

A Foundation for the Future

Generations of Otis alumni have credited Foundation, a beloved first-year educational experience, for much of their success and penchant for lifelong learning. Otis is the only West Coast college of art and design that offers a full Foundation Year curriculum. The program is also unique in its approach to preparing students for the competitive, fast-paced 21st century while continuing to honor time-tested fundamentals.

Throughout Foundation, students learn aesthetic fundamentals, sharpen their visual acuity, develop their cultural and information literacy, begin a connection with the larger community as emerging artists and designers, and hone the essential “thinking and making” skills required for creative professionals who will enjoy career success. The faculty — all of whom are working artists and designers — serve as role models. Talented, passionate, and thoughtful professionals, they are accessible to students both inside and outside the classroom.

The holistic and forward-looking philosophy that underlies Foundation is based on educational research. Through courses such as Critical Analysis and Semiotics, students learn both to question everything and to see that everything is connected. Through the Foundation Integrated Learning course, freshmen work with an external, real world “site partner.” The site partner project focuses on sustainability and the environment, and embodies another tenet of Foundation: *Knowledge carries with it a responsibility to use it mindfully within the community.*

Students share their first-year engagement within a learning community of 18 peers. Research shows that students are more creative, motivated, and willing to stretch academically when bonded with a cohort group. At the close of Foundation, Otis students emerge as creative, skilled and collaborative individuals, ready to continue focused study in the upper levels. Strong friendships with peers and faculty, combined with the accomplishments of the past year, give them confidence that, after three more years of intensive and rewarding study, they will lead a fulfilling life as art and design professionals and engaged citizens.

An Otis education cultivates students’ capacity to reach their full potential. The Foundation

Year provides the solid first steps on that path.

Samuel Hoi, President