BRACING FOR UNCERTAINTY:
PERCEPTIONS OF 12 COLLEGE ART INSTRUCTORS ON
THE ART SKILLS, DISPOSITIONS, AND TEACHING
OF FIRST-YEAR ART STUDENTS

by

Judith Lynn Mohns

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Judith M. Burton, Sponsor
Professor Victoria J. Marsick

Approved by the Committee on
the Degree of Doctor of Education

Date 16 October 2019

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2019
ABSTRACT

BRACING FOR UNCERTAINTY:
PERCEPTIONS OF 12 COLLEGE ART INSTRUCTORS ON
THE ART SKILLS, DISPOSITIONS, AND TEACHING
OF FIRST-YEAR ART STUDENTS

Judith Lynn Mohns

This qualitative case study investigates first-year college-level art education in the United States today. Specifically, 12 art instructors from a broad range of postsecondary institutions (including private art institutes, public research universities, public liberal arts colleges, and community colleges) were interviewed to explore perceptions of first-year students’ art skills, dispositions, and teaching. When supplemented by online institutional data, descriptions emerge of the curricular structures and changing teaching environments of the sampled first-year art programs.

This study finds that art majors enter college art programs today with different skill sets and dispositions than past students. While digital media offers new options for artmaking, the data suggest it may also influence students’ development of manual, fine-motor, and drawing skills. These art instructors describe first-year students as having shorter attention spans and experiencing greater frustration when learning new skills. Furthermore, the data and literature suggest that more college students today enter with mental health issues (such as anxiety and depression) and learning disabilities.

Budgetary cutbacks to K-12 arts programming may have diminished students’ abilities to produce quality portfolios for admission to selective art programs, which may have consequences for enrollment. Enrollments reflect shifting student demographics,
such as more international students attending private art colleges. Rising college costs have prompted other changes, such as more students living at home and commuting to save money, or transferring to four-year programs after attending community college, working jobs while attending college, and pursuing career-oriented art majors.

First-year art programs are continually adapting to new technical, educational, and cultural challenges through restructured curricula and modified pedagogy targeted to the student demographic served by the institution. In addition to teaching art skills required for subsequent coursework, the participants reported helping first-year students adjust to the college environment in ways that foster personal growth. This study documents changes in first-year art education as a basis for further research. Art educators at all levels benefit from knowledge of how college art instructors and first-year programs are modifying pedagogy and curricula to meet the changing needs of incoming art students.
DEDICATION

To Adrien Luc Georges Deschamps,

who taught me so much during his brief and beautiful life,

and whose intellect, humor and kindness were a gift to the world.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The realization of this dissertation owes so much to the efforts and encouragement offered by so many at Teachers College:

To my advisor, mentor, supporter, and friend, Dr. Judith Burton: thank you. During dark and difficult times, you kept me moving forward, and for this, I am deeply grateful. You have taught me so much, and so well.

Many thanks to my committee members: Dr. Victoria Marsick, Dr. Mary Hafeli, and Dr. Lyle Yorks, as I have learned so much from each of you.

To the TC faculty and staff who have helped me over the years: Tom Lollar, Mahbobe Ghodes, Lisa Jo Sagolla, Joy Moser, Ami Kantawala, Iris Bildstein, Richard Jochum, Stepanka, Watuza, Megan, Sam, Ama, Georgette, and Rocky. I also wish to thank the Art & Art Education Program, the Arts & Humanities Department, and Teachers College for generously supporting my pursuit of this degree.

I greatly appreciate the friendship and support of my fellow students at TC: Eunji, Laia, Wendell, Linda, Erol, Jesse, Brian, and many others.

Beyond the walls of TC, I am profoundly grateful to the participants in this research and in the pilot study who generously spoke with me about their students and teaching. Many thanks also to Stacey Isenbarger at FATE for her enthusiastic support of this study, and to my former high school and foundation students, who taught me so much about teaching and learning in the arts.

To Phyllis Galembo and Patti Phillips: thank you for your friendship and providing a port in the storm. Your generosity during difficult times will never be forgotten.

To my family: François Deschamps and Simon Deschamps. Thank you, François, for making a life and family with me: one that could not be more full of love, adventure, intensity, support, and commitment. To Simon, thank you for being who you are, with
your thoughts, ideas, and experiences serving as my inspiration, and for being the most interesting and best traveling companion one could ever imagine.

J. L. M.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I—INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................1
  Problem Statement ..........................................................................................7
  Research Questions .........................................................................................9
  Assumptions ...................................................................................................10
    Assumptions: Not to be Debated .................................................................10
    Assumptions: To be Debated ......................................................................10
  Limits of the Study ..........................................................................................11
  Significance of the Study ..............................................................................13
  Research Goals .............................................................................................14
  Type of Study ................................................................................................15
  Overview of Chapters ....................................................................................15

Chapter II—THE LITERATURE .........................................................................17
  Introduction ....................................................................................................17
  The State of Undergraduate Education in the United States ......................19
    The Characteristics of Today’s Undergraduates ......................................20
    Enrollment Trends in Undergraduate Education ......................................21
      Institutional responses to falling enrollments .......................................22
    Changing student demographics at institutions ......................................22
  The Economic Realities of Attending College Today ..................................23
  The Perceived Value of an Undergraduate Art Degree ..............................25
    Other perspectives on contemporary art schools .....................................28
  The State of First-Year Art Education in the United States .......................29
  The Evolution of First-Year Art Education in the United States ...............32
    The influence of Bauhaus Foundations ...............................................32
    Conceptually oriented first-year programs ..........................................33
    Restructured programs and re-skilling students ....................................34
    A lack of consensus about first-year programs ....................................36
  The Fine Arts and Design in College Art Programs ...................................38
    The growing influence of design education ..........................................39
  Teaching Art at the College Level ...............................................................41
    College art instructors .............................................................................41
    Teacher training for pedagogy and content ..........................................42
  Changes Affecting K-12 Art Education .......................................................44
  Challenge and Support in First-Year Art Education ..................................45
    Student development theories relevant to first-year education .............46
    Recent changes in adolescent development and learning ....................49
      Shorter attention spans and multitasking .........................................50
      Extended adolescence and parental involvement ................................50
      More students with mental health issues and disabilities .................52
  Summary .....................................................................................................53
Chapter III—METHODOLOGY .................................................................55
  Preliminary Considerations ..........................................................55
    The Pilot Study ............................................................................55
      Results of the pilot study .........................................................58
    Toward a Revised and Expanded Research Design .....................59
  The Dissertation Study .................................................................59
  The Framework .............................................................................59
  The Research Design ....................................................................60
    Rationale for a case study .........................................................61
    The criteria for participation ....................................................62
    The participant sampling .........................................................62
    Data sources and collection .....................................................63
  Data Collection ............................................................................66
    Conducting the research interviews .........................................66
    The research setting .................................................................67
    Collecting information from online sources .............................67
  Data Analysis ...............................................................................67
    Coding the interview transcripts .............................................68
    Analyzing the data from online sources ....................................68
    Generating participant profiles ...............................................69
  Confidentiality and Data Handling .............................................69
    Data management and security .................................................70
  Validity and Reliability ...............................................................70
  Implementation of the Study .........................................................72
    Finding the Participants .............................................................72
    The Sample Distribution ..........................................................73
    Conducting the Interviews .......................................................74
    Participant Approval of Transcripts, Profiles, and Excerpts .......75
    The Coding and Analysis of the Interview Data .......................75
    The Analysis of Data from Online Sources ...............................76
  Upon Reflection ............................................................................77
    Concerns Regarding the Interview Data ....................................77
      Participant knowledge of institutional data .............................78
      The nature of the data provided in the interviews ..................78
      The potential for negativity bias in the interview data ............79
      Documenting change via data collection ..................................80
    The Story of Teaching First-Year Art Students .........................82
  Summary .......................................................................................82

Chapter IV—THE FINDINGS .................................................................83
  Thematic Coding and Presentation of the Data .............................83
    The Presentation of the Data ......................................................84
    Descriptions of the Institutions, Programs, and Participants .......86
      General Descriptions of the Institutional Types in the Sample ....86
        The sampled institutions .......................................................87
        Program access, enrollments, and costs of attendance ...........89
Selective versus open-access programs ..................................89
Enrollment trends and costs of attendance..............................91
Descriptions of the institution sample by type........................92
  The private art institutes ........................................92
  The public liberal arts colleges ................................93
  The public research universities ................................93
  The public community colleges ................................94
Descriptions of the First-Year Art Programs .................. 94
  Programs titles and course curricula ................................95
Curricular structures of the first-year art programs ...............95
  Categories of first-year art programs ............................97
Changes affecting courses and curricula .......................... 98
Descriptions of the 12 Faculty Participants ..........................100
  Academic positions of the faculty participants .............. 102
  Teaching experience at the college level .........................103
  Artistic practice and teaching expertise ........... 104
The Teaching of Art in First-Year Programs .....................106
  The Role of First-Year Art Programs .........................107
Organizational Issues Associated with First-Year Art Programs 110
  Consistency and variation in teaching art skills ..............110
    Programs that prioritize consistency in teaching ..........112
    Programs that allow variation in teaching ..................114
  Embracing change in course design and content ..............116
  Independence versus service in first-year art programs 117
Different Approaches to Teaching Art in the First Year ..........118
  Changes in teaching first-year art courses ..................120
    Changes made in response to students’ needs ......... 121
    Teaching informed by the student demographic ......... 122
    Professional development for first-year teaching ....... 124
  Pressures to modify approaches to teaching art .............125
  Teaching focused on art skills and process .................126
  Teaching focused on art skills and content ............. 128
  Teaching focused on ideation and self-discovery .......... 130
    Creative influences and the intersection of ideas .......130
    Educational Agency through experience ..................130
    Fostering curious and flexible thinkers ..................132
    Emphasizing intuition and inventive thinking ..........134
    Teaching and learning as a creative endeavor ...........135
Faculty Perceptions of Students’ Art Skills and Dispositions 138
  The Role of Portfolios in Assessment of Artistic Potential 139
    Portfolios in the admissions process for art majors ....140
    Ramifications of portfolio requirements on enrollment ....142
    Perceptions of characteristics of student portfolios ....144
    Perceptions of quality in student portfolios .......... 146
    Changing characteristics of student portfolios ....... 147
    Admissions standards and enrollment concerns .......... 148
Perceptions of First-Year Students’ Art Skills...........................................150
  Faculty expectations of students’ art skills ........................................152
  Perceptions of students’ traditional art skills ....................................152
    Perceptions of students’ drawing skills ........................................153
    Curricula for teaching drawing skills ..........................................155
    Teaching to address drawing skills .............................................157
    Dispositions associated with drawing skills ................................158
    The teaching of 2-D and 3-D design skills ..................................160
    Curricula for manual 2-D and 3-D skills .....................................160
    Perceptions of manual 2-D and 3-D skills ...................................160
    Teaching manual 2-D and 3-D skills .........................................162
  Perceptions of students’ digital and new media skills ......................164
    Curricula for digital media skills .............................................164
    Perceptions of engagement with digital media .............................166
    Teaching digital media skills ..................................................167
    Integrating digital media skills into courses ................................168
    Perceptions of students’ digital media skills ................................169
    Dispositions associated with digital devices ................................170
  Perceptions of academic and interpersonal skills ............................171
    Defining research and ideation skills .........................................172
    Perceptions of teaching research skills .......................................173
    Research occurring in first-year art courses ................................175
    Teaching research and ideation ................................................176
    Student engagement with the creative process .............................178
    Facilitating ideation for the creative process ................................178
    Teaching communication skills ................................................181
    Communication skills in classroom dialogue ................................182
    Facilitating classroom dialogue ...............................................183
    Teaching critique skills ..........................................................184
    Teaching collaboration skills ...................................................185
    Modifications to support classroom dialogue .................................186
    Support for international students .............................................187
    Communication during advisement ..............................................187
    Advising students in crisis ......................................................188
    Advisement prompted by coursework .........................................189
    Advising foreign language speakers ..........................................190
    Advising students with parental concerns ...................................191
    Interpersonal communication skills ..........................................193
    Professional communication skills ..........................................193
  Perceptions of first-year students’ dispositions ................................193
    Perceptions of students as career-oriented ..................................195
    Teaching career-oriented students .............................................197
    Perceived financial pressures faced by students ............................198
    Perceptions of student engagement ............................................199
    Teaching with assigned readings ..............................................200
    Perceptions of college readiness ..............................................203
Chapter V—THE DISCUSSION .............................................................................. 207
Perceptions of Programs, Students, and Institutions ...................................... 207
First-Year Learner Characteristics and Responsive Teaching ...................... 208
Perceptions of Teaching in First-Year Art Programs ................................... 210
Shifting Conceptions of the First-Year Experience ...................................... 210
The structure and rigor of first-year art programs ........................................ 211
Student Growth and Thinking Differently about Artmaking ...................... 213
Fostering Self-Knowledge in First-Year Art Students .................................. 215
Supporting Students’ Transition to the College Environment ...................... 218
Perceptions of First-Year Art Students .......................................................... 221
Perceptions of Student Demographics ......................................................... 221
Distinctions between first-year program types ........................................... 222
Student demographics at the selective programs ........................................ 223
Student demographics at the open-access programs .................................. 224
Perceived Commonalities Among Students Across the Sample ................... 227
Perceptions of Students’ Art Skills and Dispositions .................................... 228
The indefinable and changing nature of art skills ....................................... 228
Skills taught in first-year art programs ....................................................... 230
Perceived changes in traditional skills ......................................................... 230
Perceived changes in digital and new media skills ...................................... 232
Perceptions of academic and interpersonal skills ....................................... 235
Research skills in first-year coursework ....................................................... 236
The influence of the Internet ........................................................................ 237
Communication and collaboration ............................................................... 238
Attention spans, patience, and frustration .................................................. 240
Perceived engagement with skills and coursework ...................................... 241
Using teaching strategies to influence engagement .................................... 243
Assessment and grading strategies ............................................................... 243
Use of open-ended assignments ................................................................. 245
Perceptions of How Students Experience the First Year of College .......... 247
Artistic development and initial intensive art training .................................. 247
Identity development and personal growth ................................................ 248
Academic adjustment and life skills ............................................................. 251
Time-management and studio coursework ................................................ 252
Student transformation during the first year of college .............................. 255
Perceptions of Art Departments and Institutions ......................................... 256
Perceived Internal Forces Shaping Curricula and Teaching ...................... 257
Curricular and course revisions ................................................................. 257
Changes involving course content and faculty .......................................... 258
Changes in response to students and their needs ....................................... 258
Changes supported by professional development ...................................... 259
Perceived External Forces Shaping Curricula and Teaching ...................... 260
Indications of shifting enrollments .........................................................260
The impact of college costs on enrollment ...........................................261
The impact of shifting demographics on teaching ...............................263
Contingent Issues ..................................................................................264
Growing Concerns about Mental Health Issues ....................................264
Crisis prompted by first-year coursework ..............................................265
Variations in the data collected on mental health issues .........................266
Professional development and campus support ...................................269
Consideration of Technology’s Effect on Creative Work .......................270
Technology use and classroom learning ..................................................270
The cognitive effects of device use on creative work .............................273
Summary ...............................................................................................275

Chapter VI—CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS ..........279
Introduction ..........................................................................................279
Considerations: Today’s Students ............................................................280
Considerations: For Faculty and Administrators .....................................282
Educational Implications .......................................................................283

EPILOGUE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ............288
Implications for Further Research ..........................................................291

REFERENCES ..................................................................................292

APPENDICES
Appendix A—Participant Profiles ............................................................304
Appendix B—Glossary of Terms ..............................................................317
Appendix C—Interview Protocol ..............................................................319
Appendix D—IRB Consent Forms ..........................................................321
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research Studies Associated with First-Year Art Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Pilot Study Coding Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sub-Categories within Major Code Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Research Design with Data Collection, Data Types, and Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Sampled Institutions: Names, Regions, Locations, and Sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Program Access, Enrollment Trends, and Cost of Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The First-Year Program Titles and Course Curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Categories of First-Year Art Programs in the Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Participants’ Positions, Rank, and Teaching Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Participants’ Art Practice and Teaching Expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Program Orientations Toward Consistency and Variety in Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Indicators of Art Skills and Creative Potential by Program Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Perceptions of Portfolios and Drawing Skills at Selective Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Participant Data Pertaining to the Art Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Drawing Courses in the First-Year Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2-D and 3-D Design-Oriented Courses in the First-Year Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Digital Media Skills and 4-D Processes in the First-Year Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Perceptions of Students’ Engagement with Digital Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Types of Research Occurring in the First-Year Art Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Research and Ideation Activities in the First-Year Art Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Strategies for Facilitating Ideation in First-Year Art Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Perceptions of Student Communication Skills in First-Year Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Perceptions of Student Dispositions Toward Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Perceptions of Learner Characteristics and Responsive Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Sample Distribution: Institution Types and Average Costs of Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Data Collected about Mental Health Issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

Long ago, as a frustrated and disengaged high school student, I was finally able to study art during my senior year. Although I had excelled in the required ninth grade studio art course, my parents, who worried about my future prospects, had insisted that I first take honors-level academic courses in preparation for college before taking more art courses. When my schedule opened up senior year, I was placed in the advanced art studio course, which focused on refining portfolios of artworks for college applications. My skills and ideas were far less developed than the students who had studied art all four years, and by comparison my portfolio appeared thin and unsophisticated. While most of my classmates went off to highly selective private art institutes and universities, I attended a state college with a well-regarded art department.

My parents had told me they could only afford state colleges or universities with in-state tuition, as I had two sisters still in college at the time. My father had retired early in poor health, and I worked two part-time jobs to save for college and to pay for a month-long, state-run summer arts program¹ that my art teacher suggested I attend after graduation, which further strengthened my skills and resolve to study art in college. My father had wanted me to have a double major if I insisted on studying art, but this demand

¹This program, the New York State Summer School for the Arts (NYSSSA), still exists (see http://www.oce.nysed.gov/nysssa) and offers scholarships and tuition waivers for students with financial need, which reduced my attendance costs. As a high school art teacher, I had students attending NYSSSA each year, often with tuition waivers.
faded as his health further declined. (He died when I was 21-years-old, during the spring semester of my junior year.)

_I tell my story because it is the untold story of many young art students whose parents have limited resources or who do not value the arts or fear the limited career opportunities that may come with an art degree. Many students with artistic passion and abilities choose to pursue non-art majors in college out of similar concerns. While people may associate college-level art education with elite private art institutes, these schools serve only a fraction of the undergraduate art students in the United States and are among the most expensive colleges in the country. Most high school art students simply lack the financial resources, family support, or access to secondary art education required to study in such programs. Instead, many art students attend public colleges, state universities, or community colleges and may live at home to further save money, as the only viable option for earning an undergraduate art degree._

My experience as a freshman art student studying in a college foundation art program proved to be deeply transformative. I had left the constraints of high school and family, and immersed myself in the milieu of art school to study with like-minded

---

2According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2016), “almost 80 percent of fall undergraduates are enrolled in public colleges and universities.”

3As reported in _Artists Report Back_, “7 of the 10 most expensive schools in the U.S. (after scholarships and aid) are art schools” (Jahoda, Murphy, Virgin, & Woolard, 2014, p. 8).

4According to an article in _Forbes_ titled, “More Millennials Living at Home to Save on College Costs” (Ashford, 2014).

5At that time, students in the first year of college were called “freshmen.” From here on, I will use the gender-neutral term “first-year” to describe students or programs in the first year of college.

6I attended a “foundation” art program in my first year of college, which is a program title still commonly used today. From here on, however, I will use “first-year art programs” (rather than “foundation”) to describe first-year art programs, as this term is inclusive of the growing number of programs that do not adhere to the Bauhaus conception of “foundation year.”
classmates and faculty. I changed over the course of that year: I became an adult living away from home with new responsibilities and relationships, which led me to reconsider my past experiences with school and learning. I was grateful to be studying what I loved and worked harder on schoolwork than I ever had before. For the first time, I excelled artistically and academically (largely fueled by sleep deprivation and unhealthy habits) and was accepted into the college’s honors program.

By the end of that first year, my entire outlook on the college experience had changed because I knew what I wanted to study, and my teachers and grades indicated this was the right path for me. Yet I also remember feeling deeply confused and adrift that year: At one point in the fall semester, I had even told my advisor that I was miserable and was considering dropping out. He reassured me that I was doing good work, that my feelings were common, and he encouraged me to finish the term. His words helped me weather the turbulent sea of emotions I was experiencing that left me feeling exhausted, foolish, confident, confused, sick, talented, arrogant, in love, angry, depressed, rejected, unsure, sad, stressed-out, insecure, driven, and ultimately, successful, elated, and relieved.

Looking back, I now understand that my confusion, wide-ranging emotions, and discomfort were the by-product of personal growth and identity development. As a first-year student, the unfamiliar demands of college life (which include social, academic, and artistic experiences) generated personal conflicts that were resolved through difficult decisions and rationalizations, which led me to reassess and revise my values and beliefs. This cognitive dissonance pushed me further toward adulthood.

Years later, when teaching first-year art courses, I was excited to welcome incoming art students into their first college art classes and hoped they would feel as I had: challenged yet supported in their studies. I had initially taught these courses using other instructors’ syllabi and my own past experiences as guides for the skills, concepts, and assignments I should teach. However, I soon realized that much of what is taught
(and learned) during the first year of college is vague and rarely appears as learning outcomes in course syllabi. Examples of this hidden curriculum include: teaching students how to develop disciplined work habits, to negotiate independence, to recover from personal failures and mistakes, to meet college expectations for coursework and behavior, how to take risks in artmaking, and discover one’s artistic strengths and interests. Although I was a part-time instructor, I also informally advised students about: college policies and resources, where to buy things, who to ask for help with particular problems, as well as what to expect during the first year of college and beyond.

Many first-year art instructors I have spoken with have mentioned the invisible nature of what is taught in their classes. While colleagues in upper-level art programs may see first-year courses as primarily responsible for teaching the basic art skills required for advanced studio courses, first-year instructors also help students adjust to the college environment and faculty expectations by addressing behaviors and attitudes (such as disruptive cell-phone use and time-management issues) that may not occur in upper-level courses. During first-year art courses, students learn whether they have the skills, interest, discipline, and determination to major in art, which leads some students to pursue other majors. However, I have often heard first-year instructors say that their art department colleagues do not understand or agree with what is being taught to students in first-year art courses, which can lead to ongoing tensions.

After teaching for years as an adjunct instructor at a community college and at the state college I had attended, I worked for five years in an underfunded public high school as a full-time art teacher. I taught advanced studio art courses where juniors and seniors developed art portfolios for college applications and I organized field trips to local colleges and “portfolio day” recruitment events. Each year, the number of students heading off to college as art majors would grow a bit and included first-generation college students from lower-income families who often lived at home while attending the state school or community colleges. Former students visited my classes to show their
work and share stories of college life and classes with demanding professors and challenging assignments. However, I noticed that many of my highly skilled and creative high school art students chose to major in other fields or, to my knowledge, never attended college if they lacked family support.

During my time in the high school, I witnessed the effect that digital devices were having on student behavior in the classroom (in the form of disruptive cell phone and iPod use) and how digital technologies were transforming art education (with new course offerings in digital photography, graphic design, and video production). The pedagogy and content of art courses were changing quickly and radically. For example, in 2005, my students used slide film to photograph artwork for college portfolio submissions. Just two years later, students were editing digital files with Adobe Photoshop and uploading them to online portfolio portals (such as Sladeroom) as part of their college applications. Now many high school students are creating websites and Instagram accounts to share their artwork online and provide links to these sites in college applications.

The most concerning changes I observed among my art students involved shorter attention spans, greater frustration when learning manual skills, and their use of Google image searches for developing ideas for projects, rather than drawing in sketchbooks as students had in the past. Yet my focus on my students’ changing work habits and dispositions was overshadowed by the arrival of Great Recession in 2008, which led to drastic cuts to the district’s budget and arts programming, and widespread teacher layoffs, including the elimination of my own tenured position in 2010.

*The eliminated arts positions in my former district have yet to be reinstated, and I have heard that fewer students are creating portfolios or pursuing college-level art study these days. The quality of art education has been affected by fewer course offerings*

---

7In 2010, 54 of the 280 teachers in my district were laid off or had their positions eliminated.
taught by fewer teachers.\textsuperscript{8} My situation was not unique, as hundreds of teachers in my geographical area were laid off between 2010 and 2012. Across the United States, many school districts have yet to see fully restored funding,\textsuperscript{9} resulting in less access to art education in underfunded districts.

I entered the Art & Art Education doctoral program at Teachers College in 2012 with an interest in researching art students and teaching in first-year college art education. Specifically, I wanted to learn more about how the advances of digital media and devices were affecting art students in first-year art programs, and to learn if the changes in behaviors, skill development, and dispositions I had seen in high school art students were evident at the college level. I conducted a pilot study in 2013 (Mohns, 2014, 2018) that explored faculty perceptions of how art students had changed over time in terms of art skills and dispositions. I interviewed six former colleagues and acquaintances teaching in the first-year art programs at the community college and state college where I had previously taught. These participants reported that students were entering their programs with different art skills and dispositions than past students, and speculated that these changes were due to many contributing factors (such as digital device use, cutbacks to secondary art programs, and changes in childhood play). Furthermore, the data suggested that these teachers were continually changing their pedagogy and course content to address these perceived changes in students.

As a result of the pilot study, I concluded that change is a constant in education and society. Although it is important for educators to articulate the changes involving first-year students’ characteristics and teaching, I expanded the focus of this study to include

\textsuperscript{8}In my former high school, there are now just 2.2 art teachers serving nearly 900 students, and the district’s two remaining elementary art teachers each teach over 700 students per 6-day cycle.

\textsuperscript{9}A 2018 article in The Hechinger Report announced, “Three-quarters of the Spending Cuts Made to Public Schools Restored,” yet funding levels remain uneven, with some states, such as Arizona, continuing to defund schools.
any salient issue that arose in the interviews, whether a recent development or a perennial feature of first-year art education.

**Problem Statement**

During the last two decades, art education at the K-12 level in the United States has undergone significant changes resulting from numerous changes in our society, including education reform policies, shifting paradigms in art education and standards, fiscal cutbacks in arts programming, and the expansion of digital media in artmaking (Sabol, 2013). During this period, computers and digital technology became ubiquitous in offices, homes, schools, and everyday life via personal devices and now provide unprecedented access to information, culture, and social media through the Internet. These changes have influenced how we communicate, behave, create, and consume art, images, and information. The contemporary art world has evolved to include new forms that challenge conceptions of “art,” “traditions,” and “skills,” while simultaneously providing broader access to art, ideas, and artists via online venues (such as YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, and online publications such as Hyperallergic, Artsy, and Artnet).

As secondary art programs continually adapt to these new technical, educational, and cultural challenges, so have first-year college art programs. During these rapidly changing times, it is beneficial to art educators at all levels to know how college art instructors and first-year programs are modifying pedagogy and curricula to meet the changing needs of their incoming art students. Further complicating the shifting terrain of art education are the following facts: “teaching” and “learning” in the arts are mysterious endeavors that affect students differently; “student engagement” is an essential component of learning environments; and the “learning” that takes place in a course is not limited to the student learning outcomes listed on syllabi and may not be realized until long after a course is over.
Undergraduate art programs in the United States require entering students (intending to major in art) to take a specific set of studio art courses, known as the “first-year” or “foundations” curriculum. Within college art departments, “first-year programs” commonly serve the needs of prospective and entering art students, administer first-year curricula and programming for art majors, and may provide elective art courses for the general undergraduate population at the institution. These programs often have a designated administrator who also teaches first-year art courses. However, each first-year art course is a unique educational environment shaped by various factors, including: the instructor’s teaching philosophy, pedagogical skills, and personal experiences (as an artist and former art student), as well as the student demographic served by the institution (in terms of prior art experiences and personal resources), the mission of the art program, and the resources and facilities provided by the institution.

Lastly, there is a gap in our knowledge of contemporary first-year art programs and teaching in the United States, and the few existing academic studies involving first-year art education have focused primarily on elite private institutions. For example, one study investigated and compared innovative first-year programs at a private art institution and a private research institution (Kushins, 2007), another explored and compared teaching and learning in first-year art programs at two different private art institutions (McKenna, 2011), another study examined the artistic development of art students over the course of their undergraduate studies at an elite private art institute (Bekkala, 2001), and yet another study piloted and evaluated a teaching intervention at a private art college (Lavender, Nguyen-Rodriguez, & Spuijt-Metz, 2010).

This study sought to redress the lack of existing research about first-year art education in general (Salazar, 2013a), and specifically, as it occurs in non-elite college environments. To supplement the limited academic research involving first-year art education, I used supporting literature from the fields of student development, technology, art and art education, and higher education.
Research Questions

There were two main research questions and two sub-questions in this study. The first question sought information about how the participating college art faculty perceive students, and the second question asked how the faculty respond pedagogically to their perceptions of students through modified course content. The sub-questions inquired about the educational environments of the participants’ institutions and relationships that may exist between type of institution and participants’ responses. These questions worked together to describe a network of forces that define teaching first-year college art within unique educational environments.

The main research questions were:

1. How do 12 mid-career college art faculty from a range of college art programs perceive art students in first-year courses in terms of their artistic skills and dispositions (such as manual and technical art skills, work habits, and approaches to conceptual ideation)?

2. How do these 12 first-year art faculty modify their pedagogy and adapt course content in response to the perceived artistic skills and dispositions of students today?

The research sub-questions were:

3. What forces (both internal, such as the skill sets presented by incoming students, and external, such as changes in admissions policies or cost of attendance) intervene to shape curricular content for these 12 first-year art faculty?

4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions and the teaching practices of these 12 first-year art faculty (who teach in art programs across different types of higher educational institutions), and if so, what are the defining dimensions?
Assumptions

Assumptions: Not to be Debated

(1) First-year art programs in the United States teach entering art students the basic art skills that are required for subsequent studio coursework and support students during their transition to the college environment.

(2) Through exposure to a broad range of art media, processes, and approaches to artmaking via a generalist first-year art curricula, students identify their personal artistic interests and strengths for further art study and concentration.

Assumptions: To be Debated

(1) Given that faculty perceptions of entering students’ art skills and dispositions inform pedagogical approaches to course content, teachers are modifying pedagogy and adapting course content (based on conceptions of the essential knowledge and skills necessary for subsequent art study) to facilitate engagement and to accommodate the changing characteristics of art students today.

(2) Given that the conditions for studying art at the college level have changed, faculty perceptions of the issues affecting entering students (in terms of preparation, disposition, academic challenges, and resources) influence how first-year curricula are being restructured to facilitate student engagement and to provide relevant content and instruction for subsequent art coursework.

(3) Given that research has shown that student involvement facilitates development and persistence (Astin, 1984; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008), facilitating engagement in first-year art coursework is critical, as the transition from high school to the college environment is a particularly challenging time for students. Instructors in first-year programs play a critical role in facilitating student engagement and teach beyond the scope of course
syllabi (and beyond their personal training) by often providing support to students in crisis and advising students about academic expectations, developing life-skills, and accessing available campus resources. In this sense, the content of first-year courses (as defined by student learning outcomes) should be expanded to include learning associated with transitioning to the college environment.

(4) Given that college art instructors bring personal experiences and expertise with art media and practices into their teaching, perceptions of entering students’ art skills and dispositions are informed by the instructors’ own experiences (as former art students, artists, and teachers). In this sense, modifications to pedagogy and content for student engagement require faculty to understand and acknowledge how the conditions under which students attend college today have changed from what they had experienced as art students.

**Limits of the Study**

A significant challenge in this study was finding a sample of 12 participants from a broad range of institutions that are representative of the college art instructors who primarily teach first-year art courses. Most first-year art courses are taught by part-time instructors who may lack the minimum of seven years of college-level teaching experience required for participation in the study. Eleven of the 12 faculty participants have full-time positions, and 8 are teacher-administrators for their first-year art programs. Serving in an administrative position influences the nature of the information provided about students and teaching in ways that may not accurately represent most first-year art instructors. While a sample of 12 participants is insufficient for making generalizations
about first-year students and teaching, the findings of this exploratory study lay the groundwork for future research.

The nature of the data collected presented another limitation. The data were collected from participant interviews and online personal and institutional websites and databases. The accuracy of retrospective recall used in the interviews cannot be verified, and information from online sources can be out-of-date or inaccurate. Furthermore, the data seemed to be continually changing. For example, shortly after conducting the interviews with five participants, their courses changed significantly or their programs’ curricula were restructured. Such changes presented a challenge for validation of the data. While the conflicting data were resolved (via follow-up correspondence and further data collection), a dilemma emerged regarding which data to present.

The minimal existing research on first-year art education in the United States does not reflect recent changes affecting the field (such as the integration of digital media and time-based art forms), and is limited to studies conducted at private art institutes, which do not describe the educational environments that serve the majority of college art students in the United States today. I have supplemented this limited literature with research and articles that broadly discuss issues faced by young adults in college today and present recent information and trends associated with the field of higher education.

While the study sought data describing the broad range of teaching occurring in first-year art programs at different types of institutions, the diversity of the data, in terms of pedagogical orientation and specialized instruction emerging out of the traditions of college art education, proved daunting at times to apprehend and report. Given that this is a study of teachers’ perceptions of their students and teaching (as informed by the unique qualities of individual programs, institutional types, and student demographics), it was important to note the potential for personal bias from my own experiences teaching in first-year art programs. A conscious effort was made to remain neutral and avoid making
personal judgments during the data analysis and when reporting the participants’
descriptions of their programs, teaching approaches, and perceptions of students.

Lastly, due to the nature of eliciting information from educators about teaching and
the characteristics of today’s students, a concern emerged about negativity bias within the
collected data and analysis. It is difficult to assess the veracity or salience of issues
described in the data when humans naturally tend to focus on problems or recall negative
interactions in teaching. To counter this tendency (as evidenced in the collected data), I
looked for confirmation of issues by using member checks in subsequent interviews and
follow-up correspondences, and in current literature; and further analyzed the collected
data for understated positive statements within the data that the participants may have
assumed were understood.

**Significance of the Study**

Given that digital technology has changed education and society over the past two
decades in terms of how we learn, communicate, process information, and create, art
educators must reassess what skills and dispositions are essential for students to learn
during their first year of college. Furthermore, the conditions associated with studying art
at the college level have changed over the past two decades as the cost of higher
education in the United States has risen. Financial concerns have led to pervasive anxiety
among students, who increasingly work more hours in outside jobs while in college to
finance their education and consequently focus on attaining skills that will lead to future
employment (Levine & Dean, 2012). This financial stress influences how students
approach studying art, and, as a result, art faculty must reassess the values associated
with pursuing a postsecondary education in the arts in terms of the specific skills they
teach and their expectations of how students engage with their coursework and programs.
In light of these changes, many first-year art programs are modifying their programs to include skill development with digital technologies to effectively engage students. Given that every college art program is a unique educational environment that reflects the demographics of the students (in terms of admissions requirements and financial resources) and the characteristics of the institutions (in terms of type, location, size, mission, and funding sources), variation among first-year art programs and curricula is understandable and expected. Furthermore, as the Internet, digital media, and the contemporary art world have changed our conceptions of what art is and how it is made, this study intended to explore and document how art is being taught to entering college art majors at this moment in time.

**Research Goals**

The intent of this study was to describe the perceptions of 12 college art instructors from a broad range of institutional types regarding teaching in first-year art programs at this moment in time when significant changes are affecting many aspects of college education. These changes involve students’ college preparation and educational goals, the integration of digital technologies and expanding approaches to artmaking within college art programs, and financial pressures that shape student experiences and institutional mandates. Furthermore, this study intended to explore faculty perceptions of first-year art students in terms of the art skills and dispositions they present, and the challenges faced and support provided over the course of the first year of college. This study further intended to compare the perceptions of faculty in relation to the institutional type when relevant, and to examine the forces that shape teaching in first-year college art programs.
Type of Study

This is an exploratory case study that investigates the quickly changing and under-researched field of first-year college art education through the perceptions of 12 college art faculty and associated online data. The framework for this study is based on Nevitt Sanford’s theory of challenge and support (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 30).

Overview of Chapters

This first chapter presents the background to the problem and the justification and goals for research of first-year art programs in the United States today. The assumptions and limitations to the study are presented, as are the goals for this research.

Chapter II presents the literature associated with this research. First discussed is the state of undergraduate education and art education in the United States today. Issues of teaching art at the college level are described in the context of the training of college art instructors and faculty concerns. Literature describing student development theories and recent issues affecting adolescent development are also presented.

Chapter III presents the pilot study and revisions made for the dissertation study. The framework, research design, data collection, and data analysis are presented, as well as discussion of issues of confidentiality, validity, and reliability. The implementation of the study and reflections on the concerns associated with the data collection and the overall experience conducting this research are also described.

Chapter IV presents the findings, first in terms of descriptions of the institutions, programs, and participants in the study, and then in terms of the organization and pedagogical orientations of the art programs in the study. The data collected on faculty perceptions of first-year art students’ art skills and dispositions, and teaching in first-year art programs are then described, as are unexpected findings.
Chapter V discusses these findings in terms of the learner characteristics of first-year art students and responsive teaching to these characteristics. The various approaches to teaching occurring in the broad range of programs are presented framed by the literature, as are the participants’ perceptions of students’ art skills and dispositions. The changing nature of first-year art programs, as shaped by larger forces impacting higher education and within institutions, is addressed, as well as contingent issues regarding college students today, specifically mental health concerns and the impact that technology use is having on creative work.

Chapter VI presents the conclusion and educational implications of the study, and the Epilogue discusses the personal journey undertaken during this research and the aftermath for the participants and programs, as well as implications for further research.
Chapter II
THE LITERATURE

Introduction

As we barrel toward the end of the second decade of the 21st century, the speed of information and change affecting all segments of society has created an increasing sense of uncertainty. Amid the political, societal, and economic upheavals facing the United States today, this study simply endeavors to explore first-year art programs at a range of postsecondary institutions via faculty perceptions of students and teaching. In this section, I present literature that describes the context for understanding the evolving nature of first-year art college programs in the United States.

Public and private postsecondary institutions in the United States are facing an uncertain future due to projected falling enrollments and funding (Anderson, 2017; Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Marcus, 2017a; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). In college art programs, instructors are responding to changes among students that reflect K-12 education and admissions policies (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2016; Lu, 2016), and the influence that the Internet and personal devices, digital technologies, and social media have had on students and teaching (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Lang, 2017; Levine & Dean, 2012; Levitin, 2014; Turkle, 2015; Twenge, 2017a). Many first-year art programs are restructuring to integrate new forms and contemporary approaches to artmaking driven by technological advances and postmodern critical concepts, including social practice, performance, 4-D, and sound art
(Madoff, 2009; Pujol, 2009; Tavin, Kushins, & Elniski, 2007). For many young adults pursuing art degrees, concerns about the cost of education and future employment hang like a pall over their college experience (Astin, 2016; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015; Levine & Dean, 2012; Mellow, 2017; Twenge & Donnelly, 2016).

In spite of these continual changes, some things about pursuing a college art education have stayed consistent over time: There have always been students drawn to study art, parents have always worried about the costs and employment prospects that come with an art degree, and a college art degree does not guarantee a career in the arts. Furthermore, the first year of college is a particularly transformative time for students, who must grapple with newfound independence, responsibilities, relationships, and discovery of personal passions. It is often the role of first-year art instructors to help their students transition to the college environment.

The Pulitzer Prize winning critic Jerry Saltz recently offered the following advice to young artists: “You will be poor, but your life will never be boring – accept it,” and “Being an artist is tough, so only be one if you really, really, really, really have to be” (Goldstein, 2018, emphasis in original). Some art students accept these sentiments and would live as artists had in the past if they could: couch-surfing in unheated lofts, often hungry but committed to making art and meeting people on their path to recognition, as depicted in myriad biographies of artists, including Patti Smith’s 2010 memoir, *Just Kids*.

However, economic conditions have changed, and the bohemian lifestyles of the past no longer exist. The high cost of real estate, comparatively lower wages, unpaid internships, and student loan obligations have created unsustainable circumstances for most young artists who want to live in or near major cities. For art students who hope to eventually work within their field, the odds are bleak, with estimates that “out of 2 million arts graduates nationally, only 10%, or 200,000 people make their primary earnings as working artists” (Jahoda, Murphy, Virgin, & Woolard, 2014, p. 3).
More art students are pursuing majors that will improve their future job prospects and earning potential, as indicated by the widespread expansions of art programs into fields such as web and interactive design, graphic design, animation, illustration, 3-D printing and digital technologies, and game design. Yet the needs of students and the perceived value of an undergraduate art education are continually changing. According to Twenge and Donnelly (2016), millennials (born between 1981-1995) valued extrinsic motives, such as financial security, more than education for education’s sake, but recent studies suggest that members of “Generation Z,” “post-millennials,” or the “iGen” generation (born between 1995-2012) are motivated by meaningful experiences more than financial advancement (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 32; Twenge, 2017a, p. 182).

Given the changes affecting undergraduate art education and art students in recent years, it is important to understand how college art faculty are perceiving students in terms of the art skills and dispositions they enter with, and how these perceptions shape teaching art in the first year of college. It is also important to consider how the circumstances facing postsecondary institutions are shaping teaching and curricular content at the different types of institutions that serve different demographics of art students.

**The State of Undergraduate Education in the United States**

To understand how postsecondary art education is changing, it is helpful to understand the overall state of undergraduate education in the United States today. For example, more students are attending college but are taking longer to graduate:

More Americans are attending college than ever before – nearly 90 percent of millennials who graduate from high school attend college within eight years. But ... only 40 percent of students complete a bachelor’s degree in four years and 60 percent graduate in six years. At two-year colleges, 29 percent of students graduate in three years. (Kovacs, 2016, para. 1)
The Characteristics of Today’s Undergraduates

Many high school students have gotten the message from parents, schools, and business leaders that a college degree is essential for upward mobility. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2016) reported the following statistics about undergraduates in college today:

- 80% attend public colleges and universities, with only 1% attending colleges that admit less than 10% of applicants.
- Nearly half of all students are not prepared for college-level work and require remedial coursework.
- 31% of undergraduates are over age 25, 37% attend part-time, and 20% never attain a degree.
- 48% of undergraduates earn bachelor’s degrees, 26% were associate degrees, and 25% are awarded certificates.
- Students are taking longer to get through college, with 60% of students taking loans and accumulate an average $20,400 in debt.

Furthermore, students have faced steep tuition increases over the past two decades:

At public four-year institutions, students pay 73 percent more in net tuition—the price they pay after scholarships, grants and loans—than they did 20 years ago. In fact, they pay 55 percent more than they did only six years ago. (Kovacs, 2016, para. 17)

Writing for the New York Times in 2017, Gail Mellow, President of LaGuardia Community College, provided the following statistics about the nearly 18 million undergraduate students in the United States today: 50% live at home to save on college costs, 40% attend community colleges, 40% work over 30 hours per week while attending college, with 25% working full-time jobs as full-time students, and 25% are single parents.

According to Mellow (2017), students are striving for better employment prospects, and earning an associate degree results in nearly 20% more annual income than a high school diploma. The majority of low-income, first-generation students attend community colleges, and while tuition for low-income students is covered by financial
aid, the costs for housing, transportation, food, and childcare are not, resulting in high dropout rates or the need for 3-6 years to earn an associate degree (Mellow, 2017). Community colleges receive significantly less funding than 4-year colleges, and redirecting more resources to community colleges is needed to improve educational opportunities for low-income and first-generation students (Astin, 2016; Mellow, 2017).

**Enrollment Trends in Undergraduate Education**

Higher education in the United States is facing a bleak future over the next two decades. Even with a higher percentage of high school graduates choosing to attend college, postsecondary enrollments have been dropping for six straight years, especially among first-year students, reflecting a dip in the birth rate, resulting in fewer 18- to 24-year-olds (Marcus, 2017b). A recent survey by *Inside Higher Ed* and *Gallup* found that the percentage of colleges meeting enrollment targets has fallen dramatically over the last two years (Jaschik, 2017).

According to Marcus (2017b), in 2017, 2.6 million fewer students attended higher education institutions than in 2011, with community colleges facing the steepest decline with 97,000 fewer students, which has resulted in a 2.3% drop in associate degree programs; and four-year schools experiencing a 1.5% drop, or 14,000 fewer students seeking bachelor’s degrees, with 69,000 fewer students attending for-profit colleges.

The 2016 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) report projected that postsecondary enrollment will continue to fall, resulting in demographic shifts among college students:

No upswing is projected until 2023, and it will be very gradual and comprised increasingly of low-income racial and ethnic minorities who are the first in their families to go to college.... Those students tend to need much more financial aid and academic support. (Marcus, 2017b)

After a brief enrollment peak in 2026, WICHE reported that “the total number of high school graduates will decrease by 8 percent in the early 2030s” (Bransberger, 2017).
Institutional responses to falling enrollments. According to Marcus (2017a), strategies are being implemented across all types of institutions to maintain enrollments, which include lowering tuition rates, offering more financial aid and scholarships; developing new majors in fields with projected employment needs; recruiting students from other countries and domestically from nearby cities; and offering internship and study-abroad opportunities. Marcus reports that faculty participation is critical for the success of these efforts, as some instructors may be unaware of the impending enrollment crisis.

Changing student demographics at institutions. The shifting student demographics at U.S. institutions reflect recruitment efforts that now target poor rural White students along with minority, first-generation, transfer, veterans, and other groups (Jaschik, 2017). These efforts have been effective, as 70% of high school students now attend college directly after graduation, narrowing the college attendance gap between students from high-income families (at 83%) and low-income families (at 67%), and even surpassing the number of middle-income students (at 64%) (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018).

A recent Pew Research Report describes the post-millennial Generation Z as the most ethnically and racially diverse, and potentially the best educated generation based on the higher percentage of these students who graduate from high school, attend college, have grown up in households with higher incomes than previous generations, and have at least one parent with an undergraduate degree (Fry & Parker, 2018).

Unfortunately, student retention remains a chronic challenge for colleges. According to Marcus (2018), “more than one in five full-time freshmen nationwide fail to return for a second year” (para. 8). First-generation college students are most affected, as one in three will quit college within three years (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018). Retention must become a priority, as dropouts must repay loans without having the benefit of a degree, and colleges lose anticipated revenue and students (Marcus, 2018).
Many private and state-funded institutions have come to rely on international students to maintain enrollment, which has been particularly effective at some art colleges. In 2016, Loudenbeck reported: “Nearly 1 million international students study at colleges and universities across the United States, up 40% from a decade ago” (para.1). According to Lu (2016), the number of Chinese students enrolled in fine and applied arts programs in the United States tripled between 2010 and 2015, due in part to the rigorous admissions process and a shortage of seats in universities and art schools in China, and an increased interest in art and design fields among middle-class Chinese students.

