

Chapter Twelve

Synergies, Collaborations, and Transformations

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Beginning in 1998, Lesley began to blossom in a different fashion. Instead of growing from within and putting out new shoots, Lesley looked out across the landscape—seeking partners. The first hybridization was with The Art Institute of Boston, a college whose roots went back almost as far as Lesley University’s. And, just how did that come about?

“Look, Mother,” said Benjamin B.

“Look at the house across the street.”

His mother looked at it.

“It is different from our house,” said Benjamin B.

“Yes,” said Mother. “It is different from our house....”

“Hurry and get up,” said Mother. “This is going to be a different kind of day.”
(Evans, 1955)¹.

¹ Admittedly, this children’s story is about Benjamin not about Lesley, but artistic license is invoked.

What did that house across the Charles River look like? In AIB, Lesley saw a high-energy community of artists who were immersed in the process of exploration and discovery. Students worked alongside their creations, which were manifested along the hallways for all to see. It was a college where students were bouncing off the walls, creating work that was, well, bouncing off the walls. AIB’s story went back almost as far as Lesley’s did.

The Art Institute of Boston’s story began in 1912 as The School of Practical Art. It became one of the first private, nonaffiliated art schools. The founder, Roy Davidson, was a pioneer in the field of commercial art education. Instead of continuing the practice where artists worked through a long apprenticeship, Davidson founded a school where students could train within a reasonably short time, empowered to become professional artists in the field (Pacy, 2007). At the time, *The Boston Herald* stated, “This seems to be a school for students of moderate means who wish to make art a business and it has the indorsement [sic] of some of the largest buyers of commercial art in the city” (Davidson, 1918-1919).

The monthly fee of \$15 and full tuition of \$110 seem moderate indeed today. It is instructive to look at the School’s mission then—a response to the needs of those times, different from what one would find today. In the School’s brochure just after World War I, Davidson advertised, “The School of Practical Art, as its name implies, is devoted to the teaching of only such drawing as have a commercial value and fills a long felt want among art students with a living to make” (Davidson, 2007).



Clearly, earning a living was *the* priority of the times. While this need is mindfully relevant today, we have evolved as a culture, and institutions of higher education have grown to embrace a larger responsibility.

Davidson remained at the helm until 1940 when Harold Pollock became Director and later, in 1945, President, a role he served in until 1962. In 1967, during the term of William Willis, Sr. the school became a non-profit institution and was renamed The Art Institute of Boston. In that time, AIB expanded its pedagogical scope, adding programs in fine arts, photography, and liberal arts.

When President Willis, Sr. stepped down in 1977, his son, William Willis, Jr., known as Tuck, succeeded him. During the seventies and early eighties AIB was accredited by the National Association of Trade Schools. Under Tuck's guidance, the school sought and received accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and later, in 1988, received the authority to grant the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the state of Massachusetts. AIB had become a strong, professional art college.

AIB had made significant progress during the eighties in becoming a competitive college of art; however, as an independent institution, it struggled with enrollment and finances. In 1990, when Tuck resigned, AIB undertook a search for a new president with strong fiduciary skills; and a year later, Stan Trecker was chosen to be the new leader. Under his leadership, enrollment stabilized and began to grow—the college flourished. With balanced budgets and healthy enrollment, AIB had moved into a position where seeking a partner was a viable option.

During the 1996-1997 academic year, The Art Institute of Boston completed a self-study and received an accreditation visit by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The result of the application for accreditation by NEASC was that AIB was given “Candidacy Status” with two areas of concern. The first and foremost was the financial status. From 1991 through the time of the NEASC visit, AIB successfully managed to maintain solvency; however, this was partially the result of low profit margins, which limited the institute's ability to pay competitive salaries or to improve infrastructure. The second area of concern was the quality and quantity of books in the library. The charge, therefore, was to remedy both these concerns within the next five years.

As the AIB Board of Trustees and key members of the administration led by President Trecker pondered possible scenarios that could have a positive impact on the institution, it became clear that partnering with another institution of higher education would be the most effective solution to achieve regional accreditation, to maintain academic integrity, and to secure the financial future of AIB. Thus, during the last half of 1997 and the first few months of 1998, members of the Board of Trustees approached several institutions including Lesley College.

