

# CSFAC at CC Strategic Plan

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## *Bemis School of Art Subcommittee*

### Vision

Imagine Bemis, a welcoming place, where the creative process is accessible to our community. Imagine programming that includes nationally renowned visual and performance artists collaborating with community members ages 2 to 102. Imagine a complex with large industrial studios full of up-to-date tools and equipment; from lathes, torches and kilns that support sculpture, ceramics, and woodworking, to laser cutters, 3d printers and presses that support integrative technologies, where a variety of processes and techniques are explored. Envision dedicated studio classrooms, designed for adults and children equipped with easels, looms, enlargers, drafting tables and sewing machines with ample and safe storage for materials, appropriate ventilation and careful consideration of physical needs.

Imagine small children leaving a tour of the museum on the way to their class taught by professional Bemis instructors and CC education students. Imagine a safe place where a variety of art making methods and media can be brought together to foster creative experimentation, individual growth and a sense of shared community. Imagine a place where collaboration is encouraged, where veterans work with practicing artists and senior citizens make books and write poetry with high school students. This collection of spaces will provide a unique and multi-faceted experience for artists of all ages and skill levels to explore a broad approach to learning in the arts.

Bemis School of Arts will offer exemplary arts learning in an innovative flexible space that allows for the incubation of ideas, where the creative process is celebrated as a shared human experience and fundamental human need. Since its inception as the Broadmoor Arts Academy in 1919, Bemis has been dedicated to teaching art and fostering creativity. For many, Bemis has served as a gateway to the FAC as well as an entrance into the world of art. Recognizing the power of the arts to foster positive change, Bemis has an important role in expanding inclusivity. The alliance of the FAC and CC will provide resources and opportunities to develop, implement and research new and adventurous approaches to teaching and learning in the arts, and will position Bemis as an exemplary learning environment for all ages.

### Recommendation #1: Support Visionary Arts Learning

We envision a physical space designed to inspire visionary arts learning that supports all stages of the creative process and is accessible to all levels of expertise. Close proximity that is easily accessible to the historic FAC building and CC campus is crucial, so collaborations between the museum, theater, academics, and student life can inspire and inform art-making at Bemis while establishing a synergy that respects institutional programming, purpose and intent. This "creativity lab" will offer programming that encourages students and teachers to bravely explore both skill building and experimental work.

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From newcomers taking art classes for the first time to experienced artists learning from and collaborating with internationally known experts, Bemis will encourage the mindset that taking risks to try new things, failing and trying again is a positive and necessary part of the creative process. Art learning will include introductory classes, ones that are more experimental, and those for accomplished artists. Classes will range from skills-based content classes to those that explore interdisciplinary processes. Functional spaces will be configured to allow for learning a multitude of media with up-to-date art equipment. An understanding of the users' unique requirements will be critical to the design process of the spaces, in order to balance the needs and safety requirements for children with the processes and tools used by those with more expertise. Well-designed spaces, flexible when appropriate, with ample storage are needed to facilitate access for innovative connections among community, academic, co-curricular and interdisciplinary programming. These collaborations and resources will establish the Fine Arts Center as unique among peer institutions.

### **Recommendation #2: Foster experiential interactions among various entities of the FAC, CC and the community**

Bemis will provide classes and programs relevant to a variety of audiences, art forms and levels, creating synergy that respects institutional programming, purpose and intent. Formal instruction in classes will be augmented with gallery tours, artist talks and connections to community organizations. Teaching and learning will become an iterative endeavor, encouraging reflection, critique and innovation. Opportunities to better understand teaching and learning will be open to Bemis/FAC staff and CC faculty/staff/students as they collaboratively study learning, creativity and new methods of arts education, continuously improving offerings for all constituents. By capitalizing on the knowledge and resources of the Education Department specifically, we envision interactions such as an art class for struggling readers, in which kids learn how visual literacy relates to reading, and where CC graduate students tutor them as part of their practicum hours. Imagine a physics major dedicated to social advocacy developing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) programming for family day at Bemis, created with an understanding of best practices in how people learn. These connections between CC departments, groups on campus, and community organizations will leverage support for community-oriented and pre-professional programs at the FAC.