However, the number of international students studying in the United States may have reached its peak as a consequence of the Trump Administration’s policies. Citing a study by the Institute of International Education, Anderson and Svrluga (2018) reported there are 6.6% fewer “newly arriving international students” since the previous year, indicating a drop of nearly 10% since the recent high in 2015-2016 (para. 10). Anderson and Svrluga explain that “many schools attributed the trend to visa delays and denials ... as well as the U.S. social and political climate and student decisions to enroll outside the United States” (para. 3). Fewer international students will significantly affect the many cash-strapped private and public institutions that depend on these students to pay full-tuition and fill dorm rooms (Anderson, 2016; Loudenback, 2016; Lu, 2016).

**The Economic Realities of Attending College Today**

In spite of the messaging about the importance of a having a college education, students today must weigh the potential value of earning a two-year associate degree or four-year undergraduate degree against the economic sacrifices involved. In 2016, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences described the economic conditions faced by millennial students:

Emerging into a labor market shaped by the Great Recession, people who came of age in the first decade of the new century have found it difficult to get their lives started. They have been hesitant or unable to move out of
their parents’ houses and have found their average hourly earnings lower in 2014 than the average in 2004, after adjusting for inflation. (Introduction, para. 3)

A 2015 report by Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found “that over the last 25 years, more than 70 percent of college students have been working while enrolled” (Carnevale et al., 2015). However, according to Fry and Parker (2018), this conflicts with a recent Pew study of the post-millennial Generation Z that suggests fewer young adults are working jobs in comparison to previous generations. This discrepancy reflects differences between millennials, who grew up with a sense of economic optimism, and the oldest members of Generation Z, whose childhoods were shaped by the Great Recession. Premack (2018) and others describe post-millennials as highly concerned about debt and social justice, skeptical about future economic prospects, yet entrepreneurial and engaged in “side-hustles,” such as selling items online or teaching skills to others.

Economic distress among college students is common, as described in Still Hungry and Homeless in College, Sara Goldrick-Rab’s 2018 study involving over 43,000 students at 66 institutions, which found widespread food insecurity\(^1\) on campuses:

An estimated half of all college students struggle with food insecurity, even at elite flagship universities like the University of California, Berkeley, and selective private schools like Northwestern University. Former foster youth, L.G.B.T. students and students of color are at substantially increased risk. Food insecurity is strongly linked to lower graduation rates. (para. 3)

The findings of this study (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018), as quoted in the following statistics, are concerning:

\(^{1}\)“Food insecurity” is defined as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire those foods in a socially acceptable manner,” and the term “housing insecurity” expands upon “homelessness” to include “the inability to pay rent or utilities or the need to move frequently” (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, Hernandez, & Cady, 2018, p. 4).
• 35% of university students and 43% of community college students were food insecure in the 30 days preceding the survey;

• 36% of university students and 46% of community college students were housing insecure in the last year; and

• 9% of university students and 12% of community college students were homeless in the last year.

Such studies have resulted in New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s proposal “that every public college open a free campus food pantry” (Goldrick-Rab, 2018, para. 9).

While many students receive adequate financial support from parents or other sources, research suggests that we are living in decidedly different economic times than 20 years ago, and students can no longer work their way through college (Carnevale et al., 2015; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). What goes unexamined here is the breakdown (by gender, ethnicity, income, and location) of how different demographic groups are accessing undergraduate education, which is essential for understanding issues of social justice, but are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Goldrick-Rab (2018) summed up the economic situation for many students this way:

The new economics of college led us into this mess. The cost of higher education is at an all-time high, which is in sharp contrast to the declining income and wealth of most American families. And while a college degree is no guarantee of employment, it still greatly increases the odds of a middle class life. It makes sense that students work hard to go to college to achieve stability, and it is tragic that many fail to complete degrees because they cannot escape poverty long enough to focus on their studies. (para. 4)

The Perceived Value of an Undergraduate Art Degree

The value of earning an undergraduate art degree is difficult to assess, as is the case with many college majors. Alexis Clements (2014), writing for Hyperallergic, thoughtfully critiqued two very different reports released in 2014 that addressed the value

---

This study uses two categories of collected data: two-year public community colleges and public and private four-year institutions, with “university students” referring to students at four-year institutions.
and content of art degrees: The first, titled *Artists Report Back: A National Survey on the Lives of Arts Graduates and Working Artists* (Jahoda et al., 2014), was produced by the arts collective BFAMFAPhD using data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. The second report, *Making It Work: The Education and Employment of Recent Arts Graduates*, was produced by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) and relied on surveys conducted in 2011, 2012, and 2013 with 92,000 arts alumni from 154 institutions (Lena et al., 2014).

The intention behind BFAMFAPhD’s research, as stated in *Artists Report Back*, was to advocate for realistic reporting of the economic conditions faced by arts graduates:

> We struggle to support ourselves with jobs outside of the arts and we struggle to earn a living in the arts. Yet art school administrators and “creative class” reports assure us that arts graduates make a living in the arts. Loan officers insist that art students can afford art school tuition, repaying student loans over time by working in the arts. This is not our experience. We decided that it was time make our own report. (Jahoda et al., 2014, p. 1)

In summarizing this study, Clements (2014) wrote: “There’s one very clear take-away ... people who graduate with arts degrees regularly end up with a lot of debt and incredibly low prospects for earning a living as artists” (para. 1).

Quoting the SNAAP report, Clements (2014) described SNAAP’s agenda “as a research and advocacy project ‘designed to enhance the impact of arts-school education’” (para. 28), concluding:

> While SNAAP and BFAMFAPhD’s reports are very different ... primarily because SNAAP ultimately aims to paint a rosy picture while BFAMFAPhD wants to point out the failures in the system, in some ways their data on the realities of trying to become a working artist after graduating aren’t that different. (para. 29)

Both groups report “that many art schools are among the most expensive in higher education when you examine total tuition and fees against average aid and scholarship packages” (Lena et al., 2014, p. 6) and identify debt as a significant impediment for an increasing number of art students who plan to work in their field (Clements, 2014,
para. 30). *Artists Report Back* stated that “art graduates’ debt loads are higher than those of non-arts graduates” and listed the student loan default rates for 14 private art institutes, which range from 6% to 16% (Jahoda et al., 2014, p. 8).

The 2014 SNAAP Report, *Making It Work*, provided specific information from recent arts alumni (who graduated within 5 years of taking the survey) regarding what they had been taught (such as “soft skills”) and what their education lacked (such as business and financial skills) within their arts education (Lena et al., 2014, p. 6). Arts graduates were described as “socially engaged—as teachers, volunteers, and patrons of the arts” who could feel “undervalued and disconnected from meaningful learning objectives” if they participate in poorly structured internships during this “rising internship economy” (p. 6).

SNAAP reported the most common majors among recent arts undergraduates as: 27% fine and studio arts majors (including photography), 15% design majors, and 15% media arts majors (Lena et al., 2014, p. 10). By comparison, *Artists Report Back* argued that most working artists do not have an arts-related bachelor’s degree:

In the United States, 40 percent of working artists do not have bachelor’s degrees in any field. Only 16 percent of working artists have arts-related bachelor’s degrees.... Of the 715,000 working artists who do have bachelor’s degrees, only 27 percent have arts-related degrees. (Jahoda et al., 2014, pp. 3-7)

Both reports advocate for their respective agendas pertaining to college-level art education, but BFAMFAPhD’s report is problematic in terms of data reporting. For example, “working artists” were defined “as people whose primary earnings come from working as writers, authors, artists, actors, photographers, musicians, singers, producers, directors, performers, choreographers, dancers, and entertainers” (p. 4), but BFAMFAPhD did not include commercial designers and architects (who they report as representing 3.9% of the degrees earned by working artists) among “art graduates” (p. 3).

The justification for this deliberate omission is “because the higher earnings of designers
significantly alter the median earnings of our field” (p. 4), which was reported to be $36,105 for working artists with a bachelor’s degree, and $30,621 for working artists without a degree (Jahoda et al., 2014, p. 9).

**Other perspectives on contemporary art schools.** BFAMFAPhD are not the only critics of the costs versus value of a college education. The cover of a recent issue of the *New Art Examiner* asks: “Is Art School a Scam?” and featured articles such as “The Flawed Academic Training of Artists” (Siegesmund, 2018) and “How Neoliberal Economics Impacted Art Education” (Thodos, 2018). Richard Siegesmund (2018), a professor of art and design education at Northern Illinois University, argues that art should be taught using an “inquiry-based model” similar to the sciences rather than “as preparation for participation in the neoliberal marketplace” (p. 6). Cornell professor Bill Gaskins, writing for the online magazine *Artsy* in 2016, argued that falling enrollments and the recent closures of numerous college art programs present an ideal opportunity to reform college-level art education to embrace more diversity among faculty and student demographics, and to adopt interdisciplinary program structures.

Additional research is needed to further explore the employment prospects for arts graduates, the conditions for working artists, and the economic value of a college art degree, particularly as economic conditions in the United States change. Furthermore, the critical examination of the organizational structures, pedagogies, and content covered in college art programs should continue as programs evolve. What may be impossible to assess are the intangible values or overall richness that studying art, creative expression, and creative problem solving add to one’s life, which may not be articulated in terms of employment or financial gain.

The value of an education depends on how well programs understand and address the existing skills, dispositions, and needs of the students they serve. As college art programs restructure to remain viable, relevant, and worthwhile, faculty must continually
reassess which skills, experiences, and dispositions are necessary for future art study and employment, especially given the financial costs faced by students and their families.

**The State of First-Year Art Education in the United States**

While articulating the value of a college art degree remains elusive, myriad books and articles exist that address a wide range of topics associated with college art education, including studio art textbooks and numerous examples of critics, artists, and teachers describing how they teach, how they think art is being taught by others, and how they believe art should be, but is not being taught in college art programs (Buckley & Conomos, 2009; Madoff, 2009; Paper Monument, 2012; Salazar, 2014; Schwabsky, 2014; Stewart, 2015; White, 2011).

While the literature on postsecondary art education may describe the context and intentions of college art programs and instructors in the United States, it may not describe or reflect the teaching in most first-year art programs today. For example, books and articles over 10 years old often appear dated in their omission or descriptions of digital technologies (Elkins, 2001; Jackson, 1999; Singerman, 1999) or in their advocacy for teaching postmodern approaches to artmaking (Barrett, 2006; Tavin et al., 2007). Some literature primarily focuses on graduate-level education (Madoff, 2009; Singerman, 1999), critical theory rather than studio practice (Carson & Yonemoto, 2009), or the historical evolution or general content of postsecondary art programs (Efland, 1990; Elkins, 2001; Gregg, 2003; Schwabsky, 2014).

Much of the writing on art schools represents the elite educational environments of selective private art institutes (Elkins, 2001; Madoff, 2009; Pujol, 2009; Somerson & Hermano, 2013; Tavin et al., 2007; Witham, 2012), which are among the most expensive postsecondary institutions in the United States (Jahoda et al., 2014; Lena et al., 2014) and
serve a fraction (fewer than 20%) of the undergraduate art students in the United States (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2016).

There has been limited academic research specifically focused on first-year college art education in the United States (Salazar, 2013b). As with the art school literature, the few qualitative studies (and associated journal articles) I have found associated with first-year art education in the United States have involved programs at selective private art institutes (Bekkala, 2001; Kushins, 2007; Lavender et al., 2010; McKenna, 2011; Salazar, 2013a, 2013b, 2014). Yet these studies have made significant and distinct contributions to our understanding of first-year art education, particularly in terms of pedagogy, curricula, and the artistic development and mindsets of undergraduate art students. These studies and journal articles are summarized in Table 1.

The Foundations in Art: Theory & Education (FATE) organization\(^3\) has generated an extensive and diverse knowledge base about first-year art education through their biennial conferences, \textit{FATE in Review} journal publication, FATE’s podcast series, \textit{Positive Space}, and members’ Facebook group. This information is generally presented in the form of panel discussions, position papers, commentaries, and interviews rather than research studies. Other organizations, including the College Art Association (CAA), the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD), and the National Art Education Association (NAEA), have also addressed first-year art education via conference presentations and journal publications.

\(^3\)Information about FATE can be found at: https://www(foundations-art.org)
Table 1. Research Studies Associated with First-Year Art Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title and Publication Reference</th>
<th>Focus/Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The Evolution of First-Year Art Education in the United States

In his 2001 book, *Why Art Cannot Be Taught*, James Elkins, an art historian and critic at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), described the historical origins of art education in Europe from apprenticeships and medieval guilds to the development of Renaissance and Baroque art academies, and the approaches to teaching art inherent within those systems. Threads of these early models can still be found in art education today, particularly in the emphasis on drawing and composition. Elkins traced the beginnings of critiques and theory from the end of the Renaissance into the Baroque French and Italian academies (p. 26). The conservative art academies, such as the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which trained many American artists and architects throughout the 19th century and taught students to draw from master drawings and casts, continues to be an important influence on art education outside of the United States.

In the United States at the turn of the 20th century, while director of fine arts at Teachers College, Columbia University, Arthur Wesley Dow developed a design theory that articulated “the elements of design and principles of composition” that became widely used in schools (Efland, 1990, p. 178). The Bauhaus approach to teaching art and design, which Elkins (2001) described as “by far the most important influence on current art instruction” (p. 32) came to the United States after World War II. The Bauhaus was a school of design that operated in Weimar, Germany between 1919 and 1932. After fleeing Germany as a result of World War II, many of its instructors eventually took positions at important art schools in the United States, including the Illinois Institute of Design, Yale University, Black Mountain College, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As Efland (1990) stated, “Wherever these teachers resettled, they transformed the teaching of the fine arts, industrial design, architecture, and the crafts along the lines established by the Bauhaus” (p. 217).

**The influence of Bauhaus Foundations.** As the number of college art programs in the United States grew rapidly after World War II, the Bauhaus influence spread as well,
especially its model for first-year art education. This “foundation course,” based on the “Vorkurs” developed by Johannes Itten, involved “training of the senses, training of the emotions, and training of the mind” through exercises that explored artmaking first in two dimensions and then in three dimensions (Elkins, 2001, p. 32). While versions of Bauhaus exercises that explore textures, materials, color, value, rhythm, etc., are still taught in many first-year art courses, Elkins points out that these exercises, as originally conceived by Itten, were intentionally “rudimentary, without the influence of current art styles or art history” because Itten “wanted to return students’ minds and muscles to a tabula rasa, or blank slate” (p. 34).

Elkins (2001) questions the perpetual teaching of Bauhaus “rudiments” and the curricular sequence of foundation courses that remains the basis of many first-year programs today:

> It should not be accepted without question that the Bauhaus’s miscellany of exercises is our “rudiments.” Do we really think that materials and textures are the basis of our practice? Is postmodern practice well served by the formal agendas of the Bauhaus?

> The Bauhaus curriculum contained the seeds of the 2-D, 3-D, 4-D sequence that is common today. That sequence is open to the same objections as the study of “rudiments.”... Should there be any “fundamentals”? After all, postmodernism prides itself on not believing in foundations, and the remnants of Bauhaus teaching look more out of place with each passing year. (p. 36, emphasis in original)

**Conceptually oriented first-year programs.** First-year art programs have evolved over the last 25 years, with some making a sharp break from the Bauhaus model. In 1999, an entire issue of College Art Association’s *Art Journal* was dedicated to “Rethinking Studio Art Education” (Wye, 1999) and included Kate Morrison Catterall and Helen Maria Nugent’s (1999) description of The Workshop for Art Research and Practice (W.A.R.P.), a first-year art program at the University of Florida, Gainesville, that “intended to address the practice and perception of contemporary art and the manner in which it is taught at the University.” (p. 5). The W.A.R.P. program was described as an
intensive one-semester, 9-credit course (with 14 contact hours per week), which is still in existence, although Catterall and Nugent have moved on:

This new program, while not neglecting the importance of traditional fundamental skills, also recognized the need for the students to involve contemporary conceptual and theoretical thinking in their work from the earliest stages of their education. (p. 5)

Through a series of eight projects, W.A.R.P first deals with concepts in two dimensions, emphasizing the importance of signs, symbols, image, text, appropriation, narrative, and metaphor in works of art, while not neglecting issues of formal composition. The three-dimensional projects that follow analyze similar concepts through installation, performance, and sculptural investigations. (p. 7)

While the W.A.R.P. program includes art history and lectures from other academic disciplines to provide students with a context for understanding their own and others’ artwork, one wonders which “fundamental skills” are being taught in one-semester.

**Restructured programs and re-skilling students.** As programs undergo curricular restructuring to include digital media and new art forms, conceptually based first-year programs are becoming more common. Kushins (2007) articulated three categories that describe different conceptions of first-year programs based on their “introductory undergraduate studio art curricula and mission statements,” as indicated by course titles and content:

1. *traditional* – some combination of courses in drawing, color theory, and 2- and 3-dimensional design;

2. *modified* – maintain some traditionally defined foundation courses with additional thematic or new media courses; and


(p. 9)

4Other examples of reconstructive programs include: Sam Houston State University’s 9-credit, one semester Workshop in Art Studio and History (W.A.S.H.) program, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC)’s Core Studio/Research first-year program, and Carnegie Mellon University’s Concept and Media Studios, where coursework is taken during the first two years.
Coinciding with first-year programs modifying (or rejecting) the Bauhaus model is an ongoing debate about “re-skilling art students” in response to more conceptual, social, research-oriented, and theory-based approaches to teaching first-year art courses. Since the 1980s, many art programs became “colleges of art and design” (or separate schools within a college) with shared or distinct course requirements, but reflecting differences in philosophy and purpose regarding the development of skills, ideation, and art production.

In 2005, Ellen Lupton, a curator, author, and graphic design educator at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), proposed “the re-skilling of the American art student across the disciplines of fine and applied art, but working from our own design field as a model” (para. 2). Lupton suggested that students should be taught the following skills: Conceptual skills (to get ideas); Technical skills (to realize ideas); Critical skills (to build the discourse); Social Skills (to work with people and make things happen); and Professional skills (to make a living) (paras. 4-8). Lupton advised reexamining the “sacred cows” of art education, including the practice of “teaching art” instead of “teaching students” in ways that address their needs, and proposed abandoning the hours-long, stereotypical art schools “critiques” and the notion of teaching art for the sake of “art enrichment.”

The same year Lupton wrote about re-skilling, Laurie Fendrich (2005), a Guggenheim fellow and art professor at Hofstra University, furthered this debate by writing “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Mess” for The Chronicle of Higher Education:

A tug of war is going on over what exactly constitutes an artistic identity. The result is that art education...has become a hodgepodge of attitudes, self-expression, news bulletins from hot galleries, and an almost random selection of technical skills that cannot help but leave most art students confused about their ultimate purpose as artists.

It falls to first- and second-year “foundation” courses to provide any meaningful link to art of the past. Those courses—“Basic Design,”
“Beginning Drawing,” and so on—teach line, tone, shape, form, proportion, color, and some fundamental “hand skills.” (pp. 1-2)

Critiquing the newly implemented first-year program at her alma mater, the School of the Art Institute in Chicago (SAIC), Fendrich questioned the emphasis on research, critical thinking, and theory structured into this program:

On the opposite side are ... “post-studio” programs.... They, too, offer “foundation” courses, but instead of studying techniques and studio skills, the would-be artists ... study ideas and concepts—the putative social, cultural, and theoretical issues having to do with art. (p. 2)

Because ... the de facto curriculum ... is determined by what individual instructors decide to teach under the loose rubric of course descriptions, there is no way of knowing ... how much development of studio skills goes on. But by using such terms as “creative production” instead of “creativity” and “critical skills” instead of “skills,” and in citing drawing as just one among several “notational systems,” ... the practice of skills appear to be a very low priority. (p. 3)

Fendrich further argued that some art instructors are unprepared to teach authentically from a critical or social practice-oriented curricular model:

Educators who love traditional art but who, out of fear of being left behind, are jumping onto a theory-driven bandwagon are marching off to a land ruled by dilettante sociology, bogus community activism, and unrigorous science and philosophy. (p. 4)

A lack of consensus about first-year programs. This debate continues today, more than ten years on. Many programs have modified or restructured curricula to included courses in 4-D and digital media, but the extent of reorientation away from the Bauhaus model varies. Barney and Graham (2013-2014), writing about the 2013 FATE Conference, reported that the “sessions were diverse, but most remained solidly within the discourse of foundations as described by the Bauhaus” (p. 3), which I had also

---

The 2013 FATE 14th Biennial Conference, *postHaus*, was held at the Savannah College of Art & Design, Savannah, GA.
observed at the 2015 FATE Conference. For FATE members (including many who teach in community colleges and public colleges and universities), conceptually oriented program changes may be difficult to implement for numerous reasons. For example, there may be resistance from colleagues who believe traditional approaches to skill development are best for their students, or administrative concerns (such as transfer articulation agreements) that prevent wholesale program restructuring.

Yet, first-year art programs are being restructured in ways that serve the needs of their particular institution and student demographic, with some programs choosing to eliminate the traditional Bauhaus-oriented courses (Design 1, Design 2, Drawing 1, Drawing 2, and Color Theory). Chris Kienke (2018), the first-year program chair at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, described the “Posthaus” orientation that requires first-year art students to enroll in one introductory course within four specific art domains (including 2-D, 3-D, 4-D, and Drawing) plus a first-year seminar course:

The new curriculum guarantees student choice and by changing from a fixed curriculum of four courses to a set of menu-based choices of fourteen courses, students are no longer faced with a required course, but a required category. The curriculum requires students to take a course in their major program of study in their first year and allows them to try things out sooner than later. (pp. 27-28)

According to Kienke, this structure works well for faculty (full-time instructors who already teach these courses within major programs) and students (who like having choice among required courses) and allows for immediate study in a chosen major.

---

6The 2015 FATE 15th Biennial Conference, Tectonic Shifts: Breaking New Ground, was held at Herron School of Art & Design, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN.

7The menu-option includes the following courses in the 2-D domain: Graphic Design, Painting, Basic Photography, and Printmaking. The 3-D course options include: Industrial Design, Ceramics, Jewelry/Metals 1, and Sculpture. The 4-D course options include: Time Arts, Intro to Video, Web Design, and Intro to Coding. The drawing domain options include: Observational Drawing, Analytical Drawing.
As first-year art programs evolve in terms of structure and content, many have opted to keep elements of the Bauhaus’s rudimentary skill development while integrating digital media into their curricula. Some programs have adopted a conceptually oriented structure that emphasizes research and ideation, while others still have fostered student agency and engagement by allowing students to choose among first-year courses in different media domains. It can be argued, however, that all programs make changes with the intent to better prepare first-year students for upper-level art coursework by developing relevant art skills and dispositions.

The Fine Arts and Design in College Art Programs

As the number of college art programs expanded after World War II, conceptions of college art programs changed. According to Elkins (2001), in the 1960s and 1970s, programs replaced the term “applied arts” with more inclusive titles, such as “communications” and “art and technology” (p. 38). Yet fine arts and design schools have inherent and often conflicting philosophical intentions and teaching methodologies, which has led some college art programs to split into separate schools of art and design. Elkins attributed the heart of the conflict to an implied hierarchy that values “fine arts” (drawing, painting, sculpture, and fine art photography) over “decorative arts” (crafts including jewelry and metalwork, fiber arts, ceramics, glass) and “applied arts” (such as the various design fields, illustration, and commercial photography). While these distinctions have broken down over time through interdisciplinary practice and access to technology-based processes, according to Elkins, fundamental differences between fine art and design teaching remain:

In studios, design students need different kinds of criticism. They do not, in general, expect detailed critiques of meaning or symbolism, but they do require teachers who can speak about “look,” style, and marketing problems. There is also a philosophical divide among design students. Much of design philosophy is told as a story of capitalism and class conflicts ... [yet] another kind of design philosophy, less often encountered, that is closer
to the philosophy of fine art ... divide[s] ... teachers who talk about things like bourgeois taste and those who focus on abstract questions like the nature of objects and things. (p. 83)

Elkins further described differences between design students and fine art students:

Four areas [where] design students can differ from fine art students: the value accorded to making money, the kind of history that seems relevant, the kind of studio instruction that seems appropriate, and the kind of philosophy that best explains the practice. (p. 83)

Practical conflicts emerge with the need to teach design students to work effectively within larger organizations, which requires collaboration and compromise to solve client-driven problems. The work of fine art students, by contrast, is often conceived of as a more solitary pursuit of self-defined artistic projects. Of course, many designers work alone on projects that are more artistic than commercial in nature, and many artists work collaboratively on projects and produce work for clients, but it is the intentions behind the fields of fine art and design that present philosophical conflicts.

Further problems occur when defining first-year content, as the “fundamental skills and knowledge” in these areas are often distinct. For example, many fine art students may not learn the basic principals of typography, and many designers may find observational drawing skills or 3-D carving techniques irrelevant to their field. While the use of “the design process” as a model for approaching design projects may seem logical, one can safely argue that many fine artists would not describe their creative process as a universally applicable series of steps.

**The growing influence of design education.** As more students enroll in design-oriented majors, the influence of “design education” (used here as a catchall phrase that includes design thinking, the design process, and design-based learning) is becoming more pronounced in colleges of art and design. While the design process varies among the fields of design, architecture, and engineering, all involve approaching a problem or
project through a series of steps. For example, the Chicago Architecture Foundation describes six steps to the design process:

1. Define the Problem,
2. Collect Information,
3. Brainstorm and Analyze the Idea,
4. Develop Solutions/Build a Model,
5. Present Your Ideas to Others for Feedback, and
6. Improve your Design

As popularized by Stanford University’s design school and others, design thinking encourages designers and business leaders to think empathically about the needs and experiences of potential users of products under design.

While some see design thinking as offering exciting models for teaching secondary and postsecondary art education, others are more critical. Virginia Tech professor Lee Vinsel, writing in The Chronicle of Higher Education in 2018, called “design thinking” a “boondoggle” of “a ‘movement’ that’s little more than floating balloons of jargon” (para. 2) and cites accomplished designers who find the term to be a meaningless buzzword, like “innovation.” Vinsel cynically sees a connection between commerce and design thinking, with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and STEAM (STEM plus Art) education and “hubs of innovation” at universities ultimately functioning to recruit more students:

Because STEM is the dominant model of innovation in universities, other disciplines have had to contort themselves to fit. Artists raised their hands and started talking about STEAM: “Look, we can commodify things, too!” (para. 18)

As more art students pursue majors they hope will lead to future employment and as postsecondary institutions develop programs designed to recruit students, questions arise regarding how art departments can be structured to serve these needs. The trend of using interdisciplinary approaches for teaching art intends to prepare students broadly,
yet the fundamental skills, dispositions, and philosophies of teaching fine arts and design fields are often distinct, which can be confusing for students exploring artistic interests. Art departments should articulate these distinctions and emphasize the points where these intentions, skills, and philosophies overlap, given that past hierarchies will likely become less relevant as artists seek various ways to survive in the increasingly entrepreneurial “gig” economy.

Teaching Art at the College Level

College Art Instructors

As with most college faculty, searches to fill full-time college art teaching positions generally seek applicants with expertise in their field, as demonstrated by active scholarship in the form of art exhibitions, projects, grants and awards, and/or publications. Once hired, the faculty’s teaching abilities may be assessed through the quality of student work, student evaluations of instruction, classroom observations by colleagues, and via course documentation (such as syllabi). College art professors are not required to have studied education and pedagogy, but prior college-level teaching experience is considered essential. Teaching experience is commonly obtained during graduate study via teaching internships and assistantships, or as an adjunct instructor. While some art faculty may have studied education coursework and taught art at other levels, such experience may not be considered relevant in the academic hiring process. Full-time, tenure-track art professors are generally expected to participate in service-oriented campus activities, such as committee work, academic advising, recruitment events, administrative tasks, and professional development, in addition to maintaining active scholarship, to be awarded tenure.⁹

---

⁹My understanding of the academic hiring process and tenure criteria for art faculty comes from distanced observations and numerous informal conversations over many years with former
As with many other academic fields, college art departments, and in particular first-year art programs, commonly rely on adjunct instructors, lecturers, and graduate students to teach undergraduate courses. The process of hiring adjunct instructors differs greatly from formal searches for full-time tenure-track positions. It is often the case that adjunct instructors are hired based on personal recommendations and availability to teach on short notice to fill an unanticipated opening. Evaluation of contingent (part-time or non-tenure track) faculty may also involve student evaluations and the quality of student work, but may be less formal than for full-time faculty.

Efland (1990) described the spread of two-year MFA studio programs within the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to the MFA’s acceptance as the terminal degree for studio art. However, internationally (particularly in Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia), studio art Ph.D.s (or equivalents) are often required for full-time teaching positions. While a few studio Ph.D. programs exist at present in the United States, MFA degrees are by far the most common degree held by studio art faculty.

**Teacher training for pedagogy and content.** Some MFA programs (particularly at large research universities) have graduate students begin teaching (in the capacity of intern or instructor of record) upon entering the program, while other programs have limited opportunities for teaching. There appears to be a growing interest in pedagogy courses offered as part of MFA coursework. For example, Ernesto Pujol (2009) argued that graduate students should be trained in effective pedagogy, because “graduate programs are mostly producing teachers,” and “education is a discipline with many differing theories and practices, and we should respect it more seriously” (p. 8).
As described in conference panels, art departments have adopted different ways of preparing and supporting graduate students who are teaching (which may include workshops and teaching seminars, direct supervision, and use of shared rubrics or syllabi). Research by Oleson and Hora (2014) suggests that college faculty commonly teach as they were taught until their accumulated teaching experiences shapes their personal knowledge base and informs their pedagogy.

Yet many college art instructors do have experience teaching at different levels and, like Pujol, have taken education courses at some point in their studies. Over the years, I have encountered many art educators who have past experience teaching at both the K-12 and college level, which is understandable, as teaching is a viable source of income for artists. College art instructors with K-12 teaching experience may indicate a particular suitability for teaching incoming first-year art students.

Professional development is an ongoing concern for many college art instructors whose teaching requires digital technologies that continue to evolve, or at institutions with shifting student demographics. While college art programs may offer workshops and retreats for faculty to address such issues, professional development also occurs through conferences, online courses, via social media (through designated Facebook groups) that offer access to information and training necessary to meet the curricular demands of their programs and the needs of their students.

Given that many college art professors are hired on the basis of their artistic expertise (with materials and processes) and scholarship (i.e., exhibitions, projects, and grants received) rather than formal training in pedagogy, one can assume that these instructors rely on intuition and personal experiences to help guide their teaching. Conversations with art faculty I have had over the years suggest that many college art instructors

---

instructors come from educationally and/or financially privileged backgrounds, often with family members who were teachers, professors, or artists. However, problems can arise when the faculty culture does not reflect the lives or needs of the students. Writing for *The Washington Post*, Jay Mathews (2015) described Rebecca D. Cox’s research on the impact that academic culture can have on students:

Cox showed how the culture of college professors, both at two-year community colleges and four-year schools, was hostile to good instruction. The professors had been trained to be proud of their grasp of their subject matter and not to worry too much about how they were teaching it. The best students at four-year colleges could adjust to this, but first-year community college students were often not equipped to translate the jargon and weather the indifference they felt from many of the college faculty they encountered. (para. 3)

As the conditions for attending college have changed significantly over the past two decades, many students today experience financial burdens that force them to engage with education differently than prior generations. It is incumbent upon instructors to recognize these different conditions and, when necessary, to modify their expectations, content, and pedagogy to the student demographic served by their institution.

**Changes Affecting K-12 Art Education**

While many art instructors have speculated that students today are approaching artmaking differently as a result of using digital devices, computer technologies, and social media, college art faculty may be less cognizant of changes in how K-12 schools are preparing students for college-level studio art courses.

In recent decades, school reform initiatives (including the Bush Administration’s *No Child Left Behind*, the Obama Administration’s *Race to the Top*, and the *Common Core*) have created assessment-driven K-12 school environments that have negatively impacted arts education through decreases in funding and instruction time (Sabol, 2010, 2013). Standardized testing and the assessment culture in secondary schools privilege testable knowledge and have influenced the content and teaching of art (Boughton, 2004),
with some suggesting that creativity and divergent thinking skills have suffered as a result (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Gardner & Davis, 2013; The RSA, 2010).

The Great Recession, which began in 2008, has led to widespread funding and programming cuts to public schools and continues to affect K-12 art education throughout the United States. According to Sabol (2010), “25 percent of visual arts programs experienced reductions in teaching staff in 2009 alone, with another 20 percent reporting the need for additional teaching staff to handle teaching loads,” due to increases in class sizes (p. 37). Although the economy has since improved, in many cases, funding has yet to be fully reinstated. According to Leachman, Masterson, and Figueroa (2017), as of 2015, “29 states were still providing less total school funding per student than they were in 2008” (para. 1), and while educational funding has increased, only “three-quarters of cuts accrued between 2009-2013 were restored by 2015” (The Hechinger Report, 2018, para. 2).

Challenge and Support in First-Year Art Education

While cognitive and artistic development in children is commonly taught in K-12 education programs, most college art instructors are unaware of the theories that describe development in adolescents and adults in terms of knowledge acquisition and identity. Student development theories can provide instructors with a context for interpreting students’ responses to challenges and support in the college environment. Such knowledge may be helpful in developing pedagogy and content appropriate for the demographic of students served by the institution and who are in their courses.

While student development theories vary in terms of focus (i.e., intellectual, spiritual, identity, or transformative), they share common characteristics. These include “stages,” “phases,” “positions,” or “criteria” that articulate the different levels or progression of development and growth, which may not be linear and often involve periods of “regression,” “waiting,” or “moratoriums.” Growth comes from holding
conflicting ideas or beliefs, or cognitive dissonance, which prompts students to question their personal assumptions. Such conflicts can be uncomfortable and may lead to personal crises, but the necessary reassessment of values and beliefs leads students to more complex thinking, insight, and growth toward higher levels of development.

**Student development theories relevant to first-year education.** Many who teach first-year students will recognize aspects of these student development theories from their teaching experiences. For example, Nevitt Sanford characterized student learning as “cycles of differentiation and integration, and balancing support and challenge” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 9). In other words, students learn how to negotiate new experiences (differentiation) and then integrate these new understandings into their thinking, and this cycle prompts students to think differently and grow. Colleges offer support and resources while simultaneously challenging students with demanding coursework in a new environment.

For example, art instructors may perceive first-year students as approaching knowledge and learning with less flexibility than students at other levels (i.e., by focusing on the “right way” to do something or wanting to do what the teacher wants, etc.). William G. Perry’s (1998) theory, or “scheme of ethical and intellectual growth,” articulates how students approach knowledge acquisition as they progress through college and addresses such faculty perceptions about first-year students. The simplified version of Perry’s scheme (Evans et al., 2010) presents four “positions” along a continuum of development: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment.

According to Perry, most first-year students (of traditional age) exhibit dualistic thinking, which “represents the mode of meaning making in which the world is viewed dichotomously: good-bad, right-wrong, black-white ... right answers exist for everything” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86). Students maintain this position until they encounter “experts [who] disagree or when good teachers or other authority figures do not have all the answers or express uncertainty” (p. 86), which prompts reassessment of their rigid
perceptions of knowledge, leading to growth toward the position of multiplicity. In first-year studio art classes, such conflict may arise within students when different faculty express differing opinions about student artworks during critiques, which will prompt students to decide (rather than accept blindly) which feedback is valid.

Students who exhibit multiplicity in their thinking accept “diverse views when the right answers are not yet known ... all opinions are equally valid” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86), and perceive their role as a student changing, from “one who works hard to learn to one who learns to think more independently…. Peers become more legitimate sources of knowledge, and individuals are likely to improve their ability to think analytically” (p. 86). This evolution in thinking continues for students throughout their college experience. For example, in relativism, students become more discerning of opinions, which are no longer perceived to have equal validity. A change from cognitive to ethical growth occurs in the commitment position, when students make commitments through “choices, decisions, and affirmations” involving “social content” such as “major, career, religion, relationships, politics, and so forth,” to develop a sense of identity (p. 87).

Many teachers intuitively help students advance to the next stage of development through pedagogy that offers challenge and support. Building upon Perry’s scheme, L. Lee Knefelkamp found that students in the earlier stages are supported by highly structured pedagogy, such as “course tasks, giving detailed explanations of assignments, and using specific examples that reflect students’ experiences,” while students at later stages prefer less structure with more open-ended assignments (Evans et al., 2010, p. 91). Knefelkamp advises using direct, hands-on experiential learning to help students in the earlier stages connect with the subject matter, and as students advance, Knefelkamp suggests exposing students to increasingly diverse sources for information that is more complex in nature (Evans et al., 2010, p. 91). The community of learners many first-year programs create mirrors Knefelkamp’s concept of personalism, which “reflects the creation of a safe environment where risk taking is encouraged” and helps early stage
students engage with the course material, make contact with faculty, and receive feedback on work (pp. 91-92). Lastly, Knefelkamp suggests that faculty choose challenging course materials to encourage growth and advancement in students (called plus-one staging) because “individuals typically understand and are attracted to reasoning that is slightly more advanced than their own” (p. 92).

The generalist curriculum of first-year art programs, which intentionally exposes students to a variety of art processes in different art domains (i.e., 2-D, 3-D, digital media, etc.), and requires different kinds of skill development, reflects experiential learning. David A. Kolb (1984) developed a complex theory of experiential learning whereby “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Kolb identified four interrelated kinds of abilities (involving concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation), which are part of a continual, cyclical process of learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 164). The cycle of learning Kolb described, which has “dimensions” that include “feeling,” “watching,” “thinking,” and “doing,” which lead to “grasping” information and “processing” to make the information meaningful (Evans et al., 2010, pp. 138-139), seems particularly relevant to the physical and expressive nature of artmaking. Kolb further noted that individuals have “habitual way[s] of responding to a learning environment” that emerge as “learning styles” that may lead students toward specific fields of study (p. 143), but advises college educators to support student growth through differentiated pedagogy:

Provide varied methods of instruction and evaluation ... to offer both support to aid students in connecting with subject matter and challenge to assist them in developing the nondominant aspects of their preferred styles so that they can achieve the level of flexibility needed to respond to differing environmental demands.... Include activities that match as well as mismatch each of the four learning styles. (Evans et al., 2010, p. 143)
There are numerous theories\textsuperscript{11} that explain how students approach learning in college. While many teachers have developed effective responses to students’ needs based on intuition and personal experiences, the benefit of understanding student development theories is responsive teaching informed by an overview of common knowledge about how students experience growth. Knefelkamp (1998) recounted Perry’s argument that students need more from faculty than “praise and blame” in the form of grading and classroom interactions; rather, students need recognition and encouragement to thrive: “For when the student is recognized, the conditions of respect and encouragement that make risk possible and the pain of growth endurable are present. [Perry] often said, ‘If my pain has not lived, I cannot let go to move on’” (p. xiii). Perry’s statement that students should be supported through recognition, respect, and encouragement seems particularly appropriate for instructors of first-year art students, who are frequently challenged to take risks with expressive artmaking that often explores painful personal conflicts or trauma that will lead to further personal growth.

**Recent changes in adolescent development and learning.** Numerous studies suggest that today’s adolescents and young adults may be developing and learning differently from previous generations (Collins & Halverson, 2009; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Levine & Dean, 2012; Seemiller & Grace, 2016, Turkle, 2011, 2015; Twenge & Park, 2017). Over the last two decades, much has been written about the effects that online media and devices have had on concentration (Carr, 2010; Levitin, 2014; Turkle, 2015) and how students are engaging with reading, research, and coursework (Collins &

\textsuperscript{11}For example, Albert Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory describes how people learn through observation, how learning is influenced by motivation and mental states, and does not necessarily change behavior. Faculty who teach adults in community colleges may benefit from reading about Jack Mezirow’s (2011) transformative learning theory, and instructors who want to understand about how students develop socially (in terms of developing the “soft skills” required for collaboration) may find relevancy in Robert Kegan’s (1994) theory describing the evolution of consciousness and socialization.
Halverson, 2009; Levine & Dean, 2012; Purcell et al., 2012; Turkle, 2015); on communication and interpersonal skills (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Levine & Dean, 2012; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Thompson, 2013; Turkle, 2011, 2015); and on identity development and mental health (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Turkle, 2011, 2015, Twenge, 2017a; 2017b; Twenge, Joiner, Rogers, & Martin, 2018).

**Shorter attention spans and multitasking.** Of particular concern for many art faculty are students’ shorter attention spans, reported to have decreased by half (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 126), and the apparent need for instant gratification and engagement through multitasking (Levitin, 2014; Turkle, 2015). This suggests that young adults have less capacity for sustained concentration and solitude, which is considered essential for creative production (Carr, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Levitin, 2014, Turkle, 2015). The debate between negative aspects of technology use (Carr, 2010; Levitin, 2014; Turkle, 2011, 2015) versus the limitless potential offered by technology use (Thompson, 2013; Turkle, 2011, 2015) has been going on for years, yet we are hardly closer to knowing exactly how and why young adults are changing.

**Extended adolescence and parental involvement.** Research suggests that adolescents are maturing at a slower pace than previous generations, which may be for a variety of reasons (Levine & Dean, 2012; Twenge & Park, 2017). Arthur Levine, who, while at Teachers College, Columbia University, conducted research involving large surveys of college administrators, faculty, and students for comparison of different generations of undergraduate college students (Levine, 1980; Levine & Cureton, 1998; Levine & Dean, 2012), found that increased parental involvement in students’ lives has contributed to the extended adolescence and delayed independence observed among today’s students (Levine & Dean, 2012, p. 89), which student affairs officers reported as the most significant change since 2001 (p. 80).

Researchers, such as Julie Lythcott-Haims, who served as dean of freshmen at Stanford, suggest that some students enter college today with fewer developed life skills
due to parents’ intensive involvement in students everyday lives (Miller & Bromwich, 2019). As hovering “helicopter parents” have morphed into “snowplow parents” who clear their children’s path of responsibilities (and failures), young adults are reported to be maturing later and experiencing an extended adolescence (Levine & Dean, 2012; Stetka, 2017; Twenge, 2017a). Writing for The New York Times, Miller and Bromwich (2019) report:

Learning to solve problems, take risks and overcome frustration are crucial life skills, many child development experts say, and if parents don’t let their children encounter failure, the children don’t acquire them.... When a 20-year-old sleeps through a test, he’s probably not going to forget to set his alarm again.

Snowplowing has gone so far, they say, that many young people are in crisis, lacking these problem-solving skills and experiencing record rates of anxiety. (paras. 48-49)

It appears that financial resources play a role in the ability of parents to become overly involved in students’ lives at college. According to Miller and Bromwich (2019), first-generation college students often navigate the challenges of applying to, attending, and paying for college on their own, without the benefit of parents’ prior experiences, suggesting that parental over-involvement may be a bigger issue at elite institutions than at community colleges.

This increase in parental involvement is due in part to the ease of communication provided by smartphones. College students today reportedly have close relationships with their parents (as compared with previous generations), whom they admire and consult with when faced with unfamiliar tasks or difficulties (Levine & Dean, 2012; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Levine and Dean (2012) also reported a consumer mentality among parents and students who treat colleges as they would businesses by considering “product quality” in terms of the “educational experiences” offered, which reflects increasing costs and the perception of education as a financial investment (pp. 91-92).
**More students with mental health issues and disabilities.** Further concern involves the increasing number of students who require campus mental health services and disability services. Gallagher’s 2014 National Survey of College Counseling Centers found that “86% of directors report ... a steady increase in the number of students arriving on campus that are already on psychiatric medication” and growing numbers of students with severe psychological problems that include anxiety disorders, crises, medication issues, clinical depression, sexual assault on campus, self-injury, and problems related to earlier sexual abuse (Gallagher, 2015, p. 5). The counseling center directors reported that 52%-59%\(^{12}\) of clients present with severe psychological problems (up from 44% in 2013), of which 8%-9% experience impairment so severe that they cannot remain in school or require extensive psychological/psychiatric help (pp. 5-6).

According to Levine and Dean (2012), there is increased use of student disability services as well:

*Use of disability services, including affective, cognitive, and physical support has also increased at 83 percent of four-year colleges and 72 percent of two-year colleges. Attention deficit disorder was cited as one of the fastest growing disabilities. (Student Affairs Survey, 2008; as cited by Levine & Dean, 2012, p. 90)*

Some researchers, including Twenge (2017a, 2017b), Turkle (2011, 2015), and Gardner and Davis (2013), have suggested that the ubiquitous use of devices and social media may be contributing to adolescents’ social anxiety and mental health issues, but concrete evidence of causes remains elusive. However, it is widely understood that the use of smartphones and laptops in classrooms can have a negative impact on learning (Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016; Lang, 2017; Turkle, 2015).

Given the changes reportedly affecting the development and mental health of adolescents and young adults, it is important to consider how these changes are affecting

---

\(^{12}\)The different numbers indicate the size of the institutions surveyed, with the smaller percentage reported at institutions with fewer than 15,000 students.
the perceived skills and dispositions of first-year art students. Furthermore, given the unique role that first-year programs play in offering challenge and support to students entering the college environment, it is also important to understand how faculty are responding to these changes in students through pedagogy and content.

**Summary**

The challenges facing postsecondary institutions in the United States today in terms of rising costs, falling enrollments, and shifting student demographics suggest that profound changes will continue to occur in undergraduate higher education over the next decade. Within the field of undergraduate art education, and specifically in first-year college art programs, the changes include students who seek training for future careers, yet who have been prepared differently and engage with education differently than past generations of art students. Given the economic challenges facing students, the pressure on art programs to provide relevant skills for an unpredictable future job market has never been higher.

College art programs must acknowledge the conditions facing K-12 art education and the effect on students: assessment-driven environments and budget cutbacks that have negatively impacted arts programming and college preparation. While digital media and computer technologies provide essential skills and artmaking opportunities for students, these technologies have also generated profound changes in behavior, communication, and thinking. Students enter college today engaging differently with learning: empowered by wide-ranging possibilities for artmaking and access to information and ideas, yet simultaneously hobbled by distraction, anxiety, and mental health concerns. The effects of social media and digital device use, parental involvement, and financial stress are not fully understood, but given all of these changes, knowledge of
student development theories and ongoing research may help to illuminate what students today need to thrive within the college environment.

The next section presents the design and methodology of the study.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study is to explore how 12 participants, as experienced college art instructors, perceive entering students and teaching in first-year college art programs today. My interest in this topic originated in my experiences teaching art in a high school and in first-year art programs, and the literature review provided a context for developing the research questions and research design.