In addition to the pragmatic aims cited by NEASC, AIB considered other significant factors as relevant to its future, including housing for students, technology, liberal arts, increased financial aid, and better benefit packages for employees. When considering the option of an affiliation, the following were considered paramount: 1) maintaining our name, 2) retaining our identity as a professional art college, 3) continuing our urban location, 4) supporting programs and faculty, and 5) initiating immediate investment in AIB. In view of these considerations, Lesley University, then

Lesley College, was considered by the AIB constituency to be the most suitable institution with whom to create this partnership; and, by the end of 1998, the merger was completed and approved by all appropriate bodies.

For Lesley University the merger meant that the arts could become central—a core element instead of just an area of service. Lesley had a strong and diverse arts-related and arts-supportive culture, but little in the way of an actual art program. It knew it wanted more. With the addition of all of AIB’s resources, faculty, and lively student body, the arts could become one of the strong pillars of the college. This meant that instead of building a substantial art program from the ground up, Lesley would gain a fully-fledged, fully-operational art college. Likewise, Lesley College would be able to expand their liberal arts offerings to reach a larger undergraduate student body. “The merger also reinforce[d] Lesley’s commitment to maintain its long-term viability through its profile as a responsive, entrepreneurial, multi-faceted institution” (Fertitta, 1999, p. 2). Lesley College, with its already extant schools, wished to move toward becoming a university. Joining with AIB became an important step toward that goal.

The similarities in our mission statements, including a professional orientation to our educational programs and a commitment to community service, provided the philosophical link desired in our partnership. Beyond pedagogical affinities, we discovered synergetic connections in a shared social consciousness when we compare the mission statements of the institutions:

The Mission of The Art Institute of Boston is to provide a comprehensive art education that develops in its students the aesthetic awareness, the perceptual and conceptual abilities, and the humanistic perspective necessary for a career in the visual arts. (AIB Faculty Handbook).

...A distinctive and fundamental aspect of education at Lesley College is the conviction that people matter, and that the professionals who respond to their needs provide a unique service to society. (Lesley University Faculty Handbook).

The two colleges were alike in their humanistic and student-centered ways. The merger has served to bring strengths, ideals, and resources together to achieve the goal of better service to all students. More importantly, it has brought the University to a clearer awareness of itself and its possibilities. The synergies and collaborations affected transformations at all levels—pragmatically, pedagogically, and philosophically—creating something that had not existed before.

Pragmatically

With a dual goal to insuring their futures and to serving their students, Lesley University and The Art Institute of Boston entered into an agreement to merge. The resulting merger has been a complementary one. With almost no redundancies in the academic programs and with strengths that dovetailed, the institutions fit together well. In synergy, they shared important aims and perspectives: quality of academic programs, small class sizes, student-centered programs, individual attention, field-based learning, faculty practitioners, and professional orientation. In collaboration, the merger allowed for a sensible and symbiotic allocation of resources and distribution of responsibility by

disciplines. Lesley took over the responsibility for all liberal arts courses, while AIB managed all art studio and art history courses. Such collaboration resulted in numerous benefits and broadened the number of co-curricular activities available to AIB students, including theater, clubs, and athletics. Quite simply, AIB students have gained an expanded sense of student life, which continues to grow and develop.

For Lesley, the merger has enhanced offerings in the studio arts. All the cultural and aesthetic elements of the AIB program—art exhibitions, gallery events and openings, and artist lectures—have become available to the entire university body. The growing list of activities has expanded and deepened the realm of offerings for both personal and curricular enrichment. The arts have become as important as other aspects that define a more creative and diverse Lesley University. Both Lesley and AIB offer strong academic programs, share a commitment to quality learning in a student-centered environment, and follow thoughtful processes for the allocation of resources to support these strengths and commitments.

This collaboration between institutions weaves a fabric of support, so that Lesley is able to continue its emphasis on teacher education, human services, management, and the arts, and so that AIB can continue to focus on developing students' artistic ability and expression alongside their professional and marketable skills. While continuously evaluating and updating its BFA degree programs in Design, Illustration, Fine Arts, and Photography, as well as the programs in Animation and Art History added since the merger, AIB has been able to remain true to its mission.

