



A Letter From the Dean, Summer 2011

Friends:

The College of Fine Arts educates students for lives and careers in the arts. We teach and study the arts at different intensities, from liberal arts studies and pre-professional education, to the most intense professional training for our graduate students. We measure our success as a college by the success of our graduates - whether they pursue professional paths in the arts and culture industries, or choose careers outside the arts.

But how much do we know about our graduates? Do we know where they go after graduating or how successful they are? Beyond the Pulitzer Prize and Oscar winners among our graduates, what do we know about how well they've been served by their education?

The answer for COFA, like most professional fine and performing arts schools, has long been that we just didn't know, or know very much in that regard. In fact, it has proven difficult to keep track of graduates. Until now.

I've been on the advisory board of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), since its inception three years ago. With the help of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Surdna Foundation, the Houston Endowment and other underwriters, SNAAP has developed a thorough survey of graduates from the College of Fine Arts and 153 other art, dance, music and theatre schools across the country.

Over the past year, COFA graduates have participated in SNAAP's trial tests. We're hoping in the coming year to have all of our graduates complete the survey. We will then, for the first time, have extensive and pertinent data on the personal, artistic and professional outcomes of our graduates.

So what have we learned thus far? There's plenty of good - even surprisingly good - news. Yet, we're also learning what a burden education debt is on our graduates, just how fast the job market is changing and how much more we need to be doing for our students and alums.

Most gratifyingly, 85% of our grads consider the education they received at The University of Texas at Austin "good" or "excellent." More than half report working, or having worked, as a professional artist, arts educator or in an arts-related field. Among those who want to work professionally in the arts, that percentage rises to a remarkable 77%.

Nearly half are teaching the arts - far more than the 15% who majored in education or pedagogy during their time at The University of Texas. That's a perplexing illustration of the weak alignment between educational preparation and career outcomes. *continued*



Photo of Douglas Dempster,
by Marsha Miller.
Detail of Tony Smith,
Amaryllis, 1966. Painted steel,
135 x 128 x 90 inches.
Lent by The Metropolitan
Museum of Art. Anonymous
Gift, 1986. 1986.432ab.