This chapter describes the pilot study and the research design and methodology for this study, including participant sampling, data sources, and collection methods, and the approaches used in data analysis. Lastly, the implementation of the study is discussed with reflection on issues that arose in the data collection and analysis.

Preliminary Considerations

The Pilot Study

A pilot study\(^1\) was conducted between 2012-2014 to explore art instructors’ perceptions of changes that have occurred over the past 10 years concerning entering

\(^1\)This pilot study appeared in two papers:


students’ art skills and dispositions, and teaching in first-year programs. The pilot study’s research questions explored the perceptions college art faculty have about first-year art students (in terms of the strengths and weakness of students’ changing art skills and the dispositions they enter college with), and how art instructors are teaching in response to these changes. The secondary research questions asked what skills and knowledge were important for art students to learn, and how art instructors envision the future of art study at the college level.

The pilot study tested the research design and research questions, the interview protocol, data collection, and the coding scheme for data analysis. Using case study methodology, I interviewed six purposefully sampled first-year college art instructors (who were former colleagues at two colleges where I had previously taught between 1998 and 2005) using a semi-structured interview protocol. Over the course of the study, the use of the constant comparative method led to refinement and expansion of the interview protocol. As an exploratory case study, the research questions were also modified as my understanding of the issues raised during the interviews deepened.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using a coding scheme initially framed by the research questions and informed by the literature. Four categories of perceptions emerged from the data that were composed of sets of interrelated codes that indicate impacts on learning, as described in Table 2. Upon closer analysis, the majority of codes fell into two major code categories: *Perceptions about Entering Students* and *Perceptions about Teaching*. Patterns emerged within these categories to created sub-categories that describe strategies for teaching (see Table 3). In addition, because four of the six participants taught in a selective public liberal arts college and two participants taught in a two-year community college, I was also able to compare the data between the different institutional types.
Table 2. The Pilot Study Coding Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Codes</th>
<th>Examples of Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Perceptions about Entering Students** | • Mental Health Issues  
  • Skill/Manual Skills  
  • Financial/Career Concerns  
  • Technology/Screens/Devices  
  • Frustration/Impatience |
| **Perceptions about Teaching** | • Physical/Hand-On Experiences  
  • Creative Problem Solving/Critical Thinking  
  • Play/Risk-Taking/Exploration  
  • Technology as Positive/Negative  
  • Frustration Leading to Growth and Learning |
| **The Reasons for Changes in Students** | • College Admissions Policies  
  • Education During NCLB/Testing  
  • Technology Use and Information Access  
  • Childhood Play |
| **Perceptions about High School Art Teachers** | • Instill a Sense of Curiosity and Work Ethic  
  • Empathy w/ Limitations on HS Art Education  
  • Empathy w/ Economic Impact on Art Education  
  • Promote Skill Proficiency and Personal Vision |

Table 3. Sub-Categories within the Major Code Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions About Entering Students</th>
<th>Perceptions About Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Concerns:</strong> for students, including financial and career concerns, achieving good grades, and negotiating mental health issues</td>
<td><strong>Practical Concerns:</strong> regarding what should be taught during the first year, the role of drawing and manual skills vs. career and technical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ubiquitous Technology:</strong> concerns about its affect on students regarding interpersonal communication, information acquisition, skill development, work habits, and aesthetic influences</td>
<td><strong>Technology and its Applications in Art, the Classroom, and in Life:</strong> in terms of potential and appeal when used for making art and addressing its troubling affects on student learning and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Development and the Creative Process:</strong> as understood by students, including the emotions expressed by students challenged by the expectations in foundation year coursework</td>
<td><strong>College Admissions Policies, the Impact of the NCLB Secondary Environment and Economy:</strong> in terms of addressing the needs and skill levels presented by art students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aesthetic Influences / Conceptions of Art Making:</strong> as expressed by students, in terms of the influence of an image-saturated world and access to culture through the Internet</td>
<td><strong>Facilitating Art Making and Learning:</strong> for students who may be struggling with processes, necessary skills, and creating a receptive mindset for Foundation Year coursework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of the pilot study. The pilot study results (Mohns, 2014, 2018) suggested that first-year art students have changed in recent years in terms of the art skills and dispositions they presented upon entering the two art programs in the study. For example, every participant described students as having shorter attention spans and being easily frustrated when learning new skills. Four of the six participants reported having students with diminished manual dexterity and who value learning digital media processes over manual art skills. Moreover, the participants described students who experience anxiety and struggle when required to work independently on open-ended art projects.

Technology use (in the form of personal devices and computers) was perceived to affect how students communicate, behave, and approach artmaking, while changing the kinds of skills students enter with and seek to acquire in their college coursework.

The pilot study also found that all six faculty participants had modified their teaching based on their perceptions of students. For example, three participants perceived students to be aesthetically influenced by the media and culture they consume online. In response, one community college instructor reported making connections between video game imagery and drawing assignments in an effort to engage her students.

There was a difference in how the community college participants and the selective public college participants responded to some interview prompts. For instance, the community college faculty described students who were concerned about financial burdens, while the participants at the public college perceived their students to be concerned about grades and seeking explicit directions from the teacher. In response to these concerns, at the community college, one participant reported bringing in visiting artists to explain to students how art coursework led to their employment in the arts. At the public college, some participants described de-emphasizing grades to encourage students to experiment and take risks in their work. The differences in participant responses from the two types of institutions were intriguing, as they suggested ways that student demographics influence content and pedagogy.
**Toward a Revised and Expanded Research Design**

The pilot study confirmed the need for further research to explore how the rapid pace of change is affecting different aspects of first-year college art education: as students are changing, art programs and instruction are changing to accommodate students and incorporate newly available technologies for artmaking. This information is essential for art educators at all levels because, as many report anecdotally, teachers are often so deeply focused on their own domains (i.e., high school art classes or upper-level media-specific college programs) that they are unaware of the changes affecting first-year art education, which can have direct ramifications for the students they teach.

A major weakness of the pilot study involved the convenience sampling, which, according to Creswell (2013), “saves time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility” (p. 158). Although interviewing former colleagues and acquaintances for the pilot study facilitated the development of the research questions and framework for the data analysis, my familiarity with the participants and their institutions posed the potential for personal bias. A broader participant and institution sample was needed to test the pilot study’s findings and to strengthen the research design.

**The Dissertation Study**

**The Framework**

This current study is an exploratory case study that investigates students and teaching in first-year college art program through the perceptions of 12 college art instructors. Specifically, this research involves recorded interviews with 12 faculty from a broad range of institutions that explore perceptions of entering first-year art students (often using retrospective recall) in terms of their art skills and dispositions, and how these art instructors are teaching in response.
This study builds upon (and makes reference to) what was learned in the pilot study, but uses a different sample of participants, and the data collected from both studies remain distinct. Significant changes were implemented to the research design as a result of the pilot study.

The Research Design

To strengthen the overall study, the following changes were made to the research design used for the pilot study:

- **A broader sampling of participants:** Expanding the sample to 12 college art instructors representing a wide range of institutions (including community colleges, public colleges and research universities, and private art institutes located across the United States) to facilitate cross-case analysis by institutional type.

- **Chain-referral sampling of participants and institutions:** Use of chain-referral sampling to find participants and institutions previously unknown to me to reduce the potential for personal bias in the data collection and analysis.

- **Use of additional data sources:** The use of unfamiliar participants and institutions necessitates collection of additional data to provide background information and context for interpreting and validating the interview data. Gathering data from online sources about the participants, their respective institutions, and first-year art programs serves to supplement and verify the interview data.

- **Modifications to the research questions and interview protocol:** The research questions and interview protocol were tested for validity through the pilot study, in the dissertation research seminars, and in consultation with my advisor. Revisions to the research questions and interview protocol were made to reduce the pilot study’s emphasis on “changes in students over time.” Given
that change continually occurs throughout society, and that instructors, art programs, and institutions also undergo continual changes, the criterion for exploring issues raised in the data became salience, regardless of whether the issues are pre-existing or recent developments. Hence, long-term salient issues (such as student development and adjustment to the college environment) do not go unexamined and recent changes are duly noted.

- **Terminology used in the study:** The revised research design reconsidered the descriptive terminology used throughout the study. For example, “foundation year” was replaced with the more inclusive “first-year” to describe curricula, students, programs, and instructors. Not all first-year art programs embrace the term “foundations” to describe their curricula, philosophy of art education, and educational mission, but most foundation programs occur during the first year of college. “First-year” also serves as a gender-neutral substitute for “freshman.”

**Rationale for a case study.** This study explores how 12 selected college art instructors perceive students in first-year courses in terms of exploring art skills and dispositions, and how they modify pedagogy and course content in response to their perceptions of students. Exploratory studies provide researchers “with an understanding of the meaning that … things, actions, and events have for people who are involved with them, and the perspectives that involve their actions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 67, emphasis in original). According to Merriam (1988), case studies are an appropriate methodology for conducting educational research:

> The qualitative case study is a particularly suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education…. A case study approach is often the best methodology for addressing these problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice. (p. xiii)
Yin (2009) articulates three conditions that underscore the use of case studies in research: (1) the use of how/why in the research questions, (2) the researcher having no control over behavioral events, and (3) the focus on contemporary events (p. 8); which all apply to this research.

For this dissertation study, the bounded case, or unit of analysis, is defined as “college art instructors who teach art majors in first-year programs and have at least seven years of college-level teaching experience.” The perceptions held by the participants (about students and teaching) are the focus of the study, not their art programs (although data associated with their institutions and programs were collected and analyzed).

**The criteria for participation.** For inclusion in the study, participants must have a minimum of seven years of college teaching experience and be recommended as a superb teacher and/or teaching in a strong traditional or innovative first-year art program. The participants must also regularly teach first-year art courses for art majors (although they may also teach courses outside of the first-year curriculum).

The criterion of seven or more years of college teaching experience is used because the study relies on the accumulated knowledge and perceptions of experienced teachers who understand the culture of academic environments and have developed a strong teaching philosophy, even if they have taught a variety of courses at different institutions. During my training to become a K-12 teacher, it was mentioned that new teachers need five to seven years of teaching experience to gain insight into the overall education process and school environment. After seven years, teachers are expected to know how to develop effective and appropriate course materials and pedagogical strategies, and can reflect on ways their students and teaching have changed over time.

**The participant sampling.** The study involves 12 participants from a wide range of institutional types for a broad exploration of teaching in first-year art programs. In
addition to seven years of teaching experience in higher education, the participants in an ideal sample would:

- Have reputations as highly-regarded, experienced college art instructors,
- Represent a range of art practices and areas of art expertise (such as drawing, digital media, or social practice),
- Represent a range of teaching expertise in terms of different kinds of first-year art courses (such as cultural seminars, observational drawing, or video courses),
- Represent a range of ages, years of teaching experience, and different stages of teaching careers,
- Represent a range of programs, from traditional “foundations-oriented” and modified, to reconstructive or experimental “first-year core” programs, and
- Represent different types of institutions (ranging from two-year community colleges to four-year public colleges, research universities, and private art institutes) in different geographical locations around the United States.

Chain-referral sampling requires soliciting recommendations for potential participants from friends, advisors, former colleagues, and contacts at the Foundations in Art: Theory and Education (FATE) organization, and from the participants themselves. According to Creswell (2013), this approach to sampling “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (p. 158), making it a suitable method for finding participants with the level of experience necessary to provide information related to what I seek to learn.

**Data sources and collection.** The research design presented in Table 4 describes the data collection methods (e.g., data types and sources) used to explore the research

---

2As described in Chapter II: “Restructured Programs and Re-skilling Students”

3FATE is a professional organization in the United States dedicated to first-year college art education. FATE hosts biennial conferences, publishes a journal (*FATE in Review*), and podcast series (*Positive Space*). See [http://www.foundations-art.org](http://www.foundations-art.org)
questions. Two main sources of data exist in this study: participant interviews and online data. The methods for collecting the data include conducting semi-structured participant interviews that were recorded and transcribed, and gathering information about the participants and their institutions from online sources. In some cases, the interviews were supplemented with follow-up correspondences to clarify the interview data, and for two participants, transcribed podcast interviews were used as supplemental data.

Information about the participants and their institutions was collected from various online sources, including: institutional websites (that included faculty listings, art departments’ mission statements, and descriptions of first-year programs, curricula, and courses); the participants’ personal websites and LinkedIn.com profile pages; and online databases that aggregate statistical information about postsecondary institutions in the United States (for the purpose of institutional cross-comparison).

The two main research questions, which involve the participants’ perceptions about the students and teaching in first-year art programs, were addressed directly via the semi-structured interviews. Supplementing and verifying the interview data were data collected from online sources that described the participants’ art practice, training, and teaching experience; and their respective institutions and first-year programs.

The two sub-questions explore forces both within (pedagogical and curricular) and outside (administrative) the classroom, and required data collection from both online sources (regarding the institutions and programs) and the interviews (regarding pedagogy and program initiatives) to address these questions.

---

FATE produces a podcast, Positive Space, which presents interviews with members of its organization (available at https://www.foundations-art.org/positive-space-archive-01). Technical difficulties arose when conducting interviews with two participants, and their interview data were supplemented with transcripts from interviews they gave on the Positive Space podcast.
### Table 4. Research Design with Data Collection, Data Types, and Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Relationship to Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) How do 12 mid-career college art faculty from a range of college art programs perceive art students in first-year art courses in terms of their artistic skills and dispositions?</td>
<td>• How do college faculty perceive the art skills and dispositions of incoming art students today in comparison to past art students (via retrospective recall)? • How do faculty conceive of the artistic skills and dispositions taught in first-year art programs today? • What art skills and dispositions do faculty expect students to possess upon entering and leaving their respective programs?</td>
<td>Interview Data</td>
<td>Twelve college art faculty who teach first-year courses for art majors</td>
<td>Participant responses relating to interview prompts that explore faculty perceptions of students’ skills and dispositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How do these 12 first-year art faculty modify their pedagogy and course content in response to the perceived artistic skills and dispositions of students today?</td>
<td>• What are the ways faculty are changing their teaching methods or course content in response to the students’ perceived skills and dispositions? • What curricular changes are occurring within their programs to address the perceived needs of students today?</td>
<td>Interview Data</td>
<td>Twelve college art faculty who teach first-year courses for art majors</td>
<td>Participant responses relating to interview prompts that explore faculty perceptions of teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) What forces (both internal and external) shape the curricular content for these 12 first-year art faculty?</td>
<td>• Administrative initiatives driving program reassessments? • Responses to the perceived needs of students?</td>
<td>Online Data and Interview Data</td>
<td>Websites (personal and institutional), databases of college information, and twelve college art faculty who teach first-year courses for art majors</td>
<td>Data reflecting the institutional missions, program descriptions, pedagogy and content revision that describe the context for program changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Relationship to Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4) Is there a relationship between the perceptions and practices of 12 first-year art faculty (who teach in art programs across different types of higher educational institutions), and if so, what are their defining dimensions?</td>
<td>• Student demographics and characteristics of institutions influencing how faculty report content is being taught and how the needs of students is being addressed in first-year art programs?</td>
<td>Online Data and Interview Data</td>
<td>Websites (personal and institutional), databases of college information, and twelve college art faculty who teach first-year courses for art majors</td>
<td>Data facilitating a cross comparison of participant responses with institutional descriptive information (such as type, state or private funding, selectivity of program, cost of attendance).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data Collection

**Conducting the research interviews.** Through email exchanges with recommended potential participants, I obtained their consent to participate and made arrangements to conduct the interviews. The recorded interviews, which ranged from 1-2.5 hours in duration, used a semi-structured protocol\(^5\) that encouraged the participants to expound on issues as they arose. The interview transcripts\(^6\) were checked for accuracy, cleaned of extraneous words, and returned to the participants for corrections and approval.

Using the constant comparative method, the interview transcripts were processed while arranging and conducting subsequent interviews. This method allowed for the identification of salient issues and information that could be discussed in later interviews via prompts added to the interview protocol. Member checks (in the form of sharing data provided by other participants) were also used in subsequent interviews to test the validity and reliability of the collected data.

---

\(^5\)The interview protocol is presented in Appendix C.

\(^6\)I used transcriptionpuppy.com (at www.transcriptionpuppy.com), a secure online transcription service.
**The research setting.** The interviews were conducted at the participants’ convenience and at the place of their choosing (office, studio, home, or during the 2017 FATE Conference\(^7\)), which required my travel to their geographic locations.

**Collecting information from online sources.** The first stage of online data collection involved researching potential participants who had been recommended to me. I searched institutional websites for faculty listings, Linkedin.com profile pages, and personal websites for contact information and to ensure that they met the criteria for participation. Résumés, curricula vitae, and course descriptions posted online by the participants and their institutions provided information about their art expertise and art careers, training, approximate age, and teaching experience.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I researched the participants’ institutions (via institutional websites and online databases\(^8\)) to get a sense of the size, location, student demographic, selectivity, and cost of attendance. I explored art department websites for the following information: degree offerings, admission requirements, undergraduate art major enrollments, studio facilities, and areas of art specialization available. Lastly, I collected data about the participants’ first-year art programs, including course descriptions, curricular requirements, and mission statements.

**Data Analysis**

The two types of data collected (from interview transcripts and online sources) pertaining to the participants and their institutions required different approaches to analysis (such as coding for the transcripts and graphic presentations for the descriptors).

---

\(^7\)The 2017 FATE Conference, *Beyond the Core*, was held from April 6-8, 2017 in Kansas City, Missouri.

\(^8\)I used CollegeCalc.org (http://www.collegecalc.org), a database that aggregates information from the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of comparing postsecondary institutions in terms of costs and descriptive characteristics for prospective students.
To further synthesize the data, I generated brief written profiles of the participants and their institutions that incorporate both sources of data (see Appendix A).

I based my approach to data analysis on Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s (2014) interactive model, whereby data collection leads to data display and data condensation, which then leads to conclusion drawing/verifying, and reflects back on data collection, display, and condensation, making it “a continuous, iterative enterprise” (p. 14).

I used the online qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose Version 7.6.21, for coding and storage of uploaded processed transcripts.

**Coding the interview transcripts.** As indicated by the constant comparative method, preliminary coding occurred during the data collection process, which prompted changes to the semi-structured interview protocol. A coding scheme was developed that included emic codes that emerged from the participant interviews and etic codes based on the research questions and the pilot study coding. I created data “chunks” for coding to provide greater context and meaning to the data (Miles et al., 2014), which was processed through multiple coding schemes.

**Analyzing the data from online sources.** The descriptive details gathered from online sources about the participants and institutions (such as art practice, administrative position, institutional type, selectivity, and cost of attendance) were organized into a series of matrix displays and tables, as suggested by Miles et al. (2014). These tables instantly showed the distribution of the overall sample and helped to illuminated relationships and patterns within the sample, as described by Creswell (2013):

The researcher establishes *patterns* and looks for a correspondence between two or more categories. This might take the form of a table ... showing the relationship between two categories.... The researcher develops *naturalistic generalizations* from analyzing the data, generalizations that

---

9Dedoose (at www.dedoose.com) is a web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed-methods research data.
people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases. (pp. 199-200, emphasis in original)

This analysis led to further understanding of the interview data (in relation to specific descriptors) and the implications for students and teaching in different educational settings. For example, comparing the interview data from participants teaching at selective private art institutes to the data from participants teaching at public colleges reveals similarities and differences based on student demographics and the educational environment, as presented in Appendix A and in tables throughout Chapters IV and V.

**Generating participant profiles.** A third level of analysis involved generating brief profiles of the 12 participants and the nature of their respective institutions (see Appendix A). These profiles synthesized the collected interview and online data to describe 12 committed educators and their unique educational environments.

Weaving narrative details gleaned from the interviews and the Internet into participant profiles humanizes the study by giving context to the voices that appear as excerpts throughout this study, prompting deeper understanding of these individual teachers and their words. Writing these participant profiles became yet another layer of analysis, as Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre explains: “A great part of that [narrative] inquiry is accomplished in the writing because ... writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 484, emphasis in original).

**Confidentiality and Data Handling**

The research design and consent agreement for participation stipulates ensuring the confidentiality of the participants. This is achieved through the use of assigned pseudonyms and institutional codes derived from the institution type and location (i.e., a large northwestern state research university is coded as LNSRU). Given that most of the participants serve as administrators and recruiters for their first-year programs, protecting
their identities (and that of their institutions) was essential for eliciting truthful responses and avoiding negative ramifications from reported information.

To ensure confidentiality, I eliminated identifying details and generalized aspects of the reported data. For example, I avoided naming specific locations and described geographic regions instead (e.g., Boston would be reported as “a major Northeast city”). Specific figures in the data (such as enrollment or cost of attendance) were rounded and approximated.

Lastly, I used a simplified system for citing excerpts from the participant interviews: I list the participant’s pseudonym, “I” (for “Interview data”), “FC” (for “Follow-up Correspondence”), or “PC” (for “Podcast”), and the year of accession. Thus, an interview excerpt from “Lauren” appears as (Lauren, I 2016).

Data management and security. The collected data for each of the 12 participants and their respective institutions were organized into a system of folders (that included correspondences, interview transcriptions, participant and institutional data) on a password-protected computer hard drive. Documents from online sources were time-stamped (with the web address attached for future retrieval), as this information is frequently updated. Printed materials and hard drives were stored in a locked office, and data uploaded to Dedoose.com for coding were encrypted and password protected.

Validity and Reliability

The value of an exploratory case study with 12 participants lies not in making generalizations, but in the opportunity to explore issues in depth as a basis for future research. The standard for qualitative studies lies not in replicating findings, as Merriam (2009) states, but rather: “The more important question for qualitative research is whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 221, emphasis in original). Given the lack of existing research involving undergraduate art education and the profound
changes affecting the field, this study intends to explore and document the present state of first-year art education as a benchmark for future research.

To address issues of validity, Maxwell (2013) suggests strategies to strengthen the research design, such as the use of “triangulation” or multiple sources of data, the collection of rich data, awareness of discrepant evidence, acknowledgement (and planning for) personal biases and participant reactivity to the researcher, etc. (pp. 122-128). This study utilizes such strategies by collecting data of different types and sources (interviews and online information) and using multiple approaches to data analysis (coding, tables, and participant profiles). The interview data are rich, and comparisons were made between the participants’ responses, with online data used for validation of responses and to identify discrepancies in the interview data. This process led to the development of theories that may explain why some participants responded differently (or similarly) to the interview prompts.

Laurel Richardson’s concept of validation through crystallization (rather than triangulation) clarifies the value of the participant profiles (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). As explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2008): “In the crystallization process, the writer tells the same story from different points of view” (p. 7). Richardson further describes the crystalline form within a poststructuralist context where data are incomplete and veracity is unknowable:

Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity”; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 479)

This study tells fragments of stories, drawn from the perceptions of the experienced educators, about young art students and teaching first-year art courses. However, these partial stories work together to provide important documentation of our changing times and may lead to new knowledge within the field of art education.
I acknowledge my personal biases that come from prior teaching experiences and collegial relationships, and in response, I have intentionally expanded the study to include participants and institutions previously unknown to me. In this exploratory study, I focus on reporting the collected data about students and teaching, rather than assessing programs and pedagogical approaches.

To address reliability among the participant responses, I conducted member checks among the participants, posed questions in multiple ways, and sought confirmation of statements in the online institutional data. I maintained a reflective research journal describing my research activities, and, as advocated by Yin (2009), have assembled the research documents into a database that serves as an audit trail, providing a “chain of evidence” to “increase the overall quality of the case study” (p. 123).

Implementation of the Study

In this section, I explain issues that arose when implementing the study.

Finding the Participants

The interview process began in the Fall 2016 and was completed by June 2017. As planned, I began pursuing recommended potential participants in September 2016, but received few responses to the introductory emails. In my case, the academic calendar was a factor, as teaching faculty often get busier as the semester progresses, making faculty less likely to respond to outside inquiries. I sent follow-up emails, and I was able to schedule the first interview in late October and the second in November 2016. I tweaked the introductory email to emphasize who had recommended them for participation and why, clarified the requirements for participation, and suggested a specific set of dates for the interview. These changes to the email appeared to be effective, as I was able to schedule two more interviews in December 2016, during the final exam period.
I asked the participants to recommend other potential participants, which produced varying results (as some were hesitant to do so, and others provided names of faculty who did not meet the study’s criteria or who had already been recommended). I conducted two more interviews at the start of the Spring 2017 semester and another in March, but had exhausted my leads. I then contacted Stacy Isenbarger, president of the Foundations in Art: Theory and Education (FATE) organization, for additional recommendations. While I had anticipated interviewing participants at the upcoming 2017 FATE conference, Stacy suggested that I also attend the College Art Association (CAA) conference, as FATE members would be presenting and in attendance. This networking proved effective, as I was able to interview three people during the FATE Conference in April 2017. The final two interviews took place after final exams in May and June 2017.

**The Sample Distribution**

After all of the interviews were conducted, I was surprised to realize that the participant sample was somewhat evenly distributed among different types of institutions and kinds of first-year programs, with participants who represented a range of art practices and teaching expertise, age groups, and levels of college teaching experience. While the majority of the participants’ institutions are located in the northeastern United States, the sample also includes schools from different geographical regions.

One area that lacked an even distribution involved the academic positions held by the participants. All but one participant has a full-time position, with 9 of the 12 having been, or presently serving as administrators of their first-year programs. This sample is

---


11The 2017 FATE Conference, *Beyond the Core*, was held from April 6-8, 2017 in Kansas City, Missouri.

12The 105th CAA Conference was held from February 15-18, 2017 in New York City, New York.
not representative the faculty who teach in first-year art programs in the United States, as many programs rely on adjunct instructors and graduate students to teach these courses.

**Conducting the Interviews**

Nine of the 12 interviews involved participants teaching at schools located within a six-hour drive of my home, and the three interviews conducted at the 2017 FATE Conference involved participants teaching in other regions of the United States.

Unfortunately, the convenience of traveling to a conference to conduct interviews with multiple participants was offset by the challenging interview conditions. Specifically, these participants (who had previously agreed to be interviewed during the conference) were reluctant to commit to specific meeting times due to conference and social obligations. While understandable, this difficulty with scheduling interviews created a stressful situation for me. Consequently, I encountered technical problems when recording two of the interviews. Fortunately, the two participants whose interviews had recording issues had also been recently interviewed for FATE’s *Positive Space* podcast, 13 which asked some similar questions to those in my interview protocol, and I was able to supplement my abbreviated interview transcripts with transcripts generated from these podcasts14 for coding purposes.

Given the nature of a semi-structured interview protocol and the differences in interview settings (i.e., a participant’s home, office, or hotel lobby), there was variation in the richness of the participants’ responses. The majority of interviews lasted between 1.5 and 2.25 hours when conducted in a home or office, but the conference interviews

---

13 The *Positive Space* podcast features a series of interviews with first-year art faculty on topics associated with teaching in first-year college art programs. The podcast can be accessed at http://www.foundations-art.org/positive-space-podcast.

14 To ensure confidentiality, the reference listing for the *Positive Space* podcasts does not include the specific episodes that include interviews with the participants. Rather, I have referenced (with an accession link) the *Positive Space* podcast series.
were considerably shorter, lasting under an hour. In general, I found that most participants were relaxed and seemed to genuinely enjoy discussing their programs, teaching, and students, while others were more “business-like” in their responses. All of the participants were generous with their time and expressed interest in hearing the findings.

**Participant Approval of the Transcripts, Profiles, and Excerpts**

Because of the exploratory nature of the study, I encouraged the participants to elaborate on topics that were not directly part of the interview protocol, resulting in some questions that went unaddressed. I corresponded with certain participants (via email and private Facebook messages) to clarify and supplement the interview data; however, some participants chose not to respond to my queries, or responded months later.

Upon receiving the transcribed interview recordings, the transcripts were carefully reviewed, corrected, and cleaned of extraneous words and returned to the participants for corrections and approval. Eight of the 12 participants responded with their approval (including four who made significant corrections), while two promised to eventually return the transcripts (but never did), and two participants never responded.

I also provided each participant with their profile and interview excerpts, which prompted some to make further corrections and edits. The consent forms and follow-up email correspondences clearly stated that approval of the interview transcripts, profiles, and excerpts would be assumed if participants did not respond. Given that these faculty were busy with teaching obligations and studio practice, I assumed that some participants would not respond and was surprised that so many made edits and corrections.

**The Coding and Analysis of the Interview Data**

The sheer volume of collected data from the 12 interviews proved daunting to process, and I relied on Miles et al.’s (2014) interactive model of data analysis for guidance (p. 14). Data condensation (or reduction) began with repeated readings of the
transcripts, which identified extraneous data for elimination. (An example of extraneous data was icebreaker questions about participants’ backgrounds and art training, which did not directly relate to the research questions.) This process led to a deeper understanding of the salience of issues raised in the participants’ responses.

The cleaned and corrected transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose.com and subjected to several coding cycles. Throughout the process, I frequently engaged in face validity by consulting with friends who teach art at the college level concerning my interpretation of the collected data. I combined the abundant emic codes that emerged from the newly collected interview data with the etic codes from the pilot study analysis and research questions. I then recoded the interview data schemes using larger “chunks” of data, as recommended by Miles et al. (2014).

With advice from my advisors, Dr. Judith Burton and Dr. Victoria Marsick, I made further progress on the data analysis. Through cycles that expanded, reduced, and limited codes to specific themes, I was able to find patterns and further condense the data. By using manual “cut and paste” methods, I compared the pattern-coded interview excerpts between participants and viewed the results alongside descriptive data related to the participants and their institutions. Viewing the interview data as matrices and tables led to abstract conceptualization and greater clarity in the analysis.

The Analysis of Data from Online Sources

A major difference between the pilot study and this dissertation involves the collection of online descriptive data associated with the participants, their institutions, and first-year art programs. While indicated in the research design, the volume of online data required to report on the participants’ artistic and teaching expertise, the institutional characteristics, and first-year programming surprised me.

Lacking prior knowledge of the participants and their respective institutions required me to supplement the interview data with descriptive information from online
sources. I had to decide what kind of information was most appropriate to retrieve from the different data sources and methods. For instance, interviews were best at finding out why the first-year art courses were being modified, but using the art programs’ websites provided clearer descriptions of the courses in the first-year art curricula (although, as I later found, data from websites may not be up-to-date or accurate). Similarly, college databases, such as CollegeCalc.org, could provide specific information about an institution’s cost of attendance or enrollment figures that many instructors may not know.

The interview data were combined and analyzed with descriptive data about the participants, programs, and institutions (collected from personal or institutional websites). In cases where the interview data conflicted with online data, I explored the source of the contradiction through further research or follow-up correspondence. Discrepancies involving data about the first-year art programs and courses (such as course curricula and descriptions) generally reflected program changes that took place after the interviews were conducted.

The use of tables and charts for organizing and analyzing the online documents was helpful, but also created a challenge in terms of effective presentation of information. As with the coding, the tables and charts went through a series of iterations, which often required adding or eliminating data, and deciding which presentation formats effectively addressed the research questions.

**Upon Reflection**

**Concerns Regarding the Interview Data**

Four issues associated with the collected interview data became apparent upon analysis: The kind of information the participants had (and did not have) about their first-

---

year art programs and institutions, the nature of data provided in the interviews (in terms of the participants’ academic positions), and the possibility that the interview prompts elicited negativity bias\(^\text{16}\) in the data provided by the participants. Furthermore, changes in the data during the collection process led to validation and presentation issues that required investigation and resolution, which ultimately served to document the kind of changes affecting the field of first-year art education.

**Participant knowledge of institutional data.** The collected interview data suggest that many art faculty lack specific knowledge of certain types of information about their programs and institutions (such as enrollment figures, admissions requirements, cost of attendance, and enrollment trends), even when they serve in administrative capacities. This may be because such information is continually changing or falls outside their purview as instructors or first-year administrators. While this lack of knowledge is understandable among faculty who primarily focus on teaching and research, it suggests that their perceptions are based on classroom interactions rather than on actual institutional data.

**The nature of the data provided in the interviews.** A further distinction appears to exist within the interview data in terms of tone, point of view, and content, which reflect the academic positions of the 12 participants. The transcripts indicate that the eight teaching-administrators tended to provide data associated with the administrative structure and intended effects of changes implemented in their first-year programs, while the four instructors generally engaged in more retrospective recall of individual students and their approaches to teaching.

Such differences in the collected data understandably reflect of the academic positions held by the participants. For example, instructors may teach more first-year

\(^{16}\)Negativity bias is commonly defined as a cognitive bias whereby humans place more importance on negative experiences than on positive experiences.
courses and have more direct interaction with students in the classroom than program chairs. Teaching-administrators may have release time for administrative duties that require representing or advocating for their programs, and may have more interactions with dysfunctional students or addressing student problems. These distinctions in academic responsibilities inform the points of view held by the participants and influence the content provided about first-year art education.

However, a more subtle issue concerning the overall tone and responsiveness to the interview questions was captured in the teaching-administrators’ data. In general, these participants seemed to present information as “scripts” or preconceived statements that promote or justify the structure and scope of their first-year art programs, or the decision-making behind implemented changes. While this tone may not have been conscious or intentional, it suggests the mindset of teaching-administrators who are continually negotiating with faculty and upper administration about the needs or vision of their first-year programs. Alvesson (2003) has addressed the issue of scripted interview responses in qualitative research, suggesting that researchers should anticipate such responses and use various interview strategies to circumvent such prepared statements.

The potential for negativity bias in the interview data. While the 12 faculty participants shared their perceptions of students and teaching in response to questions and prompts from the semi-structured interview protocol (that often involved retrospective recall), the collected data suggest that negativity bias may have been a factor in the data provided. Three participants (Anna, Jason, and Chaim) raised this issue obliquely through interview responses that addressed such negativity. For example:

When you ask, I think that my own personal need to stay respectful and positive [about] students probably limits my ability to talk about the negative things about students.... I think some people focus on that. (Anna, I 2017)

Jason, who was interviewed at the 2017 FATE Conference, noted that faculty who attend these conference tend to discuss negative aspects of teaching:
A lot of people come here to complain about the ins-and-outs of the job... the amount of work it takes to get a student to... realize something.... At the end of the day, that’s our job, right?... Whatever the skill set is that they lack, they came to us to learn it... it’s our responsibility.... It should be a joy to address those concerns and lead those kids to something new. (Jason, I 2017)

While positive perceptions of students appear throughout the collected data, the predominance of negative statements the participants made about students and teaching experiences suggests that negativity bias may have been elicited in the interviews. It is unknowable if the collected interview data overemphasize negative perceptions and thus contribute to a distorted view of students and teaching today, as an abundance of current literature also reports negative or concerning characteristics and behaviors among teens and young adults (Gallagher, 2015; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Horowitz & Graf, 2019; Levine & Dean, 2012; Turkle, 2011, 2012, 2015; Twenge, 2017a, 2017b; Twenge et al., 2018; Wolverton, 2019).

To address concerns of negativity bias in the data, I have included evidence (in the form of literature or other collected data) when available that counters negative statements or provides possible explanations. I have sought to maintain a neutral perspective as a researcher by attempting to bracket out my own experiences and recognize personal biases when analyzing the data. While a differently designed study (i.e., multiple interviews with each participant or including data collected from students) might challenge or explore apparent biases, the intention of this exploratory study is to present faculty perceptions as a snapshot of this moment in time that will contribute to the limited existing knowledge of students and teaching in first-year art programs.

**Documenting change via data collection.** Reporting the descriptive characteristics of the different first-year programs in the study (i.e., course curricula and descriptions, student demographics, enrollments, teaching strategies, and missions) proved challenging, as these programs are continually changing, and often in significant ways. For example, throughout the data collection and analysis, I frequently encountered
discrepancies between the interview data and the institutional data found online. As mentioned previously, these discrepancies often reflected participant and faculty websites with outdated information. However, concerning first-year program information (such as curricula, course listings, and course descriptions), updated institutional websites (showing changes implemented after the interviews) had often overwritten information about courses and information described in the interviews.

Fortunately, these data were supplemental to this study (used primarily for validating the interview data), as the bounded case in this study is “first-year art faculty” rather than “first-year art programs.” The discrepancies in the data could be great, as with two participants who discussed their personal teaching strategies in specific courses that no longer appeared on their art programs’ websites. In both cases, a new curriculum had been initiated over the summer, which reconciled this contradictory information. In other cases, the participants reported piloting or developing new courses and curricula, or modifying existing courses, yet the online course descriptions did not indicate the changes.

Such contradictions in the data raised questions about “accuracy” and which data to report. In most cases, I used the interview data that described teaching methods and noted changes where they had occurred. I presented the art courses in the first-year curricula as listed in the Fall 2017 (within 6 months of the last interview), as these changes had been underway at the time of the interview, and this was the information available.

Throughout this process, I thought of Richardson’s poststructuralist argument that data are inherently incomplete and limited (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 479), to which I add “and continually changing, and often inaccurate and out-of-date,” yet still valuable as knowledge for fostering further research.
The Story of Teaching First-Year Art Students

I had originally envisioned using elements of narrative inquiry as a method for presenting this research; however, I soon realized that my research design and data collection did not facilitate narrative inquiry. (Specifically, single interviews with 12 participants did not provide the level of exchange necessary for telling in-depth narratives.) The intent was to describe the participants as committed artists teaching in unique and interesting situations through descriptive profiles that synthesized the interview data with the online data. Instead, I developed brief participant profiles\textsuperscript{17} that convey specific details about the individual participants, their students, and their teaching environments.

A turning point came when Dr. Burton advised me to take a break from pursuing the seemingly infinite permutations of data analysis and said, in essence, “Write a story that you want to tell with the data, as there are so many potential directions for it to take you.” I accepted that the data could work together, or crystallize, to write a larger story of “how kids from high school enter college and how teachers engage them in first-year art courses,” and relinquished the notion of writing 12 short stories. I chose instead to make snapshots (or portraits) of 12 college art teachers in their unique environments that tell the larger story of the state of first-year art education in the United States today.

Summary

I began this chapter by describing the findings of the pilot study and the revised methodology for this dissertation study. I explained my rationale for the research design, sampling of participants, and the data collection; described my approach to data analysis, and explained my reflections on the implementation of the study.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study.

\textsuperscript{17}See Appendix A.
Chapter III presented the methodology used for the study. This chapter provides descriptive information collected from the 12 college art faculty participants and their respective institutions. The focus of this chapter is on the first-year experience, faculty perceptions of students’ art skills, dispositions, and teaching; and the unanticipated findings from this research.

**Thematic Coding and Presentation of the Data**

Data were collected from 12 faculty participants teaching first-year art courses by way of recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews, follow-up correspondence, supplemental transcripts from podcast interviews, and online sources, which included institutional websites, participants’ personal websites, and college databases. The individual participants had from 7 to 26 years of college teaching experience and worked in institutions ranging from private art institutes, public liberal arts colleges, public research universities, to public community colleges.

Data were coded using emic codes relating to concepts and issues that emerged in the pilot study; emic codes were then combined with etic codes pertaining to the research questions and literature. This study incorporated elements of Richardson’s concept of crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 479) in the data analysis to produce multiple representations of the collected data. The data are presented in several different
forms, including participant profiles (see Appendix A), as tables of detailed information about the participants’ institutions and first-year art programs, and via interview excerpts and descriptive text, which, when combined, explore the topic of first-year college art teaching from different perspectives.

The interview data (from 12 faculty participants) and descriptive data (from online sources) describe various characteristics of the participants, their institutions, and first-year art programs (such as personal data about teaching and artmaking, and institutional data about courses, curricula, enrollments, location, faculty, student demographics, teaching strategies, and missions, etc.). The interview data also describe the participants’ perceptions of students in terms of their art skills and dispositions, their experiences over the course of the first year, and the conditions they face as college students.

Together, the data describe 12 unique, distinct, and continually changing first-year teaching environments. Yet the overall goals of all these first-year programs are universal: to prepare art students (in terms of the skills and dispositions required) for further art study at the college level and to support entering students during their adjustment to the college environment. Such common goals for first-year art instruction serve as the ground upon which these stories grow together and crystallize to form a picture or momentary snapshot of first-year art education in the United States today.

**Presentation of the Data**

This chapter appears in four sections. The first section presents the collected data that describe the 12 participants’ institutions, their first-year art programs, and the participants, as follows:

- The *specific characteristics of the 12 institutions* in the sample with generalized descriptions of the types of institutions and specific information about each (including institutional type, location, size, selectivity or access to art courses for art majors, enrollment trends, and cost of attendance).
• An examination of the first-year art programs at these 12 institutions in terms of their art curricula, including program titles and courses requirements for art majors. The curricular structures and types of art programs (traditional, modified, or reconstructive), and the changes occurring at these first-year programs are also reported.

• The descriptive data pertaining to the 12 participants are presented, including academic positions (instructor or instructor/administrator), teaching experience at the college level, personal artistic practice, and area of teaching expertise.

These descriptions of the institutions, first-year art programs, and faculty participants serve as critical sources of reference for how students today gain access to art training at the college level. The participant profiles (presented in Appendix A) further describe these 12 faculty and their teaching environments.

The second section presents data associated with teaching art skills and dispositions in first-year art programs. This includes data describing how first-year art departments are organized differently to teach students the art skills and dispositions necessary for further art study at the college level. These data also describe forces within the first-year programs and institutions, and society (in terms of advances in technology and in the contemporary art world) that influence teaching and the educational environment. When evident, relationships that may exist between the interview data and descriptive information are identified.

The third section uses interview data to describe faculty perceptions of first-year students’ art skills and dispositions, and how faculty are teaching in response to these perceptions and to address the perceived needs of students today, which includes helping students transition to the college environment.

Lastly, the fourth section presents the unanticipated findings of the study.
Descriptions of the Institutions, Programs, and Participants

The research design of this study sought a participant sample (of 12 participating college art faculty and institutions) that was intentionally broad (representing different types of institutions that provide first-year art education and in terms of the participants’ artistic practices and areas of teaching expertise). The intent of using a broad sample was to identify possible relationships between the descriptive characteristics associated with the participants and their institutions, and the collected data pertaining to the research questions (regarding faculty perceptions of first-year students’ art skills and dispositions, and teaching in first-year art programs).

This section presents the descriptive data associated with the institutions, first-year art programs, and participants.

General Descriptions of the Institutional Types in the Sample

The study’s sample of 12 participants and institutions represent four categories of private- and publicly funded, four- and two-year postsecondary institutions that offer undergraduate art programs. The website\(^1\) of The College Board (2019) presents the following definitions for the categories of institutions sampled in this study:

**Public and Private Colleges:**

Public colleges are funded by local and state governments and usually offer lower tuition rates than private colleges, especially for students who are residents of the state where a college is located.

Private colleges rely mainly on tuition, fees and private sources of funding. Private donations can sometimes provide generous financial aid packages for students.

**4-Year and 2-Year Colleges:**

Four-year colleges offer four-year programs that lead to a bachelor’s degree. These include universities and liberal arts colleges.

---

\(^1\) These descriptions can be found at: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/types-of-colleges-the-basics
Two-year colleges offer programs that last up to two years that lead to a certificate or an associate degree. These include community colleges, vocational-technical colleges and career colleges.

_Private Art Institutes (4-Year):_

Art colleges and conservatories focus on the arts. In addition to regular course work, these colleges provide training in such areas as photography, music, theatre, or fashion design. Most of these colleges offer associate or bachelor’s degrees in the fine arts or a specialized field.

_Public Liberal Arts Colleges (4-Year):_

These colleges offer a broad base of courses in the liberal arts, which includes areas such as literature, history, languages, mathematics, and life sciences...and offer four-year programs that can lead to bachelor’s degrees. These colleges can prepare [students] for a variety of careers or for graduate study.

_Public Research Universities (4-Year):_

Universities often are larger and offer more majors and degree options—bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees—than colleges. Most universities contain several smaller colleges, such as colleges of liberal arts, engineering or health sciences. These colleges can prepare [students] for a variety of careers or for graduate study.

_Public Community Colleges (2-Year):_

Community colleges offer two-year associate degrees that can prepare [students] to transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor’s degree. They also offer other associate degrees and certificates that focus on preparing [students] for a certain career. Community colleges are often an affordable option with relatively low tuition.

For consistency throughout this chapter, the collected data are presented in tables by institutional type, with the participants’ names and institutional codes appearing in the same order when appropriate.

_The sampled institutions._ Using descriptive data collected from institutional websites and online college databases,² Table 5 presents the 12 institutions where the

²In addition to institutional websites, cost and enrollment data were sourced from the database CollegeCalc (at www.collegecalc.org).
faculty participants teach. For the purpose of comparison, information about these institutions is organized by institutional type, with the following data: the participants’ pseudonyms, the institutional codes, the descriptive names of each institution (from which the codes are derived), and the institutions’ geographical region, location, and approximate total undergraduate enrollment.

Such institutional information provides a context for interpreting the interview data. For example, Table 5 shows that 8 of the 12 institutions in this sample are located in the Northeast, and 10 are located in (or in suburbs nearby) cities with major cultural institutions and museums, which is considered advantageous for art programs, as easy access to art exhibits and events often influences how art is taught. Two of these institutions, SRSC and SRCC, are rurally located. Seven of the sampled institutions are

Table 5. The Sampled Institutions: Names, Regions, Locations, and Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Art Institutes (4-Year)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PIoD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Liberal Arts Colleges (4-Year)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Research Universities (4-Year)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Community Colleges (2-Year)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Enrollment figures include both full- and part-time undergraduate students. These approximate figures were sourced from www.CollegeCalc.org and institutional websites as of the Fall 2018.
small colleges (with fewer than 5,000 undergraduates), and LSCC is considered a large community college (with over 5,000 students), but the research universities are, by far, the largest institutions in the study. Detailed information about the sampled institutions also appears in Appendix A.

**Program access, enrollments, and costs of attendance.** Table 6 presents data describing the type of access (selective or open-access) that students have to first-year art courses within the required curriculum for intended art majors. Table 6 also reports on enrollment trends at these schools (based on interview and online institutional data) and their costs of attendance as of the Fall 2018.

**Selective versus open-access programs.** A major distinction between the different institutional types in the study involves the type of access they provide to first-year art courses for art majors. Six of the 12 institutions in this sample have selective art programs, whereby students must submit a portfolio of artworks for acceptance by the art program as a prerequisite for accessing courses intended for art majors. The other six institutions in the study have open-access art programs, which allow any interested student to enroll in first-year art studio courses required for art majors.

According to Rachel, the assistant chair of the first-year program at PADI (a private art institute), to produce a portfolio of acceptable quality for admission to a highly selective art program generally requires extracurricular art education (such as private or community art classes or specialized summer art programs) to supplement public school art classes, and to access such arts programming often requires financial resources:

---

3In this study, only art studio and art seminar courses in the first-year art curricula are examined, although most undergraduate art programs require art majors to take additional coursework during the first year of college (such as art history, composition, and academic requirements).

