

## **Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College Museum Subcommittee Draft Program Plan**

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### **A Vision for the Museum**

Over the past few months, the museum committee has had the privilege of hearing first-hand how deeply engaged Colorado Springs is with art, and how committed the community is to celebrating the ways art enriches our understanding, inspires us, and expands our world(s). We found this message both affirming and inspirational. While our respondents often disagreed about the exact direction the museum should take, and how it might accomplish its tasks, they conveyed a fundamental conviction that the museum is of central importance in our city, and a faith in the museum's longstanding mission to elevate and celebrate the arts as an essential part of our shared human experience. We hope the recommendations in this report convey some of the excitement we heard – which we wholeheartedly share – about the tremendous potential and dynamic future ahead for the museum at the CSFAC at CC.

In the new CSFAC at CC, we envision a museum that embodies the rich history, current vitality, and exciting future of this community. Harnessing the power of the arts to bring people together, the museum will be a center not only for teaching and learning, but also a place of inclusion, exchange, collaboration, and inspiration for people across our community and our region. As the founders of the CSFAC envisioned, the museum will bring the finest of both historic and contemporary art to the public. Dynamic interdisciplinary exhibitions paired with innovative teaching opportunities will create a museum that celebrates excellence in the visual arts for all visitors. The aim of the CSFAC at CC will be to explore, challenge, and transcend traditional definitions of what a museum can be. The museum will embrace its function as a cultural destination - but it can also be more. Possibilities include: a center for interactive and experiential learning, a laboratory of new ideas, a place of solace, a creative nexus for artists, a hub for the exchange of opinions, a platform for inter-community communication, a destination for fun and enjoyment, and more. Ultimately, the new CSFAC at CC museum will celebrate the power of the arts to inspire people, spark learning, and forge equitable communities that will contribute to changing the world for the better.

### **Results from Listening Sessions**

Museum audiences were generous with their feedback, so we had the pleasure of receiving many different ideas and concerns about the museum, the collection, the exhibition program, and the museum's role in the community. One consistent theme was a directive to honor and support the regional Southwest focus of the Taylor collection, and to prominently show that historic collection. An equally robust theme we heard concerned the important role contemporary art plays in the museum's mission. The committee understood this to be a both/and situation: to support and grow both the historic and contemporary programs the museum offers and that community members clearly value. Maintaining high standards of quality was a central concern for all respondents, who stressed the

importance of ongoing professional museum accreditation and strong curatorial vision. Another consistent theme was a desire to see the museum be revitalized in its position as a major art institution in the region, and potentially the nation. Part of that endeavor would entail growing the collection, and we heard a lot of support for a more active program of acquisition of art in all of our collecting areas. As part of developing a national reputation, we heard interest in creatively developing the museum as a center for innovative teaching.

Consistent through the groups and also through the online responses was a desire for the museum to be more relevant and accessible to today's citizens in Colorado Springs as well as to the campus. People wanted to see the museum become a vibrant gathering place for community and students alike. Fears were expressed on two fronts: first, that the CSFAC at CC would become even less accessible due to the CC "bubble" and new academic museum status; and second, that the museum would not embrace the student and faculty perspective. To the committee, these divergent points illuminated a theme of broadening access and appealing to a wide variety of people. Specific ideas such as rethinking admission policies and opening hours came forward, but our respondents' viewpoints also encouraged us to think more broadly about who the museum audience is – or should be. In this vein, such responses challenged us to consider how opening up definitions, breaking down boundaries, and embracing innovation can engage more people across both campus and community by inspiring new ways of thinking about art and its role in our lives.

A final, related theme was an exhortation to fight against perceptions of the museum's isolation. We heard a call to leverage our position as major regional museum to support the arts broadly in the Colorado Springs community and beyond. We heard suggestions for inter-organizational and community collaboration, new program building, and drawing in new audiences on and off campus, as examples of what people wanted to see in a revitalized CSFAC at CC museum.

Over the course of the past four months, the committee worked hard to distill the great amount of feedback into core concerns, and to construct concrete initiatives that address those concerns. Our recommendations are gathered into two central themes drawn from the community feedback: one is focused on enhancing excellence in what the museum does (exhibitions, teaching, and collections); the other looks at the role of the museum in the community (including inclusive programs, dynamic opportunities for engagement, and productive collaborations).

The museum Subcommittee offers these themes and recommendations with sincere thanks to the many people who submitted their thoughts, insights, and ideas in the listening sessions.