### **Recommendation #3: Increase visibility and attendance of diverse participants, prioritizing inclusivity as a vital element of the creative process**

We will create an inclusive learning community by providing experiences that present diverse perspectives. Course content will be drawn from multiple sources and from a variety of art forms that represent many viewpoints and allow for intercultural exchanges. Programs and facilities will accommodate special and physical needs of visiting patrons, staff and students. To further increase attendance of diverse populations, a commitment will be made to develop external and internal revenue streams so cost is not a principal obstacle to participation in any program. Bemis will work

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actively on marketing and public outreach, since we understand that communicating effectively to diverse audiences is essential to increasing access.

These recommendations are based on listening sessions which revealed several themes:

The Bemis School of Art, its classes and programming are highly valued by the community for the classes available at all levels and for the unique programming for diverse populations. Throughout the feedback, respondents were adamant about their desire to keep the Bemis programs available to the wider community. Many noted the excellence of the ceramic offerings unique in this region. The Bemis teachers and K-12 educators look forward to expanded programming to include more school outreach, more professional development opportunities and more interaction between other entities of the FAC at CC such as the museum, the performing arts and college departments and programs.

Many noted the need to increase the community's accessibility to Bemis especially the affordability of classes and wheelchair accessibility to the building. Moreover, there was great talk of geographical outreach to get the word out to communities in the area who have never had prior access to Bemis and its offerings.

Finally, a strong desire was expressed for Bemis to better connect various communities, including CC students and Bemis students to local, national and international artists and to increase art education opportunities that would positively impact the FAC, the Colorado Springs community and Colorado College.

## Who are we?

The Bemis School of Art Subcommittee consists of 10 dedicated members, half of whom were appointed by the Fine Arts Center and half whom were appointed by Colorado College. The members include art educators, patrons of the arts, current and former CSFAC board members and CC staff and faculty. The combination of the members' skills ranging from arts administration to community outreach created a team that is knowledgeable on and passionate about arts education. Members listed below.

Kris Stanec (Co-chair), Lecturer and Associate Director of Education Programs, Colorado College

Tara Thomas (Co-chair), Executive Director of Education, CSFAC

Tom Fleecs, Fine Arts Coordinator, D11

Kathy Giuffre, Professor of Sociology, Colorado College

Jean Gumper, Artist/Visiting Professor of Art, Colorado College

Carlos Jimenez, Director of Admission-Recruitment and Outreach, Colorado College

Kate Leonard, Professor of Art, Colorado College

Jordan Radke, Assistant Director, Collaborative for Community Engagement, Colorado College

Allison Scott, Director of Communications, The Broadmoor

David Siegel, Executive Director, Bee Vradenburg Foundation

### What was our charge?

Our charge, stated at the project's beginning, was as follows: "Through extensive research that is well documented, identify strategic themes, goals and initiatives to strengthen the art school's programming with an emphasis on implementing the CSFAC at CC mission. In addition, the subcommittee will make recommendations for a facility plan for the Bemis School of Art." With this in mind, the Bemis subcommittee met frequently from September 2016 through January 2017 to discuss what was heard and how Bemis might accomplish its goals.

### To whom did we listen?

Listening is critical to crafting a successful strategic plan. The Bemis subcommittee participated in 4 listening sessions, an additional 12 large group sessions, and hosted one focus group attended by a total of 393 community members. The subcommittee reviewed both the 415 responses from the comment cards and the 463 responses to a survey sent to specific audiences with more detailed questions. The Bemis Subcommittee targeted K-12 educators, CC faculty, staff and students, Bemis instructors, FAC docents, Bemis students and/or their parents, arts organizations and local artists, military populations and social advocacy organizations. The Bemis subcommittee studied the notes from each listening session and all survey responses and we met 6 times to synthesize the comments.