

Integrated Learning at Otis

In 2006, Otis began to incorporate vanguard Integrated Learning (IL) courses into the undergraduate curriculum. Strategically woven throughout their studies, IL provides all BFA students with a series of community-based collaborative experiences that extend beyond the boundaries of their own major and the college. Unlike traditional classroom assignments, students work with IL faculty and community mentors to co-define a public problem to be solved, and then create transdisciplinary proposals. Real-world learning experiences and creative outcomes emerge as IL students build relationships with the site partners and each other.

Almost five years later, IL is fully in place. As shared by the IL faculty members and illustrated by projects in this issue, the program is important to 21st century learning outcomes because students are challenged to experiment outside of their comfort zones and to generate solutions that have real impacts. We now have alumni who have completed the IL curriculum, and two of them have returned to teach a course this year.

The creative workplace is increasingly team-oriented, reflecting a world where traditional boundaries between disciplines are

changing. These changes require new skills. With IL, Otis prepares graduates who are flexible, imaginative, and resourceful professionals at the workplace and citizens in their communities. As students apply their academic training to civic engagement, they learn that their talent can make a difference in the world. Our 21st century society and creative economy depend on such inventive and responsible leaders.

The underlying principles of IL connect to the theme for the 2010 Otis Report on the Creative Economy of the Los Angeles Region event on November 10th: “The Power of Art and Artists.” The distinguished speakers at the event include Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Rocco Landesman, President and CEO of the James Irvine Foundation, James Canales, and economist Ann Markusen. They will discuss the findings of the newest Otis Report and bring regional, state, and national perspectives to illuminate the value that artists and designers bring to communities, culture, and the economy. IL ensures that Otis alumni will continue to exemplify the power of artists and designers into the future.

Samuel Hoi, President