



EDUCATING ARTISTS FOR LIFE.

Strategic Plan

Goals and Strategies

Fall 2013–Fall 2018

April 28, 2015

PREAMBLE TO THE PLAN

This plan is conceived as a living document involving all members of the MECA community: faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni. The professional senior leadership team will revisit the plan at least semiannually, determine its relevance to changes in the environment and the needs of the College, report its findings to the Board of Trustees and MECA employees, and make adjustments as needed.

Approved by the Board of Trustees April 15, 2015

STRATEGY STATEMENT

To grow our student body to 500, supported by an endowment of \$20,000,000, and to strengthen and diversify our learning community through a commitment to institutional excellence, sustainability, affordability, and creativity, ensuring that each student can learn how to be a working artist for life and make communities better. Our endeavor will be guided by the philosophy that we are all educators and made possible by 21st century best practices in teaching, learning, human resources, environmental responsibility, and operations.

500 STUDENTS Leverages economies of scale to lower student debt and increase selectivity. Will be achieved through new student growth at the BFA, MFA, and MAT areas and by continued improvement in retention.

\$20,000,000 ENDOWMENT Supports increased financial aid to lower student debt and helps ensure financial sustainability as well as provide more support for faculty and staff.

LEARNING COMMUNITY Sustains a diverse environment where all interactions and experiences within MECA and beyond influence art making and creative living.

INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE Motivates all individuals to learn to make good work, pushes the institution to offer distinctive, value adding programs, and requires the effective presentation of outcomes.

SUSTAINABILITY Requires a mission that remains appropriate to the times and predictable resources, routinely available, sufficient to support mission.

AFFORDABILITY Create a net price that is equivalent to a recognized value of investment and is not a primary barrier to attendance.

CREATIVITY Empowers all members of the community to transcend tradition and norms and to arrive at meaningful new concepts.

WORKING ARTIST FOR LIFE Support student goals to excel as practicing artists and make a living as an artist or creative professional for life by providing students with entrepreneurial, public engagement, critical thinking, and effective communication skills.

ALL EDUCATORS Expects all faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees to see themselves as educators and to interact to create a collaborative learning community where strong relationships are built.

BEST PRACTICES Utilizes 21st century procedures recognized for their effectiveness and efficiency in higher education in order to achieve institutional excellence and financial sustainability in all teaching, processes, policies, operations, human resource approaches, and environmental considerations.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PLAN

Achieve greater institutional excellence, affordability, and financial sustainability in a rapidly changing educational environment.

SCOPE

All activities will reflect the core mission of the institution and be consistent with MECA's educational philosophy. Success of the MECA strategic plan will be measured against the goals of developing a revised and sustainable business model, raising the resources to meet the near-term and long-range needs of the College and growing enrollment across all degree programs to 500 students.

ADVANTAGES

EDUCATION

- + Distinctive faculty-driven educational philosophy linking studio, agency, place, community, and ethics
- + Collaborative and interdisciplinary educational program integrating visual arts and the liberal arts
- + Individualized educational experience and strong mentoring program
- + High access to experienced and dedicated faculty and staff with global professional networks, who are invested in the success of every student
- + Innovative Artists at Work program supporting personal and professional goals for a creative career from the day students enter through life after MECA
- + Public engagement curriculum embedded in studio BFA program
- + Culture of critique, building resilience, and demanding continuous student improvement and growth personally, professionally, and artistically

FACILITIES

- + Modernized, spacious, vertical campus in a renovated landmark downtown building enhancing community and interdisciplinary collaboration
- + 24/7 access to studios and up-to-date facilities
- + Generous studio space for all juniors and seniors
- + Variety of student living options in nearby residence halls

COMMUNITY: MECA AND BEYOND

- + Strong community partnerships with a diverse range of artists, organizations and businesses, encouraged by MECA and facilitated by the College's location in the heart of Portland's vibrant arts district
 - + Maine's largest and oldest organization dedicated solely to art studies, founded in 1882, with deep connections to the long history of artists inspired to live and create art in Maine
 - + Active leader in recognizing, exhibiting, and publicly celebrating excellence in the arts
 - + Supportive and friendly community provided by students, faculty, and staff
 - + Accessible, engaged, and active alumni community provides opportunities for students
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I. GOAL: Educational Excellence

MECA will enhance its academic curriculum by leveraging its current strengths and creating and sustaining a culture that supports academic excellence. MECA will evaluate its curricula and co-curricular programs regularly, relying on systematic, meaningful assessment, reflection, and critical feedback, by external reviewers as well as by faculty and staff. MECA will pursue external and internal collaborations that enhance the student experience. Throughout this process MECA will be flexible and nimble enough to respond to national and global trends in a rapidly changing educational and technological environment and will encourage experimentation in program design and creation and in means of delivery.