The merger of AIB and Lesley has effected transformations and improvements in administration and governance. AIB, the fourth school at Lesley University, now operates within Lesley University's governance structure. The Dean of the College leads AIB and engages in all aspects of academic planning at the University. Like all the schools within the University, AIB Department Chairs drive the curriculum and the academics, under the leadership of the Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and with the help of its faculty-based Curriculum Committee. Across the University, AIB helps to shape matters of academic policy through participation in various university committees, most notably as part of a newly-formed Academic Advisory Committee. The faculty and the administration joined with the Provost to create this council, which now facilitates cross-university communication by bringing together faculty and school representatives, deans, and provost to a round table discussion. As at most institutions, the Provost holds the responsibility for all academic policies within the University.

Administrative functions have grown more centralized. The University Office of Student Administrative Services provides registration, financial aid, and bursar services to all students. The Office of Student Life and Academic Development oversees residence life, student activities, student government, career resources, academic support services, disability services, and athletics. University Technology furnishes the umbrella for all administrative and academic technology. Sherrill Library coordinates all library services, and, the Office of Enrollment Management supervises admissions for the University.

The expansion of workgroups in each administrative area has resulted in a larger pool of expertise to deal with issues and a broader group of colleagues with whom to work and learn. Turnover of positions at both institutions has provided new employment opportunities, resulting in expanded and upgraded career opportunities. AIB's core

faculty has been able to join in the Faculty Assembly, which gives voice to the faculty under the University's governance structure. As members of the Faculty Assembly, faculty serve on all the University academic committees, such as, the Committee on Rank and Promotion, Faculty Affairs and Academic Policies, or Faculty Life and Development. This governance forum was marked recently with the first AIB faculty member to serve as Chair of the Faculty Assembly. The AIB faculty has become full members of the Lesley community, peers with their Cambridge colleagues. The resultant structures have integrated both the larger and smaller administrative and faculty units of both School and University into a more comprehensive framework, effectively creating one whole, new institution, to the enrichment of all.

Because of the enduring emphasis on professional focus, the faculty at AIB, like the faculty at Lesley University, is comprised of practitioners in the fields who teach and bring the benefit of their expertise to their programs. This faculty of working professionals has engaged in cross-teaching opportunities and collaborations that serve the students at all four of Lesley's schools. These collaborations include development of new courses, new minors, and new programs. An array of faculty development programs, workshops, coffee hours, and training sessions provide forums for the faculty, University-wide, to engage in programmatic and pedagogical discourse. The University practice of relying on adjunct or part-time faculty to teach in the academic programs continues the custom prevalent at AIB and at art colleges throughout the country. This use of adjuncts, who are practicing professionals in the fields in which they teach, reinforces integrity, promotes sociological relevance, and honors an ongoing commitment to offer programs that combine theory and practice.

The integration of the two institutions expanded the diversity of faculty expertise and experience, created opportunities for faculty to teach different populations at different levels in the various University settings, and included AIB faculty in accessing faculty benefits, such as sabbatical leave programs, institutional faculty development funds, and grants writing assistance enjoyed throughout the University's core faculty. This assistance takes on many forms, including travel and grant funding opportunities, support for academic projects, and learning opportunities in a variety of areas. To date, most core AIB faculty have been granted sabbaticals, which have provided opportunities for their professional development. Their growth and achievements have enriched and continue to enrich the University.

In the arena of library services, the merger accorded AIB a tenfold increase in title access, as well as access to on-line/full-text data bases, inter-library loan agreements, and affiliations. Additional services that have come to fruition since that time are on-line art collections such as ARTstor.org; and, reciprocally, the University's overall library collection has been enhanced by the acquisition of the AIB art book and slide collection. Again, this collaboration and distribution of resources has created a subtle, but profound transformation—enabling a flourishing expansion and dedication of the art library, to the betterment of the entire University.