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### **Theme #1:**

**Honor and expand upon the Fine Arts Center's historic vision for innovative, culturally diverse, and interdisciplinary arts programs, and become a national model of excellence for a museum that serves community and campus, in this region and beyond.**

With roots reaching back to 1919 in the Broadmoor Art Academy, the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and its museum originated from a remarkable, innovative vision put into place in 1935. Founders Julie Penrose, Elizabeth Sage Hare, and Alice Bemis Taylor believed – as do we – in the power of interactions between the visual arts, the practice of art making, and the performing arts. The Museum in particular benefitted from the gifts of Alice Bemis Taylor, whose love for arts of the Southwest produced the remarkable Taylor Collection. Of equal import was Elizabeth Sage Hare’s passion for contemporary art. Her connections among the European and American avant-garde in New York City resulted in FAC exhibitions of what are now some of the most renowned Modern artists in history. In the intervening decades, the Museum has grown significantly in its collection of regional art and art of the Americas, both historic and contemporary. Our first theme builds upon those past strengths, and leverages the power of the original, well-beloved and powerful interdisciplinary vision while harnessing the critical skills and expertise of our academic connections. This theme also challenges the museum to implement the “both/and” perspective that came through in our listening sessions.

*Recommendation A: We advocate supporting the museum’s central mission: to present excellent exhibitions that expand awareness of diverse cultures, ideas, and modes of artistic expression from across the globe, while also respectfully showcasing the cultures of the Southwest and the Americas that are part of the shared history of our community.*

We recommend continuing to invest in the museum’s established practice of presenting critically acclaimed exhibitions of both regional and internationally recognized art, both historic and contemporary. The museum might also share its perspectives and resources by generating exhibitions that travel to regional and national venues, thus maximizing national exposure to our excellent collection and providing an opportunity to showcase exciting new scholarship and critical approaches to studying the arts and culture of our region. For example, to create exhibitions that help visitors make meaningful connections between regional, national, and global experiences and values, the curators could use an interdisciplinary lens to provide multiple access points for diverse audiences. They might design and host innovative, dynamic exhibitions that connect audiences to historical and contemporary cultures in new or unexpected ways. Strategies could include inviting artists to curate or inviting participants with a diverse range of personal and disciplinary backgrounds to interpret, discuss, and respond to artworks on exhibition. An artist-in-residence program could bring art-making directly into the museum and also provide dynamic interactions with renowned practitioners in the contemporary art world.

*Recommendation B: We advocate for enriching the quality of the museum and its permanent collections by maintaining an active acquisitions program of historic and contemporary art of the Americas (consistent with our collections policy).*

A museum must be active in order to remain important and vital. The CSFAC at CC can grow its collections by devoting resources to careful acquisition. Focusing energies on productive relationships with donors is also important. Improving support for collections care and research are strategies that would support the museum’s world class collections. Photography and digitization would make the collection accessible to a broad audience, and raise our regional and national profile. Investing in

expanding and nurturing our ongoing relationships with tribal communities is an important part of ethical stewardship of the museum's Native collections.

*Recommendation C: The museum should become a national leader among academic museums for curricular and pedagogical innovation.*

With its offerings enriched by the incorporation of the College's IDEA program, the museum is well positioned to achieve this goal. The prospect of making the museum as central to a CC student's educational experience as the library is a real possibility, one that may be achieved through: increased interaction with teaching faculty; curricular innovations such as a museum studies program; and hands-on learning through museum internships for students. A scholar-in-residence program would bring national and international scholars to the museum and generate new bodies of knowledge about the collection, regional cultures, and museum pedagogies. These discoveries could be disseminated through printed and on-line publications as well as through increased access to museum archives. The museum could embed these results into public education initiatives as well, improving K-12 school tours, docent programs, and exhibition interpretation materials.

## **Theme #2:**

**Serve the campus and regional communities by becoming a cultural hub for a wide variety of audiences from the College, the city, and the region.**

Focusing on the importance of the museum to the community, this theme responds to the call to increase the vitality and relevance of museum programming. The Subcommittee heard loud and clear that audiences wanted the museum to make visits to the exhibitions more dynamic and meaningful. In terms of its exhibitions, the museum might present exceptional regional artists within a national or international context in order to situate the local experience within a broader context, and curate exhibitions that celebrate and critically reexamine institutional, regional, and local art history.

*Recommendation D: Keep the viewer experience at the center of the museum's activities, and create avenues for fruitful and inclusive discussion, collaboration, and exchange among visitors.*

To do this, the museum might facilitate multiple points of view within exhibitions and provide opportunities for visitors to generate or contribute knowledge to exhibitions, thus breaking the mold of the institution as the single transmitter of knowledge. Developing new technologies to provide access to information, hosting accessible events and learning opportunities, and fostering the creation of personalized social experiences within the museum could re-engage a diverse audience with the museum. Additional staff might be necessary for such ventures, but the results would be significant.

