

**University of Connecticut**  
**School of Fine Arts**  
**Faculty and Staff Meeting Notes**  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
12:15-1:15pm  
WebEx Events

**Introduction to the Meeting and General Updates (Anne D'Alleva)**

Anne welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked every single person in the School of Fine Arts for the amazing work they are all doing through the ongoing COVID pandemic; she acknowledged the difficulty of the situation and acknowledged the creativity and hard work everyone is undertaking.

Anne offered a series of updates:

1) Human Rights Hiring Initiative

We have been able to build out three hires in the area of Human Rights thanks to the assistance of Global Affairs and the Office of the Provost. This is a great outcome from years of connections and collaborations, and it is excellent for Fine Arts to be integrated with one of the University's signature initiatives in this way. The three searches are underway, and all three are joint appointments; one in theatre studies, one in art history, and one in the film and video production area of Digital Media and Design. These positions will meet multiple needs, and we look forward to these new colleagues joining us in August 2021.

2) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

Anne thanked the DEI Task Force, chaired by Nisha Hardnett and John Bell, which has been doing great work, particularly around organizing listening sessions for students, faculty, and staff. We hope to continue these listening sessions, and a series of questionnaires will also be forthcoming.

Our voluntary hiring guidelines for diversity, equity, and inclusion are in place, and most of our current search committees are using them. Anne hopes that these guidelines will help us make some real progress in diversifying our candidate pools for faculty and staff positions. We have also received good feedback on these guidelines from the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, so those guidelines will continue to evolve based on that feedback and the experience of our search committees.

3) Budget

Anne presented updates on the budget. Anne acknowledged and thanked Colleen, the Financial Services team, and the department heads and directors for their hard work in the last few weeks in working on building out the budget.

4) Development

Anne presented updates on development. Anne acknowledged the great work that Lauren and the Foundation have been doing in this area.

### **Admissions and Recruiting (Elizabeth Foody and Utkarsha Laharia)**

Elizabeth offered an overview of where we are in the admissions process right now. Elizabeth reminded all that we are all ambassadors for our school, whether we are online in a video meeting, giving feedback on portfolio submissions, or wearing a UConn shirt at the grocery store.

We will have programming accepted students, which will be virtual. Elizabeth will keep departments notified as the plans for that programming progress. In the meantime, if you receive inquiries from students about admissions or any programming questions, please steer them to Elizabeth so she can help them navigate those inquiries. Look forward to further notifications and information about accepted students events and plans for the spring.

Elizabeth thanked everyone for their help and for being our very best demonstration of how to stay creative and to produce beautiful and meaningful work in the fine and performing arts, even in a pandemic.

Utkarsha gave a brief presentation on social media. She noted that video content has a comparatively greater reach than static content.

Utkarsha also wanted to note the importance of using hashtags, resharing, tagging, and liking posts across the School. Without enough likes and shares, our posts do not reach our audiences as well due to social media algorithms. She shared an example of a recent post that was a video about our facilities, which had a higher level of engagement than other posts.

### **Facilities Update (Colleen Bridgeman)**

Colleen shared updates on some of our facilities projects.

The Nafe Katter Theater Lobby renovation is complete; this project was a tie-in to the new production facility, which provided the opportunity to upgrade the flooring, furniture, fixtures, and equipment in this lobby space. The space reallocation of the Bishop Center Administration Suite is also complete; the DMD administrative offices have been shifted to the first floor of the Bishop Center, which will make visiting and finding the department more accessible and welcoming. The Drama Studios have had their A/Cs upgraded, and we have implemented Genetec card readers and door upgrades to all of our entry points in the complex, as well as in the von der Mehden Recital Hall. We plan to continue installing these card readers throughout our other buildings across campus.

Further projects that are underway include the renovation of the darkroom photography facility, A/C upgrades for the Music practice rooms, and a wayfinding signage project through our academic buildings, which Kate has undertaken. Colleen thanked Kate for her great work in this area, as well as Nate Bedard, our Facilities Liaison Coordinator at Facilities Operations.

Projects that are in development include: a complete flooring and carpet upgrade and asbestos abatement in the Jorgensen; a theatre lighting LED upgrade initiative (with thanks to Mike Demers for his tireless advocacy in this area), which will eventually replace the incandescent lighting in all of our theaters, studios, and performing art spaces, but will start in the studio theatre; discussions have

restarted to replace and upgrade the clear com system in the Harriet S. Jorgensen theater; discussions have also begun regarding addressing ventilation in our performing spaces.

Finally, we are embarking on the redevelopment of the space in the former Dean's Office and Financial Services Office to become the physical home of the Krenicki Arts and Engineering Institute. We have completed the schematic designs, which Colleen shared images from. The current estimate is to have the construction go live in mid-May to be completed in time for the Fall 2021 semester start.