The Art Institute of Boston Library supports students' academic and visual research needs. The AIB Library greatly benefited from the merger with Lesley University and its larger library department. Students and faculty have expanded access to both print and online resources. The focused art

collection, specializing in the fields of fine art, art history, illustration, design, and photography, has grown to more than 10,000 volumes. Through membership in the Fenway Libraries Online network, direct borrowing privileges are extended to nearby colleges, including three art libraries. Many more academic disciplines are supported by the Lesley University Libraries' main collection, which features a growing eBook collection. The past ten years have marked extraordinary changes in electronic publishing and searching. The AIB Library collections were automated to allow for searching materials online. Electronic database subscriptions provide online access to hundreds of full text art journals and nearly one million high quality art images. These changes have made it possible for students to complete research assignments from any location (D. Verhoff, personal communication, November 23, 2009)

All student services have been centralized on the main campus under the leadership of the Dean of Student Life and Academic Development. Some services are provided on-site at AIB, with representatives scheduling time each week at designated offices at AIB. Counseling services are available at AIB several days a week. Of course, all student services for AIB students are also accessible on the main Cambridge campus. The Career Resource Center and the Center for Academic Achievement have added a vital dimension to the services available to AIB students. Since the merger, the staff in the Career Resource Center has included an art specialist who has an understanding of the various art fields and who is, therefore, very sympathetic to the needs of art students and graduates.

The physical improvements are easiest to spot. With responsibilities coordinated, initiatives could be focused where needed, be it in improved studio spaces, in state-of-the-art, professional technologies, and in library expansion. The AIB facilities in Boston, at 700 Beacon Street and 601 Newbury Street, have been maintained and improved throughout the period since the merger. In fact, renovations were one of the first benefits resulting from the merger. The 700 Beacon Street building houses studios, classrooms, a gallery, a library, a student lounge, photography and technology labs, and faculty and administrative offices. 601 Newbury Street facilities include animation studios and labs, art studios, individual senior studio spaces, a technology lab, student gallery, and offices. The division of responsibility between Lesley and AIB has enabled many projects and initiatives to advance. AIB has been able to address its physical plant better. Students can take advantage of expanded and up-to-date animation labs, computing and digital technologies, and photographic facilities. Being better able to prioritize needs and to evaluate practices means that students also benefit from a heightened awareness of health and safety issues. With the centralization of services, the faculty has seen gains in equipment support and in upgraded working conditions. All the equipment and materials currently used to offer instruction and to support teaching and learning are maintained and/or replaced in a process integrated with Lesley's cycles of equipment and facility maintenance, renewal, and replacement. This technological support alone is an incalculable benefit to the entire community.

All of Lesley's Cambridge facilities, including the library, auditoriums, dining facilities, and classroom spaces, are also available for use by AIB faculty and students.

University Hall (formerly the Porter Exchange building) has undergone a wonderful metamorphosis. With its art and dance studios, classrooms, modern science labs, multi-phase auditorium, lavish new home for the School of Education, eateries, bookstore, administrative and commercial spaces, and finally a new, professional art gallery, we realize a new presence and begin to look to future possibilities. With each change and new development, the University's vision becomes clearer, and the next goal sprouts.

During the past five years, great progress has been made to provide new facilities for AIB in proximity to those presently occupied by the University in Cambridge. The University and AIB have been engaged in vigorous plans to achieve this relocation. Over the last two years, these plans have been solidified. This has included identifying the location, hiring an architectural firm, processing formal designs, and seeking approval of the neighborhood and the city of Cambridge. The dialogue has been comprehensive, inclusive, and responsive. Stan Trecker has resumed his position as Dean of AIB, with his primary focus to realize this landmark venture—the creation of a Cambridge-based arts community and facility, with Lesley and AIB as its cornerstones.

Sociologically, the merger brought together two undergraduate college populations—AIB and the Women's College (now Lesley College). One was co-ed; one was not. Students registering together across the University resulted in a mixed population. The presence of men in the Lesley College liberal arts courses made the transition from an all women's college to a co-ed institution not only feasible, but also desirable. The clear and significant solution was that Lesley too went co-ed, expanding its vision, its mission, and its reach.

Having sought out partners with similar and supportive missions, Lesley was able to answer very challenging questions about its own purpose—what was Lesley's business? Some programs needed to be re-evaluated, and other programs were waiting out there with open arms. With its own image sharpened, Lesley was able to make strong, informed choices about its affiliations.

