

Strategic Plan Academic Year 2020 Annual Report

MassArt at 150: September 2019 - September 2020

Executive Summary Excerpt

(To read the [full annual report](#), please visit wiki.massart.edu/display/MASP/Strategic+Plan+2018+-+2023)

In early FY20, the President's Cabinet identified four strategies from our strategic plan for immediate funding. These strategies involved anti-racism and anti-bias workshops on campus, the hiring of academic administrative assistants, the purchase and deployment of a space management system, and the continuation of the Technology department's Colleague Modernization Project. At the time, these strategies were considered essential for the success of our five year strategic plan. During the past eight months, they have also proved to be essential for our success in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and urgent racial and social justice movement. The previous prioritization of these strategies has unquestionably helped us to adapt and successfully meet the needs of the current environment.

The college's response to the COVID-19 pandemic involves cross-campus collaboration among faculty, staff, administration, and students. Efforts demonstrate the community's immense creativity, resilience, and agility to pivot the semester in-progress and continue providing a high quality art and design education. The college's response to the Black Lives Matter movement involves asserting our commitment to achieve systemic equity through all areas of our institution and to end institutionalized racism in higher education. Our strategic priority of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) was intentionally interwoven throughout the strategic plan to purposefully drive our actions - whether they be planned or unexpected. While it may seem logical for the current environment to suspend strategic work in lieu of crisis management, our plan remains relevant and strong. This is not to say that projects are not being reprioritized or that the strategic plan has not been impacted, but that we continue to succeed on our priorities and strategies despite the immediate need to respond to concurrent global crises.

Several projects in the strategic plan were completed on a much faster timeline than previously planned, such as the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy, that ensures all students have access to the technology needed to be successful in their year/major. Naturally, this reprioritization has caused other projects to be extended or postponed. This can clearly be seen in Facilities, where deferred maintenance projects such as the Justice Equity and Transformation (JET) office renovations, phase two of the public safety project, and planned upgrades in the courtyard, Illustration department, and K407 have been postponed in order to complete health and safety upgrades on campus.

Another example is the Colleague Modernization Project, which was already underway pre-pandemic and turned out to be extremely advantageous when the college pivoted to remote operations. MassArt's Technology department was able to adhere to the original timeline for the project, while providing support for remote learning, online platforms, and the myriad of other digital needs for the spring 2020 semester. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted higher education technology dramatically, and our early position to move our Colleague, our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application and Student Informations System (SIS), to the cloud put the college significantly ahead of peer institutions who deferred or delayed cloud or database migrations, and are now trying to catch up. While the

implementation timeline was shifted from July 2020 to December 2020, we have successfully migrated from a legacy, esoteric database (UniData) and on-premise instance of Colleague, to a more robust and widely used database (PostgreSQL) and cloud instance of Colleague, hosted in the Amazon cloud and delivered as Software-as-a-Service (SaaS). This migration significantly enhances the stability, performance, security, reliability and redundancy of our core enterprise system, and lays the foundation for improved technical integration and digital transformation, in alignment with strategic plan goals and initiatives.

Adjustments will also continue to be made to accommodate projects not previously planned. While they may be unexpected, many of these actions still further the priorities and strategies outlined in our five year plan. A great example is the creation and distribution of major-specific supply kits for remote learning. These kits were provided free of charge to all degree seeking students and equipped them with the basic tools and equipment needed to be successful in their major. Contents of the kits were informed by data collected from a student pulse survey in spring 2020, tabulated by discipline, and shared with department chairs in early summer. This unplanned experiment has helped to improve equitable student access to resources, and allay faculty assumptions about access to materials in teaching. There is also potential that this support could open up new opportunities for students previously deterred from enrolling in high-cost majors. By leveling the tool and equipment playing field for students, we can ensure barriers to access and affordability related to course outcome completion is drastically mitigated. This action was funded with federal CARES act money and we are exploring ways to make these kits sustainable in future semesters by considering funding strategies such as student kit fees, external grants, partnerships, and sponsorships.

The college utilized close to \$1 million in federal CARES act funding to immediately respond to student needs in the COVID crisis and funding critical health and safety updates to respond to the pandemic. This funding, in addition to other budgetary measures taken, enabled MassArt to close FY20 with a balanced budget, and avoid employee furloughs and layoffs. While revenue streams, including federal and state funding, continue to be volatile, we remain fiscally prudent in FY21, and have reduced departmental operating budgets and, with the assistance of the Massachusetts State College Building Association (MSCBA,) renegotiated our residence hall bonding debt. The college was already anticipating enrollment declines due to shifting demographics and believes current retention actions will help mitigate further declines. MassArt's Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) teams are focusing their work this year on retention efforts for students who have deferred or taken a leave of absence.

MassArt also received three notable external partnership grants this past year. MassArt was awarded \$300,000 from the highly competitive Massachusetts Skills Capital Grant Program to fund the purchase of equipment that has a direct impact on our students' ability to enter the workforce with training and experience using industry-standard equipment. In a first-of-its-kind partnership, MassArt and the City of Boston were awarded \$1.2 million over three years from the [SURDNA Foundation](#) for a regranting program entitled [Radical Imagination for Racial Justice \(RIRJ\)](#). MassArt will steward these funds to Boston area artists of color seeking to advance racial justice through collaborative projects in their communities. MassArt is the only institution of higher education involved in the national cohort of eleven award recipients, and one of three representing partnerships between organizations and municipalities. Finally, MassArt received [\\$100,000 from the Lumina Foundation](#) who recognized our legacy of commitment to our public mission of access and opportunity to all students. This award will support our

work with professional development and curricular interventions to dismantle systemic barriers to student success and degree attainment, particularly for Black and Latinx students.