4These costs are shown as rounded amounts that were provided in the Fall 2018 on the online database at www.collegecalc.org
Table 6. Program Access, Enrollment Trends, and Cost of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Art Institutes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Cost of Attendance*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>CODE</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Enrollment Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PiOd</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Increase in International Students (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Increase in International Students (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Increase in International Students (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>CODE</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Enrollment Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Research Universities</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>CODE</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Enrollment Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Community Colleges</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>CODE</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Enrollment Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Open-Access</td>
<td>Robust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data were sourced from www.collegecalc.org and institutional websites in the Fall 2018. The rounded figures shown include tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, and other associated costs, and does not take into account scholarships, grants, or financial aid.

** Enrollment data for PiOd and PADI are from their institutional websites in 2018. Enrollment data for PCoA are from the institutional website in 2019.

***Higher tuition costs at SRSC are due to an administrative arrangement with a nearby private university that provides liberal arts and academic courses to students in the state art college.

The thing with the portfolio requirement is: so much of it [depends on] the type of environment they have before they get here.... The kids that can afford to do the after school programs or the weekend programs and do the summer programs (like we’re running now) will have really strong portfolios. So, the kids [with] ... drive and talent but ... just ... [a] public high school art class and nothing extra, and ... just have a sketchbook ... that’s all they’ve been able to afford. (Rachel, I 2017)

Tracy, the program head at SRSC, also addressed the portfolio requirement in terms of the quality of submissions and their ramifications for enrollment:
We are ... [reconsidering] the portfolio requirement, not just because our enrollment numbers have been going down, but because the faculty ... have realized...over the last decade specifically, that the quality of the portfolios has declined and...[that] so many schools that are cutting art. (Tracy, I 2016)

**Enrollment trends and costs of attendance.** Enrollment trends and costs of attendance are also shown in Table 6. The most expensive institutions in the study are the private art institutes, with community colleges providing the lowest cost of attendance. The publicly funded colleges and universities charge significantly different tuition rates for in-state residents and out-of-state residents, while private art institutes generally charge all students the same fees.\(^5\) These cost of attendance figures include dormitory housing and food services, but research suggests that a growing number of students are living at home and attending college as commuter students to save money (Ashford, 2014; Mellow, 2017).

Declining enrollments in first-year art programs were reported by three participants representing different institutional types (Nell at SWPAC, Tracy at SRSC, and David at SRCC). As mentioned in Chapter II, falling enrollments at postsecondary institutions in the United States have been predicted and confirmed in reports from WICHE and others (Bransberger, 2017; Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Marcus, 2017a, 2017b), which have resulted in the recent closure of some art schools (Seltzer, 2019). The three most expensive institutions in the study (PIOD, PADI, and PCoA) appear to have addressed enrollment concerns by recruiting more international students, as described in the interview data and literature (Lu, 2016).

Increasing or robust art program enrollments were described by the participants at two schools, Lauren at SCon (a state college with a conservatory art program) and Evan at LSCC (a community college). At the sampled public research universities, participants mentioned that their programs serve a significant number of transfer students who enroll

\(^5\)The costs of attendance posted in Table 6 do not include financial aid, scholarships, or grants.
in first-year art courses as juniors or seniors. Anna at LNSRU reported that budgetary
cutbacks have reduced the number of course offerings in her program, which may lead to
fewer art students and lower enrollments. According to Chaim (who previously
coordinated NSRU’s first-year program), a consequence of having many transfer students
enter art programs at the junior level is that the importance of first-year programming is
diminished within the art department.

At community colleges, some students who take first-year art courses will choose
to pursue an associate degree and transfer to a four-year art programs. While Evan
described this as increasingly common at LSCC (which has robust enrollment), David,
who teaches at SRCC (which is located in a different state than LSCC), perceives that
more art students today are initiating their studies at four-year state colleges, which has
contributed to falling enrollments at SRCC.

Descriptions of the institution sample by type. Institutional types often share
particular attributes, and these generalized descriptions of the different institutional types
in the study reflect the characteristics of the specific institutions in the sample, while
serving as indicators of the kind of first-year art teaching and student demographics that
exist at these different types of institutions.

The private art institutes. The four privately funded art institutes in this study can
be summarized as small, nonprofit, historically significant, located in cities, and selective.
These institutes focus primarily on art-related education, offering fine arts and specialized
commercial art majors taught by accomplished instructors (including part-time adjuncts).

The interview data suggest that these programs tend to recruit students from
educationally and financially privileged backgrounds, including international students.
According to the participants, they seek students whose portfolios indicate the artistic
abilities and commitment necessary to participate in demanding classes that meet one day
per week for 4.5 to 7.5 hours per session and have significant homework requirements.
The public liberal arts colleges. The two state-funded liberal arts colleges in this study share similarities and differences with each other and with the private art institutes. These particular state colleges are selective (requiring portfolios at admission) and have highly regarded undergraduate art programs. Both colleges are small, with SCon located on an isolated campus nearby a major city, while SRSC is rurally located in a small town several hours drive from a major city. SCon is structured similarly to the private art institutes, with longer class sessions that meet once per week; however, both colleges have highly accomplished artists teaching in their art departments. (SCon relies on many adjunct instructors to teach in their program, while SRSC reportedly uses few, if any, adjunct instructors due to the remote location.)

As Table 6 indicates, the cost of attendance at these programs is much lower than at the private art institutes, and the majority of students come from public high schools. Lauren described SCon’s students as highly skilled and ethnically diverse, with some students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and most coming from public high schools, including the specialized public art high schools of the major city nearby. According to Tracy, students at SRSC also come from public high schools, but diversity among students was not mentioned, which may reflect its higher tuition rate (compared to SCon) and its remote location.

The public research universities. The four research institutions in the sample are geographically dispersed, representing the four regional corners of the United States, and share the following characteristics: large institutions with open-access to first-year art courses required for art majors, which may be taught by graduate students or adjunct instructors. The first-year art courses serve art majors and as electives for the general undergraduate population, and transfer students, who often must take first-year classes as juniors or seniors to satisfy graduation requirements.

As Table 6 indicates, the cost of attending these universities is generally much lower than the private art institutes, particularly for in-state residents. The interview data
report that students taking first-year art courses at research universities often come from areas where there is little or no art education in the public schools. The student demographic is reportedly broad, including some economically disadvantaged students coming from rural and urban public high schools, and international students.

**The public community colleges.** The two community colleges in the sample present different descriptive characteristics: SRCC is small and rurally located, and LSCC is larger and located in the suburban outskirts of a major city, yet both have strong reputations for preparing students to transfer to BFA art programs at four-year institutions. These open-access programs reportedly serve a broad demographic of students with differing educational goals, ranging from highly skilled and motivated art students who are pursuing an affordable college art education to students who lack the college readiness to continue their education. The participants teaching in these programs describe limited financial resources and challenging life circumstances as common problems facing most of their students.

As with the research institutions, the first-year art courses at these community colleges are commonly taken by both art majors and non-art majors who are fulfilling elective course requirements or seeking access to arts education, which results in first-year art classes with mixed levels of skill and commitment.

**Descriptions of the First-Year Art Programs**

As indicated in data collected from the interviews and institutional websites, every first-year art program in this study has a curriculum of required studio or seminar courses for art majors that teaches and further develops prerequisite skills for upper-level art coursework. Although the course offerings and program structures vary widely, the first-year art studio and seminar courses typically fall into four broad categories or domains, although some artforms, such as performance, installation, and event-based approaches to artmaking, cross different domains:
The 2-Dimensional Domain (i.e., Drawing / 2-D Design / Color Theory / Graphic Design / Printmaking)

The 3-Dimensional Domain (i.e., 3-D Design / Sculpture Processes / Non-Digital Installation, Performance, Social Practice)

The Digital and Time-Based Domain (i.e., 4-D Time-Based Media / Digital Media / Performance and Social Practice / Sound and Installation Arts)

Cultural, Critical, or Program-Wide Studio/Seminars (may include field trips to museums, critical readings, visiting lectures, and special events, research, writing, and other academic skills)

Program titles and course curricula. Table 7 presents the first-year program titles and studio course requirements for art majors at the 12 institutions sampled. Eight programs have maintained the term “Foundations” in their program titles, while three others have adopted “First Year Experience,” and “CORE” as program titles. (At SRCC, the curricular program title is the Fine Art A.A. Sequence.)

Curricular structures of the first-year art programs. In this sample, the first-year programs represent a range of curricular structures that serve the needs of their specific institutions. For instance, SRSC and LWSRU structure courses in 7- or 8-week modules (.5 semester), LNSRU has 10-week courses in a trimester system, and the other nine programs have 15-week, semester-length courses. While all 12 programs require first-year art majors to take a set of specific courses, six programs include a studio elective course and two programs (PCoA and LWSRU) allow students to choose among different courses to fulfill the first-year studio requirements. NSRU’s and LNSRU’s curricula are more complex in that they require students intending to major in different art programs (such as fine arts, illustration, or art education) take different combinations of first-year art courses; however, the courses reported in Table 7 are required by most, if not all, of the various art programs.
Table 7. The First-Year Program Titles and Course Curricula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME CODE</th>
<th>First-Year Program Title</th>
<th>Required Art Studio / Seminar Courses in the First-Year Art Studio Curriculum *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nell SWPAC | Foundation (Six 1-semester courses) plus 1 elective studio course | • Design I: Surface and Image  
• Foundation Drawing I  
• Visual Thinking (seminar)  
• Foundation Design II  
• Foundation Drawing II  
• Color Theory |
| Susan PloD | Experimental and Foundation Studies (Six 1-semester courses plus 1 elective studio course) | • Drawing I  
• Design I  
• Spatial Dynamics I  
• Drawing II  
• Design II  
• Spatial Dynamics II |
| Oliver PCoA | First Year Experience** (Four required and three chosen 1-semester courses) plus 1 elective studio course | • Forum I and Forum II (studio/seminars)  
• Drawing: Tradition & Innovation  
• Drawing: Contemporary Practices  
• Color/Design: Found and Focused or Surface and Screen  
• Form/Space: Body/World/Machine or Prototype/Situate/Fabricate  
• System/Time: Haptics and Optics or Cartographies |
| Rachel PADI | Foundation (Six 1-semester courses) | • Drawing I: Visualization / Representation  
• Drawing II: Visualization / Representation / Concept  
• Light, Color, and Design Lab  
• Light, Color, and Design Studio  
• Shape, Form, Process  
• Time and Movement |
| **Public Liberal Arts Colleges** | | |
| Lauren SCon | Foundation (Six 1-semester courses) plus 1 elective studio course | • Foundation Drawing  
• Lens and Time  
• 3-D Processes  
• Visual Language  
• Com X (seminar)  
• Extended Media |
| Tracy SRSC | Foundations (Foundation Art 101 ÷ 102, Eight courses taught as four-7 week modules plus a seminar course each semester) | • Drawing: O  
• Drawing: X  
• Studio: MAKE  
• Studio: RESEARCH  
• Art Seminar  
• Co: LAB  
• See: LAB  
• Fuse: LAB  
• Make: LAB  
• Art Seminar |
| **Public Research Universities** | | |
| Chaim NSRU | Foundations** (Seven 1-semester courses, some taken in second year, requirements vary by major) | • Perceptual Drawing  
• Process and Media I: Surface  
• Process and Media II: Space  
• Process and Media III: Time  
• Drawing as Research  
• Color and Media  
• Digital Literacy |
| Kat SSRU | Foundations** (Four 1-semester courses) | • Drawing I  
• 2D Art and Design Foundations  
• 3D Art and Design Foundations  
• Digital Art and Design Foundations |
| Anna LNSRU | CORE** (Three 5-unit studio and Two 2-unit “toolkit” 1-trimester courses) | Studio Courses:  
• CORE: Surface  
• CORE: Space  
• CORE: Time  
Toolkit Courses:  
• CORE: Digital Tools  
• CORE: Ideation |
Table 7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>First-Year Program Title Course Credits /Semester</th>
<th>Required Art Studio / Seminar Courses in the First-Year Art Studio Curriculum *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jason    | LWSRU  | First Year Experience Six Thematic Modules total, each 8 weeks (.5 semester) including 3 required and 3 chosen modules. | Three required courses:  
  - Mapping  
  - Space  
  - Surface  
  Three courses from:  
  - Gaze  
  - Experience  
  - Amalgam  
  - Propaganda  
  - The Body |

Public Community Colleges

| David    | SRCC   | Fine Arts A.A. Sequence (Five 1 semester courses) plus 1 elective studio course | • Visual Arts-2D  
  • Basic Drawing  
  • Fine Arts Seminar  
  Three courses from:  
  - Visual Arts-3D  
  - Figure Drawing  
  - Studio Elective |
|----------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evan     | LSCC   | Foundation Core for A.F.A. (Five 1 semester courses) plus 1 elective studio course | • Two Dimensional Design  
  • Three Dimensional Design  
  • Color Theory  
  Three courses from:  
  - Basic Drawing 1  
  - Basic Drawing 2  
  - Studio Elective |

* These required courses are not presented in sequence  
** These programs initiated new curricula, added, or modified courses after the interviews were conducted.

Data were not specifically collected about contact hours for art studio courses. However, the interview data indicate that class sessions at the private art institutes were longer (4.5-7.5 hours 1 day/week, including breaks) than at the other programs, but all programs in the sample expect students to do 3-6 hours per week of studio homework outside of class for each studio course.

**Categories of first-year art programs.** The interview and institutional data describe the pedagogical orientations of these 12 first-year art programs in terms of the three categories (traditional, modified, or reconstructive) of first-year art programs described by Kushins (2007, p. 9), as indicated in Table 8. These categories, which are superficially based on course titles, suggest the following about the first-year art programs: traditional programs have course titles that reflect the traditional Bauhaus foundation courses and sequence (including Drawing, 2-D Design, 3-D Design, and Color Theory), while modified programs have modified or added courses to include digital media or thematic approaches to artmaking while still maintaining aspects of traditional courses, and
reconstructive programs have restructured their programs in ways that reflect contemporary art forms and ideas (p. 9).

Table 8 presents the categories that seem to best represent the institutions in this study. However, it is possible that deeper analysis of the programs (beyond simple analysis of course titles) would reveal that many programs considered “traditional” are really “modified,” as digital media processes are commonly taught in first year programs.

Table 8. Categories of First-Year Art Programs in the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Modified</th>
<th>Reconstructive</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Recent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Private Art Institutes
| Lauren        | SCon | X           |          |                | Recent  |
| Tracy         | SRSC |             |          |                | Ongoing |
| Public Liberal Arts Colleges
| Chaim         | NSRU |             | X        |                | Recent  |
| Kat           | SSRU |             |          |                | Digital Course Add |
| Anna          | LNSRU|             |          | X              | Recent  |
| Jason         | LWSRU|             |          | X              | Within 10 years |
| Public Research Universities
| David         | SRCC | X           |          |                |         |
| Evan          | LSCC | X           |          |                | Digital Projects Add |
| Public Community Colleges

Changes affecting courses and curricula. Table 8 also shows recent curricular changes affecting the programs in this study. In four cases (at PCoA, SSRU, NSRU, and LNSRU), the data associated with curricula and course descriptions changed during the period of data collection and analysis. I conducted online research and follow-up communications to resolve conflicting data, and have chosen to present the course

---

It is conceivable that Kushins’ “traditional” category may soon become obsolete and a new category will be required beyond “reconstructive” to describe the many programs undergoing restructuring.
listings in Table 7 as they appeared during in Fall 2018. At 3 programs (SWPAC, PADI, and SCon), the participants described courses as “under development” or being continually revised.

The interview data indicate that 8 of the 12 programs have undergone major curricular changes in the past decade that include new courses or an entirely new curricular structure, which includes the incorporation of digital media and 4-D time-based processes into new and existing courses and curricula. These changes also suggest a larger movement away from the traditional Bauhaus-oriented course structure toward more reconstructive models that may better reflect contemporary art and approaches to artmaking among first-year programs. In the last two years alone, three programs (PADI, NSRU, and SSRU) revamped or added courses to become “modified,” and two other programs (PCoA and LNSRU) specifically restructured their programs to reflect contemporary art forms, shifting their orientation squarely into the “reconstructive” category.

Four programs have not added new courses into their first-year curriculum (which generally necessitates eliminating or changing the content of existing courses). These include: the two community colleges (SRCC and LSCC), Susan’s program at PloD, and Tracy’s program at SRSC. However, Tracy’s program at SRSC is organized around concepts that change each academic year and functions as a continually changing program within a fixed curricular structure. Susan reported there is wide variation in how the instructors at PloD teach different sections of the same first-year course (based on common learning outcomes but using the instructors’ preferences and expertise with materials and techniques), which suggests that this program is also continually changing.

All but one art program in the study (David’s at SRCC) reported incorporating digital media processes into the required first-year art curriculum for majors; however, David stated that most art students in his program take computer art classes, but they are not part of the designated first-year curriculum for art majors.
Although the programs in this study appear to be evolving away from the traditional content and structure of the Bauhaus, 8 of the 12 institutions have kept “Foundation” in their program titles. PCoA recently changed their program title to “First Year Experience” (like LWSRU), and Anna’s newly implemented program at LNSRU has taken the title of “CORE.” Another point of interest concerning these changes is that there seems to be no direct relationship between the type of institution and the categorical orientation of the first-year art programs, except with the community colleges. I speculate that the adherence to traditional course titles at the community college level may involve articulation agreements for transfer students that often require the approval of state education departments, which may make curricular changes difficult to implement.

**Descriptions of the 12 Faculty Participants**

Data were collected pertaining to the 12 faculty participants via interviews and online research of institutional faculty directories, Linkedin.com profiles, and personal websites, and appear in the participant profiles in Appendix A. The gender distribution of the participant sample is as follows:

- Seven participants are women (specifically, three teach in private art institutes, two in public liberal arts colleges, and two in public research universities).
- Five participants are men (specifically, one teaches in a private art institute, two in public research universities, and two in public community colleges).

The estimated age ranges of the participants at the time of the interviews are as follows:

- The ages of the participants range from early 30s (Lauren) to early 70s (David).
- Four participants are in the 30-40 years range (Lauren, Nell, Kat, and Evan).
- Four participants are in the 40-50 years range (Oliver, Tracy, Chaim, and Jason).

---

7Gender preferences were not specifically discussed in the interviews, except regarding admissions policies at the only women’s college in the sample, SWPAC.
• Three participants are in the 50-60 years range (Susan, Anna, and Rachel).
• One participant is over 70 years old (David).

Other descriptive details include:

• Two participants (Tracy and Oliver) immigrated to the United States to attend college and represent minority populations.
• Two other participants (Anna and David) have previously lived in other countries for extended periods of time.
• Seven participants are parents\(^8\) (Nell, Tracy, and Rachel have children under 13 years; Susan and Oliver have children in their later teens; and Anna and David have adult children).

Three descriptors associated with the academic positions held by these participants provide insight into perception of students and teaching. These are:

• *Administrative and/or Teaching Positions* (which indicate the type of information the participant can provide about their specific programs and may indicate different perspectives regarding students and program initiatives),
• *Teaching Experience* (which suggests different perspectives on teaching and students based on accumulated experience), and
• *Artistic Practice / Teaching Expertise* (which suggests different approaches to and perceptions of skill development, which reflect personal experiences with artmaking and training).

---

\(^8\)Data about parenthood and children emerged spontaneously during the interviews. The relevance of these data was highlighted when these participants expressed personal concern for students struggling with mental health issues or traumatic life events, and empathized with the concerns of parents. These participants also mentioned their children when discussing perceptions of the quality of art education in public schools, the college application process and campus environment, and how teens and young adults interact with digital devices.
**Academic positions of the faculty participants.** The academic positions (in terms of title and rank) of the 12 faculty participants are presented in Table 9 based on data collected at the time of the interviews:9

- Eight participants hold positions that combine teaching and administration of the first-year art program.
- Eleven participants have full-time positions, although Rachel and Lauren have contingent, non-tenure track positions that combine teaching and administration.
- One participant, Chaim, is a part-time adjunct instructor, although he formerly served as the part-time coordinator for NSRU’s Foundations program.
- Two participants, Susan and Oliver, have non-administrative teaching positions.
- One participant, Evan, teaches and serves as gallery coordinator at his institution.

In terms of data collection, the significance of a participant serving as a program chair or coordinator is their ability to provide specific information that may not be available to instructors (such as exact enrollment figures, or explaining program interventions and initiatives that teaching faculty may not be involved with). The eight participants serving in teacher-administrator positions described being tasked with implementing curricular changes and all 12 of the participants in the study reported developing and refining courses. Six of the participants described participating in recruitment events as college representatives who review the portfolios of prospective students, which suggests that these teacher-administrators serve as “the public face” of their programs.

---

9Several participants have told me of changes in their positions and promotions that have occurred since the interviews.
Teaching experience at the college level. Table 9 also presents data associated with the participants’ college-level teaching experience. Criteria for participation in this study stated these art instructors must regularly teach first-year art courses required for art majors and have a minimum of seven years’ experience teaching art (post graduate) at the college level As indicated in Table 9, the college teaching experience of the 12 participants in this study range from 7 years (Lauren at SCon) to 26 years (David at SRCC), with the specific breakdown as follows:

Table 9. Participants’ Positions, Rank, and Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Administrative Position</th>
<th>Academic Rank</th>
<th>Teaching Experience at Present / Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Chair of Foundation</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>4 years / 11 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PioD</td>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>18 years / 25 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-Time, Rank Unknown</td>
<td>10 years / 10 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Assistant Chair Foundation</td>
<td>Associate Adjunct Professor</td>
<td>19 years / 19 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Foundations Coordinator</td>
<td>Visiting Assistant Professor</td>
<td>7 years / 7 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Division Head Foundations Program</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>14 years / 21 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>(Former) Foundations Coordinator (P-T)</td>
<td>Adjunct Instructor, Contingent</td>
<td>16 years / 16 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>Director Foundations</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>6 years / 12 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>Program Head CORE</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>1 years / 19 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Chair, First Year Experience</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>10 years / 17 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>Coordinator, Fine Arts Program</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>26 years / 26 years total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Gallery Coordinator</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>10 years / 10 years total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five participants had cumulative college teaching experience that ranged between 7-12 years (including Nell, Oliver, Lauren, Kat, and Evan).

Four participants had teaching experience that ranged between 16-19 years, (including Rachel, Chaim, Anna, and Jason).

Three participants had between 20-26 years of college-level teaching experience (including Susan, Tracy, and David).

Six participants acquired their teaching experience at one institution (including Oliver, Rachel, Lauren, Chaim, David, and Evan).

Two participants (Susan and Jason) have taught at two institutions in their careers.

Four participants (Nell, Tracy, Kat, and Anna) have taught at three or more institutions.

Three participants (Nell, Jason, and Evan) have studied art education, and Nell taught art at the secondary level for two years as a certified K-12 art teacher.

The relevance of teaching experience for this study is the deeper understanding of the educational process and system that comes with experience, which informs pedagogy and course content and provides insight into student growth and behavior.

**Artistic practice and teaching expertise.** Table 10 presents the data associated with participants’ artistic practice and teaching expertise. The categories of teaching experience do not directly relate to specific courses or content, but rather to general domains of first-year art courses mentioned previously, which include: *The 2-Dimensional Domain; The 3-Dimensional Domain; The Digital and Time-Based Domain;* and *Cultural, Critical, or Program-wide Studio/Seminars.* While these domains may be problematic in how they categorize art practices and teaching (as many artists work in interdisciplinary ways and ask their students to do so, as well), the intention is to allow broad comparison of the teaching and artistic practices among first-year art faculty. Knowledge of the participants’ teaching expertise and artistic practices informs the
analysis of the interview data, as faculty who teach in specific domains may perceive students’ skills differently. (For example, a digital media instructor may perceive students’ manual skills differently from someone who teaches drawing or 3-D processes.)

In addition to the participants’ personal art practices and teaching expertise, Table 10 includes a “portfolios” category, which relates to interview data that describe faculty who have had experience involving students’ portfolios. This includes faculty who have attended recruitment events where the portfolios of prospective students are reviewed, or have served on admissions committees that review portfolios for college acceptance, or who advise students who are developing portfolios for transfer or acceptance into the art department (as a specific art major) at the end of the first year (which is the policy at many open-access programs). Such experiences evaluating portfolios develop expertise in evaluating student skills and artworks in ways that are often central to college teaching and administration.

First-year teaching, as described by the participants, is unique within college art programs for its focus on introductory-level skills and art experiences, and for its “generalist” curriculum. Unlike upper-level undergraduate art programs that focus on a particular field of art or discipline (such as BFA programs in graphic design, animation, or painting), first-year art faculty are frequently required to teach courses in multiple artistic domains. For example, Tracy explained that the three designated first-year art faculty at SRSC are capable of teaching all of the studio courses within the first-year art curriculum, and David stated that he personally developed and teaches all the non-digital art courses taken by art majors in the first year at SRCC.
Table 10. The Participants’ Art Practice and Teaching Expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Art Practice</th>
<th>2-D Domain</th>
<th>3-D Domain</th>
<th>Digital / Time-Based</th>
<th>Cult/Crit Seminar</th>
<th>Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Drawing, Photography</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>Furniture Design, Sculpture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>Digital Media, Drawing, Painting, Bag Design</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Sculpture, Digital Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Sculpture, Photography</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Painting, Sculpture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Research Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>Drawing, Painting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>Drawing, Painting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>Social Practice, Events</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Performance, Video, Installation, Sound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>Works on Paper, Sculpture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Graphic Design, Painting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Teaching of Art in First-Year Programs

This section presents the interview data of the 12 faculty participants and institutional data from online sources as three subthemes that describe various conceptions and issues associated with the organization of first-year art programs and approaches to teaching art in first-in perceptions of students’ art skills and dispositions, and teaching in response to these perceptions, as follows:

- *The role of first-year art programs* describes conceptions of the role of first-year programs in educating students for further art study.
• *Organizational issues associated with first-year art programs* report on the orientations of art programs toward teaching art in general, and specifically regarding teaching students art skills and dispositions necessary for further college level.

• *Different approaches to teaching art in the first year* describe different approaches that faculty and programs have adopted for teaching art skills and dispositions in first-year programs, which often reflect the artistic practice and teaching expertise of the faculty.

**The Role of First-Year Art Programs**

According to information presented on the websites\(^{10}\) of the first-year art programs in this study, these programs, in general, promise to transform students over the course of the first year through intellectually challenging artistic exploration and skill development. However, the language and website design of these institutions vary widely and reflect the costs of attendance and resources of the different institutional types. For example, the four selective private art institutes in the study (SWPAC, PIoD, PCoA, and PADI) have the most visually sophisticated websites and use similarly complex promotional texts to describe to prospective students (and their parents and art teachers) what they will learn and experience during the first year at their art school, as indicated by the following altered excerpts:\(^{11}\)

- Students will engage in critical dialogue about work they have developed from concept to completion that explores the potentiality of materials as a result of an intuitive and deductive thought process.

---

\(^{10}\)In some cases (including NSRU, SSRU), specific program pages for the foundations or first-year programs could not be found.

\(^{11}\)To protect the confidentiality of the participants and their respective institutions, I have rewritten the promotional statements from the websites of first-year programs in the study using excerpted terms and phrases, rather than presenting the excerpts exactly as they appear online.
• Students will be challenged by a rigorous and integrated curriculum that promotes skill development and in-depth thinking in an environment that honors the diversity of our people and as individuals in the world, and responds to the changes occurring in art, design, and technology through a trans-disciplinary approach to skill-building.

• This first-year program will transform students into a connected community of aspiring creative makers, designers, thinkers, and artists where students will be encouraged to work collaboratively on open-ended projects that allow for self-discovery that includes missteps and successes on the way to innovative solutions.

• Students will master technical skills based in design principles and drawing in preparation for careers in design and art, and will use traditional techniques and innovative technologies for developing personal artistic vision through explorations of materials and methods.

The two selective public liberal arts colleges (SRSC and SCon) have websites with comparatively less “eye candy” and use more direct language to describe what students will experience in their first-year art programs:

• This year-long experience builds skills and explores concepts that reflect contemporary art practice and prepare students for the upper-level art study in any program, while helping students develop a critical voice, and capacity for sharing ideas and collaboration.

• Students will be introduced to new techniques and ways of making involving concepts and materials in a progressive, rigorous, immersive, and innovative program that develops the skills necessary for moving forward into their chosen major.
The websites of the open-access first-year art programs at the two larger research institutions (LNSRU and LWSRU) also promise intellectual growth and skill development through challenging coursework, but use terms such as: “starting point,” “innovative learning,” “critical dialogue,” “professional artistic practice,” “creative methodologies,” and “work ethic,” and phrases such as “excitement for diverse ways to engage in a creative life,” which “empowers students with the basic artistic sovereignty required to pursue an art degree.”

By comparison, the website pages of the two community colleges are utilitarian and direct, explaining that these programs offer entry-level courses that provide rigorous training to help develop the skills and creative abilities required for students planning to transfer to four-year art programs to pursue professional careers in the arts.

These website statements echo the interview data of some of the participants, who, as administrators, likely had a hand in drafting these texts. However, the interview data describe the role and function of first-year programs on a more informal, human level:

Foundation is more of a generalist curriculum because that’s what you’re doing: You’re exposing the students to a wide variety of things because you don’t know what will spark them.... You never really know what kind of career you’re going to fall into. So, if you have a broad-enough base and... some idea of... different things... that you... dislike or have no talent for... you might not gravitate towards those fields. (Rachel, I 2017)

We often talk to students about the fact that a lot of what happens in foundations is about trying to figure out “What is your way of learning?” and “What is your way of approaching a project?” And so, “You have to work to... figure out what your preferences are and what helps you to work better.” (Tracy, I 2016)

I’m thinking, “What am I building a foundation for?” That’s it.... “Lifelong learning,” you know? “Finding, right then and there, what you’re really interested in or knowing how to kind of learn something else or what you need to make yourself a really rich, creative life.” (Anna, FC, 2018)

Website pages that specifically promote and describe the first-year art programs at the two smaller public research universities in the sample, NSRU and SSRU, could not be found.
Organizational Issues Associated with First-Year Art Programs

To understand faculty perceptions of students and teaching, one must understand the larger context of the educational environments where the art teaching and learning occur, in relation to their philosophical approaches to art education. As mentioned earlier, the various institutional types serve different student populations with different missions regarding college art education. For example, the six selective programs in the study that require admissions portfolios serve students with prior art training and some art skills, while the six open-access programs in this study provide access to art education to any student, regardless of prior art education.

However, different categories of first-year programs (traditional, modified, and reconstructive) exist across the sampled art programs, independent of the selectivity of the programs, and indicate different philosophical approaches to teaching art that are reflected in the curricular structure of the individual programs. A further examination of the interview and institutional data reveals different pedagogical stances toward teaching and teaching art that are reinforced via administrative policies (such as using prescribed syllabi, employing adjunct instructors, and requiring admissions portfolios).

Consistency and variation in teaching art skills. The data indicate that some programs strive for consistency in how their first-year art courses are taught, while others allow for variation in teaching and even embrace change in terms of the content, skills, and the art experiences taught. Such distinctions reflect beliefs about the nature of art and art education in terms of teaching students the “fundamental skills and concepts” of art, and specifically, which skills, content, and artmaking experiences will benefit students in their artistic development for future art study. Table 11 presents interview data describing the administrative orientation of the programs in the sample regarding instructional consistency or variety in the teaching of first-year art courses with multiple sections.
Table 11. Program Orientations Toward Consistency and Variation in Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Consistency/Standardized Instruction</th>
<th>Variation via Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Values Variety in Approaches</th>
<th>Embraces Change</th>
<th>Instructional Staffing*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Full-time F-Y and U-L, and adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y and U-L, many adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time, many adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y and U-L, many adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y, Team Teaching with U-L Faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Research Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y and U-L, many adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y, Adjuncts, Grad Students in Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Full-time, F-Y, Adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y, Graduate Students in Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time F-Y few adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time and adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*F-Y indicates full-time faculty who primarily teach first-year courses, U-L indicates upper-level full-time faculty who teach first-year courses.

The data suggest that a variety of factors may contribute to whether a program is oriented toward instructional consistency or variation, which include: instructional staffing (i.e., full-time, designated first-year faculty, or a mixture of upper-level, adjunct instructors, and graduate students in training); whether the first-year program is design-oriented (which may imply a more consistent approach to training than fine art programs, as suggested by Nell at SWPAC); the student demographic served by the program, in terms of college readiness (as less experienced art students or those who struggle with
college readiness may be perceived to benefit from consistency); and the accumulated
teaching experience and tenure status of the program administrators (as untenured or less-
experienced faculty may feel pressure to accommodate upper-level program who seek
greater consistency in the art skills and experiences taught in first-year programs).

**Programs that prioritize consistency in teaching.** The interview data describe
three programs (SWPAC, SCon, and SSRU) that prioritize instructional consistency by
using prescribed syllabi or syllabi templates, faculty assessments (in terms of teaching to
stated learning outcomes), and program-wide common assignments and grading rubrics
in the effort to ensure that students are taught the same skills and content in all sections of
first-year art courses.

Instructional consistency in first-year art programs (and in art education in general)
is considered controversial by some for several reasons. These include the notion that
consistency is sought at the first-year level in ways that do not occur at upper-levels,
which raises issues of academic freedom. Some argue that teaching art is fundamentally
different than teaching other academic subjects (such as mathematics or biology) because
there is no universally accepted knowledge base, pedagogy, or teaching methodology,
although many art educators believe there are universal art concepts (such as “the
elements of art and principles of design”), which should be taught. Furthermore, Olivia
Gude, the current Chair of Art Educator at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, has
questioned using the elements of art and principles of design as an adequate basis for

13 A panel at the 2017 FATE biennial conference, *Prescribed Syllabi in Art Foundations:
The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*, organized by Sarah Bielski, who teaches at Georgia Southern
University, specifically addressed these issues.

Education in the United States.”
curriculum development (2007), and first-year educators such as Michelle Illuminato,\textsuperscript{15} have argued that standardization in art education is antithetical to creative work and privileges skills based on cultural standards that may not be universally accepted.

Although these programs represent different institutional types, the three participants whose programs value instructional consistency all have relatively limited teaching experience at their present institution\textsuperscript{16} (in comparison to the other participants in the study) and, at the time of the interviews, did not have tenure. The data suggest that these teaching-administrators conceive of their first-year programs as supporting the needs of the larger art department, rather than as an independent first-year art experience or curriculum.

These three participants gave different reasons for seeking consistency in how art skills are taught in their respective programs: Nell stated that sophomore-level design courses at SWPAC build upon specific skills and knowledge (such as perspective drawing) taught in first-year courses. Lauren reported that the large number of adjunct instructors at SCon appreciate having syllabi and assignments developed by the upper-level faculty (who also teach first-year courses and have determined the introductory skills required for their programs). For Kat, whose program mentors graduate students teaching the first-year art courses, the use of prescribed syllabi and assignments facilitates teaching pedagogy, assessment, and classroom management techniques to the graduate instructors. Furthermore, because admission to the art major (or minor) at SSRU

\textsuperscript{15} Michelle Illuminato was the honored art educator at the 2017 FATE Conference: Beyond the Core, where her paper, Radical Whispers, specifically addressed this topic.

\textsuperscript{16} Although Kat has been teaching art at the college-level for 12 years and Nell for 11 years, their experience involves teaching in different programs. Lauren has been teaching at SCon for 7 years but she has been full-time for only 3 years. For these participants, their present position is their first experience as a program administrator. While Kat and Nell will be coming up for tenure, Lauren is presently on contingent line that requires reappointment every 3 years.
requires earning a minimum grade of “C” in every first-year art course, Kat stated that consistency in teaching and grading (via rubrics) is considered essential.

Nell provided an example of how she assesses instruction in first-year courses, which requires a presentation of the work produced in classes taught by adjunct instructors:

We’re assessing Design 1 ... [with a] rubric ... to make sure that the faculty [has] ... at least one lesson that strives to teach the students that skill, assuming [students] ... have achieved it at different levels ... [and that students have] an opportunity to learn, practice, demonstrate, [and] execute those skills. (Nell, I 2016)

While it can be assumed that most college art programs assess the student work and quality of teaching in courses taught by adjunct instructors, such assessment may be less formal, as it appears that the adjuncts in Nell’s program are assessed in a similar manner to first-year students (via rubrics). Kat’s program fosters consistency in first-year teaching among her graduate students (who simultaneously take courses with her while teaching) with strategies such as group grading of projects to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Consistency in teaching across art programs may occur for other reasons. For example, in programs where only one instructor teaches a particular course, one can assume there is consistency in terms of the assignments and learning outcomes. This is the case for David at SRCC, where he teaches the majority of non-digital first-year courses; yet the few adjunct instructors develop their own syllabi and assignments.

Programs that allow variation in teaching. As indicated in Table 11, the majority of participants reported that their first-year programs allow for variation in teaching (in terms of syllabi, assignments, and pedagogy), provided specific student learning outcomes are met. The data suggest that instructional variation is allowed for both philosophical and practical reasons. For example, some participants described the task of creating course syllabi and assignments as the instructor’s responsibility, although student learning outcomes, syllabi templates, assignments, and teaching materials are
commonly made available for instructors to use as guidelines and resources.

Interestingly, in contrast to Kat, Jason (who also mentors graduate students teaching in the first-year art program at LWSRU) considers developing personalized course syllabi and assignments (based on a template) to be important skills for graduate students to learn if they plan to pursue a career in teaching.

While nine programs in the study allow instructional variation and personalized syllabi, the interview data suggest that at least five of these nine programs (PIoD, PCoA, PADI, SRSC, and LNSRU) explicitly value the unique experiences that different artists bring to their programs. For example, highly accomplished and “famous” artists commonly teach courses (even at the first-year level) at many private art institutes. One can argue that the opportunity to study with such instructors is an inherently valuable experience to offer students that should not be subject to standardized syllabi and assignments. Some participants, such as Anna at LNSRU, argue that artmaking and teaching are highly personal and variable in nature, and that the instruction will be more authentic in courses that are designed by the instructors:

[By] letting go of the need for consistency ... I’m hiring the best darn team I can, and even though a lot of them are adjuncts ... to work together ... communicate ... [and] trust that people are ... [teaching] to their strengths. They’re going to [teach what] they know ... and ... be excited about a vision that they share. (Anna, PS 2017)

On a philosophical level, Anna suggests that such instructional independence fosters progressive education:

We have to allow and ... cherish the fact that each person brings something different. That’s good and it’s ... variation that allows there to be diversity of students and more equality in the classroom. (Anna, I 2107)

However, according to Susan (who teaches at PIoD), there may be a downside for students when the skills taught in different sections of the same course vary widely (as is the case in her program, where some sections of 2-D Design are digitally-oriented and others are manually-oriented). Given that students often have little choice or control over
their scheduled courses in the first year, the content and skills they are taught in first-year courses may seem random in comparison to what other first-year students have learned in the same course, resulting in frustrating gaps in knowledge and skills sets. For example, when asked if students at PLoD learn coding or specific software programs, Susan replied:

> I don’t do 3-D printing ... but students do it.... I don’t teach the software. I usually have them work with somebody else because ... if I have a TA ... they are probably faster and give more accurate [instructions].

> I don’t know if everyone would get coding. You know, that’s a thing with our program: Some people might get it and some people might not. So … most of the time, if they really wanted it, they kind of figure it out for themselves, to be honest. But I think that could be a problem. (Susan, I 2017)

Susan also mentioned her teaching assistant’s frustration in a 2-D Design section that was taught entirely on computers.

**Embracing change in course design and content.** Several participants (specifically Nell, Oliver, Tracy, and Anna) mentioned continually changing (or refining) courses and their content as a function of their teaching or administrative vision. For example, Nell, whose program at SWPAC values consistency in how skills are taught, stated that she has frequently changed or developed new courses to better serve the needs of the upper-level art programs.

Variation in teaching and continual change can also reflect the instructor’s personal approach to teaching, as Oliver at PCoA explained: “I am different from a lot of my peers and I’ll tell you why ... I get bored really fast. So from year to year, I always change my syllabus,” and when asked about faculty using personalized syllabi, Oliver responded, “Unique to [the instructor]. And [students] ... like the fact that a lot of these instructors bring different things to the classes” (Oliver, I 2017). Tracy (at SRSC) and her former colleague, Anna (now at LNSRU), also reported embracing continual change as a creative approach to teaching, as discussed later in this chapter.
Independence versus service in first-year programs. At the core of this consistency versus variation debate may be a conflict that was alluded to by several of the teacher-administrators in the study (including Anna, Tracy, Jason, and Rachel), which is: Whether the goal of first-year programs should primarily be to prepare art students for upper-level studio programs by teaching the skills dictated by those programs, or if first-year programs should serve entering art students broadly by guiding their transition to the college environment, creating a community of learners, and helping them conceive of what it means to be an artist, to live a creative life, and to be a curious life-long learner. While every participant mentioned that teaching art skills and concepts, and addressing students’ dispositions were important preparations for further art study, Nell, Lauren, and Kat conveyed the importance of serving upper-level programs. Both Nell and Lauren spoke of open and frequent communications with upper-level faculty (including some who also teach first-year courses) and did not describe such service in negative terms.17 Yet Anna explained why she conceives that a service-oriented approach to programming is ultimately futile and why she has instead opted to teach “bigger skills and ideas” about art, artmaking, and living a creative life:

[Upper-level] faculty [want] things that are very specific for ... [their] area and will never be quite satisfied because there’s always ... inconsistency in how you teach a whole program,... I’m looking at the big picture ... “How to get ideas,” “How to collaborate,” “How to think critically,” “How to make things with your hands,” “How to work inside, outside,” ... more about “contemporary art” and “The history of art” and “How designers work.”... There will be better students, our faculty will be really happy with what they get, but we aren’t beholden to doing specific things that people have an expectation for. (Anna, I 2017)

Tracy described an ongoing tension that exists between first-year and upper-level faculty at SRSC regarding the perceived responsibility of teaching certain skills:

---

17 According to Lauren, this reflects the fact that upper-level faculty commonly teach first-year courses, and Lauren teaches upper-level courses, so the instructors are not isolated in terms of an implied hierarchy of importance within the art department.
I’ll get criticisms like, “Why didn’t you teach them how to do this?” and I will say, “Well, that’s your job. We started it. We sent them to you ready to learn new things and now it’s your job to teach them how to do that, and also to reiterate some of the things we already did.” It’s not like, “We’re done” and then they move on to you. (Tracy, I 2016)

Tracy perceives there to be a generational and philosophical difference between upper-level faculty members (who are renowned within their fields) and the first-year faculty:

A struggle between the younger and the older faculty is this ... idea that we don’t deal with mastery at the beginning level. [Foundations] really is an introduction to everything, and the faculty reflect that. And so many of us are more generalists than anything, and I think ... that really affronts the older faculty [whose] whole identity is built on this mastery of one particular material and process, and the idea of what they see as “dabbling in something” is really distressing to them. (Tracy, I 2016)

Tracy went on to frame this issue as it relates to the contemporary art world:

We ... say, “We’re geared toward teaching at this particular level because of these needs, but also, if you look at the art world now, it’s not a refuting of mastery and ability, but it’s ... thinking [of] an artist as an omnivorous person in the world that is looking at lots of different kinds of information and trying to digest that. So if we are now educating artists that are going out into this contemporary world, we have to be very cognizant of that.” And the students should be able to decide along the way. (Tracy, I 2016)

**Different Approaches to Teaching Art in the First Year**

The orientations of the different first-year programs in this study are presented as traditional, modified, or reconstructive in Table 8, as suggested by course titles such as *Drawing 1, Color Theory, Experience,* and *Expanded Media.* A major distinction implied by these categories is whether the focus of the first-year courses is primarily on teaching art skills in isolation (as exercises or teacher-driven assignments), or teaching content- or concept-oriented projects that develop skills through the process of artmaking. Modified and reconstructive programs indicate a shift away from how first-year programs have been taught in the past. According to Elkins (2001), the original Bauhaus Foundations program focused on teaching skills through rudimentary exercises and material
exploration that were intentionally devoid of reference to art styles and concepts in order to facilitate students working from an aesthetic “tabula rasa” and intended to develop students’ sensitivities (p. 34).18

It is likely that many of the study’s 12 participants received a first-year art education that was traditionally oriented around design principles and exercises originating with the Bauhaus. Some of these participants (including Anna, Jason, and possibly Evan) have come to question why first-year art courses are still being structured this way, years after postmodernism shifted the focus of art from skill mastery to more conceptual approaches that critically examine culture, often through appropriated content. Anna articulated the disconnect that many instructors may have with this entrenched curricular structure:

[It] never made sense to me that students learn 2-D and 3-D Design, which ... sounds like a foreign language, even though I always got As ... but it was because I was doing what [the teachers] wanted me to do. (Anna, I 2017)

However, course and program titles, as collected data, do not describe what kind of teaching is actually taking place in these first-year art classrooms. This study only reports the perceptions of 12 participants as they pertain their own teaching and students, and to the experiences and knowledge they have acquired as program administrators and educators. As mentioned previously, every participant spoke of the need to teach art skills in first-year courses, including those faculty who teach art through the exploration of concepts and experiences (specifically Anna, Tracy, and Jason).

When analyzing the interview data, it became clear that the participants were using the terms “concept,” “content,” and “skill” in different ways, which could be specific (such as welding skills), abstract (i.e., we teach design skills or critical thinking skills); or to imply positive and negative connotations (such as “skill-based work looks like

---

foundation exercises,” or “students learn skills when dealing with content”). Similarly, in the interviews, terms such as “ideation,” “research,” and “the creative process” also conveyed vague or multiple meanings. Furthermore, none of the participants were willing to spontaneously list which skills (or concepts) were taught in their first-year courses or programs. Instead, some participants chose to recall instances of teaching a particular skill in their own courses and appeared reluctant to describe the teaching that occurs in first-year courses taught by others.