*Recommendation E: The museum should intentionally and authentically bridge across difference to engage a diverse and inclusive community with the museum.*

The three founders of the CSFAC envisioned an institution that was widely accessible, from Julie Penrose's donation of centrally located real estate to Alice Bemis Taylor's hope that the museum would be free in perpetuity. To that end, re-assessing admission policies and opening hours would be appropriate as a means to remove logistical barriers to attendance, while supporting enhanced K-12

school programs would enrich the art experiences of the city's youth. Renewing our commitment to nurturing relationships with Native communities would not only deepen interpretation for museum audiences but also provide a national model for collaborative care and interpretation of Native objects.

*Recommendation F: The museum Subcommittee advocates for a more central role for the museum on campus and in the community through increased partnerships and collaborations.*

Collaboration is key to a vital institution and to a thriving cultural life for our city. Collaborations might occur within the Fine Arts Center itself (with Theater and Bemis) and will certainly draw upon closer relationships with college departments and programs. The museum might variously partner with the FAC Theatre, academic departments, and the Bemis School to program multi-disciplinary arts experiences that explore a central theme. Additionally, the museum can build relationships with other arts institutions in the region, and support community groups and programs to a greater extent. Such collaborative projects could include the creation a series of "salons" for local artists to explore individual and collaborative practices through discussion sessions and workshops, or programs wherein community groups may use the museum as a venue for cultural expression. Building on and expanding existing collaborations with other regional presenting organizations, the museum and its allies could embark on visionary projects that would be impossible for individual organizations to achieve, and that would have a significant impact on our community. Finally, the museum must facilitate and enable professional development and relationship building for its staff, who are the key to achieving these visionary goals.

## **The CSFAC at CC Museum Subcommittee: Background and Details**

The CSFAC at CC Museum Subcommittee consists of 10 dedicated and experienced people: museum professionals, leaders in the Colorado Springs arts community, current and former CSFAC Board of Trustees members, and CC staff and faculty. The Subcommittee members bring to the table skills and expertise in arts administration, curating, teaching, business management, and community outreach. Cochairs Blake Wilson and Rebecca Tucker wish to convey their thanks to this group, who dedicated many hours and significant energy to this project – a testament to their love for the arts, their respect for the two institutions, and their commitment to supporting and strengthening the arts in Colorado Springs.

Our initial charge, stated at the project's beginning, was as follows:

"Through extensive outreach that is well documented, identify strategic themes, goals and initiatives to strengthen the Museum's programming with an emphasis on implementing the CSFAC at CC mission."

We began by listening intensively to as many people as possible. Through public listening sessions, targeted focus groups, email outreach, and online surveys, we were able to reach 968 people from a wide variety of backgrounds. We each attended as many listening sessions as possible, and we perused all the online feedback with great care. What we heard and read became the core of the themes and initiatives listed above.

The museum Subcommittee met bi-monthly from September 2016 through January 2017, and monthly thereafter. Our Subcommittee discussions were lively. Sometimes we disagreed, but our conversations harnessed the expertise of our members productively. We worked to balance both the “big picture” task (how to support, develop, and grow this historic and innovative museum for the benefit of both the Colorado Springs community and the College) and the specific desires expressed by the different community members. On white boards, post-it sheets, and computer screens, we produced 10 iterations of the themes in 10 weeks. We aimed to identify the core concepts we heard as concisely and authentically as possible. In the last phase, we attached specific tactics to the larger initiatives, aiming to combine general concepts with specific examples of how the museum might accomplish its goals.

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 survey broadly across the city and the region to which an equal number of individuals responded.

To gather more feedback specific to the museum at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, the museum Subcommittee hosted two focus groups and two group sessions. In total, 134 community members attended these sessions. We targeted CC faculty from across campus, the museum docent team, museum patrons and donors, CC students, CC staff, local young professionals, and Colorado Springs arts organizations/artists.

Museum Subcommittee members:

- Rebecca Tucker (Co-chair), Associate Professor of Art, Colorado College
- Blake Wilson (Co-chair), Owner, The Art Bank
- Joy Armstrong, Acting Museum Director/Curator, CSFAC
- Susan Edmondson, CEO, Downtown Partnership
- Santiago Guerra (Spring 2017), Assistant Professor of Southwest Studies, Colorado College
- Jane Hilberry, Professor of English, Colorado College
- Jessica Hunter-Larsen, Curator of the IDEA Space, Colorado College
- Mario Montaña, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Colorado College
- Eric Perramond (Fall 2016), Associate Professor and Director of Southwest Studies, Colorado College
- Annette Seagraves, Physician
- Bruce Warren, Attorney/Community Volunteer

# 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.

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



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 synthesis the comments.

# CSFAC at CC Strategic Plan

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## *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 organization<sup>1</sup>. A viable future must include meaningful plans to deepen engagement with current attendees—from first-timers to long-time

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<sup>1</sup> TRG Arts, *Every Night is Opening Night*, April 12, 2011, [www.trgarts.com](http://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

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