

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN
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Report of the President

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Looking out over the room, I suspect many of you are here because your institutions are seeking accreditation for the first time or because your institutions are up for renewal and you are preparing for a reaccreditation visit. NASAD is, after all, an accreditation association built on voluntary, peer membership. As an association of visual art colleges, private and public multipurpose colleges and universities with visual art and design programs offering associate, baccalaureate and graduate degrees, NASAD offers a unique opportunity for all of us to share information, determine best practices beyond the norm, gain insight into solving our shared problems, find ways to enhance our programs, and ultimately, contribute to our field through educating our students as we move into the future.

As administrators, faculty members, and staff, we all spend an extraordinary amount of time and effort insuring that our curricular programs are robust and that they develop the skill sets that our students need to attain their respective degrees and to be successful in their lives and careers. But what about their careers?

A recent blog posed the following question and answer—it is a question of which we are all likely not only cognizant, but one which we are already addressing in our institutions.

“Can you imagine a world in which most jobs are obsolete? If not, you are most likely in for a rude awakening in the coming decades of radical shifts in employment. This is particularly true for new parents propelling the next generation of workers into an adulthood that many economists and futurists predict to be the first ever ‘post-work’ society.

Though the idea of a jobless world may seem radical, the prediction is based on the natural trajectory of ‘creative destruction’—that classic economic principle by which established industries are decimated when made irrelevant by new technologies.”

Let’s also consider two other factors to add to the prediction of creative destruction. We live in a time when Facebook, Wikipedia, and Yelp provide the voice of the “Everyman” versus the revered and educated scholar who defines quality through critical and informed research. In addition, a recent PBS segment stated that the person has already been born who will live to be 200.

Where does that leave us? What does the common wisdom say about the new workforce competencies and life skills that will be needed to succeed in a technology-enabled post-work environment? Collaboration, networking, conceptual and process analysis skills, critical thinking, flexibility, adaptability, and continuous, self-directed learning are high on the list. Do these attributes sound familiar? They should; they are our everyday currency in the practice and study of visual art and design.

Again, this may be very familiar ground for you, and you are likely already developing and adapting programs that consider these changes. If not, you should. Regardless of where you are in the spectrum of planning for the future, here are some data to contemplate as we continue to engage in our sessions and workshops today and tomorrow:

- In this year, 3.5 zettabytes of new information will be created—that’s the equivalent of 250 billion DVDs, more information than has been created in the previous 5,000 years. Of course, the question arises of whether that information is valuable, interesting, etc.!
- It’s estimated that one week’s worth of *The New York Times* contains more information than the average 18th century person encountered in a lifetime. That explains so much, doesn’t it? No wonder we can’t get through the *Sunday Times* in a week.
- More to the point of an average higher education baccalaureate degree, 50% of what a first year student learns will be obsolete by the student’s third year. (This is not as true for art and design programs, nevertheless it is illustrative of the pace at which information and scholarship is changing.)

It would appear, as we’ve acknowledged before, that higher education should be preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist with technologies that haven’t yet been invented, in order to solve problems that haven’t been identified.

A World Economic Forum study shows that 7.1 million white collar jobs will be lost by 2020. What will replace them? We can speculate on what popular jobs in 2025 may be: urban farmer (can you tell I’m from Portland?), 3-D printer design specialist, smart home handyperson, virtual experience designer, and not surprisingly, senior caregiver. Today’s graduates will have 10-14 jobs by age 38. More importantly, those graduates will be identified not by their careers, nor what they own, but by their purpose...and their creativity—a very human attribute—an attribute which will allow them to embrace the change that will characterize their professional lives. Now, we all know this, and it’s reassuring to know that our field will be increasingly essential in the near and long term because of the skill sets our graduates possess.

Let’s return to the blog, published on Huffington Post, from which I quoted at the beginning, in which Dustin Timbrook advocates the importance of developing creative literacy. He advises parents to send their kids to art school. In fact, the title of the blog is: “If You Want Your Children to Survive the Future, Send Them to Art School.”

We know that we in this room have valuable knowledge. We also know that we need to do a better of explaining that to the larger world. Let’s take a few steps forward to a time in which our knowledge is highly valued by the general public and imagine what the challenges might be at that time. I’m reminded of an example that might hold interest and an admonition for us. The case in point was at a multi-purpose, state university on the east coast during the advent of outcomes assessment before it was accepted practice. The university was struggling, program by program, to adapt to the mandate and rubrics handed down by the state. Then an interesting thing happened. The Art Department, because of NASAD membership was ahead of the game, and became a leader on campus in training other departments to analyze what they did and to account for it by the simple premise of determining if they actually did what they said they did—and of course explaining the concept of a portfolio methodology. The point here is not in the

details, but that the Art Department became a leader on campus. Many of your schools are now leaders in your communities and fields moving forward the idea of creative thinking as a valuable commodity for corporations, businesses and organizations. Now, the admonition, as outcomes assessment has become codified in education, let's not let our commodity of creative thinking meet the same fate. Creativity and innovation are, by their very natures, fluid and flexible. We have very specific ways of teaching and achieving that multiplicity of approach, however we should retain the essence of creativity as we become leaders beyond our current fields.

One other thought: if you look at our sister organizations, NASM, NAST, and NASD—the performing arts accrediting associations—the proliferation of programs is far less extensive. The innovation that NASAD provides in art and design is indicated in the range of our collective programs and our perpetual quest to find the best way to convey our content in a changing world.

In a much more eloquent manner, our keynote speaker, William Deresiewicz, will address similar themes and set the tone for our conference.

While you are here in Baltimore, participate and listen, the strength of our association depends on you, the membership and your engagement in the conference. We will all no doubt derive ideas to take back to our home institutions to incorporate into our work and activities. However, the most valuable thing we will glean from our time together is the discussion and networking among peers. Let's make that network as strong as possible. We'll need that network if we're going to fulfill our critical role in defining the future. If you've attended a previous NASAD conference, make an effort to meet a first-time attendee. Who knows, it might lead to inventive new collaborations between your institutions and open pathways for your students.

Thank you and enjoy the conference.

Sources:

If You Want Your Children to Survive the Future, Send Them to Art School. Dustin Timbrook on HuffPost. February 2, 2016.

The Future of Work, Trends Disrupting your People Agenda, EY presentation, EY Global People Advisory Services. April 2016.