

REFLECTIONS ON THE *First One Fifty* AS MASSART'S 12TH PRESIDENT

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There are many friends of MassArt who I'll meet, some with longstanding relationships to the school, and some who are just themselves learning about the community. Of course there are many people to meet in the Boston community, some who have an existing relationship to the school, and I also want to begin to learn about the Commonwealth, its rich heritage, and to learn about how MassArt is valued among the citizens of Massachusetts.

As I meet people over the next months, I plan to mainly listen in order to learn all I can as a newcomer to the community. As well, I will have my eye on how to think about some important responsibilities as president. Our community will need to develop a strategic plan in the future, so I will listen for input that figures into a SWOT-type analysis, thinking about strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats to the college.

I want to begin an organizational analysis to see how the institution works. I also want to understand how we can best invest in people so we develop strong leaders and give the right opportunity to our employees. I need to understand how we manage risk in order to ensure a safe campus with a healthy living and learning environment and an effective organization for the future. A major priority, of course, is simply to build relationships, which is key to the success of any organization.

And I will focus on the UNBOUND campaign to raise the remaining funds to complete the renovation of the Bakalar & Paine Galleries. Time is of the essence to complete this project. The recent \$1 million gift of our alumnus Arne Glimcher gives us considerable momentum to engage friends of the college to join us in providing a newly revitalized venue for the outstanding exhibitions curated by Lisa Tung and her staff.

Let me give you some idea of the various ways I plan to listen and learn over these 150 days. I will meet faculty in various gatherings, over coffee or a meal, for example, to hear about their insights into the campus community. Beginning in September I will visit each of the academic programs of the college to learn from faculty, staff, and students about the work in each program so I can understand the various disciplines better and begin to learn how to advocate for the college.

I'll host "Table Talks," which will be gatherings of students, staff, and faculty together where each will answer some prompts to give me insight into MassArt. During the summer I will be out visiting various offices to meet staff and learn about their work. I will visit all kinds of organizations in the community in order to understand how MassArt is already engaged outside the walls of the school and to consider other potential ways we might serve our city and state. I am already engaged in various social gatherings to meet supporters and potential supporters of MassArt, and I will continue to do so. And, of course, I will meet various leaders, supporters, and partners in one on one meetings to hear what people are thinking about MassArt.

I want to be explicit about what I hope to accomplish with First One Fifty, to explain to what end I am putting my energies into this plan. First, I want to listen and learn about MassArt. This is a time for me to focus on hearing from you, for me to learn from you, for you to help me begin my work in a way that best serves the MassArt community. I'll be listening and asking questions. I hope you will help me by letting me know what you think, by telling me what you love about MassArt, to help me understand what we can do better, and to show me how I can work most effectively.

Second, I want to build relationships. I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating. I am committed to an administration that is based on transparency and trust. We will work best

together if we know one another. So First One Fifty is a way for us to begin to build good relationships together.

Third, I want to lay the groundwork for the future work of visioning and planning for the college. It's too soon for me to do that now because I don't know MassArt well enough. The first one hundred fifty day plan is designed to move us toward the time that we can begin a robust process of together envisioning the future and planning for it.

Ultimately, First One Fifty is really about MassArt students. It is about faculty, staff, and administration working together, as the MassArt mission states, to prepare students from diverse backgrounds to participate in the creative economy as artists, designers, and educators and to engage in the well-being of their society. This is about opening doors of opportunity to all kinds of students who will help create a better future for us all.

PRESIDENT'S FINDINGS

Throughout my first one hundred fifty-plus days of full-time service on campus, I visited students, staff, faculty, alumni, donors, supporters, legislators, public officials, business leaders, and cultural leaders. After talking with them and hearing about their impressions of MassArt I can state without question that our college is a vital, healthy institution. I can also say that we have our weaknesses and challenges. Greater than any weakness or challenge, however, is the opportunity that is before us all.

At the beginning of June 2016, I presented my plan for the first one hundred fifty days to the MassArt Board of Trustees at their annual meeting. *First One Fifty* was designed for me to listen and learn about the college, to begin to establish relationships within the campus community and beyond, and to begin to formulate a vision for the future of MassArt. At that meeting, I promised to report on what I have seen and heard.