Changes in teaching first-year art courses. Most of the 12 faculty participants described ways their teaching has changed over time. The majority stated that they began their careers as more rigid or demanding teachers who were less forgiving of students by strictly adhering to course syllabi and due dates, who pushed students to work really hard, and who focused primarily on skill mastery. Similarly, a majority of the participants stated that they initially modeled their teaching on recollections of influential teachers, positive learning experiences, and lessons they had valued as art students. For example, Evan explained how he first approached teaching a 2-D Design course at LSCC, the community college where he still teaches:

I was doing straight up Bauhaus: black and white, first couple of weeks, basic shapes. And then, I [thought], “The principles are very important ... but surely there’s a more interesting way that they can be doing this, rather than playing with squares and circles and triangles and rectangles.” (Evan, I 2017)

When asked if his students found such exercises engaging, Evan responded:

Yes and no. But quite frankly, I wasn’t engaged ... [Laughter] I mean ... “I’m not passionate about this” ... I just figured ... “If I was an 18 or 19-year-old kid in this age of technology and instant gratification, what’s a cool assignment ... to convey that lesson?”... I’ve done that ... with most of the assignments. (Evan, I 2017)

Evan went on to describe his evolution as a college professor, which echoes the responses of other participants who gained insight and confidence through experience:
When I was an adjunct, I ... worried about things ... [on a] more micro-level, like short-term ... “Was this week’s class successful? Can I make the next class successful?”... [Over the] years, it gets a little bit bigger than that ... “What can I change in the curriculum for the entire semester to make the course more effective,” rather than week-to-week.... [In the] foundation courses, I’ve changed almost every one of my assignments majorly. (Evan, I 2017)

**Changes made in response to students’ needs.** Some participants reported changes in their teaching that reflect a greater awareness about students today. For example,

Susan at PloD stated that she has become sensitive to the well-being of students in her classes and is willing to sacrifice her course schedule when students are exhausted from the demands made in other courses. Rachel explained that she reads about pedagogy and continually strives for clarity in her teaching at PADI:

To teach a structured class that the students would understand what they’re learning, why they’re learning [it], and how it links together, is something I keep working on because I think it helps their learning and [makes for] a better class experience. (Rachel, I 2017)

In recent years, Rachel has used reflective writing assignments at the final stage of projects to add depth to students’ artmaking experiences and to address metacognition:

I’ve been ... using reflection.... Because ... doing project after project, there’s so much work ... it’s just ... a blur.... “What did I learn?”... To get them at the end to say ... “What was my goal going into this project?... Where did I succeed?... If I were to do it again, would I do it differently?”... It helps them become more sophisticated about choices ... I found that their work has improved and [it] also helps ... if I give them an open-ended project, [with] defining parameters that are realistic ... and more specific about what they want to get out of it. (Rachel, I 2017)

However, not all participants described the evolution of their teaching in positive terms. David stated that his community college students now must be entertained and cajoled to engage in coursework:

When I was first starting ... I was much more serious in the classroom.... Because of the nature of the classroom changing, I’ve become much more entertaining.... I tell a lot of jokes naturally.... Students say, “If you weren’t an art teacher, you should be an entertainer.”... I feel ... ashamed of myself because I’ve ... fallen into that trap.... I’m keeping the students happy and
that really bothers me because ... doing really good professional work isn’t about being happy. (David, I 2016)

Further compounding David’s concerns are the falling enrollments at SRCC:

  So ... this entertainer guy here surfaces more and more because I have to get people in that classroom.... I have to keep people happy. And ... to keep an 18, 19-year-old happy, where you want to push, you start asking less.... It’s a difficult thing ... because it doesn’t go with my character. (David, I 2016)

  David’s teaching has evolved in response to changes in students and other factors in his teaching environment, such as falling enrollments. Other participants (specifically Tracy, Oliver, Nell, Evan) also described modifying their teaching in response to various factors, such as students’ changing characteristics; programmatic changes involving course content, curricula, and technologies; and in response to the conditions faced by students today. Such data clarify that change is an essential component of responsive teaching, especially as the demographics of students continue to shift and as advances in technology, society, and culture further shape conceptions of relevant skills and content.

  **Teaching informed by the student demographic.** It appears to be easier for faculty who stay at one institution to refine their pedagogy and gain insight into the needs of their changing students, as teaching similar courses at different institutions to different student populations can require reassessment of teaching strategies. For example, Nell taught as an adjunct instructor at five different colleges before being hired in her present full-time position at SWPAC and explained how her development as a teacher advanced when challenged to teach the same course at different types of institutions:

  At some schools, it was just like, “You’re teaching *Drawing 1*, these are some ... loose ideas of things that we like hope that you might cover.” So when it was really open like that, I drew a lot from my own experience as a student.... I looked back at projects that I had enjoyed ... and I would borrow a lot of that. That worked really well at [PCoA] because I [had gone to PCoA].... It was terrible for some of the other programs ... like when I taught at [local community college] or when I taught at [elite private college] for a little while ... because, at [PCoA], the students were coming in with a high level of experience. (Nell, I 2017)
Nell ultimately relied on advice from her program chair at the local community college:

I realized at that point that I really needed some more resources. I couldn’t just go off ... personal experience.... I started to seek resources from other faculty ... teaching at the college to get feedback.... [The Foundation Chair] walked me through ... all of the assignments that she did, and they were really terrific ... because so many times when you teach 2-D Design it’s like, “elements of art, principles of design” ... and that is really good for students who have never had any experience with that. But for the students who have had experience with that, [it] can be really frustrating for them. (Nell, I 2017)

Nell articulates the challenge of teaching classes with students that have mixed levels of art skills and experiences, which the data suggest is common in open-access programs, especially at the community college level. In Nell’s case, using conceptually-oriented assignments that require the development of basic art skills and knowledge proved more effective than simply focusing on “the elements of art and principles of design”:

[The Foundation Chair emphasized] Gestalt Theory. So: similarity, continuity, figure-ground relationships, and all of the principles of design, elements of art; they’re all, like, twirled up in that. So she’s still addressing line ... [and] shape, but it’s all under this umbrella of something that’s very new to all the students. (Nell, I 2017)

Nell’s prior experiences teaching in different art programs have undoubtedly added to her skills as a teacher, yet they also clearly illustrate the need for using different approaches to teaching skills and content at different types of institutions.

Oliver discussed the impact that changing student demographics can have on teaching when his classes at PCoA have had large numbers of international students:

[In] my most diverse class, I had nine Chinese ... and somebody from Korea who felt completely out of place. And I remember saying [to the registrar], “Guys, if I have 20 kids, could you please not make half of them foreigners? It changes everything. I can’t show a video without subtitles. It becomes impossible. I’m losing half the class, right?” (Oliver, I 2017)

Yet Oliver also spoke of developing an art course specifically for international students:

Last semester, I piloted Tradition and Innovation ... because of all the foreigners we’re getting. [Teaching] this Western European-type of art ... just doesn’t fly [anymore]. So we started making students do research ... [and}
give] a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation. They have to speak it out to me, mainly because...as artists, you need to know how to talk about your work, and it’s really hard on the foreigners but, “Hey, it’s a part of life.”... It actually turned out pretty good because they were excited ... and I made it less about reading books. So I took them to the library. [The librarian] was really good ... so this was easy and they did it...It was a really, really, good experience for me and we learned a lot. (Oliver, I 2017)

**Professional development for first-year teaching.** The issue of professional development for faculty teaching first-year courses arose pertaining to different teaching situations. In three cases, the interview data described older faculty who required training to implement changes in their teaching, which was met with resistance. For example, Oliver mentioned an older colleague’s complaints when more digital media was being integrating into the revamped first-year curriculum at PCoA, as this would require further training on her part. Similarly, Evan mentioned a recent curricular change at LSCC where digital media instruction would be a significant component of every first-year studio course, but questioned if the older faculty were implementing the change as intended:

> At least a quarter or a third of the projects make use of the computer.... Some faculty ... [with] a strong traditional art practice ... may not know the full-range of digital software applications ... and instead of the students getting experience in two or three applications, may only ... utilize one program.... Being traditionally art educated ... [with] a personal art practice that is also rooted entirely in traditional processes, there’s not a real premium on such faculty to continually familiarize themselves with the ever-changing software. (Evan, I 2017)

Rachel described a situation where some faculty members at PADI did not want to accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities:

> It’s very hard for staff because oftentimes if students have learning disabilities, they’ll give these notes for the faculty, and the faculty are like, “I’m not doing that.” I’m just like, “You have to do this. That’s what your obliged to do. It’s a legal and binding thing.” I’ve sometimes I’ve had to switch faculty because the old timers don’t want to do it, and [that also makes them angry]. (Rachel, I 2017)

In other cases, the participants spoke of wanting more professional development, or seeking further information from campus resources. For example, Oliver spoke of his
need to be trained in psychological counseling because so many students confide in him about traumatic life experiences. Rachel mentioned consulting with a foreign language specialist on PADI’s campus to help develop teaching strategies for the large number of international students in their program now, and Lauren reported consulting with the autism specialist on campus when developing effective approaches for teaching the significant number of students with autism in SCon’s first-year program.

Pressures to modify approaches to teaching art. The data suggest that some art faculty may think back positively on their own first-year experiences in art school with deep appreciation for how they were taught and the skills they learned. Many faculty still value mastery of traditional skills in both their teaching and personal work, but find that teaching skills for the sake of skills is no longer appreciated by students.\(^{19}\) Today, rather than using Bauhaus exercises, many instructors teach assignments based on “the elements of art and principles of design”\(^{20}\) (referenced by both Nell and Evan) as the commonly accepted fundamental art concepts that have been featured in art textbooks over the last 100 years,\(^{21}\) which, as Nell explained earlier, can frustrate experienced art students.

First-year art programs oriented around traditional skill development have been forced to adapt and change when new art forms (such as social practice, performance, and interactive web-based works), new technologies (such as smartphones, video editing software, midi keyboards, and 3-D printing), and interdisciplinary approaches to

\(^{19}\)This is addressed in Stacy McKenna Salazar’s 2014 article, “Educating Artists: Theory and Practice in College Studio Art.”

\(^{20}\)As described in Chapter II: “The Evolution of First-Year Art Education in the United States.”

\(^{21}\)While Efland (1990) described the influence of Arthur Wesley Dow’s design theory on art education in schools during the first half of the 20th Century, his “elements of art and principles of design” are commonly featured in contemporary textbooks, including Mary Stewart’s (2015) textbook series, *Launching the Imagination*, which is used in many first-year art programs, and in secondary-school textbooks, such as Rosalind Ragan’s (2005) *ArtTalk.*
artmaking are integrated into the curricula. Such integration of new approaches and technologies forces faculty to reconsider the existing structure and sequence of studio courses within the traditional art domains. Furthermore, teaching about contemporary art may lead students to question the relative importance of developing art traditional skills when so much art today is about “concepts” and “ideas,” and is produced using the labor of others.22

Design-oriented first-year program, such as SWPAC and PADI, may conceive of teaching skills and concepts differently than fine art-oriented programs, perhaps more like tools and methodologies that will serve future client-oriented applications. The interview data suggest that these programs teach specific technical skills (such as perspective drawing, as mentioned by Nell at SWPAC) or “soft skills” for collaboration and ideation (as discussed by Anna at LNSRU), and the adoption of methodologies for creative problem solving and ideation (as with PADI’s recent decision to integrate elements of the design process23 into all first-year courses), as described by Rachel:

Instead of short little projects, [we will teach] more things that [require] some research, some iteration, some thinking, some revision, making the final, and then presenting it publicly, writing reflections…things that get them thinking more about the whole process of learning. (Rachel, I 2017)

Teaching focused on art skills and process. How one approaches teaching art often reflects the instructor’s teaching expertise and studio practice, and the student demographic served by the program. At SSRU, Kat’s approach focuses on skill development and teaching the process of artmaking as a series of steps, reflecting her teaching expertise in Drawing and 2-D Design, and her drawing and painting practice

---

22Many contemporary artists (such as Jeff Koons, Ai Weiwei, Vik Muniz, and El Anatsui) employ workers on a large scale (in factories and villages) to produce ambitious works of art; while artists who work conceptually with performance and event-based forms (such as Tino Seghal, Marina Abramovic, and Rirkrit Tiravanija) may leave no physical trace of their art after the event beyond documentation (if allowed).

23As described in Chapter II: “The Growing Influence of Design Education.”
involving realistic portraiture and illusionistic rendering. During the interview, Kat explained why first-year students in her program benefit from developing basic skills and artmaking experience before engaging with concepts and content:

Our foundations [program] is formal and is skill-based.... Because of our student population, we really need to focus on formal concerns and media skill for them to then build into content. It’s overwhelming to start with [content].... So we want ... our program to serve ... the kids that we are going to have ... and that we hope to matriculate and retain and get them through. (Kat, I 2017)

Although she teaches at a research university, many of Kat’s students have not had art education in secondary school. In fact, the data suggest that Kat’s classes may be less diverse in terms of students’ skill-levels and art experiences than many community college art classes,24 which explains why Kat teaches basic skills in a directed way:

Rigor is a challenge ... because either [the students have not had] art in high school ... or ... it’s ... like an elective ... [with] no real assessment ... or standards. They are really hungry for [a] problem-based ... step-by-step, breaking-it-down ... approach.... “I know that you want to make something ... to be proud of, but I know that you are overwhelmed.... We’re going to give you an approach ... to enter you into this making process: Do this first, then do this, then do this.” I have found that is really comforting, especially for the millennial set. (Kat, I 2017)

Kat supports her students with structured lessons and projects that have been broken down into clearly articulated steps, which then become a strategy that students can use with future projects:

To encourage their developmental growth, I try to straddle the line between giving them enough of that structure but not to where it’s stifling ... to find that balance between—”Now, whatever solution you’re going to do, the first thing you’ll need to do is research, the second thing you’ll need to do....”—So I try to give them an approach. That’s the rigid part. But then, hopefully, the outcomes can be responsive to whatever they do in the steps. Otherwise, I think I’d do them a disservice as they get into advanced courses

24 David, Evan, and Nell spoke of teaching diverse student populations in community college art classes with wide-ranging art skills and prior art experiences, including some highly skilled art students with limited financial resources or family support.
because then they’re uncomfortable solving a problem on their own. (Kat, I 2017)

According to Kat, developing skills and understanding of the artmaking process will eventually lead the students to making more independent work with stronger content:

I want to train them to have confidence ... and give them the skills to [generate a] solution ... they can actually articulate, which is another disconnect they have.... They’ll come up with these grand ideas of what they’re going to make, but they don’t have the skill set to actually do that. So it’s this kind of horrible self-fulfilling prophecy. (Kat, I 2017)

Using rubrics in grading supports Kat’s skill- and process-oriented approach to teaching in several ways: First, it encourages students to adhere to the parameters and steps of the assignments while demystifying the way artworks are graded, and ultimately, rubrics give students a sense of control over the grades they receive:

In the syllabus, I list the things ... to be graded.... In art ... there is such fear of ... subjective grading.... I like the rubric ... [as] a more objective way.... “This thing is worth 100 points ... 10 points is for doing the preliminary sketches ... 10% ... for participating in the critique ... 10% ... for meeting the size requirements.... You could get 35-40 of these points by just following the guidelines and by doing the minimum.”... [Rubrics eliminate] that, “Oh ... she just doesn’t like the art I make,” [reaction].... It’s a way to [say], “You’re controlling it, you’re driving this bus.”... I have very few grade [challenges]. (Kat, I 2017)

Teaching focused on art skills and content. Jason also teaches at a large research university, LWSRU, where his program’s courses are required for art majors and serve as electives for any interested undergraduate students, including many who attended K-12 public schools that did not offer arts education. Although Jason trained as a painter, his practice and teaching now involve performance art, video, and sound installations. During the interview, Jason challenged the notion that to make art, one must first develop skills before engaging with content:

25Because Kat also mentors graduate students teaching first-year courses, the same rubrics and assignments are used in all sections of a given course. Kat meets with the graduate instructors to grade the finished assignments for a particular course using rubrics and inter-rater reliability.
Obviously ... to express an idea you have to have skill.... By pairing the two in the first year, instead of just having it be “skill” or “craft,” you would think that the “skill” would suffer because they’re also dealing with these conceptual issues, but I find the opposite ... [students] make a connection and they have personal investment. (Jason, I 2017)

Jason also spoke of negative consequences that can result when skill development is prioritized over ideation and personal expression:

A lot of programs still ... carry on that “They need to learn the skills first” ... [and] focus on “how to gradate paint from red to green.”... Then, [as] juniors, suddenly [students are] expected to have ideas ... [to] express with those techniques ... but they don’t have any practice with coming up with ideas ... [as a] creative methodology.... We try to focus on having them make art from Day One, rather than isolated design principles. (Jason, I 2017)

While the first-year program at LWSRU has some highly skilled art majors (who enter with portfolios), Jason emphasized the importance of encouraging curious non-art majors to try studying art in relatively low-risk, eight-week-long course modules, such as his Experience course that teaches time-based projects, including performance and videos:

The video projects [are] partially collaborative and sometimes it causes issues for kids that have social anxiety, but ... I always explain ... “Look, some kids are going to love it, some kids are going to hate it, but you all are going to learn from it.” (Jason, I 2017)

According to Jason, the first-year program at LWSRU emphasizes content and ideas, as well as craftsmanship and technique, which accommodates different kinds of art students:

Our grades [use] an established rubric: 50% of the grade is ... craftsmanship-based or technique, 50% is content or idea ... and those more internal conceptual processes.... We weigh craft and content equally, not because we feel that’s ... appropriate ... for students to go out into the world and work, but because we know there is a range.... Many students ... consider themselves ... conceptually oriented. Many are more technically oriented. We want ... full exposure to both ... so ... they’re informed as they move forward...and begin to decide what type of artist they are. So they are not making presumptions based on their previous experiences.... They’re making an informed decision [based on] deep exposure. (Jason, I 2017)
By emphasizing the development of ideas for self-expression alongside craftsmanship and skill development, the students in Jason’s program make work that resists the “cookie cutter” quality that afflicts many skill-oriented first-year projects:

It’s not just ... [about] executing the professor’s vision, it’s ... being responsible for ... that vision because we call upon them ... in the development of ... projects ... [that] look like a wall of art instead of a wall of “foundations projects.” (Jason, I 2017)

**Teaching focused on ideation and self-discovery.** A subset of four participants (Anna, Tracy, David, Chaim) provided extensive data about teaching ideation and creative (or inventive) thinking for problem solving. This approach suggests a deeper level of learning associated with self-discovery, self-reliance, and metacognition with the goal of providing students with a sense of agency in their education and artmaking.

**Creative influences and the intersection of ideas.** For example, at the time of the interview, Chaim, at NSRU, taught a course for first-year and transfer students that explored the students’ aesthetic interests and influences through independent and collaborative studio projects that connected personal and disparate ideas in the world. The course used exercises (such as making mind-maps and lists of students’ interests and cultural influences) to create “personal inventories,” and then focused on collaborative studio projects that derived ideas from obscure books (assigned by Chaim) and connected them in collaborative group projects. This decidedly non-digital approach to research required physical exploration of the campus library to retrieve the books from the stacks of the university library and collaboration with classmates in the production of an artwork that conceptually represents the intersection of these different ideas.

**Educational agency through experience.** Anna uses a variety of experimental approaches to teaching first-year courses, including some she developed while working

---

26Since the interview, the first-year program at NSRU has been revamped with entirely new courses. A similar course to the one Chaim spoke of in the interview is now called *Drawing as Research.*
with Tracy at SRSC, and that she now employs at LNSRU. These approaches include similar strategies to those used by Chaim (i.e., mind-maps, list making, and physical exploration) to help students discover and further explore their personal interests. The data (from interview and podcast transcripts, and multiple follow-up exchanges) suggest that Anna draws heavily from her expertise in social practice, where teaching, communication, orchestrated events and activities, and exploration are inherently artistic activities. Communication, collaboration, and trust among the students and faculty are essential to Anna’s approach to teaching and learning:

If you don’t have relationships ... a sense of trust within the classroom, then you can’t do these things.... So, [it’s about] building that trust with everybody, not just me, but ... together, and then changing this paradigm of “What are they doing there?”

[By] ultimately expecting a lot from people, but making them comfortable and making them know that you’re really making a connection that matters for them that’s about “truth” ... you can begin to really change the way the classroom can work. (Anna, PS 2017)

Anna’s courses engage with physical movement, self-discovery, experiential learning, curiosity, and the willingness to explore; and her stated goal is to empower students to be active in their education and to foster self-reliance for living a creative life. Implicit in the ideation strategies used by both Anna and Chaim are the following observations about students:

1. Many students do not see themselves as a source of knowledge and ideas.
2. Many students have been conditioned to passively engage with education.
3. Many students have never been asked to express their opinions in an educational setting.
4. Many students may be unaware of the influences that shape their thinking, sense of aesthetics, and ideas about art and artmaking.

Anna spoke at length about helping students engage with education:
“What are you interested in?”... The first time you ask a student that, it’s really hard for them.... “I’m not interested in anything.”... I actually had a student say that to me ... and I was like, “There are things! And if you haven’t been thinking about them, you should, because that’s what’s rich!” ... If I’m not asking those questions, and nobody else is, then what are they getting from the whole experience? Just like, “Doing your homework and keeping everything at bay?” (Anna, I 2017)

Anna then explained how using movement-based activities and keeping students from sitting around in the same seats facilitate student agency in the learning process:

You have ... a different kind of experience.... They’re not sitting at a desk looking at you in the front of the room, which keeps ... that direction of ... “I have all the knowledge and I’m handing it out to all of you,” instead of thinking about knowledge ... or learning, as located in the individual. (Anna, PS 2017)

When asked to describe the kinds of experiences student have in her classes, Anna said:

“Write a hundred things. I’m going to time you. In a minute, I want to see a hundred things you know about art,” ... or, “Go outside. You have twenty minutes to ask three people to give you something from their pocket.”... They bring those things back ... spread [them] out on a table and ... just observe.... Objects already have inherent meaning.... They have the information that they can get from that ... the normal thing is to wrinkle it up and throw it away. (Anna, PS 2017)

Although the activities in Anna’s courses may sound foreign to those with traditional training in the arts (which Anna also received), these activities teach numerous skills that are commonly considered essential for artists, such as communication, collaboration and research skills, “out-of-the-box” thinking, as well as traditional studio skills. Anna’s approach to teaching also includes the development of metacognitive and critical thinking skills through experiential learning and classroom discussions.

Fostering curious and flexible thinkers. After Anna’s departure to LNSRU in 2015, the first-year program at SRSC has continued teaching projects involving research and social practice methodology. What I found distinctive about Tracy’s approach to teaching, as evidenced in the interview data, are her ideas about the essence of creative work. At a time in history when technological advances offer opportunities for creative
production that could hardly be imagined 20 years ago. Tracy reminds her students that creative work ultimately comes from the mind and hand, not from elaborate processes, facilities, and machines:

[We] say, “You can make art in any situation. It’s really great that you are in a school that has kilns and digital photo and you can learn all the coding, [but] if it’s just you in a room with a table, if ... you’ve got a notebook, how can you continue to make art without all the stuff?” (Tracy, I 2016)

To be clear, Anna and Tracy reported that they do use smartphones, digital media, and other technologies for artmaking in their first-year classes at SRSC and LNSRU. But Tracy argues that creative thinking is more about curiosity, flexibility, and the love of learning rather than skill mastery, studio space, and the latest available technologies:

When we look at our alumni ... the most interesting ... who did not [become] studio artists ... ended up using their BFA degree to be creative thinkers.... The best students that we’ve had ... were facile learners ... who were open and very curious.... We could teach them to do anything because they were ... interested in learning.... We’ve had the hardest times with [students] who said, “I only want to do this one thing.” (Tracy, I 2016)

When Tracy advises the instructors who team-teach SRSC’s first-year classes about designing assignments, she encourages them to begin projects on a basic level whenever possible, with the process broken down into a series of basic steps. For example:

“Could you show them how to do this thing without the computer lab?... Is this something ... they could use their laptop or their phone for ... or ... something that you can break down in a way ... [to] show them how to do this on paper?” So with video and animation, “Can you start with a flip book first and then stop-motion?... Can you break down all the different steps?” (Tracy, I 2016)

Like other participants in this study, Tracy wants to build confidence within her students by teaching them the creative process in practical and realistic terms:

---

27Including technologies such as 3-D printing, laser cutters, and sophisticated smartphone apps.
A lot of what we do in first year ... is to help [the students] get to that point where they feel that they have a lot of resources within themselves to ... tease out an idea, to look for facilities, to kind of figure out how to do things without all the fancy stuff. (Tracy, I 2016)

**Emphasizing intuition and inventive thinking.** David is an outlier among the participants in the study due to his extensive experience and training as a self-taught sculptor who pursued an MFA later in life after working for years as a farmer (see Appendix A). Because his formal art education began at the graduate school level, David developed all of the courses at SRCC based on a personal philosophy that drove his own artistic development, which involves inventive problem solving, curiosity, sensitivity to materials, and craftsmanship.

The students taking David’s art courses vary widely in terms of art skills and experiences, including some highly skilled local students who save money by first attending community college. However, David’s approach focuses on the creative process and artistic intuition, rather than building upon the skills and experiences students have developed prior to entering his program:

I talk about a creative method and it starts with our intuitive response. I think we all feel philosophically committed to intuition. That’s really the source of creative decisions ... that gut feeling: “I want to do this, I don’t want to do that.”

[The students] were doing all their projects intuitively ... under the guidance of [high school art] teachers and I didn’t want those results. I wanted to find new things. I wanted them to work on this intuitive base and ... I really pushed for this discovery in materials and processes.... They all get it within the very first weeks of the first semester: they’re doing work that they never thought they would do and usually there’s a little bit of difficulty. They are definitely uncomfortable. (David, I 2016)

After many years of teaching, David has found that using non-objective projects facilitates new and authentic creative thinking:

I think most students would work from an objective basis, [to make] objective art. You know, it’s imagery or symbols that they understand and that they’ve being exposed to, and I understand that completely. I force them
within a week after their first project to move into non-objective art. (David, I 2016)

David’s approach seems related to the rudimentary exercises of the Bauhaus, which used material exploration to heighten students’ artistic sensitivities and avoided imagery to facilitate working from an aesthetic blank slate.28 Yet David never took Bauhaus-oriented first-year art courses and his approach to teaching developed intuitively. In a similar vein to Anna and Chaim (who use list-making and personal inventories in their teaching), David’s intention is to facilitate self-discovery within his students (in terms of aesthetic preferences) that leads to development of an authentic voice that is not the product of the media or social media, prior art education, or other aesthetic influences:

The projects are designed using this non-objective direction to get them to their self, where they are, but unrelated to idea. So if there’s idea involved, ultimately it will be carried by the size of the elements they use, the edges, the color, and the inter-relational things that they will discover themselves. They will be discovering new materials, too, that we have in the classroom ... all these materials ... and I really push for non-traditional processes, too. One of our assignments is that they have to come up with an inventive way of creating a value scale without using any ink, paint, charcoal, anything like that. (David, I 2016)

David came from a family of inventors and fine woodworkers, which has informed his art practice and his teaching. David’s students learn skills in relation to the individual projects they develop, and David teaches students a wide variety of processes that may not be available to first-year art students at other community colleges:

“You don’t have to know how to weld, you don’t have to use a table saw, but whatever you do, it must be appropriate.... So if you need to weld or you need to use a table saw, well then, we’ve got to learn how to do that.” (David, I 2016)

Teaching and learning as a creative endeavor. The Foundations Program at SRSC is perhaps the most extreme example of first-year art programming in the study in terms of its structure and approach to teaching as a creative artistic experience. As mentioned

28As described in Chapter II, in “The Influence of Bauhaus Foundations.”
earlier, Anna and Tracy taught together at SRSC for over a decade, and Anna’s influence and teaching expertise is still evident in the program. For these participants, teaching and learning is a form of artistic expression, and teaching provides an opportunity for faculty to make, learn, and develop artistically alongside the students. This approach relies on the unique structure of SRSC’s first-year program, whereby every year, the faculty develop new programming, course content, and assignments based on a thematic concept (such as “Identity,” “Iteration,” and “Ways of Seeing”).

Tracy explained that the semester begins with a weeklong series of events and workshops with visiting artists whose work addresses the chosen theme. During this week, the faculty observe and divide the first-year cohort into four groups. Each semester is broken up into four seven-week studio modules (that each group will cycle through) plus a program-wide seminar course. These modules have open-ended titles, such as Drawing O (for observation), Drawing X (for experimentation), and a series of “studio” and “laboratory” modules, such as Co: LAB (for collaboration), Studio: RESEARCH (as a research oriented studio course), etc.

All first-year course modules are team-taught with art faculty from upper-level program areas. According to Tracy, the way these modules are taught changes each year in response to the instructors involved and the thematic concept. Tracy explained that certain skills are taught consistently using new assignments that incorporate the knowledge and expertise of the team-teachers and opportunities provided by the theme:

We might say, “This year, we want to focus on this idea of iteration” ... we really want the students to ... learn how to make objects, but then also develop a way of researching information... We’ll try to put two [faculty] together who have some kind of sympathy in terms of how they teach and

---

29Anna recently moved to LNSRU to initiate a newly restructured first-year art program.

30The students register for Foundations 101 and Foundations 102 (8 credits each) in the fall and spring semesters, respectively, which provides a consistent curricular structure for flexible programming.
maybe ... view the world.... We [encourage] faculty not to bring in old projects.... We host faculty meetings ... and ... say [to the instructors], “We are not going to tell you what to teach but you’ve got a list of ... five objectives that we want you to fulfill by the end of the semester.” Some of them are really concrete: We want the students to be able to measure, cut a straight line, and ... build something that can bear weight ... or more esoteric ones: “We want them to understand how to move through an idea.” (Tracy, I 2016)

The success of this approach to teaching appears to hinge on the small size of the school, its remote location, and adequate staffing with full-time faculty who support this educational endeavor. Because the program is continually changing, it is also uniquely responsive to the needs of the incoming students:

    We have a portfolio requirement.... What we see in the portfolios and the SAT scores ... will inform what we might assign that coming year.... [If] the drawing skills of the students were not as good coming in ... then we might do more ... in the first part of the fall semester ... developing basic drawing skills. We might see that the SAT scores ... are a little bit lower, so ... we might assign readings that are not as difficult and try to build up their competency over the semester. (Tracy, I 2016)

SRSC’s program supports the faculty’s intellectual curiosity and excitement about learning and trying new things. Both Anna and Tracy reported seeking out opportunities when they can personally learn from art department colleagues together with their students. Tracy reported that the three full-time faculty in the first-year program are all generalists and versatile in both what they teach and how they approach teaching:

    All three of us are pretty adept at teaching just about everything ... because we [teach] collaboratively…. I see [teaching] as an opportunity to learn something new. Oftentimes I will put myself into situations where I only really know how to teach half of what we’re doing, but the other person can do the other half, and then we try to teach the students and teach each other. (Tracy, I 2016)

Although Anna is now teaching in a very different program, her general approach to teaching has not changed, as indicated by a class she is developing at LNSRU:

    Everyone has to teach from their strengths, but also [from] the things that they want to know.... I’m a constant learner. I’m interested in learning with my students.... I’ve constructed a class that will allow me to do that.... We’re going to explore the city [and] think about things in terms of tours,
souvenirs, and guides, but we’re going to go out and interview people ... and use that as a way to ... prompt artmaking. (Anna, PS 2017)

While this approach to teaching college-level art sounds spontaneous and informal (in comparison to other first-year programs in the study), Anna and Tracy, as their programs’ administrators, each expressed the confidence, experience, and knowledge that comes with nearly 20 years teaching in higher education. Furthermore, the interview data describe the extensive advanced planning and course preparation required for such collaborative programming that occurs in weekly meetings and over the summer.

Yet it is Tracy and Anna’s mindset that seems most extraordinary among the participants in this study (and among educators in general), as many teachers will spend their careers developing specific assignments and teaching strategies that they will use repeatedly in future courses. By identifying themselves as curious learners who work and learn alongside their students, Anna and Tracy upend conventional educational structures. Not surprisingly, within academic environments where upper-level colleagues take comfort in more traditional approaches to teaching and artmaking, and value mastery of media-based skill sets, Anna and Tracy have faced ongoing resistance to their radical approaches to teaching art in the first year of college.

In this study, Anna and Tracy are not alone in challenging traditional conceptions of first-year art education, as Jason’s program at LWSRU presents a similar structure to SRSC’s, with eight-week modules oriented around concepts and media rather than more conventional courses structured around the different artistic domains.

**Faculty Perceptions of Students’ Art Skills and Dispositions**

This section presents faculty perceptions of students’ art skills and dispositions, and teaching in response to these perceptions. The data associated with these perceptions are presented as five subthemes:
The Role of Portfolios in Assessment of Artistic Potential describes data associated with the use of portfolios of student artworks as tools for assessing the artistic potential of students and providing access to selective art programs.

Perceptions of Students’ Traditional Art Skills (which include drawing skills, 2D-design skills, 3-D design skills, and knowledge of color theory).

Perceptions of Students’ Digital and New Media Art Skills (which include such forms as digitally- and time-based art forms, such as video, performance, and social practice events).

Perceptions of Students’ Academic and Interpersonal Skills (which include research, ideation, communication, collaborative, and other skills that support art practice).

Perceptions of Students’ Dispositions, which relate to education in general, and to artmaking specifically (including interest in career-oriented majors, student engagement, college readiness, shorter attention spans, and greater frustration when learning new art skills).

Faculty perceptions of first-year students’ art skills and dispositions have been informed by teaching experiences in first-year art courses and opportunities to evaluate student portfolios. In the interview data, the discussion of students’ art skills and dispositions often occurred within the context of teaching. The data emerged as three categories of art skills (traditional skills, digital and new media skills, and academic and interpersonal skills), which are presented with their associated curricula, teaching strategies, and students’ dispositions toward education and developing art skills.

The Role of Portfolios in Assessment of Artistic Potential

In the visual arts, portfolios of artworks are often used as indicators of existing art skills, creative potential, and artmaking experiences. Portfolios are commonly used in the hiring process for professional artists and art teachers, and for grant, residency, and
exhibition opportunities. Portfolios are often required of students when applying to college art programs, when transferring to study art at a different institution, and for scholarship and internship applications. Portfolios can be actual collections of physical artworks (with photographs representing work that is too large, heavy, or fragile), often with videos or animations displayed on devices, which are reviewed at “Portfolio Day” college recruitment events. It is common now for students and artists to produce digital portfolios that show photographs of physical artworks or digital media that provide links or files for viewing videos and websites. High school art students are expected to upload their digital portfolios to college admission sites, and many have also created personal websites and Instagram accounts for sharing their artwork online.

The interview data suggest that most students who produce art portfolios (of the quality required by selective art programs) either go to high schools with quality art programming, take extracurricular art classes, or attend specialized summer art programs. At institutions where admissions portfolios are not required to access the first-year art courses (open-access programs), students often generate portfolios with artwork produced in first-year courses for later application to the art department or specific art majors. At community colleges, committed art students commonly produce transfer portfolios to continue their studies at four-year institutions.

Portfolios in the admissions process for art majors. Table 12 shows the different criteria used to evaluate the level of skill and creative potential of students planning to major in art at the 12 institutions in the study. As mentioned previously, six participants teach at selective institutions (four private art institutes and two public liberal arts colleges) that require admissions portfolios of acceptable quality. The other six

31“Portfolio Day” recruitment events are held in different cities throughout the fall as a way for art students to find out about different art programs and to receive feedback on their artwork. College art departments send representatives to meet students and review portfolios, and to advise prospective students on how to improve their admissions portfolios.
participants teach in open-access institutions (four public research universities and two community colleges) that serve a broader population of students and do not require portfolios for access to first-year courses for art majors.

In this sample, three open-access programs (LNSRU, LWSRU, and NSRU) require portfolio reviews for acceptance to the art major (or minor), which can occur at the time of acceptance to the university or upon completion of the first-year art courses. These three art programs also admit large numbers of transfer students (presumably with transfer portfolios) who may need to take first-year art courses to fulfill degree requirements. Each of the six open-access programs allow non-art majors to enroll in first-year art courses as general electives, which, according to the participants, results in higher overall program enrollments and exposes non-art majors to creative expression through the arts, but also generates classes with students who have widely varying art skills and prior art experiences.

Table 12. Indicators of Art Skills and Creative Potential by Program Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Indicators of Art Skills / Creative Potential</th>
<th>Program Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio</td>
<td>Private Art Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio</td>
<td>Selective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio</td>
<td>Public Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>Portfolio Review After First-Year Coursework**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>Minimum Grade of “C” in all First-Year Coursework</td>
<td>Public Research Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio / Portfolio Review After First-Year Coursework***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Admissions Portfolio / Portfolio Review After First-Year Coursework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>Transfer Portfolios</td>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Transfer Portfolios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Considering eliminating portfolio requirement.
** Previously required portfolios, but no longer.
*** Does not have a portfolio requirement, but may implement one.
Selective and open-access programs differ fundamentally in their mission of art education, by either requiring that students enter with prior art training (as needed to produce a quality admissions portfolio) or providing access to art training (to develop a portfolio for future purposes). According to the interview data, these distinctions influence how art skills are perceived and taught by faculty in first-year art courses.

**Ramifications of portfolio requirements on enrollment.** One function of having a portfolio requirement is to intentionally restrict the access of art courses to students with evident art skills, creative potential, and commitment to art study, and who can succeed in rigorous art classes with similarly capable peers. The restrictive nature of portfolio requirements has consequential ramifications for program enrollments, as described in the interviews with Tracy at SRSC (a selective program) and Anna at LNSRU (an open-access program), who have both explored changing their programs’ admission policies, but for different reasons.

Tracy reported that SRSC has experienced a drop in enrollment in recent years, from a high of 156 first-year art students in 2007 to just 66 first-year art students in 2016, which she partially attributes to cutbacks in public school arts programming, which has limited the ability of students to produce quality art portfolios. Tracy and her colleagues question whether portfolios are valid and appropriate tools for assessing the creative potential of prospective students in terms of social justice, given the state of public school arts education in the United States today:

> We ask, “Does a portfolio requirement actually do what it’s supposed to do?” and “Are we ... discounting students ... with ... high aptitude for doing well ... because ... their portfolios are poor, or ... not as good as someone ... [coming from] a really good school system or [with] money ... [for] a summer camp?”... “What are other kinds of markers ... that ... [can] tell us ... more about ... students [and] make it fairer?”... Also ... people we’ve given scholarships to ... based on ... portfolios sometimes just don’t have the grit, or whatever it takes, to get through that first year. (Tracy, I 2016)

---

32See Chapter II, “Changes Affecting K-12 Art Education.”
By contrast, Anna described the first-year program at LNSRU as serving large numbers of upper-level transfer students who must take first-year art courses to satisfy graduation requirements. Due to budget cutbacks, LNSRU is facing a shortage of class seats for art majors, which may impact their ability to graduate in a timely manner, prompting reconsideration of art department admission policies:

We’ve been thinking ... “If the university is cutting classes because of funding ... how do we have any rigor if we’re just letting everyone in, but we have [fewer] classes than ... we normally need?” (Anna, I 2017)

Anna has advocated for LNSRU to adopt a portfolio requirement that will ensure access for committed art students, but she has encountered resistance from her colleagues:

“To improve this program, we need, even if it’s kind of fake, a portfolio review.”... The faculty [said], “Nobody’s gonna [have a portfolio] ... that’s gonna be so hard for them!” I was like, “High school teachers [will help] ... there are tons of AP classes.... It’s not unusual for a student who is serious about getting a BFA to be asked to do a portfolio.”... [Now] I think that everybody has decided that we are going to do a portfolio review, even if it’s a minimal thing. (Anna, I 2017)

Open-access programs allow any interested student to access introductory courses in any subject on the assumption that motivated students can succeed in the course. During the interviews, Kat at SSRU and Jason at LWSRU (both open-access public research universities) stated that portfolio requirements conflict with their institutions’ missions to provide affordable access to education for any admitted student regardless of educational background:

It’s a land-grant university and they want to be an institution of the people.... So it makes sense and it’s actually good because ... there are a lot of kids in different high school programs that may not have had the same opportunity as others. (Jason, I 2017)

---

33In a recent follow-up correspondence, Anna stated that LNSRU’s art department has decided not to implement a portfolio review.

34Although further access to art courses may be restricted based on grades or portfolio quality.
We don’t require a portfolio ... for ... [practical] reasons.... We’re [in a] rural southern [area].... The student population we serve typically have not had a ton of, if any, formal art education. So our idea is, “We’re going to take you. If you are interested and you want to explore this, we want you to come try it.”... A portfolio requirement would basically exclude the vast majority of [students]. (Kat, I 2017)

**Perceptions of characteristics of student portfolios.** The data suggest that portfolio reviewers for selective programs base their recommendations for acceptance on assessment of artworks in student portfolios, as indicators of the following: the student’s existing art skills, creative potential, past art experiences, and aesthetic sensitivities. During in-person portfolio reviews, informal interviews with prospective students can reveal additional information, including the student’s access to financial resources, which Oliver suggests is a further consideration for admission to PCoA, a private art institute.

Interviews with six participants who have reviewed admissions portfolios for their programs in recent years suggest that no universal standard exists for what reviewers consider to be “acceptable qualities” in artworks presented at portfolio reviews. This implies that reviewers may be making subjective judgments informed by personal experience and aesthetic values. The data also suggest that some high school art teachers are knowledgeable about the types of artworks and presentation standards reviewers look for in portfolio submissions, but many high school students and art teachers are not.

The following excerpts present the range of opinions expressed by the participants regarding admissions portfolios, which often seems contradictory and subjective, and the advice they would offer high school art teachers regarding student portfolio development:

35Portfolios can indicate a number of things, including the financial resources of a school district or family (by the types of projects presented) and the aesthetic influence of a teacher. Informal interviews with students at portfolio reviews can indicate skills, knowledge, experience, and potential (which may not be demonstrated in the artworks). Other criteria for admission may be artist statements, essays, high school transcripts, and test scores submitted with the application.

36Given the limited scholarships and financial aid offered at most private art colleges, students lacking financial resources will likely incur significant debt to attend these schools. Such assessment may improve student attrition rates.
I see a lot of students ... [who] have worked on one drawing for, like, three weeks or three months.... I would ask high school teachers to open up projects [so] students can work ... more iteratively.... Keep retrying that same project over and over because that is ... what being a working artist is.... To get students to realize that an amazing thing can happen in five minutes or five years ... [to] work on iterations or series, and also ... abstractly, [but] not ... based on just appearance or the idea of abstraction. (Lauren, I 2016)

You know what I really hate when I go to those portfolio reviews? When [students] show me their AP portfolios and they have, like, 12 of the same thing. I would rather see a little more variety.... I mean, if they’re doing ... sketches to work towards something ... but ... the way that they structure those [AP] portfolio reviews ... to narrow [ideas] and come up with ... the same iteration ... a million ways, I think that’s a little young for high school. You want to see more of a broadened experience. (Rachel, I 2017)

Rachel then described what she hopes to see in student portfolios, but often doesn’t:

Projects that take longer times, like, training students to be able to sit for six hours and work on a drawing.... I think that’s something they don’t do, and also, just actual observation. They do a lot of copying from photos but not real observational work. With [observation], you really train their eye to translate from three dimensions into two. (Rachel, I 2017)

A lot of students who have taken AP Art or high school art ... [often] have spent the entire semester on one painting ... on their own ... and [felt it] was such a great accomplishment ... but it so precluded doing anything else. So I might say: “Spend more time ... discussing art, looking at art, and maybe not always making art.” I don’t know if making art and developing those skills, at least for my program, are really that important, but [rather] ... coming in with a broader mindset ... [with] more experience ... looking at art...or reading about things. (Tracy, I 2016)

I ... [look] for finished pieces ... that have a lot of time in it and I see it as a real bonus ... if she has a sketchbook [that] shows some ... idea development.... I remember ... [as a student] we were always told, “You don’t put assignments in there. This should all be stuff that you did on your own.”... [But] I saw a lot of assignments [with] the grade ... on the back.... That whole day, the only portfolio ... like a true college portfolio was by a student...applying for fashion. (Nell I, 2016)

I used to see “XYZ” high school bring me an “XYZ” homework and “XYZ” community college bring in “XYZ” projects. So I know ... the “Life

37Many high schools offer Advance Placement Studio Art courses administered by The College Board, which have specific criteria for grading for potential college credit. For more information, see https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses
After Midnight” project, or whatever, and some of them are cool. They’ve ... got a really good ... high school or community college teacher [who has] ... put in more open-ended assignments to allow them to ... stretch their wings. But...without the proper introduction, when you say, “Okay, it’s a free assignment, go do something,” you end up getting ... another painting of the dishes in your sink or the view from your window or ... moody self-portraits. (Chaim, I 2017)

**Perceptions of quality in student portfolios.** The data in this section are limited to the six participants teaching at selective programs, including the five participants who have reviewed portfolios for their programs in recent years. Table 13 presents the following faculty perceptions about student portfolios: their overall quality, in terms of strong submissions or declining quality; if the standards for portfolio acceptance are lower now; the implications that portfolio requirements have on enrollment (in terms of less or greater economic diversity or enrollment); if portfolios today indicate weaker drawing skills than in previous years; and if these qualities affect teaching. For example, while all six participants reported that some students are still producing strong

Table 13. Perceptions of Portfolios and Drawing Skills at Selective Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Strong Portfolios</th>
<th>Overall Decline</th>
<th>Lower Standards</th>
<th>Enrollment Concerns**</th>
<th>Weaker Drawing</th>
<th>Affects Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan*</td>
<td>PIoD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Private Art Institutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Strong Portfolios</th>
<th>Overall Decline</th>
<th>Lower Standards</th>
<th>Enrollment Concerns**</th>
<th>Weaker Drawing</th>
<th>Affects Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Liberal Arts Colleges**

* Does not review admissions portfolios, but data is based on students and conversations with colleagues.

** Concerns involve lower enrollments and changes in the diversity among the student demographic.

---

38Susan does not review portfolios in her position at PIoD. Rather, Susan’s perceptions are based on interactions with students in her classes and from conversations with colleagues.
portfolios, four participants perceived that the overall quality of student portfolios has declined in recent years, which three participants suggest has led to lower admission standards.

Regarding enrollment concerns, two participants (Nell and Tracy) suggested that portfolio requirements have contributed to falling enrollments. While three participants at private art institutes (Susan, Oliver, and Rachel) expressed concern that portfolio requirements were making the student demographic at their schools less economically diverse, Lauren reported increased diversity among the students attending SCon. Four participants perceived that portfolios today demonstrate weaker drawing skills than past generations of art students, and five participants indicated that changes in the art skills demonstrated in portfolios have affected teaching in first-year art courses.

