

CSFAC at CC Strategic Plan

Performing Arts Subcommittee

Our Vision

We envision three separate performing arts programs that will become more than the sum of their parts, joined by a mutual commitment to a thriving region and campus, to sharing resources for maximum impact, and to learning in and through the arts. These three programs will include the Fine Arts Center Theatre Company and its Youth Repertory Program, productions by the Performing Arts Departments at Colorado College (Music, Theatre and Dance, Film and Media), and a coordinated presenting series that will take place in all venues of the alliance.

Recommendation #1: Create a holistic vision for the performing arts.

Create a holistic vision for the performing arts programming at Colorado College, rather than separate visions for the formerly-separate entities. This unified vision must embrace both the *productions* of the Fine Arts Center Theatre Company and the Colorado College departments, as well as *presentations* of regional, national and international professional artists in the live arts and film.

The performing arts are the perfect tool to form a creative nexus between Bemis, the Museum and CC's academic programs, animating all performance spaces across the campus. Imagine a literature class attending *Dracula* to spark discussion about literary adaptations for the stage, or a dance performance installed in one of the galleries, or CC music faculty and students collaborating with a sound designer on an original sound score, or the resident scenic designer working with Environmental Studies students to research sustainable design practices.

For current and new audiences, the performing arts will cultivate a sense of intellectual and emotional discovery, generating buzz and filling houses in a way that demonstrates undeniable relevance. As the most-nimble artistic medium, the performing arts will enable Colorado College to immediately deepen relationships with community participants of all ages and backgrounds through innovative education experiences in the performing arts (see #2 and 3.) Ultimately, this new vision will attract an expanding number of performing artists and technicians to our city, which will help grow artistic quality and establish CSFAC at CC as downtown's premiere cultural anchor.

Recommendation #2: Broaden and deepen audience engagement.

Deepen relationships with audiences to build patron loyalty and widen the community of participants to include communities that historically have not attended CSFAC productions. Nationally, 4 out of 5 first-time single ticket buyers come once and never return to that organization¹. A viable future must include meaningful plans to deepen engagement with current attendees—from first-timers to long-time

¹ TRG Arts, *Every Night is Opening Night*, April 12, 2011, www.trgarts.com

supporters—such that they more fully recognize and value the CSFAC at CC as an integral part of their lives. A viable future must also include meaningful plans to increase participation among non-attending communities by engaging their values and concerns through live performance.

Recommendation #3: Promote learning in and through the arts.

Build meaningful relationships and structures that encourage life-long learning. The alliance will offer new educational growth paths for CC students who might experience curricular connections with performance events in their courses or gain experience working as interns for the Theatre Company. The alliance will create professional development paths and additional creative opportunities for performing arts staff and CC faculty members. For community members, the alliance can strengthen education programs and offer rigorous conservatory-style training in all the performing arts.

Recommendation #4: Build an alliance that is more than the sum of its parts.

Use the performing arts to shape the new institution formed by the alliance into more than the sum of its parts. Live performance can help build a creative community that draws out the very best from its people, venues and financial resources. For example, might the alliance bring a Fine Arts Center Theatre Company musical theatre production (and its loyal audiences) into the Cornerstone Arts Center, allowing space for an international dance presentation in the SaGaji Theatre?

A strategic infusion of resources (e.g. new staff or financial investments) into the performing arts could guarantee the long-term success of the CSFAC at CC. For example, might the investment in a larger presenting budget allow us to bring in more international artists who could broaden our students' experiences and attract new arts supporters? By cultivating new resources, this alliance could make the performing arts a cornerstone of the CSFAC at CC and ensure that they are more dynamically integrated into the Colorado College mission.

Our Process

Equipped with robust community feedback from six weeks of intensive listening, we were ready to apply our expertise and start articulating a direction for the future. Over many weeks of meetings that culminated in a four-hour working session at the TRG Arts headquarters in the Wells Fargo Tower, our subcommittee began to draw out (sometimes literally) recommendations for creating powerful performing arts programs. We left inspired about the future, and we hope the community shares our optimism and excitement about our recommendations in the four key areas listed above.

What was our charge?

Our initial charge was as follows: "Through extensive outreach that is well documented, identify strategic themes, goals and initiatives to strengthen the theatre's programming with an emphasis on implementing the CSFAC at CC mission." Through our process, that charge quickly evolved into defining a future not just for the Fine Arts Center Theatre Company but also for the performing arts at the Fine

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Arts Center and Colorado College. How might we craft a unified vision for the performing arts across the entire institution?

To whom did we listen?

Listening is critical to crafting a successful strategic plan, and we did a lot of it before the first mark was made on the whiteboard. To gain broader feedback the CSFAC at CC held 13 sessions attended by 417 community members and sent out a far-reaching survey. Some of our subcommittee members attended each of them, and when we could not attend, we pored over the notes afterwards.

To gather feedback specific to the performing arts at the Fine Arts Center, the Performing Arts Subcommittee hosted three focus groups and two large group sessions and issued a written survey. In total, 95 community members attended these sessions and 207 filled out the survey. We targeted CC performing arts faculty, CC students, FAC artists and production staff, FAC performing arts audiences, and Colorado Springs performing arts organization/artists.

What did we hear?

The Fine Arts Center Theatre Company and Youth Repertory Program play vital roles in our community. Current audience members, professional actors, Youth Repertory students and parents, and theatre technicians all agreed that these programs should remain a central part of the new alliance. Other focus group participants said they wanted more diverse offerings, e.g. new plays, local premieres, original works, presentations of genres beyond theatre, and performances by prominent artists. We heard loud and clear the desire to retain and enhance current programming, while developing new programs to provide audiences with more choices.

We also heard participants ask about audiences: Who attends performing arts events at the CSFAC? Who else might attend in the future? The Fine Arts Center Theatre Company has a loyal following of ticket-buyers, subscribers and donors who form a strong support base. These individuals need pathways like traditional subscription packages and Curtain Call Society to remain engaged. At the same time, many participants wanted to see more engagement with communities that have not historically attended productions. They repeatedly said that engagement strategies must not take the form of traditional “outreach” (e.g. inviting non-attenders to come to an unchanged institution,) but rather that the CSFAC at CC must evolve to be relevant to both current and new audiences.

Lastly, we heard a desire to creatively leverage all the assets of the new alliance—venues, staff, communications, funding and other resources—for maximum impact on the Colorado College and Colorado Springs community.

Who are we?

Our subcommittee is comprised of people affiliated with the Fine Arts Center and/or Colorado College who know and love the performing arts in Colorado Springs and beyond. We represent arts educators,

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artistic leaders in the fields of theatre, dance and music, audience members and patrons, arts business experts, and more. Each member brings a deep knowledge of and passion for his or her field within the performing arts. We are:

Amy Brooks, Tutt Library Special Collections Coordinator, Colorado College, Theatre Artist

Al Buettner, Community Volunteer, CSFAC Board Member

Sue Grace, Lecturer/Artist in Residence, Associate Chair of Music, Colorado College

Sally Hybl, Community Volunteer, Theatre Artist

Anita Lane, Physician, Theatre Artist

Scott Levy, Executive Director, Performing Arts and Producing Artistic Director, CSFAC

Tom Lindblade, Professor of Theatre, Colorado College

Libby Rittenberg, Retired Professor of Economics and Business, Colorado College

David Seals (Co-chair), Director of Client Development, TRG Arts

Shawn Womack (Co-chair), Associate Professor, Chair of Theatre and Dance, Colorado College