On November 29th, as promised, I reported my findings to the trustees, and subsequently started conversations on the findings with MassArt students, faculty, staff, and MassArt Foundation directors. This is a summary of my reported findings in written form.

Beyond articulating my own thoughts, I hope that this report will be used to promote rich dialogue among the entire MassArt community about the future of the school. I also hope that this report will encourage our community to anticipate laying out a longer-term plan for the college during the 2017-2018 academic year cycle, with clear five-year initiatives (2018-2023) and formed around a ten-year horizon (2018-2028). That is, let us next focus on how to maintain the integrity of the MassArt mission while ensuring our role as a leading cultural institution in Boston, in Massachusetts, nationally, and internationally over the next ten years, with an eye toward the 200th anniversary of the school in 2073.

I note that the terminus of our five-year plan, 2023, will land on the 150th anniversary of the college. It is not too soon to be imagining not only what we want to accomplish by that time, but also to consider how we want to celebrate the significant events in the founding of the school and to celebrate MassArt's rich history.

As in my *First One Fifty* presentations, the layout of this document may be sorted into three main categories: *observations, questions, and proposals.*

OBSERVATIONS

MassArt has a compelling mission and historic legacy as a leading cultural institution

I have observed much in my first five months at MassArt, not the least of which is *the identity of the college as a leading cultural institution with a critical mission and an historical legacy.*

The mission of the college, to “prepare students from diverse backgrounds to participate in the creative economy as artists, designers, and educators, and to engage in the well-being of their society,” is seen in the remarkable accomplishments of MassArt alumni over generations as well as in the accomplishments of the faculty, a cadre of practicing artists, designers, educators, and scholars.

MassArt is an historic institution in the art and design world, the first of its kind in the United States, a story told in *Developing Visual Arts Education in the United States: Massachusetts Normal Art School and the Normalization of Creativity* by Professor Mary Ann Stankiewicz of Penn State University.

MassArt was a visionary institution at its founding, the result of a desire by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to create a talented workforce during the industrial revolution. This was compounded by the desire of the school’s founding leader, Walter Smith, to create a place for training in the fine arts. I must note the central role of training art educators in the founding of the school.

MassArt is marked by excellence of art and design among its faculty and students. We value not only the practice, but also the training of those who will teach the practice to others. This focus of preparing working artists, including artists who teach, is something of a “genetic marker” of MassArt. We must, at all costs, maintain the integrity of the college’s identity in this regard.

MassArt is a place where community matters

First, MassArt is a campus community where people care. We care about one another, about the school’s mission, about the community in which we are located, and about the communities that we serve. The caring nature of the campus community is seen everywhere. We see it in the way staff members go out of their way to serve students, to get things done, and to make visitors feel welcome. We see it when faculty members work late nights to ensure that our students receive the education they need. We see it among students as they take time out of busy schedules to serve our neighborhoods. We see it when community members show support for one another in matters great and small.

MassArt is also a place where some of our members are not convinced that people care as much as they should. Some relate that their personal experience isn’t of an inclusive community. Some students feel let down by processes that seem difficult to maneuver. Some say they feel like they aren’t treated fairly or are somehow on the “outside” of the community.

In past months, thanks to the leadership of our student body, we have heard members of our community express that we are not as inclusive, equitable, and just as we can and should be. While some view the MassArt campus community as wonderfully welcoming and caring, I observe that this is not a universal feeling.

Second, MassArt is situated in a vital and unique location. We are part of an international cultural center within the City of Boston, in a unique set of neighborhoods – Fenway, Avenue of the Arts,

Longwood Medical, Mission Hill, and Roxbury. We are “located” in a state system, one of nine state universities, along with fifteen community colleges and the University of Massachusetts system.

We are in a resource rich context. We sit amidst remarkable cultural and art institutions, evolving public and private K-12 schools, many colleges, and several creative foundations in a state long recognized as a leader in culture and education. We are interlaced with networks of committed volunteers, generous donors, and loyal alumni who give our school a remarkable solid foundation from which to grow.

MassArt is place of excellence, marked by creativity, innovation, and accomplishment

I have begun telling people about the *ubiquity of creativity* at MassArt. Creativity abounds behind every door and around every corner. We see this in the work of students, faculty, and staff.