**Changing characteristics of student portfolios.** In the past, admissions portfolios were strongly associated with drawing skills, as it was common for colleges to require specified quantities and types of drawings\(^3^9\) in portfolio submissions. PIoD is the only program in the study that still requires specific drawing assignments as part of the application; however, many schools encourage students to submit sketchbooks. Nell’s description of the change in portfolio requirements at SWPAC is typical:

> I imagine that faculty ... [are] probably feeling very frustrated because there used to be more rigorous drawing components in the portfolio. Way before I got here, those were taken away. So now, it’s just a suggestion. We’d really like to see some representational drawing but it’s not required. (Nell, I 2016)

Three participants (Nell, Rachel, and Oliver) stated that they look for developed drawings and sketchbooks in portfolios. Lauren reported that many portfolios submitted

\(^{39}\)As recently as 2007, my high school students would receive lists from college art programs of the artworks to be included in portfolio submissions, which commonly required four to six drawings from observation, often specifying a self-portrait and still-life studies, landscapes, or the typical “coat on a chair” assignment.
to SCon are mostly comprised of drawings,\textsuperscript{40} unless the students are interested in graphic design or photography. The interview data suggest that in recent years digital media projects (i.e., photography, video, graphic design, and animation) have become more common in portfolio submissions and have replaced drawing as the primary component.

Nell’s statement echoes remarks made by other participants at selective programs:

\begin{quote}
If I look at the whole picture ... the students that we are getting now in art school, there’s a lot more variety of the skills.... Even at a school like [SPWAC], you’ll get students who gained admission ... because of the way that they’re approaching ideas, because of their photography portfolio, because of their [fashion portfolio]. (Nell, I 2016)
\end{quote}

The four participants who perceived weaker drawing skills and a decline in the overall quality of portfolio submissions also reported a change in the kinds of skills and art media presented in portfolios. For example, Nell described what she had seen at a recent portfolio review:

\begin{quote}
I see wildly different portfolios.... Last year, when I did National Portfolio Day ... I was seeing a lot of good work. This year ... I just saw real rough portfolios ... like 8-1/2 x 11 [inch] pencil drawings ... copied from Steven Universe\textsuperscript{41}.... They bring their iPad and ... show you photos, and a lot of it was like snapshots. (Nell, I, 2016)
\end{quote}

Both Nell and Tracy speculated that cutbacks in arts programming in K-12 schools could be responsible for the decline in drawing skills and portfolio quality.

\textit{Admissions standards and enrollment concerns}. Two of the six participants (Lauren at SCon and Susan at PIoD) did not perceive changes in portfolio quality, acceptance standards, or declines in enrollment. In fact, Lauren reported that enrollment in her program has steadily increased over the past several years. Susan acknowledged that she did not have specific information about portfolios and enrollment at PIoD because she has not served on the review committee, but based on conversations Susan

\footnote{\textsuperscript{40}This may reflect the fact that many applicants to SCon come from the specialized public art high schools in the nearby major city, where drawing skills are prioritized.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{41}Steven Universe is an animated television series on Cartoon Network.}
has had with colleagues and from observations of students in her classes, she perceives
that the artistic abilities of admitted students have not changed in recent years.

However, three participants (Nell, Oliver, and Tracy) reported that the overall
decline in portfolio quality has changed or has lowered the standards for acceptance to
their programs. For example, Oliver described his experience with changing standards
when he was reviewing portfolios for PCoA at a recent recruitment event:

I do feel like they’ve lowered their standards.... My [friend] ... asked me
to work with her to recruit.... [She said], “What are you doing?” [I
responded], “The kid has some real problems drawing.”... “But don’t be like
that. You have to be supportive.”... I’m like, “But I know they’re not gonna
be able to deal with the freshman class.”... [She replied], “But you don’t
know that.”... I see where this is going.... They’re basically telling me ... to
not be as strict. It was rough because I [thought] ... “I don’t know what I am
doing now because my idea of what is good is now being tested.” (Oliver,
I 2017)

Nell reported that enrollment pressures have prompted changes in admissions standards:

I think ... schools like [SPWAC], and [PCoA], [PlOd], all of these
private art colleges; we want to make sure that we have enough students to
keep the doors open and so that changes the caliber of who comes in. (Nell,
I 2016)

Oliver described the effect of changing standards on the quality of students in his classes:

People don’t realize the range of [students] we have in here.... I would
say 20% of the people in this school shouldn’t even be here.... Most of them
will drop out and we could see that from freshmen year, and I tell them,
“Guys, this is not for you.” Some kids make the decision themselves but ... [administrators] always talk about attrition levels, and stuff like that. (Oliver,
I 2017)

Two participants, Nell and Tracy, expressed concern that fewer students in public
schools may be able to produce portfolios of acceptable quality due to budget cutbacks
that have not been reinstated since the recent economic crisis. Three participants
expressed concern that their programs may suffer from a lack of economic or educational
diversity as a result of cuts to arts programming in public schools, particularly given the
high cost of attendance and limited financial aid available at the private art institutes. Oliver described the changing demographic at PCoA this way:

    I never saw myself as a teacher for the rich, and I feel like that’s what it’s becoming because this place is not affordable. I mean it’s not even close to being affordable for most people. (Oliver, I 2017)

The outlier among these participants was Lauren, who also expressed concern about public school students being able to generate quality admission portfolios, but she described the student population at SCon as increasingly racially and economically diverse, drawn mostly from the specialized art high schools in the nearby city and from public high schools around the state.

**Perceptions of First-Year Students’ Art Skills**

While it was mentioned previously that all 12 faculty in this study seemed reluctant to specify the various art skills taught in their first-year art courses and programs, three general categories of skills emerged from the collected data:

1. *Traditional skills* – manual skills and material processes that have historically been taught in first-year programs, including (but not limited to): drawing, color mixing, measuring, cutting, carving, casting, and 3-D processes that may involve equipment in specialized workshops (i.e., woodshops or print shops).

2. *Digital and New Media Skills* – including skills associated with digital media and new technologies (such as digital photography, video production, coding, digital hardware) and skills associated with more contemporary art forms (such as performance, social practice events, and time-based media).

3. *Academic and Interpersonal Skills* – this group of skills (including research, ideation, communication, collaboration, writing, and reading skills) is considered essential to the field of art and supports academic coursework.\(^{42}\)

\(^{42}\)Artists must be able to write artist statements, participate in critiques, and give presentations, and collaboration is required for many artistic endeavors.
These three categories of art skills are not distinct and, in practice, overlap and may be taught concurrently (for example, in a series of connected assignments where, after researching images for inspiration, students make collages with 3-D paper forms, then draw the collages using charcoal and erasure, and simultaneously make stop-motion animation videos of the process with their smartphones, then upload the videos to the class Google Drive where they also post reflective blog entries about the process).\(^{43}\) The interview data suggest that many projects taught in first-year art courses involve multiple skills sets (such as technical, manual, research, collaboration, and communication); however, a context for analyzing the data is provided by reporting faculty perceptions of students’ skills within separate categories.

Table 14. Participant Data Pertaining to the Art Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Open-Access</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Digital and New Media</th>
<th>Academic / Interpersonal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Art Institutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{43}\)This project was shown during a panel presentation by R. Iancu and W. Causey titled, *Yes to Devices: Integrating Technology into the Art Process*, at the 2019 FATE conference: *Foundation in Flux*, held in Columbus, Ohio, from April 4-6, 2019.
Table 14 shows the participants who provided data pertaining to the three categories of skills. Program access (selective and open-access) is indicated because data associated with particular art skills (such as drawing) were nearly exclusively provided by the participants at selective programs. Table 14 indicates that 10 of the 12 participants addressed traditional skills in the interviews, and 9 of the participants discussed digital and new media; however, all 12 of the participants mentioned academic and interpersonal skills as they relate to art study. This suggests that academic and interpersonal skills are a significant component of first-year art instruction.

**Faculty expectations of students’ art skills.** In general, the six participants teaching in the selective programs provided far more data about students’ art skills than the six participants teaching at open-access programs, which may reflect faculty expectations that students will enter with some developed art skills (as indicated by their accepted portfolios). Furthermore, changes in entering students’ skill sets may be more apparent to these instructors. It is also likely that faculty in open-access programs have fewer expectations about the skill sets of students in their first-year art classes, which have a mix of art- and non-art majors. This disparity in data collection could also reflect different levels of faculty “attention” given to individual students in first-year art courses that reflect of the admission process, relative size, and costs associated with the different types of institutions in the sample.44

**Perceptions of students’ traditional art skills.** This category includes skills associated with traditional instruction in *Drawing, 2-D Design, 3-D Design,* and *Color Theory* courses. The data come primarily from participants teaching in selective programs. By far, the collected data describe perceptions of students’ drawing skills.

44See Table 5. At open-access programs, many students will not continue with art study after fulfilling their elective credits. At selective programs, however, portfolio reviews and first-year courses mark the beginning of an extended relationship with students specifically chosen for acceptance. It is also possible that, in general, enrollments are smaller at private art colleges or in selective art programs than in open-access art programs at research universities.
**Perceptions of students’ drawing skills.** As indicated in Table 13, four of the six participants at the selective program perceived that art students, in general, are entering college with weaker drawing skills than previous generations of art students; however, two participants, Lauren and Susan, did not perceive a change in drawing skills among students in recent years.

While many art students develop and hone skills in observational, figure, and perspective drawing in first-year art courses, in the past, drawing was more commonly taught in high school art classes. The interview data suggest that many art students enter college today lacking prior formal instruction in drawing. According to Rachel (the assistant chair of the first-year program at PADI), this lack of drawing experience is compounded by the notion that fewer children are drawing outside of school, as well: “By and large, the kids don’t draw ... at home because of the phone and everything else, and the gaming. They’re not drawing for fun anymore” (I 2017).

The distinction in the data provided by Lauren and Susan may reflect student demographics at their institutions (Lauren reports that large numbers of students at SCon come from nearby specialized public arts high schools or public high schools that offer quality art education; and PIoD, where Susan teaches, is a highly selective school that requires prospective students to physically send in a “drawing test” in addition to their uploaded admissions portfolios, to ensure that students enter with drawing skills). Susan discussed rumors of fraudulent drawing test submissions and spoke of the rare student in her courses with weak drawing skills, which make their portfolio submissions suspect:

> Occasionally ... people say, “Let me see those drawings.”... For the most part, students at (PIoD) are very, very motivated and very good, but occasionally you get people [whose] ... portfolio [submission] did not match what they were doing [in class]. (Susan, I 2017)

Of the four participants (Tracy, Nell, Oliver, and Rachel) who perceived students overall as having with weaker drawing skills, three teach drawing courses (Oliver, Nell, and Tracy). These participants suggest that the diminished role of drawing in high school
art classes (as evidenced in admissions portfolios) has changed faculty expectations of entering students’ drawing skills. Rachel described the challenge faced by PADI’s faculty teaching first-year drawing today:

I think the drawing faculty would complain that [students] don’t draw as well as they used to.... That would be a universal complaint.... [It] has been difficult for our drawing faculty to figure out, like, “Okay, we’re not just starting from here. We’re kind of starting from here now. How do I still get them to here?” [Hand moving from middle to low to high] (Rachel, I 2017)

Nell teaches drawing at SWPAC and echoed the need to maintain high standards for student work when the skill levels of entering students have changed:

There’s a real range of drawing ability when they come in, and it’s not uncommon to have a student who cannot draw at all.... That’s not a problem, but it’s a challenge when you’ve got students that do have some drawing experience and some that don’t.... I feel like I see that more now than I used to. (Nell, I 2016)

This perception of students entering with less-developed drawing skills is countered by the increasing numbers of international students who attend private art institutes, which, according to the institutional websites, are 33% of the first-year student cohort at PADI, PLoD, and PCoA. Rachel, Susan, and Oliver reported that students from South Korea and China receive extensive art training at the secondary level (involving many hours of drawing from plaster casts of sculptures) and, consequently, enter their programs with highly developed rendering skills. Susan explained the difference in training when she relayed a colleague’s account of a portfolio review involving international students:

Some of the Asian students ... would have very specific drawings from plaster casts of, like, the bust of Homer ... a very different, more formal kind of education ...I remember one of my colleagues saying, “You know, at first, you think, ‘Wow,’ and then, you think, ‘Well, that’s not really a good bust of Homer, I’ve seen better.’” [Laughter] ... It’s just something completely different than you’re used to seeing. (Susan, I, 2017)

Rachel described the international students at PADI this way: “Initially, they do come with a very good technical training, but they seem to be pretty open, too” (I 2017).
Curricula for teaching drawing skills. Historically, observational drawing focused on capturing objects, human forms and features, and scenes through the illusion of realistic rendering. However, the data suggest that in recent years, instruction in observational drawing may be valued less for illusionistic rendering than for the cognitive processes that develop perceptual abilities and hand-eye coordination. Teaching observational drawing (involving the perception and graphic representation of light and shadow, space and perspective, size relationships, and textures, etc.), is still a component of many first-year programs, but drawing instruction (as reflected in the interview data and course descriptions found online) has expanded to include imaginative rendering, mechanical mark-making, and conceptual approaches to recording information, processes, thoughts, histories, symbols, and ideas.

Table 15 presents the required drawing courses and their content for the sampled institutions. Every program in this study requires at least one drawing course or module as part of the first-year curriculum except Anna’s CORE Program at LNSRU, where required drawing courses for art majors still exist, but fall outside the CORE curriculum.

The breakdown of required drawing courses presented in Table 15 is as follows:

- Seven programs in the sample require two semester-long courses in drawing.45
- Two programs, SCon and SSRU, require one semester of drawing;
- SRSC requires two drawing modules (one-semester), plus module titled See: LAB;
- LWSRU offers two drawing modules: Mapping (required), The Body (optional).

---

45 At SWPAC, only one semester of Accelerated Drawing is required for students who enter with highly developed drawing skills.
Table 15. Drawing Courses in the First-Year Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Course/Module #1</th>
<th>Course/Module #2</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td><em>Foundation Drawing I</em> or <em>Accelerated Drawing</em></td>
<td><em>Foundation Drawing II</em></td>
<td><em>Accelerated Drawing</em> for advanced students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PlID</td>
<td><em>Drawing I</em></td>
<td><em>Drawing II</em></td>
<td>Exploration of drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td><em>Drawing: Tradition &amp; Innovation</em></td>
<td><em>Drawing: Contemporary Practices</em></td>
<td>Exploration of drawing media and approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td><em>Drawing I: Visualization/Representation</em></td>
<td><em>Drawing II: Visualization/Representation/Concept</em></td>
<td><em>I = Observation / Figure II = Continuation</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Art Institutes

Public Liberal Arts Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lauren</th>
<th>Scon</th>
<th><em>Foundation Drawing</em></th>
<th>1 drawing course required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td><em>Drawing: Observation</em></td>
<td><em>Drawing: Experimentation</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Research Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chaim</th>
<th>NSRU</th>
<th><em>Perceptual Drawing</em></th>
<th><em>Drawing as Research</em></th>
<th>Observational, experimental and digital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td><em>Drawing I</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 drawing course required in f-y, more later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing requirement falls outside CORE curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td><em>Mapping (Required)</em></td>
<td><em>The Body (Optional)</em></td>
<td>8-week modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Community Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>David</th>
<th>SRCC</th>
<th><em>Basic Drawing</em></th>
<th><em>Figure Drawing</em></th>
<th>Observational and Figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td><em>Basic Drawing I</em></td>
<td><em>Basic Drawing II</em></td>
<td>Observational and Figure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview and institutional data describe recently implemented course changes involving the drawing requirements of first-year studio curricula. It appears that changes have been made to accommodate teaching digital media in the first year (as is the case at SSRU) and to integrate more process-driven approaches to teaching drawing (as with NSRU). Nell described a change made at SWPAC to better accommodate entering students with different levels of drawing skills and experience:

In the Fall semester, I teach the *Accelerated Drawing* class and [the students] are typically ... uber-achievers that work really hard.... There was this huge disparity [among] students coming in with drawing skills. Some ... were drawing ... at an AP level.... By placing them out of *Drawing I*, [and into] one semester of *Accelerated Drawing* ... we could focus ... on bringing
the very low [skilled] drawers up ... much higher.... Our attention wasn’t divided. All of the class time was going towards “You don’t understand perspective and we’re going to work with you on that.” (Nell, I 2016)

Teaching to address drawing skills. The participants reported using various teaching strategies to help students who lack experience with drawing, as described in the following excerpts:

A lot of students come in saying, “I don’t know how to draw. I don’t like drawing. I am terrible at drawing.” And we say, “Well, yeah, if you don’t do it every day, you’re probably not going to be very good at it. But after a whole semester of [drawing] ... three hours a day plus ten hours of homework a week, you’re going to learn how to draw ... and you just need to stick with it.... You’ll be fine.” (Tracy, I 2016)

Although PIoD requires a drawing test for admission, according to Susan, this does not always ensure that admitted students have developed drawing skills:

I always assume that they’ve had drawing ... but occasionally you’ll get one [student who has not]. The first thing I [assign] is a drawing.... They [say], “Oh, I don’t really know how to draw,” and I think, “Really?... Well, here is what we are doing: We are drawing this thing.” [Laughter] (Susan, I 2017)

Susan has also observed that motivated students greatly improve their drawing skills:

I have seen remarkable things.... I remember one student [who] did what looked like a lower-grade school drawing ... and then, when I had him do a drawing later ... it was so amazing ... so sophisticated, and I thought, “Wow! He has really learned a lot in that drawing class.”... [He] was very dedicated and he was a filmmaker, so he just really hadn’t had that experience. (Susan, I 2017)

Nell describes SWPAC as a design-oriented institution that requires students to have a clear understanding of perspective drawing for sophomore-level courses in animation, interior design, and other programs. Nell stated that learning these skills was daunting for students with minimal drawing experience, and as a result, she uses rubrics to explain which skills must be demonstrated in the finished projects:

For drawing rubrics ... I look at three or four technical things ... let’s say, [in] a foreshortening lesson. One ... is her ability to capture foreshortening. One ... would be her ability to use line to create a sense of distance in the piece.... The third is her ability to use sighting techniques to get an accurate
drawing. Then, I always look at composition and I always look at growth and improvement. (Nell, I 2017)

At PCoA, Oliver has encountered students in his drawing courses wanting to use their smartphones to ease the cognitive challenge of translating 3-D space on 2-D surfaces and learning the hand-eye coordination required for observational drawing:

These things [smartphones] flatten out the space and people are so comfortable now photographing stuff that I [say] “Draw the chicken,” and they [say], “Okay. I’m gonna photograph it and go home and draw it.”... “That’s not what I want you to do. I want you to draw it from there.”... They never get that.... One of the ways I had to change is that I actually have to prove to them that “Your drawing would be shittier if you draw it flat from the picture.” (Oliver, I 2017)

In response to his students’ desires to the use smartphones in the drawing process, Oliver spontaneously created an assignment to demonstrate the importance of direct observation:

I gave everybody mirrors and I made them do their portraits.... Then I said ... “Take a selfie and ... do that portrait for homework.... Bring both portraits back and ...we’ll talk about it.”... They came back and people were complaining that with the photo, they got a worse drawing.... “Let’s unpack that. Why?” [Describes class discussion] ... “So our eyes see a lot more. When you are getting an appropriated image ... you’re already starting at a disadvantage.” Then they get it. So that’s what I find myself doing more ... having to find ways to bring across points that, in the past, I would never have to. (Oliver, I 2017)

**Dispositions associated with drawing skills.** Several participants discussed student dispositions observed in first-year drawing classes, which specifically involve: attention spans, frustration levels, lack of engagement in coursework, the desire to finish quickly and move on, and time-management issues. While most of these dispositions appear to be negative, it is clear that many students are capable of deep concentration, determination, and engagement, as evidenced by the Nell’s description of her *Accelerated Drawing* students and in Oliver’s description of a highly motivated Chinese student:

This Chinese guy ... I had never seen somebody want to draw as much as this kid. I would tell him to do that size [indicates medium size paper] and he will do that size [indicates large size paper], that huge! I was like, “Why did you do that?” “Because I really want to.”... “How [many] hours did you spend on that drawing?” And he said, “14.”... I looked at this other kid and
said, “How much did you spend on yours?” And she said, “Two.” (Oliver, I 2017)

Oliver’s classes at PCoA have a mix of international and domestic students with vastly different training and artmaking experiences, skill levels, and work ethic. Oliver realized that some students were having difficulty starting their homework assignments, which led to last-minute efforts with inadequate results. In response, Oliver experimented with “flipping” his class to begin the homework assignments under his guidance:

I started doing my own research ... the past, I used to let them do the drawings at home. “Work your stuff out and bring it in and I will criticize it.” ... Now, I make them start the drawing in class, for that six hours, they have to do something on that drawing, then they finish it at home.... So even if they choose not to do work at home, at least I have something to talk about ... that I’ve seen them complete.... That’s one way I have to change.... Now I have to make sure their ass sit there for three hours or else. “Anybody who does art knows three hours is nothing to get anything realized, so I’m just asking you to put in a minimum amount of time.” (Oliver, I 2017)

Tracy reported that her students have difficulty judging how long studio projects will take, indicating a lack of patience or misjudgment of the process:

Their idea of what can be accomplished in a period of time is much greater than what can actually be accomplished.... I have students who are really disappointed with themselves if, like, in an hour, they can’t finish a project. And we say, “Well, you need to have more patience with it.” (Tracy, I 2016)

Both David and Nell reported that some students are disengaged in drawing courses and, when frustrated or bored, seek distraction from the challenging task at hand by using their smartphones in class. David reported that he has caught his community college students watching movies on their phones during drawing sessions on multiple occasions, while Nell finds that some students use their phones while others do not:

Cell phones are the biggest problem in the spring semester when I teach Drawing 2 ... [to students with] very little drawing experience who find drawing very frustrating.... It is what it is. The students that are working hard are always working hard, and the other ones, I just remind them to put [their phones] away. (Nell, I 2016)
The teaching of 2-D and 3-D design skills. In recent years, traditionally oriented 2-D Design and 3-D Design courses have evolved from Bauhaus exercises to incorporate broader approaches to artmaking by using both digital and non-digital technologies (including digital imaging and Photoshop, laser cutters, motors, installation, etc.). For example, Color Theory (which can be taught within 2-D Design or as a stand-alone course) has traditionally involved precise color mixing and painting techniques, but now may use photography, printing, coding, and lighting technologies. Similarly, a 3-D Design class might teach 3-D printing or make sculptural costumes for performance or video projects, or assign more traditional projects, such as plaster carving or wire forms. However, this section is limited to faculty perceptions of students’ manual or non-digital skills involving 2-D and 3-D design courses (i.e., hand skills involving manual dexterity and fine-motor skills) and associated cognitive skills (such as calculating measurements and compositional skills). 4-D/Digital media skills will be discussed in the next section.

Curricula for manual 2-D and 3-D skills. Table 16 presents the 2-D and 3-D design-oriented courses required by the first-year art programs in this study, with descriptive information indicating how digital media has been integrated into these courses. While many programs have undergone restructuring over the last decade to include digital media and a broader range of approaches to artmaking, it is worth noting that eight of the programs in this study have maintained course titles that reference the traditional structure of 2-D Design and 3-D Design.

Perceptions of manual 2-D and 3-D skills. Most participants did not specifically address students’ 2-D and 3-D art skills in the interview data. However, two participants (Evan and Lauren) who regularly teach 2-D-oriented courses perceived changes in students’ manual and cognitive skills involving using rulers for measuring and cutting. While Evan suggested that his community college students lack experience with manual tasks, Lauren did not know why students at SCon found using rulers to be challenging:
I have noticed changes, but I also don’t know if it is due to technology or due to learning disabilities.... I have had students who do not know how to use a ruler. And not just that they don’t know how to enter 5/8ths in a calculator; they do not know how to hold it up against one end. But I don’t know if that’s because of technology [and fewer manual art experiences]. (Lauren, I 2016)

Table 16. 2-D and 3-D Design-Oriented Courses in the First-Year Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>2-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>3-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Design I: Surface and Image Color Theory</td>
<td>Foundation Design II</td>
<td>Includes digital media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PlOd</td>
<td>Design I&lt;br&gt;Design II</td>
<td>Spatial Dynamics I, Spatial Dynamics II</td>
<td>May include digital, varies by instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>Color/Design: Found and Focused or Surface and Screen</td>
<td>Form/Space: Body/World/Machine or Prototype/Situate/ Fabricate</td>
<td>One course chosen from each domain, includes digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Light, Color and Design Lab Light, Color and Design Studio</td>
<td>Shape, Form, Process</td>
<td>Varies by instructor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Art Institutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>2-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>3-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Visual Language&lt;br&gt;Extended Media</td>
<td>3-D Processes</td>
<td>Includes digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>See: LAB&lt;br&gt;Studio: MAKE;</td>
<td>Make: LAB</td>
<td>Includes digital, varies by instructor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Liberal Arts Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>2-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>3-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>Process and Media I: Surface, Color and Media&lt;br&gt;Process and Media II: Space</td>
<td>Yes digital</td>
<td>No data on digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>2D Art and Design Foundations&lt;br&gt;3D Art and Design Foundations</td>
<td>Yes digital</td>
<td>Digital media in other course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Research Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>2-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>3-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>CORE: Surface</td>
<td>CORE: Space</td>
<td>Includes digital, varies by instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Surface (Required)&lt;br&gt;Space (Required)</td>
<td>No data on digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Community Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>2-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>3-D-Oriented Courses</th>
<th>Descriptive Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>Visual Arts-2D</td>
<td>Visual Arts-3D</td>
<td>No digital courses in F-Y curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Two Dimensional Design Color Theory&lt;br&gt;Three Dimensional Design</td>
<td>Yes digital, varies by instructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evan also stated that many first-year students lack basic compositional skills, which he considers to be essential for art and design, and speculated that these skills are no longer being taught in high school art classes.
Three participants at selective programs (Tracy, Susan, and Rachel) make sculpture in their art practices, and two participants (Tracy and Susan) regularly teach 3-D processes in their first-year programs. All three participants stated that it is common for students to enter college with underdeveloped 3-D skills because 3-D processes are not generally taught in high schools, as Rachel explained:

I don’t know if [students] ever had that many 3D skills ... unless they went to ... a very well funded private school ... or unless their father was a carpenter.... Most kids in high school don’t really have [those experiences].... High schools have [not] had [wood or metal] shops since probably I was in high school. (Rachel, I 2017)

While Tracy suggested that the art skills of SRSC’s students have stayed “about the same” over time, Susan has perceived a change in students’ manual skills at PIoD:

I think there probably [are] less hand skills ... than there used to be, but ... it’s nothing I can’t overcome.... I’m ... old-fashioned in that I do have a lot of really hands-on things ... so they expect it, and it hasn’t changed that radically.... [There has] always been a mixture and I’ve always expected ... that’s what you would teach them. (Susan I, 2017)

**Teaching manual 2-D and 3-D skills.** The limited data collected associated with the teaching of manual 2-D and 3-D art skills came from six participants: four from selective programs (Nell, Tracy, Susan, and Lauren) and the two participants at community colleges (David and Evan). For example, Nell reported that she uses rubrics for teaching and assessing “essential” design skills at SWPAC:

In Design 1, one of the essential skills ... is ... [for] students to cut something out and mount it on the board.... We’re assessing for ... even measurements, properly aligned, that the glue adhesion is uniform ... an understanding of craft and that the cutting is crisp.... We have a rubric ... [with] “exceptional,” ... “adequate,” “below expectations,” and ... “very poor.” (Nell, I 2017)

Susan described several of the projects that she has assigned over the years that involve manual skill development, including “classic” traditional 3-D assignments, such as a plaster carving and a wire insect project (that builds on drawing skills), which she
said were popular with the students. Susan uses a structured assignment to assess entering students’ skills, which determines how she advises them on projects going forward:

Having something really structured [gave] me a sense of where they were, so I could gauge if they have something that they are proposing to me. I am always trying to balance out what is possible versus what they want to do, because sometimes they have these high expectations and you just think, “Yeah.” (Laughter) (Susan, I 2017)

A furniture designer by training, Susan teaches her students to develop manual skills first and eventually transitions to working with power tools and other technologies, which reflect the common learning outcomes for the Spatial Dynamics courses at PloD:

My first paper project ... they have to do it by hand, draft it out and cut it, and then after that, it is more open. I introduce power tools midway in [the term], so they can use band saws and drill press if they want to.... I started introducing laser cutters that cut through thin plywood and stuff.... This year, for the first time, we had everyone be trained on both of those things.... If they don’t want to use any tools, the digital or the laser cutter, I don’t care. The projects are open-ended and ... the most important thing is safety. I’d have students [who] were afraid of the tools and ... they trusted me to ... [teach] them safely. [They now say] “I didn’t want to use this band saw, but it is fun.” (Susan, I 2017)

The data suggest that instructors who teach 3-D-oriented courses expect to have classes of students with mixed skill levels, as Susan and Tracy reported:

[There are] ... people [with] a lot of experience and people that have had less, and you ... see that right away when [they] work.... [Some] have done a ton of sculpture in all different media.... It kind of raises the bar, but I have never found it to be a huge problem. I just tell the students, “I assume you don’t know anything.... This is an X-Acto knife, this is how you put it together, and this is how you cut with it.”... I am looking for progress over the course of the project no matter where they started.... They want to learn [about] materials and skills, and ... to express themselves as far as the content goes. (Susan, I 2017)

Our philosophy at [SRSC] has just always been, “We actually don’t really care if you have any skill coming in. That’s why you’re here ... to learn something.”... “It’s great if you’ve got a background in something, but if you don’t, we can teach you how to do it.” (Tracy, I 2016)
Tracy explained how skills are taught in SRSC’s Studio: MAKE course, given that the teaching faculty, course content, and assignments change each year:

[Studio: MAKE] is ... about learning to make objects in space. So it’s not really 3-D Design, not really sculpture, but somewhere in between. But really, it’s about teaching students to cut and measure things and how to use different kinds of materials. So it’s still a lot of “material process” type of stuff, and ... faculty members, depending where they are coming from, might ... [work] with specific materials that they are used to. So if we have someone coming in from sculpture, they might want to work with metal, or something like that. (Tracy, I 206)

At the community college level, David reported teaching students at SRCC to work inventively and intuitively with a wide range of materials, and he teaches a variety of processes and tool use, including power tools and welding techniques, if warranted by student projects.

**Perceptions of students’ digital and new media skills.** In recent years, art programs across the United States have recognized the critical importance of teaching digital and new media skills (which include 4-D/time-based media) as relevant approaches to artmaking that provide skills for future careers in the arts. Nine of the 12 programs in this study have revamped curricula or modified courses during the last decade to include digital media and 4-D processes. Such curricular changes serve to broaden the skills sets of first-year students while acknowledging what many art students want to learn (as a perceived job-skill) and want to use (as a method for artmaking).

In this section, the term “digital media skills” is used as a simplified and somewhat inaccurate catchall term for data pertaining to a broad set of skills that may include: digital photography, computer-based graphics and image software, 3-D printing, coding for websites, and 4-D/time-based art forms such as video and sound production, performance, interactive, interdisciplinary, Internet-based, and socially-engaged art.

**Curricula for digital media skills.** Table 17 presents the data collected from interview and course descriptions that indicate two ways first-year programs are teaching
Table 17. Digital Media Skills and 4-D Processes in the First-Year Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Designated Courses for Digital Media</th>
<th>Courses that Integrate Digital Media</th>
<th>Description / Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>• Visual Thinking</td>
<td>• Color Theory • Design 1</td>
<td>Continually evolving to address needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PIoD</td>
<td>Varies by professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>No specific courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>• Prototype/Situate/Fabricate</td>
<td>• Haptics and Optics • Surface and Screen • Cartographies</td>
<td>Recently reorganized F-Y curriculum, course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>• Time and Movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>4-D- / Photo-oriented, recently restructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>• Lens and Time</td>
<td>• Expanded Media • Visual Language</td>
<td>New course, digital media incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Varies by professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>No specific courses, uses both manual and technical approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Research Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>• Digital Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recently reorganized, new courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>• Digital Art and Design Foundations</td>
<td></td>
<td>New course, replacing a drawing course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>• CORE: Digital Tools</td>
<td>• CORE: Surface All First-Year courses</td>
<td>New courses in revamped program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>• Gaze • Experience</td>
<td>• Amalgam • Propaganda</td>
<td>Photography, video, interdisciplinary and graphic design module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic Computer Graphics is not in A.A. sequence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>All First-Year courses Varies by professor</td>
<td>One digital project in every F-Y course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

digital media skills: (1) via courses designated to teach digital media skills (i.e., LNSRU’s CORE: Digital Tools or SSRU’s Digital Art and Design Foundations), and (2) by integrating digital media skills into existing courses through modified content (i.e., SWPAC’s Color Theory and Design 1, or at LSCC, where every first-year course uses digitally-based assignments). In some programs (such as PIoD and SRSC), the instructors
choose if and how digital media skills will be integrated into their courses. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to describe the content and skills taught in these courses.

**Perceptions of engagement with digital media.** Seven participants (Evan, Nell, Oliver, Rachel, Lauren, Anna, and Jason) reported teaching digital media skills, and the others did not. However, all 12 participants discussed their perceptions of how students are engaging with digital media, and how digital media and the Internet are influencing students’ engagement with the creative process.

Table 18 presents the interview data as four categories that describe perceptions of students’ digital media skills and the influence that digital media and the Internet have had on students’ artmaking and ideation. For example, while Kat does not teach digital media, she described her students’ work as being heavily influenced by media (such as cartoons, TV, movies, music, and viral online videos) in ways that pervade aesthetic decision-making. The four categories pertaining to perceptions about digital media are:

- *Digital media and/or the Internet’s influence on students’ creative process and/or approach to artmaking,* such as using smartphones to document work or make videos (12 participants).

- *Digital media and/or the Internet’s influence on students’ imagery and ideas,* as with the use of appropriated images and color palettes from popular media, or selfie photography (7 participants).

- *Perceptions of students as having fluid and confident digital media skills,* as when images are effortlessly upload to websites, Facebook or Instagram, or when prior knowledge of advanced software is exhibited (5 participants).

- *Perceptions of students as lacking digital media skills, or self-describing as unskilled or technophobic,* as demonstrations of superficial knowledge of digital processes, or claiming little knowledge or experience with digital devices or software (6 participants).
Table 18. Perceptions of Students’ Engagement with Digital Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Digital Media / Internet Influence on Students’ Artmaking Processes</th>
<th>Digital Media / Internet Influence on Students’ Imagery and Ideas</th>
<th>Tech Fluent with Skills</th>
<th>Tech Phobic / Unskilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Art Institutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell*</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver*</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel*</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren*</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy*</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna*</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason*</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan*</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates if the participant regularly teaches digital media processes.

*Teaching digital media skills.* The first-year programs in this study have adopted a range of philosophical approaches for teaching digital media skills. For instance, David explained the logic behind SRSC’s curriculum, which introduces manual, non-digital skills before digital skills, while Anna intends to seamlessly integrate technology as tools and teaching platforms into her first-year courses:

A lot of our students do take computer courses ... but our thinking ... is that everything ... in the computer has started really from our physical world.... We want our students to know...our social, cultural, physical world ... [to] work in three-dimensional space and have objects moving and they have textures on various materials. Our thing is, “You don’t just look at it and think ... [you need] to know tension and touch and textures.”... That [makes] a better prepared student going into the computerized world. (David, I 2016)

We are very much trying to use the phone as a tool in the classroom in all classes ... using Google Drive and D2L as places to organize the info, images, files that students collect. After years of trying to find a good
solution to how to share/document digital work, these seem to be simple solutions that students “get.” (Anna, FC, 2018)

The data suggest that some participants treat digital media as distinct from other art processes because of its screen-mediated and (often) virtual (rather than physical) nature, which may require specialized tools, computer labs, and knowledge of software. Other instructors reported embracing digital media (and smartphones) in their classrooms as logical and obvious tools for artmaking. Perhaps these differences reflect the instructors’ personal fluency with digital media; or how the instructor perceives of teaching with digital media or interdisciplinary approaches; or the kind of digital media processes used (such as smart phone apps versus video editing software). Furthermore, some participants allow students to use smartphones in class for specific purposes (such as for Internet research, documentation of projects, or as music devices), while others (including David and Evan) do not allow any use of cell phones during class to minimize students’ distraction from the task at hand. In this sense, decisions about digital media use appear to be driven by student demographics and course content.

**Integrating digital media skills into courses.** Implicit within much of the interview data is the acknowledgment that while computer technology, personal devices, and social media are influencing human behavior, learning, and culture, digital media is here to stay and has great potential for use in artmaking. Consequently, as programs are incorporating more digital media skills into existing courses, some participants (including Anna, Tracy, and Lauren) are overtly encouraging students to think of their smartphones as powerful tools that can support artmaking and learning, as calendars, note pads, stopwatches, alarm clocks, voice recorders, still and video cameras, GPS devices, tablets for drawing and painting, etc., as well as devices for communication and accessing social media or conducting online research. As a result, some art students may be using digital media and devices in new and different ways to make artwork that reflect our technological world.
Yet, in spite of the potential that smartphones have for artmaking, some faculty stated that they must also address students’ reflexive dependency on digital devices in their teaching. As mentioned earlier, Tracy’s intention is to instill students with the creative autonomy to be able to make art in ways that do not require sophisticated technologies, and Oliver teaches students that using technology does not always produce the best results, especially with drawing. At SCon, Lauren spoke of confronting the ways that technology use has fostered students’ creation of “comfort zones” by developing assignments that force students to explore “discomfort” and the outside world:

[Students] like selfie culture. I hear [that] a lot from faculty ... in photography, in particular.... They really have to push students to go outside their comfort zone.... For one of our projects in this new Lens and Time class, our students have to go photograph somewhere that makes them uncomfortable and not [look] inwards. It is not photographing themselves in some place uncomfortable, but really looking outward.... They ... are interested in looking at what’s right around them and ... in their friend circle. (Lauren, I 2016)

**Perceptions of students’ digital media skills.** Four participants (including Lauren, Oliver, Rachel, and Susan) reported that students frequently teach themselves how to use software, apps, and hardware via online tutorials. Because the individual instructors at PLoD decide which digital media skills to teach, Susan reported that her students often learn software from others or on their own. Lauren reported that some students describe themselves as unskilled or inexperienced with digital technology, in spite of their apparent constant interaction with devices and social media. Two participants, Evan and Oliver, reported that students’ technical knowledge of computers and software has diminished in recent years with the increased use of apps, as Oliver explained:

We believe that these kids are computer savvy and they’re not.... They never claimed to be.... They walk around with that [smartphone] and we assumed [they were].... I [ask], “How long have you had this laptop?” “My dad brought this for me ... to go to school.” ... “What programs have you used?” Most ... have used Photoshop, pretty much that’s it.... They ... go to Instagram ... Snapchat, they don’t do Facebook. They go to ... a lot of these apps. (Oliver, I 2017)
**Dispositions associated with digital devices.** The data suggest there is no consensus among faculty or students regarding how digital devices can (or should) be used for artmaking, as the data provided about smartphone use were often contradictory. For example, Nell finds smartphone use to be disruptive in her *Drawing 2* classes, but allows smartphone use in the first-year research-oriented seminar:

> In the *Visual Thinking* class, so much of it is research-based that all of them have their cell phones, their laptops, iPads; they’re all connected. They’re researching. They’re working. So if they’re texting and if they’re socializing on their cell phone, I’m probably not going to know. (Nell, 2016)

The two participants teaching at community colleges, Evan and David, reported that students’ compulsion to use smartphones in class (which causes distraction) prevents them from being used as artmaking tools. Most participants described having cell phone policies prompted by rude or disruptive behaviors that, in some cases, have led to conflicts and public humiliation of students (as reported by David, Kat, and Rachel). However, Susan does not find phone use to be a problem in her classes at PIoD. Similar to Jason, Susan understands that college students (like her own daughter) depend upon their smartphones for many aspects of their daily lives: for communication, education, work, entertainment; and as alarm clocks, maps, notebooks, and cameras; and as an instrument used by students with social anxiety.

Interview data from Oliver and Evan indicate that students may be less interested in knowing how software or devices work than past students. Rather, students today have learned to quickly find answers to their computer problems or questions about software through Google searches, online forums, and YouTube tutorials, and have come to rely on apps to instantly perform complicated tasks.

While some participants, such as Tracy, Anna, and Lauren, use smartphones as tools in their courses, the data suggest that some students do not automatically think of smartphones as artmaking tools, or perceive what they make with digital media on their
own (i.e., selfies and Instagram images) to be “art” or “photography.” Furthermore, although faculty may recognize the creative potential for using devices and technology in art classrooms, they may not perceive teaching digital media skills or software as their personal responsibility (as when Susan stated that students often teach themselves software or coding).

Chaim, who teaches a research-oriented studio course at NSRU, speculated about the influence of digital media and the consequences it may have on art students:

I could say, “Well, [students are] more curious now.”... I’m teaching a class that’s about being curious.... There are different obstacles.... I’ve got students who can’t give an oral presentation longer than two minutes ... they can’t necessarily make an entire argument, [but] they can make a 10-second Vine\(^46\) that is brilliant.

The way it’s going now, there is more and more removal from touch.... I think that there is an emerging skill set. I do not have a disparaging, dwindling hope in who’s coming towards us, but it’s our responsibility to acknowledge what kind of person it is that’s coming towards us. (Chaim, I 2017)

**Perceptions of academic and interpersonal skills.** The interview data describe a group of skills associated with the creative process and the field of art and design that also support academic coursework. These academic and interpersonal skills include: communication, ideation,\(^47\) collaboration, research, writing, and reading. In practical terms, these are some of the interpersonal “soft skills” and academic skills that students need for collaborative artmaking, creative problem solving in art and design, for critiques and making artist statements or presentations, which also support academic coursework

---

\(^46\)Vine (https://vine.co) was a web app and hosting service for creating short form video loops.

\(^47\)“Ideation” is commonly defined as the process of generating ideas, but along with research, is considered an important component of design education and design thinking. As with the term “research,” depending upon the context, “ideation” can mean different things, including a specific step or process (i.e., brainstorming) for coming up with ideas for a specific design problem, or it can simply mean generating ideas and materials for an assignment.
Defining research and ideation skills. The production of original artworks generally involves four components: skills, materials, creative ideas, and an understanding of the creative process. “Research,” “ideation,” and “the creative process” are abstract terms with meanings that may overlap and change within a given context. Many art instructors consider “research” to be the product of an investigation or a skill used in artmaking that can support the generation of creative ideas. Research and ideation are components of “the creative process” or, as known in the context of engineering, architecture, and design schools, “the design process.” The research activities described in the participant interviews vary widely and often meld with methodologies for facilitating ideation and creative problem solving.

For the context of this study, I have defined research as: gathering or generating information or materials, or developing a process or practice for creative production and/or the study of art, which may facilitate ideation as: the process of generating creative ideas and the creative process as the steps in the production of artworks and design (including research, ideation, and material manipulation) that vary with given projects.

“Research” and “ideation,” as terms, arose spontaneously during the first interviews as activities that occur in first-year courses, prompting changes made to the interview protocol. In the eight subsequent interviews, participants were asked if they teach or use research in their classes, to which most responded that they do. When asked if they consider research to be a foundational art skill, some participants said yes. When asked if they had been taught research skills as first-year art students, most had not. This led to discussions of what form research takes in first-year courses, why instructors

have students use research in their work, and *how* students present evidence of their research. The reasons given for using research in first-year art classes include:

1. Research generates and gathers information and materials for inspiration, ideation, and the development of processes for artmaking and design projects.
2. Research in art courses supports academic writing skills.
3. Teaching research skills addresses the sources and quality of information accessed by students.
4. Personal reflective research can address influences on students’ aesthetic interests and engagement with ideation and the creative process.

While the majority of participants did not explicitly make references to ideation or the creative (or design) process, the data suggest that faculty perceive students as needing guidance for understanding the processes of creative problem solving when developing ideas and content for works of art, and for determining the quality of online information.

**Perceptions of teaching research skills.** Three participants (Oliver, Evan, and Nell) perceive that students need instruction in academic research skills:

You ask them to do research and they don’t know where to start.... We assume that they know how to use Google, but they don’t, they never use it.... They go to apps and they leave them open all the time, so they don’t have any reason to go anywhere else. (Oliver, I 2017)

I can’t believe the things ... passed off as a term paper.... Two paragraphs into the first page ... it’s so blatantly apparent that this is not the student’s writing.... I just type ... the first two sentences ... into a Google search and ... [it’s] somebody’s blog ... or [a museum’s] website.... I have to go back to the student and explain, “Do you understand why I can’t accept this?” And some, not all, don’t even understand it. They’re like, “Oh, what do you mean?” (Evan, I 2017)

Of the eight participants specifically asked about research, four stated that they did not teach research skills but required research in their courses, and four reported teaching research skills, often with the help of librarians. Four participants described using activities and pedagogy intended to foster personal reflection (on aesthetic preferences,
influences, and their personal knowledge base, and through writing) as forms of research.

The following excerpts present the range of responses pertaining to teaching or using research in first-year classes:

No, I don’t ... teach research ... [but] I always have one project where I go to the museum and they pull things that relate to that assignment.... “This is just one way of looking at the problem.” ... Students will say, “Can I go to the library ... [or] the museum?” and I’m like, “Yeah! Sure.”

In design ... they have more “issues” ... [requiring] research that relates to that project.... That’s probably where ... that happens. (Susan, I 2017)

I take them over to the library ... and the [librarian] explains:... “This is Google and these are all the other databases.... Google can’t search all those databases.... All this other information exists,” because as far as they are concerned, Google is it .... I ... give a paper [and] everybody gives me the same example because they will do a search in Google and just take the first couple [results]. (Oliver, I 2017)

We assign a project and they ... research the theme [by] going to the library [or by] using the Internet, and then ... research personally how they connect to it.... The students write a 15-page paper in their writing class ... [using] one of the topics they researched in Visual Thinking. (Nell, I 2016)

Studio: RESEARCH ... is really about learning ... research skills.... “When you say that you’re interested in the environment ... where do you find the information?” ... They ... write a blog ... as a way of collecting information ... online, and [take] photographs ... going out into the community and learning about what it’s like to be a new citizen in (Town) and trying to engage people and talking..... “To make art about this subject, how do you put that out into the world ... why is it relevant and [what] are the different ways that we think about it?” (Tracy, I 2016)

Oliver emphasized that faculty and students have different perceptions of what it means to engage with research:

What we mean about research, we have to be clear ... because [students] understand research to be something completely different. They don’t see research as something that is time-consuming. It needs to be like that [snapping fingers], like a microwave, whereas we would do research for weeks...in books. They’re like, “Is there a quicker way to do this?” (Oliver, I 2017)
Research occurring in first-year art courses. The research activities described by the eight participants who were asked directly about teaching research skills were used as the basis to analyze the interview data and course descriptions of all the participants for evidence of research activities, which is presented in Table 19.