II. GOAL: Financial Sustainability

MECA will develop its business model to ensure adequate resources to support student success, limit student debt, provide appropriate compensation and support for employees, maintain the physical plant, meet current capital needs, and invest in the future of the College. This work will include implementing operational efficiencies, building operating reserves, increasing depreciation funding, identifying opportunities for diversifying revenues, and creating a long-term development plan to increase the College's endowment with funding goals dedicated to specific areas defined by the business model.

III. GOAL: Enrollment: Recruitment and Retention

MECA will grow carefully to at least 500 students combined in all degree programs. This will be achieved by promoting MECA's distinct advantages and by supplying selective financial recruiting incentives. With more applications, MECA will increase selectivity and strengthen the student profile. Retention will continually improve, with a graduation rate of 60 percent as the first benchmark.

IV. GOAL: Diversity

The College will increase the compositional diversity of its students, faculty, staff, and board. MECA will cultivate a learning environment that prepares its students to thrive in a diverse and global community.

STRATEGIES

1. Strengthen initiatives that promote pedagogical innovation, teaching excellence, and original creative activity and research among faculty.
2. Articulate, define, and build on what is unique and distinctive about Maine College of Art.
3. Develop new academic programs (or expand) in order to provide more choice for students in all programs.
4. Create new academic pathways that will provide more ways for students to obtain their degree.
5. Pursue external and internal collaborations and initiatives that are in the strategic interest of the College.
6. Agree on, define, and measure competencies and outcomes in an ongoing and consistent manner.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop financial modeling that shows full allocation of cost and short and long-term implications of various revenue and expenditure assumptions.
2. Make affordability a priority by continuous effort to drive down costs as well as by resource development and by finding ways to reduce the debt load of future students.
3. Create a master facilities plan for the entire campus that ensures high quality instructional spaces, improves the aesthetic experience, including the public presentation of Porteous, and is sympathetic to environmental responsibilities and deferred maintenance.
4. Prepare for and conduct a fundraising initiative to increase the endowment to \$20M and complete the renovation of Porteous Lower Level, Facade, and Lobby.
5. Create a business plan that offers the best path for sustainability and educational quality.
6. Starting with current emergency plan, create a comprehensive risk management plan and process.

STRATEGIES

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

1. Improve outreach to prospective students and teachers for the BFA, MFA, and MAT.
2. Improve marketing and enhance course offerings for Continuing Studies.
3. Expand recruitment footprint regionally, nationally, and internationally, to include focus on diversity.
4. Develop strategies specifically for recruiting veterans, transfers, and non-traditional students.
5. Continue to develop reputation.
6. Continue dialogue with academic program directors, faculty, and the admissions team regarding program interest and student success.

RETENTION STRATEGIES

1. Update retention plan and execute at a higher level.
2. Develop and implement Assessment Plan: curriculum, student learning, and program evaluation.

STRATEGIES

1. Create Diversity Statement.
2. Develop diversity initiatives and assign responsibility.
3. Provide diversity training and education to all employees.
4. Establish an assessment and program evaluation process for diversity initiatives.

V. GOAL: Identity and Reach

Create a clear identity and vision for MECA. State this identity consistently in printed materials and via the website. Identify our current reach and broaden MECA's network geographically outside the Greater Portland area. Deepen relationships with all constituencies in order to improve the College's financial position and desirability. Improve the local community's understanding of MECA's student profile and its financial impact on Portland.

STRATEGIES

1. Expand the geographic range and increase the economic capacity of MECA.
2. Engage and empower alumni, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to create a national and international network to support each other and the College.
3. Conduct peer institutional messaging assessment.
4. Improve the local community's understanding of MECA.
5. Position Mission, Vision, and Core Values as central to our brand.
6. Introduce a new institutional visual identity system across all media.
7. Leverage core selling points.

VI. GOAL: Working Environment

MECA will foster and support a positive working environment where employees can do their best work as they provide an exceptional educational experience. The College will follow best practices in human resource management.

STRATEGIES

1. Define and communicate expectations for institutional excellence and high professional standards that are measured annually.
2. Implement effective, collaborative institutional planning and efficient work systems.

OUR MISSION

Maine College of Art educates artists for life.

OUR VISION

MECA will be distinguished by its focus on educating artists and designers who excel in their chosen field with integrity, professionalism, and community leadership.

OUR CORE VALUES

At MECA, we believe in the transformational power of an arts education to serve as the foundation for a lifelong pursuit of personal and professional goals. We combine a rigorous interdisciplinary curriculum, immersive studio practice, and wealth of professional development opportunities to provide an educational experience that embodies artistic excellence, civic engagement, and creative entrepreneurship.

ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

In the belief that learning is centered in the process of inquiry, self-discovery, and creative expression, we offer our students the environment and tools they need to take risks, think critically, and work creatively within and across disciplines.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

With a history of a commitment to the creative evolution of our communities, we focus on engaging students in the process of becoming the inventive, self-disciplined, contributing citizens upon whom our world depends.

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We teach each student the necessary professional skills to transform aspirations and values into a creative practice that will serve as the foundation for a rewarding career.