At MassArt, norms are taught and norms are transcended. Innovation occurs not only due to creativity but because people are willing to take risks and willing to fail as part of the process.

Standards are high, norms are appreciated *and* transcended, creativity and risk-taking are welcome, and failure is not terminal. This is the kind of context in which innovation occurs, and it creates an environment in which people succeed. As a result, MassArt is filled with stories of successful students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

MassArt faces resource challenges

It is no surprise that like many institutions, MassArt faces resource challenges. We must identify our challenges and determine how to address them. Space, technology, equipment, budget, staffing, and campus climate are all issues.

Each academic program needs adequate *space*. This is a perennial issue that necessitates regular adjustments to space use and also demands careful long-term campus planning. How we answer questions about the Tower building will directly affect the availability, quantity, and quality of space in both the short-term and the long-term.

Throughout the campus, we have considerable deferred maintenance issues to address, again a perennial issue. And, of course, we need to improve wayfinding and accessibility on campus, especially to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to our campus.

We want our campus to be seen as a vital living and learning environment and as a hospitable place for guests. In order to achieve that, our buildings need to best reflect the identity of MassArt, from our “front door” to our common areas, to gallery, meeting, and lecture spaces, and to our classrooms, studios, and shops.

We need *technology and equipment* that supports our curricula and adequately prepares all of our graduates for success in a 21st-century workplace. To be frugal at the expense of technological fluency is no bargain at all. Likewise, we must ensure that our technology infrastructure and resources are maintained adequately.

Needless to say, resource challenges include our *budget*. We face challenges that will be solved by careful establishment and funding of priorities. We will need the determination to say ‘no’ to efforts that we determine are outside our mission or beyond our capacity. And we will need to ensure careful and collaborative planning.

Given the trend of rising costs, and given our commitment to keep attendance costs affordable and accessible, increasing revenue streams is a necessity. Determining the right undergraduate enrollment numbers, reconceiving the size and shape of graduate programs, and restructuring professional and continuing education can all affect the generation of adequate funding to support the college.

I have observed at least three *staffing* issues we should address. First, it is hard to say whether we have adequate staffing to maintain certain programs or services. Second, there is a need for assessing our professional development and advancement opportunities. Third, commitments to any new initiatives and programs should be supported by the necessary resources.

We have identified and begun to address some important challenges of our *campus climate* that contribute to sustaining a quality workplace and vital living and learning environment. We want to do all we can to keep our campus safe for everyone. We want to foster greater inclusiveness and equity on campus. And, to ensure openness commensurate with our mission, we need to improve accessibility for differently abled persons.

MassArt has a need for improved communication and connectivity

An important observation that echoes throughout this document is that our community wants to improve the way we communicate. We want to improve our accessibility to information and to enable connectivity across the campus. There is a consistent request for more transparent and timely information.

Our community places a high premium on effective communication. The MassArt community values the practice of conversing, consulting, and problem solving that doesn't naturally happen digitally. A challenge to face-to-face communication is the time constraint produced by our schedules. Addressing challenges related to schedules and calendars is vital to improving our campus culture.

MassArt has an opportunity for improved organizational development

There is considerable sense on campus that we are (dis)organized in ways that stifle creativity and innovation, hinder productivity, and dampen the joy of the workplace.

There may be room to improve certain processes, to consider new initiatives with more adequate forethought, and to consider structural changes that will benefit the campus.

I discovered these ideas for improving our institution by listening to members of the community. I find the staff and faculty to be highly committed to their work and enthusiastic about serving in the MassArt community. Notably, I find students, staff, faculty, and alumni very positive and optimistic about the college. I also found many to be transparent about how we can improve, which bodes well for problem solving and strategic planning that can make the enactment of our mission even more robust in the future.

QUESTIONS

I appreciate the generosity of the MassArt community in sharing their time and ideas with me. Embarking on this process of listening to so many people and taking in so much information of course sparked much thought on my part.

During *First One Fifty* I generated a number of questions about our future, three of which may serve as framing questions regarding the future of the school: 1) What are the implications of the MassArt

mission; 2) How can we fashion our academic programs for MassArt to best fulfill its mission in the 21st century; and 3) How willing are we to adapt and change in order to fulfill our mission?