Table 19. Types of Research Occurring in the First-Year Art Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Information and Images</th>
<th>For Art Materials</th>
<th>Content Generation</th>
<th>For Papers / Presentation</th>
<th>Research Portfolio</th>
<th>Reflective Assessment</th>
<th>Museums / Lectures</th>
<th>Library Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Art Institutes

Public Liberal Arts College

Public Research Universities

Public Community Colleges

The eight categories of research activities reported to occur in first-year courses include:

- Accessing images or art information referenced in class

---

49Lauren at SCon, David at SRCC, Tracy at SRSC, and Kat at SSRU were not directly asked about research and ideation, and minimal data pertaining to research and ideation were collected from Kat.
• Gathering information or images (physically or online) for use in projects, or developing sketches, prototypes, or processes for art production
• Generating content for art and design projects, via interviews and other means
• Gathering existing information and images for papers and presentations
• Producing a “research portfolio” of project-oriented work and information
• Using “reflective assessments,” “personal inventories,” and “conceptual mapping” to explore students’ interests in content, processes, and learning
• Attending museums, galleries, artist lectures, art performances and events
• Using the college library as a resource for information and inspiration

Teaching research and ideation. Table 20 presents the research activities that facilitate ideation in the sampled first-year programs, based on the interview data and course descriptions found online. Research and ideation, as steps in the design process, can occur simultaneously within the same activities (for example, research in the form of material exploration can simultaneously prompt new ideas, or ideation). While research can suggest a skill, activity, or product, ideation is primarily a cognitive process prompted by activities or teaching strategies. In this study, courses such as Drawing as Research, CORE: Ideation, and Studio: RESEARCH indicate that some programs are foregrounding the importance of research and ideation in first-year art education.

Yet the data also suggest that the Internet and digital technologies are influencing how students develop ideas, imagery, and approaches to artmaking. For example, Oliver described students today as “raised surrounded by information” (I, 2017) and spoke of trying to disrupt students’ reliance on computers and the Internet. Kat described the influence that streaming media has students’ aesthetic choices on a subconscious level:
Table 20. Research and Ideation Activities in the First-Year Art Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Courses Involving Research / Ideation</th>
<th>Types of Research / Ideation Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>• Visual Thinking</td>
<td>• Material Collection for Writing and Artmaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussions of Cultural Criticism via Films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Multiple Approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PiOg</td>
<td>• Spatial Dynamics</td>
<td>• Museum Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Library Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>• Drawing: Tradition &amp; Innovation and other courses</td>
<td>• Library Research for Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Library Instruction on Searching Databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Museum Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Various courses</td>
<td>• Content Generation for Art Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Integration of The Design Process into All Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>• Com X</td>
<td>• Field Trips to Museums and Artist Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visual Language</td>
<td>• Discussions of Art Criticism and Critical Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Illustrating Abstract Concepts from Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>• Studio: RESEARCH and Co: LAB</td>
<td>• Multiple Approaches including blogs, interviews, inventories, documentation, collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Research Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>• Concept, Process, and Application</td>
<td>• Mind-Maps and Personal Inventories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing as Research</td>
<td>• Physical Library Searches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative Projects that Require Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying Sources of Aesthetic Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>Various courses</td>
<td>• Research for projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>• CORE: Ideation and other courses</td>
<td>• Concept-Mapping and Physical Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative Projects that Require Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inventories of Personal Knowledge and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>• Experience</td>
<td>• Collaborative Projects that Require Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Research Portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>• Fine Arts Seminar and other courses</td>
<td>• Non-Objective Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Material Exploration for Aesthetic Preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Various courses</td>
<td>• Art Viewing for Term Papers Required in Every First-Year Art Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They’re so, so, so media driven and ... looking at the same stuff ... the *YouTube* stars ... seeing that aesthetic ... driven by their own peer group. I don’t think they realize how ... narrow it is because they are “liking” what their peers like.

Now streaming [TV shows] is so big.... You see these color palettes that are coming right out of the 90’s.... But they’re not realizing how retro the
palette that they’re gravitating towards is because [media is] informing it. (Kat, I 2017)

**Student engagement with the creative process.** The data pertaining to engagement with the creative process emerged when the participants were asked, “Do entering students know how to make things?” In response, Nell relayed a recent conversation she had with colleagues who told her:

“[Students] don’t have any skills yet. They don’t know how to really do anything ... so they’re ... just defaulting to what they already know.”... Most of my faculty feel that students are coming in ... not knowing about the creative process, and I feel like they do.... Our job is to give them a lot more opportunities to do that ... in this class that emphasizes experimentation and risk-taking. (Nell, I 2016)

Lauren described her students at SCon this way:

Students don’t know what they don’t know. They just don’t realize how much there is to learn.... They’ll say things like: “I did this already in high school.”... “Well, no, this is a different project and you have to keep trying things over and over in different ways to learn.” (Lauren, I 2016)

Jason acknowledged that students in his program at LWSRU often lack art skills and understanding of the creative process because that is what they came to learn:

Of course [students] don’t know how to make a collage instead of doing it in Photoshop and some of them don’t know how to use Photoshop.... Whatever the skill set is that they lack, they came to us to learn it. (Jason, I 2017)

**Facilitating ideation for the creative process.** Table 21 presents the interview data pertaining to facilitation of ideation for the creative process as six categories of teaching strategies or activities. The data suggest there are no universally adopted strategies for facilitating ideation. Rather, the instructors appear to use strategies and activities that reflect their personal philosophy toward artmaking or as part of a curricular response to support students to engage with ideation on a deeper level (i.e., via seminars that teach art criticism or by adopting the design process model).
Table 21. Strategies for Facilitating Ideation in First-Year Art Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Physical Activities / Collaboration</th>
<th>Material Exploration</th>
<th>Culture / Criticism / Influences</th>
<th>Conceptual / Textual Analysis</th>
<th>Cognitive Lists / Mind Maps / Reflections</th>
<th>Creative / Design Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Art Institutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PlOD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Liberal Arts Colleges                                     |      |                                     |                        |                                 |                               |                                         |
| Lauren      | SCon | X                                   | X                     | X                               |                               |                                         |
| Tracy       | SRSC | X                                   | X                     | X                               | X                             |                                         |

Public Research Universities                                      |      |                                     |                        |                                 |                               |                                         |
| Chaim       | NSRU | X                                   | X                     | X                               | X                             | X                                        |
| Kat         | SSRU | X                                   | X                     |                                 |                               |                                         |
| Anna        | LNSRU| X                                   | X                     | X                               | X                             | X                                        |
| Jason       | LWSRU| X                                   | X                     | X                               | X                             | X                                        |

Public Community Colleges                                         |      |                                     |                        |                                 |                               |                                         |
| David       | SRCC | X                                   | X                     | X                               |                               |                                         |
| Evan        | LSCC | X                                   |                        |                                 |                               | X                                        |

These six categories of teaching strategies suggest that the following philosophical or practical approaches are being used to teach students about art, ideation, and the creative process:

- **Combining skills, knowledge, and experiences with ideas to produce artworks**
  (through collaborative projects, material exploration, and physical activities, some of which involve unfamiliar approaches designed to challenge students’ of prior assumptions, experiences, and dispositions involving artmaking)

- **Teaching systematic approaches to creative problem solving and artmaking**
  (by using the design/creative process as a model, formally or informally conceptualizing artmaking as a series of steps, which may include: defining the problem, research, brainstorming, iterative sketching, production, presentation, refinement, and reflection)

- **Understanding ideas in the context of contemporary art and cultural influences**
  (through the teaching of critical and conceptual art ideas, and examining
sources of cultural influence via concept-mapping, list-making, and textual analyses)

- **Encouraging artistic growth through exposure to art and aesthetic ideas that challenge students’ assumptions and dispositions toward artmaking** (through cultural seminars, visiting artist lectures, trips to museums, galleries and art events, participation in collaborative or socially engaged art activities)

- **Facilitating student empowerment in aesthetic decision making** (by exploring aesthetic interests, influences, and knowledge through personal inventories and reflection, and using non-objective assignments or skill development in material exploration)

- **Facilitating student agency in the artistic learning process** (by discussing the learning process, explaining course expectations through rubrics and clear instructions, focusing on the individual contributions of students, and using student-center assignments)

The following excerpts and examples represent the range of strategies described by the participants for facilitating ideation. For example, Anna, Jason, and Chaim reported using collaboration projects that require jointly produced research and physical activities in their courses.

It’s important that students don’t stay in the classroom.... I’m ... for “Get rid of all the furniture, let’s stand a lot.” They don’t always love it, but as a person who works in social practice, I really understand ... the framework of the room and how important it is that we recognize how that changes experience. (Anna, PS 2017)

Tracy described how the *Studio: RESEARCH* course leads into the *Co: LAB* course (involving collaboration) for further development of ideas for research-based projects:

In the fall, they learned ... different research techniques ... to [work] together as groups, [and go] out into the community.... In the spring ... they continue that ... theme, but ... narrow it ... to a very specific type of research.... [If] the faculty ... is in social practice ... that class might ... [learn] even more about the community ... how to take the next step ... to contact
people ... [and] set up structures for collaboration within the community. (Tracy, I 2016)

The data suggest that some programs address cultural influences on ideation in seminar courses (as with Nell’s program at SWPAC and Lauren’s program at SCon), while some participants (such as Anna and Chaim) teach about art and culture through exercises, assignments, and activities that explore personal interests and sources of influence. Nell, Chiam, Tracy, and Anna also described using film screenings, group discussions, and research-oriented projects to address cultural influences.

**Teaching communication skills.** Communication skills are generally considered a “soft skill” (unlike manual or technical skills that involve physical processes, tools, or software) that facilitates mutual understanding and collaboration with other people. The ability to communicate about the qualities of artworks, artists’ intentions, and the creative process is considered essential for art students and art professionals. As such, communication skills emerged from the interview data of all 12 participants as a broad and important theme. Table 22 presents this interview data as three larger categories and six subcategories of communications skills, which include:

- **Classroom Dialogue** includes **critiques, class discussions, collaborative projects, and presentations** (students develop the ability to publicly express aesthetic ideas and opinions, and where **foreign language speakers** can receive clarification on project requirements and classroom policies);

- **Advisement** includes **one-on-one advisement** (between faculty and students for a variety of issues, including clarification of assignments and grading, program policies, and informal counseling that may involve mental health issues or personal crises that arise from coursework.) One-on-one advisement can also support **foreign language speakers** and addresses **parental concerns**; and

- **Interpersonal Communication** describes **in-person** communication between students and the affect that **phone use** has on communications in the classroom.
Parental concerns describe parental involvement in communications between faculty and students.

Table 22. Perceptions of Student Communication Skills in First-Year Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Classroom Dialogue</th>
<th>Advisement</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critiques Discussions Collaboration Presentations</td>
<td>Foreign Language Speakers</td>
<td>One-on-One Advisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>CODE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private Art Institutes

| Lauren       | SCon                | X          | X             |      |           | X         |
| Tracy        | SRSC                | X          | X             | X    | X         |           |

Public Liberal Arts Colleges

| Chaim        | NSRU                | X          | X             | X    | X         | X         |
| Kat          | SSRU                |            | X             |      |           | X         |
| Anna         | LNSRU               | X          | X             |      |           |           |
| Jason        | LWSRU               | X          | X             | X    | X         | X         |

Public Research Universities

| David        | SRCC                | X          | X             | X    | X         | X         |
| Evan         | LSCC                | X          | X             |      |           | X         |

Communication skills in classroom dialogue. In college-level studio art courses, critiques are commonly used to assess the ideas, creative process, and final realization of art assignments. Critiques often take the form of public discussions about student work and help students to develop art vocabulary, public speaking skills, and promote conversation among classmates. Eliciting engaging and productive dialogue during critiques and class discussions can be challenging for instructors, as entering students may be uncomfortable talking publicly about other students’ artworks (or their own). First-year critiques and class discussions can be especially difficult for the international
students who struggle with English language skills, particularly if they are coming from a
culture where students are not expected to speak in class.

Collaborative projects require students to communicate and negotiate with each
other when working on group projects. Collaboration skills are often essential for
producing and exhibiting ambitious art projects and in arts-related employment. This
collaborating on projects can be challenging for students who prefer to work alone or
who may have social anxiety and prefer texting or online messaging to face-to-face
communication.

The ability to give public presentations is another skill considered essential for art
students to learn, as art professionals often speak publicly and make presentations to
clients, businesses, or art organizations, and may teach or give lectures.

*Facilitating classroom dialogue.* Classroom dialogue among students and faculty
can take many forms. For instance, Anna reported that when she previously taught at
SRSC with Tracy, her students used blogs to communicate with each other and the
faculty within the large group settings:

> I learned so much about my students by reading the blogs ... we had
> large classes ... team-taught ... from 50-65 students. We rotated the reading
> of the blogs. It added a personal level to the class that could not be achieved
> otherwise. The quiet student, the ones who pushed themselves to the edges
> often were dynamic, smart, engaged within the scope of their blog. (Anna,
> FC 2018)

Now at LNSRU, Anna has students use online media, apps, and commonly accessible
drives (such as Google Drive and D2L) to communicate about their creative work:

> More recently we are using phones and apps not only as a creative
> maker tool but to also share what they are making [through] Instagram,
> Facebook and other apps. This is newer, the idea that they should be thinking
> about communicating WHAT they are doing even early on. (Anna, FC 2018)
> [Emphasis in original]

While it is a common practice for college courses to use online computer drives
(such as Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas, D2L, and Google Drives) for sharing uploaded
course information and blog posts, collaborative projects and critiques require students to articulate thoughts about their own or others’ artworks publicly and in-person. Because collaboration and critiques can be difficult for students, teachers frequently employ a variety of pedagogical approaches for teaching these skills, which may also reflect personal philosophies about teaching and making art.

Classroom communication skills can be reinforced or suppressed by the overall “personality” of a given class and the dynamics between individual students (regardless of the subject). Evan reported how this occurs in his first-year courses:

I always tell my students, “I’ll let you dictate ... the studio environment.”... I have classes where ... everybody is as quiet ... [working] for three or four hours without speaking to each other and they’re really productive.... Other classes, like my foundations class this semester, [are] so loud and engaged, but in a good way. Everybody knows each other now, they listen to music when they work, and ... I’m fine with it. So it all depends on the energy of the students. (Evan, I 2017)

**Teaching critique skills.** Art students are commonly taught how to engage with critiques during the first year, but this can be a challenging task for many instructors. Evan reported using a common pedagogical technique to elicit thoughtful opinions from his community college students:

[They] hang the work up on the wall.... I give them ... [5] questions ... and they each have to answer the questions quietly. It’s a silent time so they can look and react to the work via my given prompts.... Crits run much better if the students are given ... time to think and write about the work before speaking.... They’re more willing to share ... [and] more inclined to think that their opinion matters more because I’m asking them to write it down. (Evan, I 2017)

Nell described how her students evolve in terms of developing critique skills:

Their level of criticism starts off as very associative, like, “Huh, it reminds me of ... that episode of *SpongeBob*[^50] where --.”... But ... once you start to raise the bar for what a critique is really supposed to look like and what they’re supposed to do ... they rise to the challenge and they really start to think about what they’re talking about. (Nell, I 2016)

[^50]: *SpongeBob SquarePants* is an animated show produced by the Nickelodeon network.
Nell’s pedagogical approach involves telling students “what it looks like” to actively participate in critiques:

“Your only responsibility today is to be actively engaged in this crit. What does that look like?... You’re not on your cell phone. You’ve got a sketchbook out. You’re writing. You’re looking. You’re participating. You’re saying things.”... I will tell them why critiques are important.... I critique their critique a lot.... “Why did you say that? What does that mean?”... “Oh, I don’t know.”... But I won’t let them back down from it.... “Yes, you do, but let’s look at it.” (Nell, I 2017)

Lauren also reported emphasizing the value of critique skills to her students:

I tell all the freshmen why critique is important ... to [become] a better artist, but how important it is in life.... In a critique, all of your classmates are seeing this thing you made and seeing you publicly critiqued ... with constructive criticism for you to ... make it better.... How ... unique of an experience that is ... as a student, to learn to take constructive criticism but to also give it to other people. I think art students should be diplomats ... [and] lawyers. Art students are going to be better partners.... It’s ... so valuable as a life skill. (Lauren, I 2016)

For international students, speaking in class can be culturally unfamiliar and intimidating in terms of language skills. As a result, PADI has implemented a new studio language course specifically to teach international students the cultural expectations for dialogue in American art colleges while simultaneously reinforcing English language skills.

**Teaching collaboration skills.** According to the participants, students respond differently to the demands of collaborative projects. A typical example of teaching collaborative skills came from David, who has developed ways to engage his community college students in his *Visual Arts-2D* course through fostering discussion and modeling how to give presentations:

We have ... tables that sit four students.... Those classes [are] based on discussion ... with ... questions that each table has to answer ... and they have to look at their projects and then work as a group.... They have to do a presentation like I do.... All three or four students have to talk. So I tell them to divvy it up.... I force them to be in front of the group. And that is kind of off-putting for some of them, too, because they’re on the spot. But ... I know how to [engage them]. (David, I 2016)
In contrast to David, Anna described using social practice methodology to generate communication (which, in some cases, is the “product” of the art activity) and address students’ tendencies to be “inactive” or “invisible”:

Moving people around ... makes it so that there’s more chance for them to get to know each other and people that they wouldn’t normally sit by. If you say, “Okay now, everybody pull your seats around in a circle,” all of a sudden they’re going to be with somebody that they don’t sit with all of the time. (Anna, I 2017)

Jason spoke of the value of learning collaboration and communication skills have in life:

You are forced to [work with other people].... Even if the resulting project is bad ... as an artist, as you move through your career, you’re going to need to talk to curators and gallery coordinators ... [and] to people about applying for grants and ... [who] might want to buy your work. You’re going to have to figure out how to talk to those people. (Jason, I 2017)

**Modifications to support classroom dialogue.** SCon’s unique curricular structure facilitates classroom communication on several levels. Lauren explained that SCon’s *Peer Advisor* program enlists upper-level art students to advise small groups of first-year students (for credit, via a course taught by Lauren). These groups and advisors attend *ComX* (the Common Experience seminar) together and meet weekly to convey important information, hold mock critiques, discussions, informal advising or tutoring sessions, and tours of upper-level art studios. These advisors report any issues or concerns pertaining to individual students to Lauren, who then follows up as program coordinator. This program extends Lauren’s reach as a teacher, advisor, and coordinator in terms of communication and offering support to the first-year students.

The data from the interviews and course descriptions suggest that as first-year programs restructure curricula and courses, some are foregrounding collaboration. Examples of this include: SRSC’s *Co: LAB* (for collaboration lab); LWSRU’s video- and performance-oriented module titled *Experience*; LNSRU’s *CORE: Time*, which includes group projects; and SCon’s *Lens and Time*, which involves collaboration, performance, interactive projects, and social practice approaches to community-focused projects, and
the revamped version of Chaim’s course at NSRU, *Drawing as Research*, which also heavily relies on collaborative projects.

**Support for international students.** According to Rachel at PADI and Oliver at PCoA, the large influx of international students entering the private art institutes has prompted the development of new courses and teaching strategies to support communication skills and understanding of the culture of art colleges in the United States. As mentioned earlier, Oliver successfully piloted a course for international students, which requires library research for PowerPoint presentations.\(^{51}\) Rachel also described a course under development at PADI that emphasizes studio language skills to help international students negotiate a new and different education environment:

> Students [who] test ... proficient enough ... to take Foundation classes ... aren’t really proficient ... especially first semester. They don’t ... understand enough of what’s being taught to really follow it and often times, just culturally, they will not feel comfortable going up to professors ... saying, “I really don’t understand.”

> There’s a lot of fear of failure and embarrassment if they don’t do well.... This is a studio language course specific to art and design learning, but to talk about their work in a sort of safe, smaller environment with other international [students]. (Rachel, I 2017)

**Communication during advisement.** Another form of communication occurs when students and faculty meet for one-on-one advisement or informal counseling, which may happen after class or during office hours. These private conversations are often used to address students’ dispositions toward coursework and their transition from high school to the college environment, or to explain assignments and grades, or to arrange support for students with learning disabilities, anxiety, or facing personal crises. The data suggest that one-on-one advisement between faculty and students can occur under a variety of circumstances. For instance, the eight participants with administrative positions serve as academic advisors to first-year students, but the instructors in non-administrative

\(^{51}\)See Chapter IV, “Teaching Informed by the Student Demographic.”
positions (such as Oliver at PCoA and Susan at PloD) also reported informally advising of students in crisis.

Data associated with advising are presented in the following four categories: Advising Students Facing Personal Crises, Advising Prompted by Coursework, Supporting Foreign Language Speakers, and Advising Students with Parental Concerns. Advisement pertaining to course registration did not emerge as a significant issue, as it was only mentioned briefly by three participants in the context of parental concerns and by Lauren at SCon, whose peer advisors help with course advisement.

**Advising students in crisis.** The majority of participants who are first-year program coordinators reported that advising students and monitoring their welfare constitute an important component of their job. For example, Tracy described closely observing students and their interactions during the weekly seminar classes at SRSC and raising concerns about individual students with other first-year faculty in program meetings.

At SCon, Lauren reported that she has meetings with each first-year student at least once a semester to inquire about their experiences and well-being. She described the students as forthcoming: “They tell me a lot. I never ask or force a student to say anything, but they are pretty open” (I 2016). As mentioned previously, the peer advisors at SCon will alert Lauren to any student who appears to be struggling, and Lauren then follows up by meeting with the student promptly or alerting campus services. While Lauren perceives students to be at ease discussing their mental health issues, Nell described her students at SWPAC as assertive advocates in one-on-one conversations:

I’m hearing this term ... “Advocate for yourself.” I think they’ve been taught that.... I had a student who is always complaining ... “I’m so sorry, I’m always advocating for myself.”... “No, you’re not! You’re just complaining. That’s not advocating for yourself.” [Laughter] (Nell, I 2016)

Other participants also spoke of advising students who were struggling to manage mental health problems, anxiety, or who are managing medications. Susan described fearing tragic consequences for her students, as there had recently been a student suicide
on PIoD’s campus. Rachel reported that some students who are managing mental health problems want a fresh start in college, which can create problems when they go off medications or do not seek the kinds of counseling or medical support they had received at home. Tracy stated that students are increasingly reluctant to talk with instructors about their problems with academic coursework:

More and more students … instead of going to talk to the faculty member to figure out what’s happening [will] either withdraw from the class or just allow themselves to fail…. That didn’t happen as much, I think, previously, but it’s more in the academic classes and less in the art and design classes. (Tracy, I 2017)

When prompted to explain why some students are reluctant to communicate, Rachel speculated, “There is fear … ‘If I do this and they’ll think this of me.’… They don’t always trust that the professors have their best interest in mind,” and further added, “There’s a lot of depression and anxiety with the international students” (Rachel, I 2017).

Advisement prompted by coursework. Several participants reported that the nature of teaching art, which requires students to express feelings and ideas through artwork, often leads to emotionally intense meetings with students that can go beyond the training of the instructor. For example, Oliver described an incident that took place in his class the week before the interview:

I told them to do a piece … about yourself…. This girl did … a video and [asked to] show it to me privately, which is normally a signifier…. “Well this is gonna be heavy.”… She had been molested [as] a child by a family member…. We have this Title 9 stuff and we have to report certain things…. Once I realized that she’s been seeing [a therapist], I [thought], “Whew … I don’t need to tell anybody,” but it was rough…. You could tell that it was … helping her…. She [and her friends] … started crying…. “Wow. I didn’t see this coming with this job.”… You keep thinking … “Do I set boundaries?” But you can’t … because the students are gonna be empowered to open up. (Oliver, I 2017)

Jason stated that making art about personal issues is understandable and can be helpful to students, and that it is common for his students to deal with traumatic issues through coursework. However, Oliver suggests that when students talk with an instructor
about traumatic events or problems, it puts the empathic instructor in the uncomfortable position of spontaneously counseling students, even if just recommending other campus services. Oliver argues that instructors are not adequately trained for such encounters, which can be emotionally draining, while Jason perceives that dealing with trauma is a normal part being an art student and having such conversations is a predictable aspect of teaching art at the college level.

*Advising foreign language speakers.* Three participants reported that it was common to advise international students (or speakers of English as a second language) after class to clarify assignments. Susan described the different reactions domestic and international students have when receiving assignment handouts in her classes:

> There are language issues.... When I give out an assignment .... [the international students] are highlighting it and really reading it. [Laughter] I feel like, “Wow, I better make sure I read this over carefully,” and they all come to me and say, “What do you mean here?”... The domestic [students] ... they would lose it and ask, “What is the assignment?” (Susan, I 2017)

Oliver described his Chinese students as assertive in terms of wanting clarification of course information:

> The foreign kids, a lot of them [talk] to me, too, especially the Chinese ... [who] are a ... bit more forward, unlike the Koreans [who] tend to [get] the information from their peers. The Chinese kids will wait for you after class. I’m serious. They will wait and stop you and not let you go until they understand. (Oliver, I 2017)

In contrast to Susan and Oliver, David described the students at SRCC who struggle with language issues as good students from local families who have immigrated to the US:

> Most of the foreign students I’ve had, their families have moved here and ... live in the area.... This semester, I had one from Chile ... Yemen and ... Haiti.... There is some strain financially ... [and] definitely language issues.... I’m very sympathetic.... “If I say something in class ... you don’t understand, just see me after class.” I have that happen a lot.... The girl from Yemen ... would come up to me after class [to clarify] ... the homework.... I feel very positive [toward] those students because ... they’re better students.... They show up and do the work. (David, I 2016)
**Advising students with parental concerns.** The data associated with parental concerns straddle the categories of advisement and interpersonal communications, as some participant data described one-on-one advising about the pressures parents place on students, and other data described the intrusion of parents into communications between the students, faculty, and the institution.

Concerning one-on-one advisement, several participants reported counseling students who feel pressured by their parents to pursue a career-oriented major (such as graphic design or illustration) or to receive high grades as a condition for financial support. Jason reported a recent conversation that was typical among the participants:

> I think there are always going to be the parents that try to talk [students] out of being an art major.... Just last week I had a student that was really upset about that.... I don’t remember what [the parents] wanted him to go into, but it wasn’t art, and he was just distraught about it. And I said, “Look around the room. Each of these kids has had an awkward conversation with their parents at one point or another about this very issue.” (Jason, I 2017)

At PCoA, Oliver spoke of counseling conflicted first-year students whose parents want them to study a commercial art field rather than fine art:

> Parents [say] ... “If you wanna do art, you have to be a graphic designer ... [or] an illustrator. You have to be this or that, right?”... This student came up to me recently.... “You keep opening my mind.... My parents, I can’t show them this work.” [She is] from China.... “I show them my still lives, but [not] the other stuff ... because they will take me out of school.”... [Another] girl ... came in and ... was gonna be an Illustration major ... and her dad was so happy.... At the end ... she said, “I want to do General Fine Arts.”... “That’s cool,” I said, “Because I know you like video.”... “No, it’s not cool.” she said, “My dad is threatening to stop paying for the education.” (Oliver, I 2017)

Oliver also mentioned advising students whose parents have unrealistic expectations for earning high grades in art courses:

> These kids ... come in with these stressors from their parents and expectations.... I gave a girl a B recently, first semester freshmen year, she’s expecting an A. I said, “It’s not A quality” ... she starts crying.... “My parents expect me to get an A.” I said, “Are they in this class? They don’t know what my expectation are.” So then, I’m like, “What are these kids
coming in here expecting?”... [I] realize now that if their parents help [pay for school], [they] are saying: ”You have to get straight As.” This is not an academic place! (Oliver, I 2017)

Beyond grades and majors, Oliver described an incident when he advised a distraught student to seek counseling and tell her parents about an unplanned pregnancy. (Oliver speculates that his approachable nature and genuine concern encourage students to confide in him, and as a person of color and former international student at PCoA, he can relate to students’ experiences in ways that many of his colleagues cannot.)

Concerning parental intrusions into interpersonal communications between students and faculty, Tracy reported that parents either interject themselves, or students want to include their parents in their day-to-day college lives. As the program head at SRSC, Tracy stated that she deals with parental inquiries far more now than in the past:

It’s ... communication with parents that ... we struggle with as a faculty ... lots of parents calling ... sending us emails.... “I am really checking on my son or daughter but please don’t tell them.”... Or ... [with] registration or some difficulty ... they will immediately include their parents.... We have to really work with them.... “It’s you that we are [talking] with. How do you feel about it?... We’re not speaking through your parents” ... I never had [that] in the beginning [of my] teaching ... constantly [explaining] to parents that, “We can’t talk to you ... I know how difficult it is, but we’ve got to really communicate with your student.” (Tracy, I 2016)

Chaim reported a different kind of parental intrusion into his classes at NSRU:

I have to battle the student who’s getting text after text from her mother, which is why we’re talking about this passive-aggressive world about education. I’ve got parents who are worried about their kids’ education and they’re getting in the way. They’re the ones interrupting. They want to know, “When they take my kid out of this class for this family event [will the student be penalized]” and I was like, “Alright, it’s your extremely expensive education.” (Chaim, I 2017)

Several participants mentioned talking to parents at recruitment events, but refuse to discuss their child’s progress once they are enrolled in college. Rachel acknowledged the pressures felt by international students at PADI, particularly Chinese students from single-child families, to be successful in college given the financial sacrifices made by their families to send them to study in the US.
**Interpersonal communication skills.** Over the last decade, it has become widely accepted that the use of personal devices has affected interpersonal communications in the classroom. The majority of participants reported that use of cell phones inhibits direct conversation between students, particularly during class breaks, when many students opt to look at their phones rather than talk amongst themselves. To address this lack of direct communication and help build a sense of community, three participants (Lauren, Tracy, and Nell) described using field trips, collaborative projects, events, performances, and group seminars to foster dialogue to counteract isolation among first-year students.

**Professional communication skills.** Lauren at SCon raised the issue that professional communication skills must now be taught to students in the first year. Specifically, she mentioned students who were oblivious to the notion that it is considered inappropriate and rude to check phones or respond to texts during conversations with faculty. Lauren also described receiving emails from students that have the informality of text messages, which has ramifications if students apply for internships, jobs, or grants that require professional correspondence:

> Over the summer, before students even get here, I’ll get ... emails with all lower case, “hey, what’s up, put me in this class,” or whatever.... There’s a lack of that professionalism and so we do have to [tell them]: “You can’t write an email like that to a future employer if you ever want to be hired.” (Lauren, I 2016)

Yet Tracy questioned if unprofessional communication is a new problem or a function of maturity:

> I don’t know if that “learning to email properly and speak properly to someone” isn’t something that was always kind of there … but that maybe we ... forget in our own histories where we learned those things, and did we learn them earlier or was it really at college? (Tracy, I 2016)

Perceptions of First-Year Students’ Dispositions

Dispositions as “mindsets,” “attitudes,” or “habits of mind” exist for both students and teachers engaged in learning and teaching about art and artmaking. Dispositions may
be innate to the individual and are not formally taught, but they may be cultivated, reinforced, and can evolve over time.

The interview data regarding students’ overall dispositions toward education create a backdrop that describe challenges faced by first-year art students, which include the financial burden of attending college, pressures from family to pursue career-oriented majors, conditioned behaviors and educational expectations learned in high school, time- and life-management issues, and college readiness. The first year of college is often a difficult time for students, and the majority of participants perceive their role as helping students adjust to college life by teaching about academic expectations, campus resources, ways to negotiate independence, effective communication, etc., in addition to course content. The data suggest that students who succeed modify their dispositions toward education during the first year as a consequence of the realization of personal strengths and interests, and personal growth that the college experience brings forth.

While some attitudes toward education result from the nature of K-12 schooling in recent years, others (such as those involving time-management and life skills) have always been an issue for young adults learning to live independently. The financial burden of college appears to have fostered a dispositional focus on obtaining job skills, while other dispositions toward learning appear to reflect the influence that digital technology, social media, and Internet access have had on students’ behavior, habits, and learning preferences.

The data suggest that some generalizations can be made about how entering art students are approaching education. Table 23 presents the data pertaining to faculty perceptions of students’ dispositions toward education in the following three categories:

- Students as Career-Oriented (with the subcategory of Financial Pressures Faced by Students)
- Student Engagement with Content and Delivery (with the subcategory of Teaching with Assigned Readings and Textbooks)
• *Life-Management Skills, Time-Management Skills and College Readiness.*

Table 23. Perceptions of Student Dispositions Toward Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>Career-Oriented</th>
<th>Financial Pressures</th>
<th>Content / Delivery</th>
<th>Readings / Textbooks</th>
<th>Life-/Time-Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Art Institutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Not Used</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PloD</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
<td>LM/CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>LM/TM/CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>LM/TM/CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Research Universities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Not Used</td>
<td>LM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>May Eliminate</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May Eliminate</td>
<td>TM/LM/CR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TM = Time-Management; LM = Life Management; CR = College Readiness

**Perceptions of students as career-oriented.** The participants were nearly unanimous in their perception that art students today are more career-oriented than past generations of students and enter college with specific majors or careers in mind. The following excerpts are typical of the responses from the participants teaching at four-year institutions:

When I started teaching ... the students ... were interested in art in a very general sort of way. Now I’m seeing more students who ... have a really particular career goal in mind.... In the beginning [of my career], the students seemed more exploratory and ... less focused on, “I want to be an animator.” (Tracy, I 2016)

People say there has been a huge increase in ... more career-oriented [majors], like in industrial design, [where] the numbers have gone way up over the years ... versus some of the fine arts.... Students ... [are] not thinking, “I need to come out of foundation year with these marketable skills.” But when I talk to them ... [it is] because their parents are telling
them, “You have to go into design,” ... something that’s marketable ... that may be part of it. (Susan, I 2017)

Anna described many of her students at LNSRU as working adults who have transferred into the university to complete a degree as a credential for future employment. Jason spoke of advising art students who are fearful about how they will earn a living after college. Several participants (including Jason, Oliver, and Chaim) mentioned teaching students who feel pressured by parents to pursue design-oriented majors at the risk of losing their financial support.

Yet an interesting contrast occurs with the two participants teaching at community colleges. Evan’s suburban program at LSCC presently has a robust enrollment, while David’s rural program at SRCC has seen a significant drop in enrollment in recent years. In the past, according to Evan and David, their programs primarily served students seeking specific job skills (such as computer skills for immediate employment), but now serve students who are pursuing four-year BFA degrees. David reported that changes in the job market have negatively affected enrollment and student motivation in his program:

When I first started ... there was ... excitement about the Internet ... and there were careers: art therapy or art teaching ... and [we] had a lot of women who wanted to have a business with computers.

[Students] can’t see the value of art today with survival in the world.... Like jobs. Earlier, there was a sense you could have jobs related to art.... We ... sent a lot of people to [Local State College] for teaching. There were paths ... [toward], “Well, I’ll have a regular life.”... But now, that ... regular life ... with security ... would be based on the skills you have.... A lot of [students] ... don’t feel they would have those skills. Some would, but they’re not willing to do the work. (David, I 2016)

Such data suggest that students are now attending community colleges as an affordable way to access college art education rather than to acquire specific job skills. Conversely, it appears that art students attending four-year state and private institutions (and their families) feel an economic pressure to learn specialized skills for the job market through pursuit of a commercial art or career-oriented major.
Teaching career-oriented students. In this study, the community colleges and private art institutes market certain program offerings as providing training for future careers in the arts (with courses and degrees offered in industrial, interior, or fashion design, illustration, animation, or game design), with some participants (such as Susan at PloD) reporting significant shifts in enrollment from “fine arts” to more “commercial” majors. All 12 programs in the study offer graphic design and technology-oriented courses or majors, and six offer undergraduate degrees in art education. However, the majority of participants expressed concern for art students today, as summarized in the following statements:

- Many students today work outside jobs while attending college, making the college experience stressful and difficult to participate in fully. Some students perceive earning a college degree to be a necessity for employment rather than an opportunity for personal exploration, growth, and academic achievement.

- Most art students cannot enjoy the undergraduate college experience as previous generations had. The participants reported that they, as undergraduates, had felt less pressure than students today because costs were lower and wages were higher, which allowed more freedom to explore art and pursue interests, and more time to focus on their college education.

- Some participants do not conceive of undergraduate art education as vocational training for art careers. Furthermore, they perceive the foreclosure of creative exploration by entering students who must (prematurely) choose a major based on imagined future job markets as detrimental to the students’ mental health and to their overall educational experience.

For example, Rachel expressed frustration when entering students at PADI resist exploration because they rigidly identify as a career-oriented major, which she perceives to be developmentally inappropriate and based on flawed ideas of the future job market. However, some students do reassess their choice of major during the first year:
So students come in with a major.... In March, they ... [can] either change ... or stay with their same major.... A certain percentage every year ... after taking these classes and ... [with] exposure [to forms of artmaking] they didn’t have [before], decide, “Oh my gosh ... I love this and I want to change my major.” (Rachel, I 2017)

**Perceived financial pressures faced by students.** Evan reported that many of his community college students work jobs to help support their families or attend to appease parents with financial concerns about studying art at the college level. At the private art institutes, Rachel, Susan, and Oliver suggested that the high cost of attendance is altering student dispositions and demographics. For example, Oliver expressed sympathy for students who are under financial strain because he had been a student at PCoA on full scholarship while raising a family, and mentioned multiple conversations he has had with students struggling to pay for PCoA while in school and after graduation:

This girl ... from Kentucky, I’ll never forget this, an amazing kid. Really good, talented.... I was like, “Are you getting a lot of scholarships?” “No, because I think our family just [wasn’t] poor enough.”... She was middle class.... “I didn’t get much money.” I said, “Why are you here?”.... “Admissions really convinced me that this is where I needed to be.”... That happens a lot.... You have art kids, kids who love art, and their parents [who] don’t support art ... tell them ... “If you ... keep doing art ... I’m not supporting you, take your loans out.”... The girl ... after the semester [said] “I have to leave.... I just realized I cannot afford this place.” (Oliver, I 2017)

One kid came up to me and [said], “Listen, if you want a 20” x 30” piece of paper, I will get it,” he said, “but it will mean I’m not gonna eat tonight.”... “How much is the paper?” and he said, “14 dollars.” I said, “What?” So I walked to the bookstore.... They only have the high-end shit. And that’s what I’m telling you, it’s like [the administrators] don’t really seem to get it. (Oliver, I 2017)

This girl ... graduated with a fiber major, [and] took every loan possible to go to [PCoA]. She’s paying like 11 hundred dollars of month [in loan payments].... You can’t start off! You’ll live by your parents for the rest of your life! So, she’s living with a boyfriend ... she’s working maintenance [jobs], “Now we are indebted.”... That happens a lot.... They earn 30k on average a year, after you just dropped 240K ... so how are you doing that math? (Oliver, I 2017)
Oliver also reported using the high cost of attendance at PCoA in an attempt to motivate disengaged students:

I actually had this big blowup ... because ... [students] are half-assing stuff. I ask them, “Why are they spending 50 something K to be here?... Would your mother like to know that you’re wasting money?”... They look at me like, “Oh god.” So ... I have to lay into them.... “I did the math and each class that you miss or take is [worth] about $500.” (Oliver, I 2017)

**Perceptions of student engagement.** The interview data suggest that students are questioning the value of course content and are choosing whether or not to engage with coursework, which may reflect preferences for content delivery. While it is not new for students to question content or to fail courses, the majority of the participants perceive that students’ dispositions toward learning course content have changed. Rachel’s, Nell’s, and Tracy’s descriptions serve as examples of such shifting dispositions:

[Students] have these very specific [ideas about education]: “I didn’t learn anything in this class that relates to my major. They should do more that [relates to my intended art field].”... We have to do a better job selling what Foundation is and why, because sometimes they’re really stuck on ... “I’m only doing this ... as a stepping stone.” (Rachel, I 2017)

[Students are] interested in critically looking at what they’re learning and they want to have a conversation about “Why is this important?” “What does this mean?” “Why are you teaching us this?” “Why have we spent so much time on that?” So they’re ... wanting to have conversations about relevance. (Nell, I 2016)

My colleagues in art history have found that the students seem less resilient or prepared to read and write, so ... the amount of reading ... [that was assigned] in the past, they just can’t do it. For these new groups of students ... reading 50 pages of text a week seems too much, so ... rather than struggling through it ... they just will give up and won’t do it, and they’ll just fail the class. (Tracy, I 2016)

Several participants described students as struggling more with academic coursework and writing. Tracy speculated that art students do better in art classes because of the structure and activities, and fail academic courses due to a lack of skills:

While a student may be very strong in their art classes because we have this more open-ended approach, we have many more students now who are
in academic jeopardy, or in a lot of cases, failing academic classes because they don’t have the study skills, and some of the composition skills, or just even executive-like functioning. (Tracy, I 2016)

Evan perceives some of his community college students to be engaging passively with education:

The critical thinking part ... is also taking a nosedive, students being able “to think outside the box” ... I get a lot of ... “So basically, you want us to do this?”... I never answer that question.... Because if I say that, then somebody over there who’s passively listening is going to say, “Oh, well the other day you said, ‘Basically, you just want us to do this.’”... Or, “What do you want us to do? Is this what you want me to do?” And I’m like, “Well, is that what you want to do? Is that what you think the best solution to the problem is? Because if so, then yeah, continue on. But it’s not about what I want you to make.” (Evan, I 2017)

Several participants mentioned teaching students with disabilities, which affects how they are able to engage with content. Evan described the challenge of trying to help students who have not provided documentation of their disabilities to their instructor:

[Without] a letter of disability ... I can’t give them extra time ... or ... whatever ... to help them along,... A lot of students don’t give them to you, but ... often it’s completely apparent which students have something going on, whether it’s mental or psychological, or anxiety, or just a learning disability.... “Student X clearly can’t read really well and there’s a comprehension issue” ... then they bring in [work] that is completely off ... not even close to what is expected.... There is a disconnect with how they’re receiving and interpreting information ... it’s not really their fault. (Evan, I 2017)

**Teaching with assigned readings.** One area where the participants suggested that students have changed involves the use of textbooks and assigned readings to deliver course content. The majority of participants reported that it has become increasingly difficult to get students to read textbooks and assigned readings in recent years, which has led some faculty to eliminate reading assignments altogether. This may reflect a distinct change in student preferences for content delivery (as students reportedly embrace the use of video tutorials), or this may be because students perceive textbooks to be prohibitively expensive, optional, or an unengaging method of instruction. As
indicated in Table 23, David, Evan, and Kat presently use textbooks in their courses, but have realized in recent years that a growing number of their students are not reading or even purchasing the books, which has impacted how they teach:

I [may get] rid of the textbook ... [due to] this difficulty of getting students to read. It has always been ... a problem, but ... these last ... three or four years ... it has got so bad ... I really question using the textbook. I was ... thinking about what I can do ... and how to approach it better.... It goes with the digital thing. (David, I 2016)

Reading is very important.... I always assign readings.... “For homework, read Chapter One. Next week ... we’re going to have a discussion.”... When I first started teaching ... about 70% ... would complete the reading.... Now, it’s literally the opposite. I get, maybe, two or three students who will read the chapter, and the rest won’t ... [or] don’t even buy the textbook.... I’m at a crossroads because it doesn’t mean that they’re right in not having the textbook – this doesn’t invalidate ... [the] importance ... [of] the material. It just means that, as an educator, I have to find a different approach for teaching them content ... they ... were learning outside of the class by reading.... It’s very tricky. (Evan, I 2017)

Kat is less concerned about students reading the textbook because she presents the necessary information in multiple ways and cares more about students’ acquiring the information rather than how they get it:

I’m a fan of “pick your battles.”... I am really more interested in them getting the information.... That book is a tool that can give that information, but I don’t feel ... it’s the only one or that it’s required.... If you’re a different kind of learner, I want you to have access to all the tools ... to be successful. I’m not a fan of mandating a certain type of learning for every learner. (Kat, I 2017)

Tracy explained how academic instructors at SRSC are modifying assignments to help students complete the work for their courses:

[Faculty] had to figure out, “How do we ... get them to that point where they can actually perform this?” Maybe ... reading shorter chapters ... and writing little papers before they get to that longer text and bigger paper at the end. (Tracy, I 2016)

While it may be tempting to label students as academically unprepared for college-level reading, other participants reported using assigned readings in classes successfully.
For Anna, Chaim, and Lauren, readings are an essential part of their coursework, and they use different pedagogical strategies to reinforce their value and to support students. Chaim stated his belief that students actually read more today than in the past. In his course, he uses obscure library books as the raw content for conceptual exploration and collaborative artmaking. At SCon, all first-year students read Zadie Smith’s (2005) book, *On Beauty*, as the basis for projects in the *Visual Language* course. In the *Com X* seminar, Lauren assigns challenging critical essays, even though Lauren describes many of her students as having learning disabilities. SCon’s Peer Advisor program provides the necessary support for students to comprehend and discuss these challenging texts. As an experienced teacher, Anna emphasizes the importance of completing the assigned readings through classroom activities that ensure compliance:

> I make [my students] responsible. I’ll give out five readings in a class ... a couple of people on each reading ... and I’ll [say], “Diagram on the board the main things that this person said.” Well, you only have to do that once and somebody is going to start reading. [Laughter] ... It is very hard to get students to read, but ... do you have them read ... and not talk about it? That happens a lot.... So then, students don’t buy into that as an important thing.... Saying why it’s important, whatever you are doing, is good for the whole class. (Anna, I 2017)

It is unclear if these different outcomes from teaching with assigned texts reflect pedagogy, specific content, student demographics, textbook costs versus free downloadable files, or something else. Nell recognizes that when students challenge content, it prompts reflection on the part of the instructor to assess the value of the assignment to the course:

> They are thinking critically about what ... and ... how you’re teaching them. And critically, like criticism, criticizing. So if you can use that to ... create a forum ... then you’ve got this other teaching moment to talk about ... “Why it is important.”... It’s also helpful because you’re then asking

---

52The critical texts taught at SCon include Walter Benjamin’s 1936 essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2010), and Hito Steyerl’s 2009 article, “In Defense of the Poor Image.”
Perceptions of college readiness. Online research for the term “college readiness” brings up generic descriptions, such as: the knowledge, behavior, and skills that entering students possess to be successful in college as indicated by standardized tests, GPA, and other indexes; but I sense the participants in this study apply the term differently to their art students. All 12 participants addressed aspects of time-management skills, life-management skills, and/or college readiness during the interviews. Most of the participants mentioned the transformation that most students undergo during the first year, whereby they become immersed in the college experience and learn how to function as art students. The data also describe students who struggle with the responsibilities of college coursework, independent living, the transition into adulthood; and who ultimately decide that attending college or being an art major is not the right choice for them.