MassArt is also increasingly being recognized as a leader in contemporary art museum industries. In February 2020, after extensive renovations, the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), Boston's newest, and only free, contemporary art museum, opened to the public. MAAM is a *kunsthalle*, or non-collecting museum, showing temporary exhibitions that bring fresh, diverse perspectives to Boston. The opening was much anticipated and heralded as one of the Most Anticipated Museum Openings of 2020 by Smithsonian Magazine (#2 after the Grand Egyptian Museum, Giza). The grand opening festivities were attended by nearly 3,000 visitors including the Governor, the Ambassador of Portugal, members of the Portuguese American Legislative Caucus, state representatives, city councilors, the MassArt community, and general public. As a teaching museum, MAAM is a resource for educating students about contemporary art, partnering with faculty to support the curriculum, and preparing students for careers in the museum field. As an extension of our public mission, MAAM is a vital resource to the community, offering a pathway to education in the arts and free, unique educational programming to Boston-area public schools and community groups. Only weeks after opening, MAAM quickly pivoted into a remote environment, providing a series of live virtual events. They continue to be an invaluable stage for building community, attracting multi-generational and cross-department populations of faculty, staff, students, and alumni. MAAM was recently nominated for USA Today's Best New Attraction of 2020. In spring 2021, MAAM looks forward to hosting Nikole Hannah-Jones, the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and creator of the *1619 Project*.

We will use the lessons learned these last eight months to plan for upcoming semesters and prepare for a post-pandemic world, where there will be permanent impacts on our academic and administrative online operations, our utilization of space, and our engagement with students and our community. This work will be centered on pursuing systemic equity as we remain committed to closing opportunity and completion gaps. Therefore, we will continue to focus our resources on technology and JEDI driven strategies, as we steer and sustain the college through the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The college will benefit from the solutions discovered in remote working, which will influence everything from space utilization to improved digital systems and e-operations. Many of the larger strategies in our five-year strategic plan concern space analysis and how our campus could be better used for the student experience. The pandemic has demonstrated new ways that we might provide future flexibility for building renovations, adaptable classrooms and meeting rooms, and other creative ways to use space. While the deployment of the new space management system was postponed to prioritize urgent pandemic-related technology needs, the creation of a heat map tool to demonstrate the impact of de-densification and physical distancing strategies has helped to visualize and communicate how space is used. Our investment in digital tools, such as online meeting and engagement platforms, software like Adobe Suite/Cloud, and self service e-operations will not only enhance on-campus activities when restrictions are lifted, but also provide greater access and equity to resources for student and employee populations.

Remote learning has broadened our academic environment and created greater access to educational opportunities through flexible modes of curriculum delivery. Our Youth Programs, for example, enrolled students from around the country and as far as Spain this past summer. Over the summer, faculty

participated in professional development focused on adapting their courses for remote learning and designing studio courses for student success through multi-model engagement. Stipends to 116 faculty who attended the summer sessions were provided through funding from the MassArt Foundation and Academic Affairs. With this support, faculty have created new, innovative approaches to their courses and students are able to engage with content, materials, and their academic community whether they live on campus or have chosen a fully remote semester. Academic departments are taking advantage of various remote platforms, software, and materials that can be used off campus to support students as they work toward their creative and academic goals while maintaining the college's high achievement standards.

We will also continue to benefit from the new and creative ways we are communicating with each other and building community virtually. Departments across the college have expanded their virtual offerings and online content, orienting the community to use and return to the website and wiki for resources, updates, and events. There has been a 20 percentage point increase in visiting artist lectures, which are increasingly being attended by populations across departments, crossing silos. Studio Foundation faculty and MAAM partnered together to host virtual [Drawing Together](#) events which encourage out-of-class connections between faculty, first year students, as well as a cross section of community members. There is no doubt that the student experience will shift post-pandemic, and we will continue to invest in digital participation and online community-building tools, such as [My SSP](#), which provides 24/7 remote mental health and wellbeing counseling, and [Presence](#), an online student engagement platform.

In April 2020, President David Nelson stepped down and the board of trustees appointed Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Kymberly Pinder as Acting President. Associate Vice President Dan Serig assumed the role of Interim Provost and Professor James Mason transitioned into a newly-created position as Interim Dean of Faculty. Over the summer, the board created a Special Committee on Presidential Vacancy Planning who made recommendations regarding the timeframe for a presidential search, selected an executive search firm, and made recommendations for the selection of the search committee.

Despite this current period of leadership transition and crisis management related to the COVID-19 pandemic, MassArt remains focused on attaining goals framed within the 2018-2023 strategic plan. Our community driven plan is intricately tied to our mission and values, which guide our every day actions and decision making. While some of these actions may have shifted in scope or timing, or not have been those originally planned, we continue to make progress on what is at the core of our five-year plan - [our five strategic priorities](#) and the strategies underneath them. Consequently, the 2020 annual report is organized by these five priority areas:

Environment for a Creative Campus
Transformative Learning and Teaching
Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)
Reputation and Resources
Quality Workplace and Effective Organization