Pedagogically

The merger has created opportunities to expand and develop new programs for students at both schools. "AIB students can now enroll in minors in a variety of disciplines such as creative writing, history, environmental science, management, and psychology" (J. Stanwood, personal communication, April 9, 2009). The new programs offered at the University that trace their inception to the merger include: an MEd in Art Education; two MFA programs, one in Creative Writing and the other in Visual Arts; two additional BFA programs, one in Animation and the other in Art History; a dual degree program with a BFA and M.Ed. in Art Education; and a BA in Art History. Soon, students will have "the opportunity to earn a BFA/MA in expressive therapies" (J. Stanwood, personal communication, April 9, 2009). The addition of a studio arts curriculum to Lesley's offerings strengthened the basis for the development of the PhD in Expressive Therapies program. This was approved by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in 1986 and was a big step leading to Lesley's becoming a University.

The combined Lesley and AIB provide more diversity for students in course selection, methods of learning, and student activities. The resulting breadth of undergraduate degree programs available allows a student to change direction and pursue

another course of study within the same institution. More fundamentally, however, the breadth and richness of combined program offerings allow students to come into their own. For a specific example, the Animation Department has now grown from the Illustration Department. While, pragmatically, both these departments have benefited from the University's investment in technology and other resources, pedagogically, illustrators and animators are enriched by being able to access programs such as creative writing. They can develop their artistic voices in narration so that visual communication and verbal communication reinforce each other.

One of the most important changes for the undergraduate population at the University was the development of a general education program that served all undergraduates. The process for moving to this universal GenEd program had its genesis in a very early collaboration of the faculty across the University. Under the guise of Academic Program Planning (APP) initiated by the Provost, the faculty met together on a regular basis for two years. This was supported by money from the Davis Foundation. The results of this process included collaborations in course development between faculty members from different schools, the beginnings of a sense of unity across the schools' faculty, and realization that major programs like general education needed to be re-evaluated in light of the blending of the two undergraduate populations.

Following the APP effort, a formal working committee began to focus specifically on general education. This effort was led by the Dean of Lesley College and included members of the AIB faculty and the Lesley College faculty. By the fall of 2005, a new GenEd program was implemented and applied to both undergraduate populations. After reviewing the benefits of the program since its inauguration, the University is moving to augment the breadth and depth of its GenEd offerings.

The work done over the past few years has yielded significantly broader educational opportunities in the areas of liberal arts, social sciences, math, and the sciences for undergraduate students. The continued review of our general education program ensures that the enhancements to the curriculum have expanded the diversity of offerings and pedagogies available to students while meeting the specific needs of each school's professional programs. The outgrowth of this expansion has led to a larger core and adjunct faculty to better support the programs and pedagogies across the University's range of academic programs.

Across the University, the enhancements in programs and faculty life have led, increasingly, to faculty members working together on curriculum and on professional development opportunities. Administrative structures have likewise been strengthened as responses to questions, issues, and problems are addressed from the different perspectives of the schools within the University. The art library that formerly served as the library for AIB has been able to focus exclusively on the visual arts adding great potential for enhancing resources available for curriculum development and professional activity in the arts-based and arts-related programs across the fabric of the University.

On the individual level, many students take advantage of traveling abroad to study. We maintain affiliations with programs in Italy, France, Holland, Ireland, and Japan. More locally, there are any number of bus trips, museum trips, conferences, panels, and lectures to take advantage of. We are part of a growing culture that draws visiting artists and lecturers into all areas of our university community. Conversely, the

required internships for all majors send all AIB students out into the professional community. We expand our exposure and our vision.

Programmatically, one of the first places identified as a natural opportunity for collaboration was between GSASS and AIB in the arena of teacher education. Lesley University is renowned for its programs in teacher education. Until AIB joined with the University it was not feasible to have a visual arts focused teacher education program. With faculty from both schools working together, a new program for a Master of Education (MEd) in Art Education was developed and presented to accreditors for approval. The program was implemented and has been successfully graduating art teachers for several years. The existence of this masters program opened the door for a new dual degree program for students receiving the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Students now are able to do preliminary work toward the MEd in Art Education during their undergraduate years and, therefore, are able to shorten the duration of their Master's degree work significantly.

