outcomes of the project are: to increase students understanding of and confidence in their creative abilities in their academic and personal lives; to illuminate parallels in creative

processes across disciplines; and to demystify notions of artistic creativity as separate from students own creativity. The primary output of the project is the Creative Learning course. Additional outputs include learning artifacts from the artists, faculty, and students through reflective journaling and ePortfolios, online creative spaces where the students can chart their responses to the course.

Formative evaluation of the project will be incorporated into the fabric of the class itself through reflection activities at the student, faculty, and artist level. This formative structure will be supported by a more rigorous summative assessment protocol based on the empirical research findings of Deci and Ryan (Motivation and Self-Determination Theory) and Biggs (Approaches to Learning, SOLO Taxonomy).

For the primary student outcome, our evaluative methodologies assess deep learning and students abilities to find connections among disciplines, to explore previously uncharted experiences, and to address intrinsic questions about creativity. The SOLO (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) taxonomy classifies learning outcomes in terms of their complexity, enabling one to assess participants work in terms of its quality.

To assess the effectiveness of the project in defining a new framework for deep learning in an interdisciplinary setting, the faculty working group will periodically examine student, faculty, and artist responses to course structure and activities, as expressed through the learning artifacts generated by the course. Artists responses to their interaction with faculty and students will be an indicator of success in terms of artist engagement with the campus. Periodic artist interviews will be used to gain a better understanding of the artists evolving perspective of their role in an academic setting, as a result of their participation in the project.

During the second year of the project, the working group and faculty teaching the course will meet each semester to review results of the protocols described above and to assess student, faculty, and artist responses to the framework established for the course. The results of the reviews will be disseminated to the president, provost, and participating faculty through reports assembled by ACP and RAUL. The documentation process will also be integrated into the curriculum of the Creative Learning course curriculum and will include all course participants (students, faculty, and artists). We are exploring ways in which ePortfolios could play a significant role in documenting the evolution of the project by course participants while also serving a more general purpose of providing internal and external dissemination of project successes.