What are the implications of the MassArt mission?

The core of our mission is *to prepare students from diverse backgrounds to participate in the creative economy as artists, designers, and educators, and to engage in the well-being of their society*. What does the fulfillment of that mission mean for the future? We shouldn't be too quick to say that we know the answer to that question.

Corollary to the question about mission is the question, *What is the implication of MassArt's name?* Consider that just for a moment:

- We are the Massachusetts *College* of Art and Design, therefore we exist for students. Therefore we must be a student-centered institution.
- We are the *Massachusetts* College of Art and Design. We are not, I note, the Boston College of Art and Design. We are, deliberately, the art and design school of the entire Commonwealth. We are the art and design school of the citizens of Massachusetts. We are the **people's'** college and, as such, we should examine how we serve the entire state. Further, **what it is to be** the art and design college of a state that has always been at the forefront of education in America and has long been a leader in education in the world? I believe this has implications for our role nationally and internationally.
- And, of course, we are the Massachusetts College of *Art and Design*. We will always need to examine and reexamine what that means in our current context -- which leads to the next question.

How can we fashion our academic programs for MassArt to best fulfill its mission in the 21st century?

MassArt has had a long and rich variety of programs. Throughout our existence, programs have come and gone from the curriculum. My reflections lead to the following series of question about our academic programs:

- What are the right programs (current and potential), undergraduate, graduate, and professional, at what size/scale, and in what relation to one another?
- What will we do in the next 5-10 years that will position the school to be a leading international educational/cultural institution in 2073?
- What curricular revisions or innovations will serve our students best? Including ways to make the curricula richly inclusive and transcultural?
- How can we make the MassArt curricula and schedule more flexible, permeable, and allow opportunity for exploration and interdisciplinarity and reflection, as well as making time for cultivation of community?

These questions require careful deliberation and deserve a rich dialogue among the college's constituencies. The answers we give to these questions in the near future will shape the institution for decades to come. And the measure of our effectiveness in shaping the future hinges, in large part, on the third question.

How willing are we to adapt and change in order to fulfill our mission?

Again, I have a series of questions in mind here. And I note that during one of my presentations of this report that an astute faculty member suggested that perhaps we could even ask the question a bit differently by asking, *How are we willing to adapt and change in order to fulfill our mission?* That's a good point to consider. So, we're really asking, *How are we willing to change* and *How willing are we to change?* Both are important considerations.

Among the questions related to change, I ask our community to consider the following:

- How can we better organize ourselves?
- How can we better use our resources, including space, money, and personnel?
- How do we challenge a culture of scarcity while cultivating a culture of philanthropy?
- How do we understand the concept of "administration"?
- How willing are we to test assumptions about what we do and the way we do things?

Questions like these merit thought, discussion, and deliberation. Our planning process should be designed to accommodate this sort of reflection among members of our community.

PROPOSALS

Finally, I submit to you a set of proposals that touch on what I believe to be core values of the MassArt community. I believe some of these are matters we can begin working on to improve the institution between now and September 1, 2017, when we commence our strategic planning process. Here are five proposals.

We cannot underestimate or overstate the significance of inclusion and equity

Inclusion and equity are important because, as a public institution, we are unequivocally committed to access to students from diverse backgrounds. In that sense, this commitment is a matter of justice.

Furthermore, they are significant because we believe that education is enhanced when students learn and faculty teach in an environment that looks most like the world in which we live. We believe that one's education is impoverished in an environment that lacks diversity. In that sense, this commitment is a matter of quality and excellence.

In the past year or so, our community has received recommendations from the Diversity and Social Justice Task Force, worked through student demands about diversity and equity, and convened a new Diversity Council made up of faculty, students, staff, and a mirror committee of a representative group of students. We have expanded our Office for Diversity and Inclusion and appointed a new Assistant Director. We continue to prioritize diversity and equity not simply to say we achieved a list of goals, valuable as that may be, but to ensure that every student who attends MassArt, every faculty member who teaches here, and every staff member who works here will find it an inclusive and just environment in which to live, learn, and work.