Almost simultaneously, work began on Master of Fine Arts degrees in Visual Arts and in Creative Writing. Initial work on these new initiatives was carried out at the college level with AIB forging the foundation for the MFA in Visual Arts and with GSASS doing the essential groundwork for the MFA in Creative Writing. In the later stages of development, there was significant collaboration between the work groups from each school. The synergy between these programs lay in their both being low residency by nature. This allowed the programs to run concurrently and share resources including visiting artists/faculty. These programs work with the different structures and with the different thinking involved in pursuing an MFA in Visual Arts or in Creative Writing. Both programs have been successful in attracting well-qualified students, as well as seeing them through graduation with their master's degrees.

The MFA in Visual Arts grew out of a proposal made in 1993, an idea that languished until the merger, when it piqued the interest of both Lesley's President and Provost. The program's original director recalls,

My original proposal was for a six-week summer program in painting, but discussion in committee generated a broader curriculum in visual arts in general and semi-annual 10-day residencies—both of which deepened my vision that the program encourage independence and pluralism of viewpoints. (T. Apesos, personal communication, April 15, 2009).

Repeatedly, we encounter a passion and support for a variety of personal and sociological perspectives, a common thread in the warp and weave holding our University together.

At AIB, the MFA scene is a lively one indeed. Optimizing the classroom and gallery facilities over intersession breaks, artists transform every inch of space into kiosks of wildly diverse and challenging artwork. These artists are developing their unique voices. Participants in the MFA in Visual Arts program grapple with the ever-evolving art scene, responding to such issues as “globalization” or “world citizenship.” What is the reality? What are the politics? What is the resulting pedagogy (Barry, 2007). Art, for the past two decades, has blurred national boundaries in much the same way as have other aspects of society and the economy. Artists have been exhibiting in a global art world.

The effect of this has been to infuse art with a new political and social consciousness, as well as broadening the landscape of what art is, how it is made, and for whom it is made. With the artists debating a “return to craft” versus a “de-skilling of art” (Steck, 2009) giving meaning to the term *master* is seminal. Many of the MFA faculty teach locally at other institutions, and they provide an influx of new ideas and ways to connect with the changing and evolving art scene.

Although there seem to be considerable overlaps between studio art programs offered at AIB and an art therapy program, a salient philosophical difference hinders tying them together neatly. The intent of the programs are different in spirit; one envisions art professionally and the other therapeutically. The studio arts programs are production-oriented and focused on the individual making the work. The art therapy programs are focused on counseling and on using art-making by clients as a therapeutic tool. Currently, however, efforts are being made to open a more direct pathway for students in BFA programs to meet some of the requirements of the Master’s degree in Art Therapy or Expressive Therapy. This would further meld undergraduate programs in studio art at AIB with graduate programs at GSASS. It is in the philosophical interactions that we uncover the richest dialogue.

Philosophically

The initial rationale for engaging in the process of merger, better service to students and new program opportunities to support Lesley’s profile as a multi-faceted institution, remains the focus that continues to shape many of the present and future developments at the University. The Lesley/AIB merger has lived up to its promises of enrolling more aware students in both institutions and for providing them with a fuller and more diverse educational experience. Both graduate and undergraduate students have enjoyed the richness of the combined cultures and the richness of the new educational programs that have evolved during these explosive ten years. The mission of the University has been substantially bolstered by the combined efforts that have resulted from our partnership. We are free to examine more deeply what binds us together.

The compatibility of missions and values of Lesley and AIB has borne out the positive potential for students and program developments first perceived at the time of this merger. Lesley has helped AIB to turn its vision outward to the non-profit sector and community-based organizations. Since the merger, AIB has been examining the world of visual arts with an expanded sense of community service and connection.

The University’s citizens have been broadened by the addition of a strong, professional arts culture. Students are at first surprised, then beguiled, by how art can be a fundamental force, a means, or a goal, depending upon one’s venue or field. Art is more than just the product. It is about the journey and the discovery. “The goal is always nebulous. We keep pushing, trying, falling down, and pulling ourselves up again.... Art is a game—a joyous game. Play is important. We strive—we never arrive” (Lanza, 2008, p. 63).

