

In support of Christine Mani's call for a forward thinking, proactive response to the challenges presented by COVID 19 to our efforts as an educational institution.

Of course, Christine's explanation of the value of a creative arts education is excellent. Yes truly, not only will training in theatre arts, fine arts and music increase your capacity to face rapidly changing situation in your careers, on the job and in life, but it enhances your capacities to participate in the world as a citizen and a human being. But I grow weary of making this case. Why? Because the case is made. People who cut our art budgets have annual memberships to the ballet, SFMOMA, the opera etc.. In other words, it is tiring to try to make the case to people who know the value of art. Christine has done an excellent job so here is what I want to talk about.

I lost count of the emails that included the phrase "We are all in this together!"! Imagine my shock when it came down to the last month before the semester and I had to go to battle to prevent my courses from being prematurely canceled. We were all in it together until it came down to enrollment and then it was the same old story. You are on your own when it comes to enrollment. Suddenly, COVID was never a factor. There is no thought to what the causes of low enrollment might be, what larger world issues are putting pressures on our potential students. In the end the only one penalized will be the faculty, who suddenly discover that the phrase "We are all in it together!" does not include them. Who ever the "We" is referring to, it is not faculty. It was a heavy blow, after dedicating much of March through August to getting up to speed to teach online and cooperating with every institutional effort to address the COVID 19 challenges. But we can be "all in it together" and here are a few suggestions.

These suggestions that might allow us to "All be in this together." It would require some "Thinking outside the box." Here are some ideas that seem to offer some fiscal responsibility, allow our institution to support us and help to preserve our fine art, music and theatre programs.

1. Determine a break even point for enrollment. – Currently the minimum enrollment for my studio art classes (60%) is 16 students. But financially the college begins to break even between 10-12 students. So, not for ever, but for COVID 19 times the college could choose to exercise the option to allow courses to go forward if enrollment reaches this break even point. I know, this would require some cooperation with the union. Again it is not forever, but it could save some programs, and it would certainly demonstrate that our college is concerned with the situation that COVID 19's effects on enrollment has had on faculty and that "We are all in this together!" Better yet it could demonstrate that in hard times, the college will get creative to have our backs.
2. Another way to consider a low enrolled class to be a financial break even point. Try to follow me on this one. I was in a situation two weeks out where it looked like I might have to take a fully enrolled drawing class, that I was not yet prepared to teach, from an adjunct. At that point my class only had 12 students. So here is my hypothetical solution:
 - a. Imagine that we just traded classes. I as the full-time instructor take the adjunct led drawing class, and the adjunct takes my 12 student ceramic class. So financially this is a viable option because, the full-time faculty has a fully enrolled class, and the adjunct is teaching 12 students which, given their much lower pay scale, is still a significant money maker. Only difficulty is we are both better suited to be teaching the classes we were originally assigned to teach. So that is a down side but on the upside it is a financially viable experience.
 - b. So now, imagine that we go ahead with that plan with one change. We do not switch classes. Same two classes, same two instructors, same financially viable profile. Only now the students are getting the best instruction available as well.
3. Another issue is timing. My two low enrollment classes are now at full or close to full enrollment, one established a waiting list. The most enrollment happened in the two days before the start of the semester and

several added in the first week of classes. So this idea of making enrollment decisions on month out is a denial of human nature which always puts things off until the last minute.

4. I understand that this proposal would mandate that we would temporarily suspend the contracted class minimums. Extreme perhaps, but temporary. We are experiencing global pandemic. These are dire times. Nothing is familiar and we are required to reimagine what a successful educational experience is to be. We are struggling to all pull through. It is not business as usual. Couldn't we all find new ways to keep all this going forward that is more inclusive and less alienating?

So these are a few thoughts to help faculty and the district find common ground. I would love to be in this together. I have a tremendous dedication to teaching, my students, and making this all function during COVID 19. I would love to feel like I was part of the team. I have certainly been a team player.