### **Alumni Affairs (Emily Auger Murray)**

Emily shared highlights of the programming that was held in 2020 in conjunction between SFA and alumni relations. We were able to hold one in-person event prior to the pandemic, which was the Dramatic Arts Alumni Night, and we have thereafter held two virtual pain nights, an virtual open mic night, a virtual puppet making workshop, a virtual Dinner and a Show, and a virtual alumni diversity roundtable. We have found that registrations have skyrocketed for the interactive arts programming events, and we've been able to engage with alumni nationwide that we usually don't reach. Even as we transition back to being in-person, we will continue to host virtual programming because we want to continue to reach these alumni.

If anyone is working on virtual events and would like Emily's assistance with promotion or registration, please reach out; she's happy to help out in any way.

We have a number of upcoming events, including a virtual Japanese tea bowl making workshop with Monica Bock, and UConn Gives on March 23-24.

Emily is working on developing programming in the area of professional development and mentoring between alumni and current students; she would love to have alumni from each department involved in this project, so if anyone has any recommendations of alumni with whom they have been in touch, let Emily know. She would like to have a robust group of programming in this area starting next year.

Finally, we are getting a brand new group off the ground this year: the Recent Alumni Council. This group will serve as a complement to the Dean's Advisory Council, and will focus its membership on alumni who have graduated within the last 10 years. We will start with four members (one from each department), and will add four more members each year until there is a group of 12 total. Terms will last three years, so members will cycle on and off. Again, if you know alumni who would be interested whom you would like to recommend, please be in touch with Emily.

### **Giving Day 2021 (Lauren Prause)**

Lauren shared information about UConn Gives 2021. This event was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, but will take place as an entirely virtual event this year. We have a group of Fine Arts projects that will be supported through this event: the Ballard, the Benton, CRT, the Marching Band, the DMD General Fund, and the Paul Zelanski scholarship in art and art history.

If you want to be involved, please plan to be virtually present during the event: save the date for 7am on March 23 through 7pm on March 24. You can sign up to be a champion, which is an opportunity to

promote the project of your choice, especially via social media. It is helpful to make gifts early, and watch out for social media challenges and match competitions.

### **Q&A (Anne D'Alleva)**

Anne opened up the floor to questions. In response to a thanks for the A/C in the drama studios, Anne noted that we have a good relationship with facilities, who have been very responsive to our needs and special concerns in the arts. If anyone has concerns about facilities, if something is not right or needs improvement, please bring that concern to your department head or director, and they will bring it to Colleen, who has a master list of projects we are working on. It is a priority to keep our facilities up to date, safe, and state of the art.

Anne noted that the data on social media focused on the academic departments; we will revise to include data on the venues before sending out the presentation. The venues do have an important part to play in our admissions / social media efforts, because they are a big part of why our arts community is so vibrant and it's important that prospective students and their families are aware of what we have to offer.

Regarding the prospect of social media engagement as an addition to everyone's existing workload. Anne noted that this will be discussed at the next Academic Affairs meeting so we can find ways to leverage students to help out with our social media efforts.

Regarding how alumni are selected for membership to the advisory board, Anne noted that our members are recommended by department heads. If you have suggestions, please do send them our way; we will build out our list over time, and we could use alternates as well in case members need to drop off. Anne noted her appreciation of our faculty and staff for maintaining their relationships with alumni after graduation; we want to maintain those ties and we are working on finding ways to help our students as they make their first forays into practice, as those early years in arts careers are often where people drop out of the arts and change their paths. We want to focus on their professional development and build a strong network for our alumni.

A question was asked about the university providing more extensive COVID testing for performers, as this might allow for performers to get back to performing. Anne noted that the university is having ongoing conversations about what testing and vaccination looks like moving forward. The university knows the special challenges we have with ensuring our performers can work safely, and we are hoping to have everyone back in our facilities and working safely as quickly as possible.

Anne noted that, as much as we are eager to get back to normal and working in person, we have developed a lot of very valuable virtual programming that is having an outsized outreach to audiences worldwide. We don't want to lose that in the aftermath of the pandemic; it's reach, it's accessibility, and it's an equity issue. As we get back to working in person, we will think about what we want to maintain and keep in terms of our digital work.

Anne thanked everyone in the Dean's Office and all of our panelists and presenters for being here today, and thanked everyone in the School once again for their amazing work.

**N.B.** More detailed minutes available to SFA faculty and staff by request to [arielle.hill-moses@uconn.edu](mailto:arielle.hill-moses@uconn.edu)