Art education is profound, and it deals with reality. It is not about making pretty things or about elevating the masses. Depending upon one’s arena, art’s aims can be very different indeed. Philosophical differences in the cultures and expectations of the college

communities within the University have been used to engage in discussions about the meaning of those differences, leading to clearer understandings and to better education. Early on, the University brought together its faculty from the two undergraduate schools to explore and deepen the “Foundation Experience.” Ideally, the foundation moment never stops: the basics are always relevant and what is relevant becomes the basics. Artists, as learners, are neotenous by nature: we are curious children in the world. So, if artists are constantly responding and growing, what are they responding to? How do we help our students to stay curious, to grow, and to speak about our world? How do we kindle the spark?

At Lesley, because of its students’ wide range of vocational diversity in approaching the study of art, the mixture plays out experientially. To illustrate, one can say that too many students today are focused inward. A typical art student might come to class bringing the idea that art depends totally on talent. This is similar to the notion of ranking people by IQ. Curiously, Alfred Binet designed the IQ test to identify students that were not profiting from Paris schools and that had need of different educational programs to help them (Dweck, 2006). He believed that there were major differences in people’s backgrounds and in the ways they learned. Binet did not profess that an individual’s intelligence was fixed and unchangeable. Ironically, a sector of the public is wedded to the doctrine that “smarts” are either there or not there, an idea that totally undermines potential and growth. People who believe in a fixed-mindset spend a lot of their time trying to prove their already existent abilities. They arrive with the assumption that they must already be artists. Afraid of taking risks and fearing failure, they learn through imitation and repetition (Wertschek, 2007). They seek praise and aspire, merely, to hone their craft, resisting new learning experiences. Unfortunately, society perpetuates the myth of artists being specially-endowed creatures who hibernate in garrets. Something more, something different is needed.

In response to our changing world, the first year must engage learners on multiple levels—addressing sensibilities in ethics and world citizenship, addressing practicalities in art and design skills and working skills, and addressing competencies in visual and verbal language, research, and moving an idea (Keathley, 2007). While skill *is* important, so is the communication of ideas and feelings. Reflection and maturity evidence that talent is not the only factor by far. Education must deal with the whole person and the whole picture.

As the field of visual production has expanded, so too has our approach to educating young artists. It is no longer sufficient to focus on teaching our students a prescribed set of technical skills or aesthetic sensibilities. Today, our goal is to provide aspiring artists with the capacity to think beyond the perceived boundaries of any one discipline, and to approach the process of making art as both an intellectual and an expressive pursuit. As educators, we must train practitioners who are creative, resourceful, and responsive—responsive to both the outside world and their own values. (Grossman & Steck, 2007).

With the merger confirmed, we daily experience microcosmic social interactions in many of our classes. Working with a richer mix of students has ignited an examination

of what it means to be a student in the arts and in the world. The university has embarked upon a journey of exploration and experimentation to discover what questions need to be asked and answered.

AIB and Lesley have entered into a more capacious environment. In bringing together its varied student populations, Lesley and AIB have created a forum where students can respectfully regard each other's needs and sensibilities. Given the scope of our different creative programs, we have the potential for philosophical growth that we can only dimly envision. Perhaps this is one of the more significant transformations resulting from our collaborations—creating a world of possibility where we can openly examine the passions, desires, and mindsets that people bring with them to the arts.

Now, when we stir in students whose majors are not in the studio arts, an interesting dialogue germinates. If one has had very little experience in making art before coming to an art school, then it is sensible to approach a class as an atrium of possibilities. With nothing to prove, a student can engage in the same art-making pursuits with this open or growth-mindset (Dweck, 2006). Not only does this create a wonderfully provocative mixture, but it creates a delightfully unexpected and expanded potential for achievement as well. The combination of adventure and ability is a strong tonic for all of our programs. Such a paradigm fosters multiple connections across, not only, disciplines, but across societies and cultures as well. Emotive and synaptic associations embrace each other. What then happens when the art net expands to include artists, philosophers, teachers, therapists, writers, actors, dancers, and maybe also musicians? Like the composer Modest Mussorgsky, whose music painted *Pictures at an Exhibition*, art can sing, art can move, art can tell a story. Art reflects the world, and art is in Lesley.

Throughout this adventure, we have found synergies; we have collaborated; we have transformed ourselves. Our university world has grown bigger and richer. We grow curious. Together, we have indeed created something new and different.

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