

The Art of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) program at Otis is spotlighted in this issue of OMAG. It is an important but not well-known fact that the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree dedicates one-third of its curriculum to studies in the humanities and sciences. At Otis, the faculty pursues purposefully and imaginatively the underpinning ideal of training the hands, eyes, and mind in a holistic manner.

LAS is a vertical core program that weaves through all four years of an Otis education. The faculty has carefully developed ways to address the needs and interests of an art and design student population. Creativity, social responsibility and identity – along with other themes that are important to contemporary art and design – are curricular bridges that help students connect their LAS course work and studio practice.

LAS also extends the classroom to the rich resources in the city of Los Angeles. Currently, the groundbreaking regional initiative of Pacific Standard Time (PST) showcases the birth of the Los Angeles art scene and its significant movements. Museum and other site visits are built into LAS courses this year and various classes study today's urban development in the context of ideas shaped by the historic decades covered by PST, examining how the visual culture in Los Angeles affects and reflects cultural perspectives.

When I went to college, I took a class called Physics for Poets. The idea behind the class acknowledged that science studies could benefit from a delivery that is attuned to its arts and humanities students. If thoughtfully tailored, such courses can lead to discoveries and epiphanies; if conducted as throwaway education, they can patronize and alienate students. Happily, my Physics for Poets class was taught with infectious passion by a top Physics professor who was mindful of his audience, and I developed a lifelong interest in quantum physics. The Otis LAS program, committed to this productive path, guides and challenges students to learn to relate to others, be curious about unfamiliar cultures and ideas, and, very importantly, learn what they need to accomplish work and life goals.

At Otis, LAS aims to help students develop a 21st-century mind frame and skill set so that they are equipped to evolve, thrive, and contribute in an environment of constant and complex change.

Samuel Hoi, President