

## **Innovation and Real-World Preparation**

**9/07**

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Otis' Digital Media and Toy Design departments. At their inception, both programs were considered highly innovative. Toy Design today remains one of only three such programs in the country. The rise of these departments to the top of their respective fields within a decade is remarkable. Digital Media students have routinely swept top prizes at national and international competitions, and young Toy alumni have created industry trend-setting toys. This issue of OMAG features a look at Digital Media and Toy Design at ten, as well as success stories from our graduates.

Several Otis trademark factors underpin the achievements of these departments: strategic development of new programs that respond to the needs of industry and society; a pedagogical balance between blue-sky creativity and workplace know-how that enables young professionals to innovate in a real-world setting; and active partnerships with industry leaders to provide our students with top faculty mentors, internship opportunities, and employment upon graduation.

In addition to connecting students with professional opportunities, Otis is committed to providing students with a socially aware and diverse educational experience. This fall, Otis launched a new graduate program in Public Practice that explores new artistic strategies and practices based on social engagement and activism. At the undergraduate level, Otis' Integrated Learning (IL) curriculum extends the classroom boundaries by requiring students from various departments to work collaboratively on site-based community projects that involve experts from fields other than art and design.

The undergraduate Fine Arts department offers the Artists, Community and Teaching (ACT) program for students interested in careers in art education. In addition, the Otis Teenagers Educators Artists Mentors (O TEAM) initiative offers low-income Los Angeles youth an after-school academy in digital media that provides skill-based media arts education and a path toward higher education. These and other efforts have earned Otis a place in the inaugural group qualified for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Community Engagement Classification – as the only art and design college to be included.

Otis' educational mission and impact are recognized by major funders. Recent grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Annenberg Foundation provide resources for scholarships for financially challenged students. The James Irvine Foundation has also awarded the College a grant for leadership advancement, including the research for a strategic diversity plan.

An Otis education is distinguished by a fruitful combination of innovation, optimism, diversity, and opportunity.

Samuel Hoi  
President