

Arts For LA Activate Fellowship Action Project

Bringing Arts2Work to West Los Angeles College Culver City and Los Angeles County

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For several years, I have been interested in the intersection of the arts, education and business. I come from a classical music background, where, in the Western European music tradition, in all fields involving craftsmanship, apprenticeships were how knowledge was passed down from one generation to the next. Apprenticeships fell out of favor, especially here in the U.S, with a focus more on higher education, and fewer resources devoted to training people in trades. This began to change about 20 years ago, and now, apprenticeships are considered a valuable tool towards job mobility, especially in construction, IT, health care and manufacturing. But it has yet to happen in the creative economy. That's about to change.

I had done a lot of research prior to becoming an ACTIVATE fellow, and thought that as a fellow I could actually begin to build a framework for a workable apprenticeship program in the arts for Culver City. We have the right environment: a burgeoning creative economy and a fantastic and forward-looking community college looking to build up their media arts/creative arts programs.

Upon becoming an Activate Fellow, I began my outreach and research in earnest. My colleague on the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) who had led the creation of the Culver City Creative Economy Report had already begun a conversation with the president of West Los Angeles College (WLAC) about how to engage the local business community in business/education partnerships. He assured me that WLAC was open to a program such as one I was envisioning especially if I focused it in media arts, a program they were hoping to build up in the next few years. My colleague made the introduction for me and after an initial "elevator pitch" the president invited me to schedule an exploratory meeting. In preparing to make my case, my research took me to the State Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) in Southern California, where I learned that only recently the Department of Labor (DOL) had approved the first two registered apprenticeships in the arts: digital editor and multi-media producer. My contact at DAS sent me the specifications, and, seeing who had put them together, I googled the organization, The Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, to learn more about them. Lo and behold, they had a program on their website, Arts2Work, which was what I had envisioned: a pathway for underserved youth towards sustainable jobs in the creative economy through training and paid apprenticeships in media arts. Arts2Work was looking for partners, so I immediately contacted them. When I told the Executive Director that I wanted to bring Arts2Work to Culver City/WLAC, that I didn't need to "reinvent the wheel", she was extremely enthusiastic, and offered to come from Washington State to the meeting at WLAC. All of a sudden, I had a program and infrastructure to provide to WLAC, thereby making it possible for WLAC to become a partner with Arts2Work. We held the meeting in early January.

Even though the meeting had been set up by the president of the college, I took the liberty of creating an agenda for the meeting to better direct the conversation. This was received warmly by the president, and in fact, he invited several other professors and administrators to the meeting and printed out the Arts2Work materials for everyone.

We had 10 people in attendance: the President and Vice President of Academic Affairs at WLAC, The Director of Creative Studies and the Co-Director of Motion Picture and Television Production Crafts, the program developer for the Aeroflex Aerospace Engineering Apprenticeship Program, two faculty

members from Film Studies and the HCPR program, the DAS representative, the ED of the Alliance and myself.

The room was a buzz with creative energy-it was amazing. Everyone was so open and receptive. I didn't need to say much-simply give an introduction and offer occasional Culver City context-the experts took it from there. After two hours, we had a plan to draft an MOU (memorandum of understanding) between Arts2Work and the college as a first step in building the partnership. The MOU went through several edits, but I am happy to say that as of May 14th, 2019, we have an agreement between West Los Angeles College and Arts2Work to create an official Arts2Work training hub on the campus of West Los Angeles College!

We are planning a follow-up meeting to discuss next steps, including finding some equivalencies at WLAC for Arts2Work curriculum. This is timely because Arts2Work is about to launch their national website with an interactive map of training centers. We want to get WLAC on the map, so to speak.

Additionally, once the site is launched, we're planning another sit-down to strategize some local gatherings for employer partners and curriculum review. We are also hoping for grant funding to become available through Apprenticeship Innovation + Expansion grants (federal) and the California ETC (Employment Training Council). These grants will provide funds for businesses to help support an apprenticeship position and for training incumbent workers at WLAC, promoting entry-level below the line or administrative workers into creative, above-the-line positions.

In addition to the work with WLAC, I have met with one of the Culver City City Council members and the Assistant City Manager. They had good ideas for bringing the program to the Culver City business community, and plan to include it in their work plan for the council's Equity subcommittee. The Creative Economy subcommittee of the CAC will also be involved as they plan next steps for Phase 2 of their action plan on the creative economy report.

On May 20th, I facilitated a video conference call with the ED of the Alliance, the program manager of Arts2Work, the director of Arts Education at the LA Arts Education Collective and the program manager of Teen Arts Pathways at the LA Arts Ed Collective. In a previous meeting with the Arts Ed Collective's program manager (who I met because of the "speed networking" Activate session in February) we discussed the possibilities of expanding Arts2Work into LA County, looking for ways Arts2Work can bring its established structure countywide, serving the mission and goals of the Arts Ed collective in finding ways to train and employ traditionally underutilized workers in the creative economy. The Arts Ed Collective just completed a field scan of opportunities and existing challenges for creative career pathways (literature, surveys, focus groups), so the timing is perfect.

In the video conference call, we discussed YouthBuild opportunities, expansion to other community colleges, repurposing of juvenile detention centers, WIOA-funded programs for apprenticeship expansion in Southern California, and formation of a statewide Youth Media Network.

One of my next steps is to work with the President of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce. I had provided a student string quartet for a Chamber of Commerce event, which provided my introduction to the president. Over the next several months, I engaged him in conversation at various Culver City events. We discussed Arts2Work and the possibility of holding a convening for members of the Chamber, presenting a plan to begin creating an Arts2Work pipeline from WLAC to Culver City businesses.

I feel good about my work in bringing a transformative program like Arts2Work to Culver City and the LA Region. Although I will not be directly involved in the administration of the program, I have been invited to be an advisory board member of Arts2Work, hoping to continue supporting what I think is paradigm-shifting program for the creative workforce of the future.