We will continue to optimize enrollment management to ensure student success and financial sustainability

We have made significant strides in enrollment management over the past two years, building on an already strong record of retention and graduation.

As we consider the “right size” of our undergraduate and graduate populations, we will grow in the right way at the right time. For the college to remain strong we must pay careful attention to recruitment, admission, retention, major selection, persistence, graduation, and career pathways.

We will immediately explore and enact ways of improving MassArt while also entering into a longer-term planning process (in 2017-18) to position the school for the next 5, 10, and 50 years

I am eager to engage the community in a planning process that will identify strategic initiatives for the college from 2017-2023. This will also afford us the opportunity consider how we might redesign how the college is organized and how we work.

I imagine a process that has a ten-year horizon with a five-year plan of key initiatives. The year 2023 is the 150th anniversary of MassArt, so it is an ideal time to create such a plan.

I also want us to consider how the decisions we make and the plan we enact over the next five to ten years will impact those who will work, teach, and learn at MassArt in 2073, when the college turns 200 years old.

Decisions were made in the past that makes MassArt what it is today. The decisions we make today and the next months will help make MassArt what it will be tomorrow.

We will clarify our shared values and then reward what we value

MassArt is a community with shared values. It is helpful for communities, from time to time, to restate those values and then ensure that those values are cultivated and rewarded. Our planning process is such a time.

We will increase visibility by enacting the MassArt mission more fully

MassArt is an incubator for great artists, designers, and educators. That is not well enough known by enough people. We will address that by developing a plan to raise the visibility of the college in Boston, the Commonwealth, New England, nationally, and internationally.

We will also, as we answer the questions about the implication of the MassArt mission, look at where we need to strengthen work we are already doing and where we may need to begin new work to maintain the integrity of our mission.

For example, we have excellent programs that serve youth in the Boston area. We should consider how to ensure those programs are sustained. I also wonder how we might use our expertise to aid other communities in building or strengthening programs.

MassArt’s art education program is the first of its kind in the United States. We have excellent faculty and a remarkable program. I would like to ensure that the MassArt art education programs, undergraduate and graduate, are destination programs for those who want to teach the next generation students.

Likewise, we have highly-regarded programs in art and design across the college. I wonder how our varied curricula might evolve in the next five years so that we are a distinctive destination for students who seek an art and design education.

As we develop a strategic plan, we will consider every program at the college in such terms. Some programs may exist exactly as they should. Others may need to be rethought at this time. Some may not exist that should.

Our planning process will be designed not only to identify strategic initiatives for 2018-23, but to help us consider how we work together, how we are organized, and how we can be an even healthier institution in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

Altogether, a few hundred people have heard my presentation and given some initial feedback. Subsequent to my several *First One Fifty* presentations last semester, I did a brief presentation on Opening Day in January to over 200 faculty, staff, and students. We held a *First One Fifty Café* that allowed attendees to respond to a prompt about the future of MassArt. The discussions were engaging, and our public report session was inspirational to me, as was the variety of conversations in the days following that I had with members of our community.

We also did a smaller version of *First One Fifty Café* with a group of over 55 students, where we also received very interesting feedback on a variety of topics. The results of the two cafes are found in Appendices 1 and 2.

I want to recognize the hard work of the staff in MassArt's President's Office, Alicia Perry, Kate Russell, and Susana Segat, and also our student interns Melike Maden and Kassie Hyde who helped coordinate calendars, plan events, take notes, and collate materials. I also have to thank our Marketing and Communications Office led by Ellen Carr.

I am grateful to the MassArt Board of Trustees, led by Chair David Lee, who entrusted me with this work, who supported the *First One Fifty* plan, and who have been such good partners in helping me think about the future of the college. And special thanks to the board's presidential transition group, led by Vice-Chair and alumna Pamela Parisi. I also want to recognize both the MassArt Foundation Board and the Corporate Advisory Council, who gave me time to make a *First One Fifty* presentation to them and provided thoughtful feedback.

Of course, I thank the entire MassArt community who made *First One Fifty* productive for me by taking the time to participate in sessions of all kinds (see Appendix 3). The time you invested in this effort has made the beginning of my presidency richer and, I hope, will make me more effective in serving MassArt in the days to come.

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