As reported in the interview data, many students who study art at the college level enter with learning disabilities or other disabling conditions. For example, Lauren mentioned that SCon’s program has a significant number of students on the autism spectrum or with learning disabilities, and most of the participants described students whose anxiety and depression can interfere with successful participation in classes. As a field, art may attract students with creative ideas and highly developed art skills, yet lack writing and other academic skills. In this study, I have interpreted college readiness as a general assessment of the capacity of individual art students to meet the academic demands of their particular institution.

While Lauren was not the only participant to mention college readiness, she provided the most detailed information on how it has shaped pedagogy and policies at her institution. SCon is a publicly funded conservatory college with similar qualities to the private art institutes, but it serves many students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Lauren describes SCon’s students as skilled and passionate about art, but in her role as
program coordinator, she is tasked with developing programming and pedagogical interventions to help students succeed. Lauren helped develop the Peer Advisor Program as a further support for students and to assist with implementing pedagogical initiatives designed to improve student success:

We do have a lot of students with extreme learning disabilities and/or psychological troubles that [prevent them] from being ready for college.... Students ... don’t ... write out when they have class and when ... homework [is due] ... [those things prevent] them from excelling in the classroom.

This year ... we printed ... planners for the freshmen and with the peer advisors, we made them sit down and write all of this stuff out. We’re not going to take time out of a class to do it.... It is something I wish I didn’t have to address as a college professor, but I can’t just barrel through pretending like we are operating on a level up here when the students are somewhere else, you know? (Lauren, I 2016)

Greater frustration and shorter attention spans. Nine of the participants reported that students today seem to have shorter attention spans and want to move on quickly after completing tasks, or express frustration when learning new skills.

They get frustrated faster.... They’d rather sit ... staring at a blank computer screen, not telling me that they can’t remember how to do something, rather than admit that they don’t understand an aspect of technology, which to me is just crazy. (Evan, I 2017)

Such perceptions have led some participants (including Tracy, Nell, and Kat) to modify their teaching in various ways that build and extend concentration and focus, and encourage students to be patient with the creative process. These teaching strategies include more frequent breaks, breaking tasks into a series of distinct steps, or using shorter or smaller assignments when teaching skills (such as observational drawing) that require extensive focus and concentration. Some participants (including Kat, Rachel, and Nell) perceive students today as struggling with ambiguity in coursework and, in response, strive to create clear assignments or use rubrics to help students make progress in their work.
Unanticipated Findings

Prior to this study, I conducted a pilot study involving six participants (four from a selective state college and two from a community college), and I anticipated this study would validate and expand upon the earlier findings. While the collected data from a larger sample of participants and a broader range of institutional types has confirmed many of the earlier findings pertaining to student dispositions toward artmaking (such as shortened attention spans and increased frustration when learning new skills), there were significant unanticipated findings.

For example, the majority of participants reported that supporting students during their transition to the college environment was a major component of first-year teaching and one that often goes unrecognized by art departments and institution. Although advising students has always been an important aspect of teaching, it was surprising to hear the level of concern these faculty expressed about the well-being of students and the personal toll that counseling students in crisis can have on faculty.

The extent to which the cost of higher education has affected student enrollment in the art programs in the study’s sample was also illuminating. This study’s finding that more art students at the community college level are intending to transfer to four-year BFA programs rather than enter the workforce with acquired skills from an associate’s degree was also intriguing. Findings associated with the large numbers of transfer students who, as juniors and seniors, are served by first-year art programs were surprising, as was the extent to which private art institutes have increased recruitment of international students to maintain enrollment targets. Furthermore, the additional academic support these students require (in the form of modified pedagogy and specialized supplemental courses) was something I had not considered before.

The extent to which financial concerns are shaping students’ college experiences was also unanticipated. Nearly all the participants mentioned that art students today are
more career-oriented than in the past, reflecting pressures from families. I was surprised by the prominent role research and creative ideation play in first-year curricula, reflecting the needs of design programs within art departments.

Finally, I had not realized the extent to which open-access art programs are providing students with initial access to art education in the United States (and the extent to which art education is not offered in public K-12 schools), which has challenged my prior assumptions about prerequisite art skills and experiences. When many people think of “art school,” they conjure images of selective art institutes. However, half of the sampled institutions do not require admissions portfolios to access first-year art courses. At these publicly funded institutions, art skills and creative thinking are conceived of as learning outcomes rather than prerequisites. The faculty at open-access programs cannot assume that their students have had prior experience with art, so classes with mixed skill levels are anticipated and accommodated through pedagogy and content tailored to the student demographic served.

Summary

This chapter presents the data collected in this study in four sections: Descriptions of the Institutions, Programs, and Participants; The Teaching of Art in First-Year Programs; Faculty Perceptions of Students’ Art Skills and Dispositions; and concludes with a discussion of the Unanticipated Findings of this study.

The next chapter discusses these findings about first-year art students and teaching in the context of the literature in relation to the research questions.
Chapter V
THE DISCUSSION

Chapter IV presented the data collected from 12 college art faculty participants regarding their perceptions of first-year students’ art skills and dispositions, and their perceptions of teaching in first-year art programs. Chapter IV also described data collected about the participants (in terms of teaching experience and expertise), the first-year programs (in terms of selectivity, curricula, and missions), and institutions where the participants are teaching (regarding cost of attendance, location, enrollments, and student demographic served).

This chapter discusses these findings in terms of the research questions and relevant literature.

Perceptions of Programs, Students, and Institutions

The research questions explore how 12 participating faculty instructors perceive the skills and dispositions of first-year art students today and how these characteristics are addressed through teaching (via pedagogy and course modifications). The data were analyzed to consider forces within and outside their respective institutions that appear be shaping curricular content and teaching, and to identify possible relationships between the institutional type and the perceptions and practices of the participants. This discussion addresses three aspects of the participants’ perceptions:
(1) How faculty participants conceive of the role of first-year art programs within art departments and the support they provide to entering students through teaching and advising.

(2) How faculty participants perceive their students in terms of who they are demographically and developmentally, the art skills and dispositions they enter with (as learner characteristics), and how students experience the first-year of college.

(3) How faculty participants perceive art departments and institutions regarding the forces that affect their curricula and teaching.

These themes often overlap and are discussed in relation to the 2014 pilot study findings and relevant literature pertaining to art education, technology, and student development theories.

**First-Year Learner Characteristics and Responsive Teaching**

Framing this discussion is a summary of the study’s findings regarding perceptions of first-year art students’ learner characteristics and the ways instructors are responding to these characteristics (through pedagogy and content) to prepare students for advanced studio art coursework. The findings are presented in Table 24 as two corresponding categories of “learner characteristics” and “teaching responses,” within three themes associated with first-year art education that emerged from the data: *Perceptions of Art Skills and Dispositions; The Influence of Digital Technology on Learning and Teaching;* and *Challenge and Support Offered in First-Year Art Programs.*
Table 24. Perceptions of Learner Characteristics and Responsive Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Perceptions of Art Skills and Dispositions</th>
<th>Teaching Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-Year Students’ Learner Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Across all institutions, students enter art programs</td>
<td>• Instructors cannot assume that entering students will possess a basic set of art skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with diverse skill sets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manual and fine-motor skills appear to be especially</td>
<td>• Instructors focus on teaching manual and fine-motor skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underdeveloped among students today.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students develop necessary skills over time.</td>
<td>• Instructors use basic teaching strategies with targeted instruction (i.e., cutting and pasting materials, and drawing to teach manual skills).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students tend to have short attention spans, work</td>
<td>• Instructors modify content and use strategies (i.e., timed or shorter work sessions) to develop longer attention spans, focus, and patience by scaffolding content in short chunks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quickly, and are easily frustrated.</td>
<td>• Instructors intentionally expose students to new and diverse artmaking skills and processes in different art domains (i.e., 2-D, 3-D, 4-D/Digital Media, and Drawing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• With exposure to different art processes and material</td>
<td>• Instructors augment methods of content delivery (i.e., video tutorials, altered assignments, entertaining personas) to facilitate engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploration, students realize their artistic interests</td>
<td>• Instructors discuss “the goals” of first-year art study and reflective metacognitive awareness with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and abilities over time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students are career-oriented and want to know the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value of what they are being taught.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students may have difficulty engaging with required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coursework perceives as unrelated to their interests.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students appear to be younger and less accomplished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in their skills and attitudes toward work than in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**The Influence of Digital Technology on Learning and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ use of digital devices in the classroom</td>
<td>• Instructors recognize disruptive behavior and educational smartphone use, and have personal policies to govern device use in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be for artmaking or distraction.</td>
<td>• Instructors teach communication skills using critiques, collaborative projects, presentations, targeted instruction, and through advisement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ communication skills have changed as a</td>
<td>• Instructors teach ideation skills (i.e., the process of generating ideas and creative solutions) using strategies that identify personal interests, aesthetic values, research skills, and the design process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>result of digital devices and social media (i.e., less</td>
<td>• Instructors teach research skills (as a range of activities) for different purposes (i.e., academic support, gathering info or materials, or experimenting with art processes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort/experience with interpersonal dialogue and</td>
<td>• Instructors teach basic digital skills using a variety of pedagogical approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weaker/more informal writing skills).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ ideation skills and aesthetic values are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influenced by use of the Internet (via Google searches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and media images) as inspiration for creative problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solving solutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students’ research skills tend to be confined to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superficial Internet searches.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students have fluid skills using apps but are not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>necessarily “good with technology.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors recognize disruptive behavior and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational smartphone use, and have personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies to govern device use in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors teach communication skills using</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critiques, collaborative projects, presentations,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>targeted instruction, and through advisement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors teach ideation skills (i.e., the process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of generating ideas and creative solutions) using</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies that identify personal interests, aesthetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values, research skills, and the design process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors teach research skills (as a range of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities) for different purposes (i.e., academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support, gathering info or materials, or experimenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with art processes).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge and Support Offered in First-Year Art Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students undergo significant growth in maturity, identity and artistic development during their transition to the college environment over the course of the first year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students explore and decide if the arts are the appropriate field for their educational pursuit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students enter with anxiety and mental health issues, and learning disabilities, which may involve medication and counseling services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students may enter with expectations for art study based on prior art experiences and adjust slowly to the expectations of the first-year program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First-year instructors serve as resources and convey college policies, expectations for art students, and available resources on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors facilitate self-knowledge and convey expectations for students majoring in the arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors monitor students’ well-being and functionality. Instructors informally counsel and refer students to campus resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructors explain the expectations of college level art study and use various pedagogical approaches to help students with this adjustment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptions of Teaching in First-Year Art Programs

It’s ... fascinating to see—developmentally—these kids ... just out of high school, and their way of learning and being ... coming out of a culture ... formed by their family and their community. That’s what they know, and ... being taken out of that, literally, and into this very different place, and having to discover who they are as human beings and as artists and designers on their own.... To witness that and to help form that ... a lot of [faculty] have a hard time because [the students] are so young, but I love it. I think it’s really fun. (Rachel, I 2017)

Instructors in first-year art programs are often the first faculty art students meet as they enter college. In this study, most participants reported feeling excitement when welcoming students to the college, and pride and amazement when seeing how these students have grown and matured by the end of the first year. The data strongly suggest that first-year instructors not only teach students how to meet the expectations of the art department by developing disciplined work habits and skills for upper-level courses, but also provide information and support to guide students through the first year of college.

Shifting Conceptions of the First-Year Experience

In this study, the data collected from interviews and institutional websites strongly indicate that many college art faculty conceive that the primary purpose of first-year
programs is to teach entering students the basic art skills and processes that will be used in upper-level art coursework. Tracy’s description of this objective for first-year teaching is typical for the majority of programs in this study:

Our mission in that first year is to get everybody up to a general level of ability and understanding ... so a student ... [is] confident to study in any area of the art school.... To come out of that first year saying, “I can take the media class, the graphic design class, and ceramics, and painting, and glass-blowing ... I have the general skills to be able to learn all of these new things.” (Tracy, I 2016)

In the United States, the first year of art school has often been described as a “boot camp,” or a “rite of passage” that requires tremendous effort, growth, and determination on the part of art students who emerge skilled, capable of hard work, and committed to studying art. This conception of the first year is still common, as indicated by Rachel’s description of her program at a private art institute:

Sometimes it’s very boot-campy ... like “I survived it, I did great, and now I’m getting to do what I want.”... [It’s] just this training ... before they [go into their major] ... because they have no choice in Foundation. They come ... pre-registered, they have no choice of ... faculty ... [or] what classes they get.... I don’t think they are crazy about [the lack of choice], but they do it. [Laughter] (Rachel, I 2017)

However, the boot camp label can carry negative connotations, particularly for students who are unsure about majoring in art or intimidated by demanding coursework. Recognizing this, some first-year coordinators, such as Jason at LWSRU, have embraced a different conception of the first-year experience for his open-access program at a large public research university:

What ... is ... important is discipline ... and interest and curiosity. I like to envision the foundations year as a kind of welcoming gate. A lot of people talk about it like, “Oh, burn them down and build them back up. Got to destroy everything they know.” I don’t see it that way. I always talk about it like, “Meet them where they are and then lead them to new things.” (Jason, I 2017)

The structure and rigor of first-year art programs. The institutional and interview data collected suggest that the curricular structure of first-year art programs
varies widely. In this study, nine programs operate on a 15-week semester, 1 program uses a 10-week trimester, and two programs use 8-week course modules within a semester system (as presented in Table 7). Within the study sample, the types of first-year art curricula were evenly distributed between “traditional,” “modified,” and “reconstructive” programs. The contact hours of studio art courses also varied by institution type, ranging from classes held two days/week (for 1.5-3 hours/session) or one day/week (for 3.5-7.5 hours/session). The private art institutes in the study generally have longer class sessions (5-7.5 hours) than the liberal arts colleges and research universities sampled, although at LSCC, a community college, classes meet one day/week for a 4-hour session.

The curricular structures of these programs reflect the mission of the institution in terms of program goals and student demographics. Evidence of this appears in statements made by Jason and Rachel, who administer programs serving very different populations. For example, Jason describes his first-year program at LWSRU, a land-grant research university, as providing access to art courses (which are 8-week, open-access course modules that serve both art majors and non-art majors) to students who have not had prior access to art education at the secondary level. According to Jason, some students decide to become art majors after taking the first-year modules as electives, which is reflected in Jason’s conception of his program goals:

It’s really just to get them excited.... Our mission ... is more than laying a foundation.... We ... call it First Year Experience.... Artists come from different upbringings – whereas a foundation assumes ... this singular structure that everything is built on.... I think foundations can vary ... like saying, “Hey, this stuff is possible as an artist, right? These are different routes you could go. These are different ways of thinking. What do you like to do?”... It tries to emphasize [the student] ... to make them part of the conversation, and ... to give them permission [to work artistically]. (Jason, 1 2017)

---

1See Chapter II, “Restructured Programs and Re-Skilling Students,” and Table 8.
By contrast, the students admitted to PADI (the selective private art institute where Rachel teaches) have demonstrated highly developed skills through admissions portfolios. Rachel’s program only serves students who have had extensive prior art education and who presumably know they want to study art at the college level:

Our classes are all 6 hours long ... [with] 6 to 12 hours of homework, so it’s a pretty rigorous program.... They learn a lot ... they live and breathe work.... For some, it’s too much, but most of them love it. That’s why they came to school here.... They see how much progress they are making and they’re really excited about it. (Rachel, I 2017)

However, across this study’s sample, the first-year programs employ a generalist curriculum that exposes students to a wide range of art media and processes to ensure that students develop the basic skills and broad knowledge of artmaking processes required for further art coursework. A generalist curriculum is compatible with supporting student development, as both Kolb and Knefelkamp advise teachers to use a variety of instructional approaches to help students discover personal preferences and to retain flexibility and breadth in knowledge and skills for the future² (Evans et al., 2010).

**Student Growth and Thinking Differently about Artmaking**

Although first-year courses vary widely, a universal goal is to prepare first-year students for the challenges they will encounter later as art students in specific majors. Many instructors want students to undergo extensive artistic growth fostered by demanding coursework (like what they had experienced in art school), which undoubtedly causes students stress and discomfort. According to Ryan (a pilot study participant at a selective public college), one goal of first-year coursework is to expose students to the discomfort associated with creative production:

The first year experience in art schools is unique ... it tends to be really intensive ... very immersive ... focused ... on preparing students for ... discomfort with ideas, discomfort with setback, discomfort with linear

---

²See Chapter II, “Student Development Theories Relevant to First-Year Education.”
thinking, and getting used to that.... If anything, that is our ... greatest task.
(Mohns, 2014, p. 45)

Student development theorists (such as Perry, Knefelkamp, Mezirow, and Kegan) state that personal growth and development commonly occur as the result of cognitive dissonance and reassessment of personal truths,3 which often gives rise to discomfort or personal crises (Bekkala, 2001; Evans et al., 2010). During the first year of college, art instructors generally require students to engage with learning and problem solving in different ways than they had in high school (where teachers’ step-by-step instructions are followed to produce end products that adhere to a set of district standards or to fulfill “what the teacher wanted” for the assignment).

Jan, a pilot study participant and coordinator of a selective first-year program, explained how she challenges students to be open and responsive, and to reconsider prior assumptions about artmaking and the role of teachers in the production of creative work:

Our whole job is to open their minds to every possibility, every way of thinking that we can, and get rid of all the crap that’s come before. (Laughter) ... [We say] “Yeah, well, that’s not how it is here. Here’s what it is here.”... “Open, open, open, open, think, think, think. Be creative.”... “How are you going to solve it?”... “I don’t know the answer. Do you?”... “That sounds like a good idea.”... “Maybe you should push it further.”... The whole first year is to send them reeling. (Mohns, 2018, p. 7)

Ryan, another pilot participant and Jan’s colleague, reported that first-year art students are taught to accept ambiguity, self-discovery, and patience as factors in artmaking:

There’s [a] broader realm of experience that begins in the first year ... teaching students how to be patient with an idea, how to be patient with themselves, how to be comfortable sitting amidst ambiguity and then making choices, and accepting the fact that sometimes those choices are not going to lead to the best outcome, but they learn from that experience. (Mohns, 2014, p. 45)

3See Chapter II, “Student Development Theories Relevant to First-Year Education.”
Fostering Self-Knowledge in First-Year Art Students

Learning skills and material processes within the different art domains (including 2-D, 3-D, and 4-D/Digital Media) makes different physical, cognitive, and temporal demands on students. For example, the participants described studio classes that involve the following activities: walking around town to make images and gather information, making collaborative videos that require set building, acting, and editing; sitting in front of computer monitors and easels for hours at a time; using power tools, 3-D printers, and various materials in sometimes loud and dusty workshops; participating in performance events and exhibitions; and reading articles or textbooks and writing short papers.

As mentioned previously, the generalist curricula of these first-year art programs expose students to a wide variety of artmaking experiences to foster discovery of their learning preferences and artistic interests, while ensuring the basic skills of the various studio domains are developed by all students. The majority of participants reported that students identify their personal strengths, interests, and aesthetic preferences through exposure to different artmaking processes during the first year, which may reflect Kolb’s concept of individual “learning styles” in the way students gravitate toward particular approaches to problem solving and activities as demanded by different artistic domains (Evans et al., 2010, p. 143).

Five participants reported using specific teaching strategies (such as personal inventories, list making, mind maps, non-objective art projects, and reflective writing) to help students articulate their aesthetic preferences and call upon prior knowledge. Put another way, these teachers want students to discover themselves—who they are and what they like— independent of the influences of society, art teachers, friends, parents, media, art history, advertising, social media, the Internet, etc.

---

4See Chapter II, “Student Development Theories Relevant to First-Year Education.”
One could argue that this instructional focus on self-discovery is a response to multiple issues affecting art education today, including: the pervasive influence of social and digital media in our contemporary society (which subjects teens and young adults to a barrage of culturally-driven images, not unlike advertising, to cultivate “followers” or “viral trends” on online platforms such as Instagram and YouTube); entering students’ conceptions about art (which may include familiar art forms and styles commonly taught in high schools, such as “realistic rendering,” or art historically-based “impressionistic” or “surrealistic” artworks); or the perceived value of particular art skills and training for future employment.

For example, three participants in the pilot study and four participants in the current study reported that students’ ideas and aesthetics are strongly influenced by the Internet and social media, as described by Kat:

[Students] have content ... ideas they want to explore.... We get a lot of ... anime lovers ... excited to show you, “Look at this manga head that I drew. It looks just like one ... on TV.”... They have no understanding of cultural appropriation ... [or] of authenticity in making.

They’re so, so, so media-driven ... looking at the same stuff.... The YouTube stars ... seeing that aesthetic ... driven by their own peer group. I don’t think they realize how ... narrow it is because they are “liking” what their peers like. (Kat, I 2017)

Or, as reported by David, students enter deeply influenced by previous teachers or traditional conventions of artmaking:

The kids come into our program already knowing what to do.... If they’re asked to do a drawing ... a painting ... a sculpture, they already have a very good idea what you’re looking for.... Like a standard “something” ... heartfelt ... very personal and emotive, [about] some important issue.... They fall into these patterns.... [I want] to get the students outside of these patterns ... [and] into new areas. (David, I 2016)

In this study, the majority of participants (across all the institutional types) reported that art students enter college today with concerns about future employment prospects and often choose a career-oriented major before exploring other art fields, basing their
decisions on parental influence. According to Rachel, the conception that college-level art study is primarily for obtaining job skills rather than for personal artistic exploration is a recent (and misguided) development:

Students ... want a design major.... “Okay, I’m here, but I’m going to be a ‘this.’”... And I’m like, “You have no idea what you’re gonna be! You don’t even know what jobs are going to exist by the time you graduate.... I’ve done a bazillion jobs!”... But that’s their mindset, which it didn’t used to be.... When I went to college, [it] had nothing to do with job training.
(Rachel, I 2017)

Four participants shared the viewpoint that students are more likely to succeed if they know their abilities (by exploring various approaches to artmaking) and discover their passions (rather than pursue a major for future career prospects), which is the purpose of teaching a generalist curriculum in the first year.

To address deeper levels of engagement, four participants stated that their goal for first-year teaching is to empower students to have agency in their own artistic education (by challenging students’ passive participation in coursework). Anna, for example, spoke at length about helping students engage more deeply with education for lifelong learning, or as she described it, “To ... find the way to their passion ... how they learn best, [and] what it is that makes them want to work all night” (Anna, I 2017). To facilitate the development of this personal insight, these faculty address the process of “learning” and metacognition with students, as Anna explained in the research and podcast interviews:

You need to get them out of the place of being fed as a student ... just “giving them the information,” and into that mode of being “active.” But ... that’s scary for some people ... a huge risk. [Students] love being invisible in class ... [and not] invested.... It’s about making that classroom “the place to be present” ... [and] thinking about “their art, right there.” (Anna, I 2017)

I had [the students] create ... infographics ... drawing what they learned in the last ten weeks.... A student [said], “You know, I’m a freshman and no one has ever asked me what I’ve learned.... I never really thought [about] what I was doing here, that I should be thinking about my learning.”... We’ve got to get to where [students] realize that the whole thing is “about them” ... increasing their awareness of the world, how artists work, and where they fit into it. (Anna, PC 2017)
Supporting Students’ Transition to the College Environment

In addition to learning art skills and concepts, entering art students must also learn to negotiate greater independence within a college environment filled with new relationships, expectations, and responsibilities. Orrego and Rodriguez (2001) call this transition “academic adjustment,” which they define as a “multidimensional construct consisting of psychological well-being, social adaptation, academic achievement, and students’ overall outlook toward the college experience” (p. 176). The eight participants in this study who chair their first-year programs understand that academic adjustment has significant implications for student retention, future enrollments, and academic success.

While first-year art programs intend to offer students rigorous and varied studio coursework in preparation for future art study, research suggests that students are primarily focused on acclimating to their new lifestyles and surroundings during this period of transition. In her 2007 dissertation, Jodi Kushins quoted Lowry Burgess, a dean at Carnegie Mellon University, regarding his research involving first-year art students:

One of the things we found out about first year experience is the events that leave the biggest track in students’ minds are being away from home for the first time and being responsible for oneself, then all that socializing stuff around making of friends and love relationships was number two. A very distant number three is the curriculum. (L. Burgess, personal communication, 2006; as reported in Kushins, 2007, pp. 108-109)

Teaching art in the first year differs from upper-level art teaching with its focus on introductory generalist content and acknowledgment of the difficult transitions entering students commonly experience. Yet the interview data and anecdotal information strongly suggest that the developmental aspects of first-year art education often goes unrecognized by upper-level art faculty and college administrators:

[It is] very difficult ... to convey to ... upper-level faculty that ... a lot of what happens ... in this first year is about not only teaching ... basic skills ... but also helping [students] to develop as adult people. (Tracy, I 2016)

Specifically, six participants spoke of ongoing tensions within their art departments about how and what first-year students should be taught. Yet four participants stated that such
tensions were mitigated when upper-level faculty also taught first-year courses. Rachel, who serves as the assistant chair of a large first-year program at PADI, a private art institute, described the essence of the conflict in her program:

"I think there’s always going to be tension ... because some departments will say, “No, you’re training my students.”... We have to train [students] how to work, [and to realize] who they are as a human being, how to [transform] from a high school kid into an individual who is self-sufficient, how to think for themselves. “You know, there’s a lot of other stuff we’re teaching and not just skills for your department.” (Rachel, I 2017)

The data suggest that experienced first-year instructors are uniquely positioned to nurture students in their academic adjustment because they perceive the first year of college as a fundamentally transformative experience. Some art departments, including the six selective programs in this study, work to create a community of learners among the first-year cohort via program-wide seminar courses, trips, events, and designated dormitories or instructional spaces to support students throughout the first year, which reflects Knefelkamp’s (1998) concept of personalism. Three participants described using program-wide seminars as a common forum for discussing art and artistic goals, college expectations and academic adjustment, monitoring students’ well-being, and for building a sense of community, as Tracy explained:

"We bring the whole group together ... for a lecture class ... centered on the question of “what’s it like to be an artist.” So we watch films, we bring in visiting artists...to talk to the students about how they started off in school, why they are doing what they are doing, and things that happen along the way. And when we talk to the students on [those days], we often check in on them to see: “Are you sleeping?”... “How are your classes going?” (Tracy, I 2016)

In addition to teaching the first-year studio courses, these instructors advise students, both formally and informally, throughout the first year. They provide students with information about art department policies and special events, facility use and rules,

---

5See Chapter II, “Student Development Theories Relevant to First-Year Education.”
and campus regulations and resources available to assist students. The data describe instructors who introduce first-year students to using the college library, bring them to the university museum and student galleries, and take them on fieldtrips to see art in the city, which may not have the same effect on students in upper-level courses. According to the participants, students will often seek them out for advice about deeply personal matters, which can be prompted by a studio assignment or personal crises and may result in references to other campus resources, such as counseling centers.

The data from all 12 participants indicate that support is commonly offered to students in one-on-one and small-group advising, and through targeted interventions. For example, Lauren, who coordinates the first-year program at SCon, described an initiative whereby upper-level art students serve as “peer advisors” to the first-year art students. These peer-advisors (who are trained in a separate class taught by Lauren) attend the first-year seminar at SCon and meet weekly with small groups of first-year students to offer various types of instructional support (such as clarification of course assignments, college policies and expectations, informal academic advising, tutoring, and instruction in time-management skills) while monitoring the well-being of individual students.

Although unique within the study, SCon’s peer-advising program is an example of a supportive first-year intervention targeted to SCon’s specific student demographic, as Lauren explained:

In order for students to succeed, I need to get them to make. They learn through making better than they learn from reading, which doesn’t mean we obliterate the reading, but [if] we can somehow tie a reading very specifically into a project that they have to respond to ... it makes more sense because they make amazing things.... All of our students are makers ... they make amazing things.... But all of the other stuff that comes with being in art school: critique, reading, writing, art history, can be a challenge. Not to all of them, but to quite a few of them. (Lauren, I 2016)

The data also describe supportive interventions at two of the private art institutes in the form of newly developed courses designed to help international students acclimate to the
expectations of college art programs in the United States. Rachel explained the intention behind PADI’s new course:

[In] a critique situation ... often they’re very uncomfortable ... expressing their opinion and talking to their professor in what they might consider a non-respectful way ... like arguing points with their professor, which is part of our educational system but not ... theirs. We’re trying to structure this class so it’s understanding the studio culture in North America and giving them the tools to be more diverse ... to understand the vocabulary and really break it down for them, and to be able to feel comfortable being expressive with their own work. (Rachel, I 2017)

Perceptions of First-Year Art Students

Fundamental to this study’s exploration of first-year art education are the perceptions these 12 art instructors have of their students in terms of the art skills and dispositions they enter with and how they experience the first year of college. Such perceptions of students’ learner characteristics influence teaching and curricula, and are informed by the student demographic served by their institutions, which varies broadly within the sample.

Perceptions of Student Demographics

This study intentionally sampled faculty from four types of institutions, including three categories of publicly funded institutions (liberal arts colleges, research universities, and community colleges) that offer subsidized tuition rates for state residents, and four private art institutes (as presented in Table 25). The sample represents a wide range of institutions with different application requirements and standards for admission, educational missions, specialized art programs, degree offerings, and costs of attendance. Consequently, these programs serve vastly different student demographics.
Table 25. Sample Distribution: Institution Types and Average Costs of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Program Type</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Average Cost of Attendance^6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selective (Restricted Access)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Private Art Institutes</td>
<td>$61,850/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Public Liberal Arts Colleges</td>
<td>In-State Tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Out-of-State Tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$30,900/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$39,300/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-Access (Provides Access)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public Research Universities</td>
<td>$25,900/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Public Community Colleges (2-Year)</td>
<td>Without Housing Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With Housing Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$8900/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$16,900/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The # column indicates the number of institutions within each institutional type in the sample.

For the purpose of comparison, Table 25 shows the average cost of attendance of the sampled institutions within each institutional type.^7 The data collected suggest that the most affordable option for earning an bachelor’s degree is to live with family while attending a state community college for a two-year degree and transferring to a four-year publicly funded program (with in-state tuition rates), and the most expensive option is to attend a private art institute. It is important to note that this study does not include financial aid, scholarships, and grants, which may lower the actual costs for students.

**Distinctions between first-year program types.** Apart from cost, a major distinction among the 12 institutions sampled is the type of first-year art program: selective versus open-access. The six selective programs (four private art institutes and two public liberal arts colleges) require prospective students to submit an art portfolio of acceptable quality as a criterion for admission. The six open-access institutions (four

---

^6The cost is the average of the sampled institutions within different institutional types. Data are sourced from www.CollegeCalc.org and institutional websites as of the Fall 2018. These averaged figures include tuition, fees, room and board (at residential schools), books and supplies, and other associated costs, but does not take into account financial aid awards, scholarships, or grants.

^7For a more detailed breakdown of the data associated with each institution, see Appendix A.
public research universities and two non-residential community colleges) allow any interested student to enroll in first-year art courses.

The admissions requirements for these different program types imply that different assumptions can be made about expectations for students’ art skills and past art experiences. In open-access courses, it is assumed that some students will not have had prior art training (although many students in these programs do enter with highly developed art skills and have previously studied art in school). In selective programs, it is assumed that all students are committed art majors who possess developed art skills and knowledge of art and artmaking, and are capable of meeting the demands of rigorous studio coursework.

**Student demographics at the selective programs.** The participants teaching at the two most expensive private art institutes in the study (PADI and PIoD) generally described students as highly skilled and hard working, and, by implication, from backgrounds that provided access to supplemental art training or high quality art education in school. At the other two private art institutes, students were described as entering with different skill sets than past students, including fewer students with highly developed drawing skills, which reflects changing criteria for admission, as reported by the participants teaching at the other two private art institutes (SWPAC and PCoA).

Participants at the three private art institutes with the highest cost of attendance reported a significant number of international students\(^8\) enrolled in their first-year art programs and mentioned the need for greater economic diversity among their students. By contrast, the participants at the two selective state colleges described students who have benefitted from educational or cultural privilege in the form of specialized art high schools or public high schools that offer quality art education or parents who support

---

\(^8\)In the Fall 2018, PIoD, PCoA, and PADI each posted on their institutional websites that international students make up 33% of the first-year cohort.
college-level art study. For example, Lauren described the students who attend the state conservatory college, SCon, this way:

Maybe 20% of our students are coming from arts high schools.... They come in with a lot of skills: they can draw really well, they can render a portrait really well, and the other 80% ... the vast majority [come] from public high schools ... a lot of them come in with really good drawing skills, except maybe the photography majors, some of whom freak out about drawing. (Lauren, I 2016)

Tracy, who teaches at a small state college (with higher tuition costs 9), reported:

Our students come from all different kinds of places.... We have students whose parents are gallery owners and small businesspeople who run glass shops and that kind of thing. So, pretty savvy. And we also have students who took one art class and then decided, “This is what I want to do.” (Tracy, I 2016)

Among the six participants at the selective programs, only one spoke of students who work outside jobs while in school, which seemed surprising given the literature on working students.10 This finding suggests that many students who attend these selective programs have access to financial support, or are committed art students who have prioritized their time for studio coursework during the first year. This could also reflect the isolated locations of the two state liberal arts colleges, where there may be fewer opportunities for off-campus jobs. However, two participants who teach at the private art institutes mentioned students who struggle to afford art supplies and food, or express concern about the costs of attending such expensive art colleges and student loan debt, and the financial pressures felt by their families to pay for their education.

**Student demographics at the open-access programs.** The participants who teach at the six open-access institutions described different categories of students enrolled in

---

9Online institutional data (available at www.collegecalc.org) reported, as of Fall 2018, that tuition costs at SRSC were approximately $10,000 higher than at most other public colleges in the state due to its unique affiliation with a nearby private university.

10For more information, see Chapter II, “The Characteristics of Today’s Undergraduates,” or “The Economic Realities of Attending College Today.”
their first-year classes, including: highly skilled and committed art majors (or minors), students who take art courses to satisfy elective requirements, students who want to explore a field of study that was not accessible at the secondary level, and upper-level transfer students who need first-year art credits to satisfy graduation requirements. Four participants (at community colleges and research universities) reported that students who take first-year art courses as electives often decide to major or minor in art, which suggests that these courses also serve to recruit students for their art departments.

Four of the six participants teaching in open-access programs described students who are under significant financial stress, including some who are supporting families. As a result, these students are working jobs while in school (including full-time employment), which affects their ability to engage with the college experience. As Jason, who teaches at LWSRU, explained:

> More than ever, I’ve got so many students that have 40-hour week jobs ... [and] trying to go through university in four or five years.... And that ... makes everything a little less lovely, right?... If you’re doing a full-time job ... and then take seven or eight years to go to college, I think that’s doable.... I don’t know that they’re leaving equipped in the same manner. (Jason, I 2017)

Researchers report that an estimated 40% of undergraduates work at least 30 hours a week while in school (Carnevale et al., 2015), which often results in lower grades and less involvement with the college environment (when compared to non-working students) (Astin, 2016; Levine & Dean, 2012; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Campus life is also affected by the estimated 37% of students today who choose to live at home (rather than in dormitories) to save money (Sallie Mae/Ipsos, 2018a).

At the research universities, two participants explained the problems that can arise for students and faculty when first-year art classes have a mix of first-year and transfer students (at the junior or senior level). According to Anna, accommodating transfer students can disrupt the scaffolding of content when courses are taken out of sequence:
[LNSRU has] always been this public school [with an] open door policy ... [with] tons of ... transfer students in their junior year ... re-taking the first-year stuff and it’s very confusing ... for students, and it also mixes up the [sequencing of] classes. (Anna, I 2017)

Given that transfer students are likely at a different stage of intellectual and artistic development than entering students, transfer students may not fully benefit from highly structured courses designed to support students in their first year of college. According to Perry and Knefelkamp, first year students commonly exhibit dualistic thinking and likely perceive knowledge and learning differently from upper-level students, who may exhibit multiplicity or relativistic thinking (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86). Knefelkamp suggests that first-year students benefit from more structured lessons and direct material exploration, while advanced students may benefit from more complex concepts and assignments that can be explored independently (pp. 91-92).

At the community colleges in the study, the two participants described a broad and shifting student demographic. Evan summed up the student population this way:

One of the biggest challenges of teaching in a community college is that ... some students ... quite frankly, are not prepared for college. Then you have some that are there [for] various reasons ... like economics, and ... they are immensely talented. So you get both ends of the spectrum and, of course, everything in between. (Evan, I 2017)

Both participants stated that financial pressures and affordable access to education are what brings most of their students to the community colleges:

It’s always the same story: They’re working a job on top of being a full-time student ... maybe their mom or their dad is not able to work, so they’re trying to get an education while also contributing to their family.... Some students ... are simply told by their parents, “We’re not paying $35-45,000 a year for four years of art school when we have an institution right down the street that has an amazing reputation. Go there for two years ... and we’ll see how you do. If you ... want to transfer ... we’ll support that decision.” (Evan, I 2017)

---

11See Chapter II, “Student Development Theories Relevant to First-Year Education.”
For the highly skilled, committed art students who lack financial resources (or parental support), community colleges offer a viable path for earning a degree in the arts. During the ten years that Evan has been teaching at LSCC, he has seen a significant shift in the goals and ambitions of the students taking art classes, which has altered the focus and scheduling of classes:

Transferring to a four-year BFA program is the main goal for most of our students.... Ten years ago, maybe 60% of students just wanted to learn enough skills ... to get a graphic design job. Perhaps 20% ... didn’t have a concrete goal ... the rest would transfer.... Over the past five years ... these numbers ... flipped.

When I first started ... we offered far more night classes.... Students ... with the goal of transferring do not want to take night classes. Current full-time students want to take morning and day classes, like a normal four-year college student. So the number of evening classes ... has dropped significantly. (Evan, I 2017)

Perceived Commonalities Among Students Across the Sample

While the students at the wide range of institutions in this study come from different demographic backgrounds, the participants’ data describe commonalities within the sample. These commonalities relate primarily to art skills and dispositions, and, in particular, the influence that digital technology, personal devices, the Internet, and social media have had on artmaking and learning. Recurring themes in the interview data that appear across the sample include:

• Students entering college today with mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, medication management, and counseling needs) and learning disabilities that affect their ability to succeed in college.

• Students entering college with financial concerns that affect their college experience, as evidenced in descriptions of working students, concerns about loan debt and pressure on families, and in pursuits of career-oriented majors.
• Students today having shorter attention spans, less patience, and experience greater frustration with studio coursework than past students.

• Students begin creative projects with online research of images and information, which suggests a profound evolution has occurred in how art students approach ideation and artmaking over the past two decades.

Perceptions of Students’ Art Skills and Dispositions

One can safely state that art students today are entering college with different skill sets and dispositions toward artmaking than previous generations of art students. Participants in both pilot study and this current research perceived that cutbacks in K-12 art education have affected students’ skill development and their ability to produce admissions portfolios. Furthermore, this research suggests that advances in digital technologies and access to the Internet have fostered changes in students’ art skills by offering new options for artmaking (such as digital photography, video, 3-D printing, animation, etc.) that require new and different kinds of skills (involving knowledge of software, digital hardware, coding, and online research). The data also suggest that the pervasive use of digital devices and social media (which can affect students’ learning and behavior) and the conditions associated with attending college today (such as financial pressures from increased costs and future employment concerns) have changed how students are engaging with artmaking and education (in terms of skill development and dispositions).

The indefinable and changing nature of art skills. When the participants were asked, “What art skills do you see students entering with?” or “What art skills are taught in the first year?” all 12 faculty were reluctant to respond with a definitive list. (In fact, several participants initially dismissed or refused to answer the questions.) While these questions were broad, the participants seemed uncomfortable quantifying students’ art abilities or describing art teaching in terms of defined skill sets. The majority of
participants discussed specific skills (such as drawing, research, or digital skills) as examples from their own teaching experiences, or made vague generalizations (as with the three participants who stated, in essence, that “students’ skill levels are basically the same,” which can be taken to mean that students’ skills have not appreciably changed over time, or, as teachers, they have always taught students with diverse skills or that they never really know or want to qualify students’ skills).

The data collected (from interviews and institutions’ program and course descriptions found online) indicate that there is no standard list of art skills that are covered by first-year programs. The skills taught in these art programs appear to be determined by individual faculty expertise and teaching philosophies, course and degree offerings, and the educational missions of the art departments and institutions. Furthermore, according to the participants, the skill sets that are taught may change over time in response to institutional changes, such as program restructuring, newly available technologies and facilities, staff changes, and changing student demographics and enrollments.

For instance, Oliver gave an example of how local events and administrative initiatives prompted changes in the skills he teaches in the first year:

Last year, I did ... a mural in the city and the kids loved it.... One of the school’s institutional learning outcomes is more community engagement, especially since the riots.... I’m taking these kids in the hood ... students sticking around me, being like, “Wow. I cannot believe this place exists 10 minutes away.”... My teaching changes.... I used to really be on the rigor of technical stuff. “You have to be able to understand perspective. Have to. I don’t care.”... But now, perspective doesn’t seem important when you weigh it with other stuff. (Oliver, I 2017)

The data collected across the sample suggest that such changes often require faculty to learn new skills (via professional development involving new technologies or art processes, or artistic research of new art forms) and to utilize different pedagogical
strategies or content into their teaching (as with Oliver’s newly developed mural project, or teaching existing courses with different assignments and class activities).

**Skills taught in first-year art programs.** As described in Chapter IV, three broad categories of skills taught in first-year programs emerged from the data: *traditional skills* (manual skills and material processes); *digital and new media skills* (skills associated with digital media, new technologies, and art forms); and *academic and interpersonal skills* (including academic, interdisciplinary, and “soft” skills considered essential to the field of art and supportive of academic coursework). These generalized categories of skills associated with artmaking are often taught simultaneously as the course activities and projects demand.

**Perceived changes in traditional skills.** The interview data from the six participants teaching in selective programs suggest that while students may be highly skilled in certain areas (such as drawing), they commonly have underdeveloped skills in other areas (such as digital media or 3-D sculptural skills), which may be the result of limited exposure and experience with particular media and processes. Furthermore, the data from the selective programs indicate that the most apparent shift in students’ traditional skills involves drawing. Four participants stated that students in general enter their selective art programs today with less developed drawing skills than past students (as indicated by admission portfolios and teaching experiences). According to Oliver, this relatively recent development has changed faculty teaching:

> When I first came [to PCoA, still lifes were] the first thing we would do.... “You have drawing skills, so we’re ready to hone these drawing skills.”... Now [I ask] ... “How many people have actually drawn in their life?”... Like 50% of the class [have] not [drawn] anything.... I cannot throw them still life! They would sink!

> We ... have to start basic.... “Okay, look. Take a photo. Try to draw that photo as real as you can.”... I see what they are capable of now [and] I can’t run the class [normally]. I ... have to ... judge the progression of that particular student from the point they entered.... I can’t go too fast and leave people behind. (Oliver, I 2017)
The data collected from the open-access program faculty did not specifically address drawing skills, which likely reflects faculty assumptions that some students in their classes will not have had prior art training.

The three participants who teach 3-D courses in selective programs stated that entering students commonly lack experience with 3-D processes. This was not perceived to be a recent development, nor described as a deficiency to overcome, but rather to be expected with some students, as Susan explained:

You never know if [students] had ... any [3-D experiences] because that’s not necessarily something ... taught in school.... That’s where the variation is. [In] some schools, they do all this ceramics and sculpture ... and other people have had literally nothing. So, to me, that’s interesting. (Susan, I 2017)

However, six participants (three from the pilot study and three in this study, from both selective and open-access programs) perceived that students’ manual and fine-motor skills have changed in recent years, as described by Evan:

The hand-motor skills have decreased significantly. It’s amazing to me. I have students that can’t hold a ruler and cut a straight edge with an X-Acto knife ... and their reasoning is, “Oh, I’ve never done it before.”... After demonstrating how to hold a ruler down ... dragging a sharp blade across it to cut.... I have students ... class after class, with final comps that are ... like a trapezoid; or the edges look like they were cut with a chainsaw.... [This is] a very basic hand-motor skill ... important to any artist or designer, and it ... seems like it’s not being taught to students any more at a young age. (Evan, I 2017)

Ryan, a pilot study participant, connected students’ manual skill development to virtual play in childhood that has reduced face-to-face interactions and physical play:

I grew up with a lot of independent play…. I went outside and I played and I built things ... [with] friends.... So that negotiation, in a peer group, face-to-face instead of in front of a screen, was really fundamental in my own learning and ...the way I thought about the world.... Now I find students have great difficulty in their manual skill set because much of their experiences has been virtual.... They are much less apt to engage with people around them because of their reliance on technology and the ease of it. (Mohns, 2018, p. 6)
Roger, a community college professor who participated in the pilot study, identified digital devices as the major cause of students’ changing skill sets and dispositions:

They’re pretty hooked on the gadgets.... They get a break, they’re on the screen. That’s the world we live in.... You see the effects: students come in for a hands-on traditional art class and they’re frustrated, or they don’t want to learn about materials—their sense of hands-on interaction with physical materials has been a little bit numbed. I’m extremely disturbed by that change. (Mohns, 2018, p. 7)

The traditional art skills that have been used and taught to art students historically since the Renaissance (such as drawing, painting, and sculpture processes) that involve manual and fine-motor skills are still considered to be an essential component of many first-year art programs. Teaching entering art students to become more sensitive to observation and materials, and to understand the concepts associated with composition and design through manual exercises (which reflects the Bauhaus model of foundation studies) is also valued by many first-year instructors, particularly given that students today appear to have underdeveloped fine-motor skills.

**Perceived changes in digital and new media skills.** Art students (and their teachers) learn and apply digital media skills in different ways. For example, these skills are often taught formally in studio or online courses that focus on a specific medium (such as video or typography) and specific software (such as Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop). Informal skills for personal use of digital technologies (including smartphones, apps, programmable appliances, or games) may be acquired differently through independent learning (via online video tutorials, observations of others, and personal exploration).

Given that the knowledge associated with digital media is continually changing (as technological advances produce new tools, materials, and possibilities for artmaking), continual learning and adaptation are required of students and teachers alike. Furthermore, as humans adjust to changes in behavior and learning fostered by the use of digital technologies into our daily lives, some participants have noticed how students
have adapted to using apps in their daily lives. Across the sample, data from five participants who teach technology-based courses suggest that students are now engaging with digital media skills differently than students in the recent past, as Evan explained:

> It’s interesting because ... eight, ten years ago, I think students picked up the software faster.... Now I think there are too many distractions. They’re too busy with apps. If you need something technologically-based, you just download an app ... [to do] what you want. Like “Face Swap”: with two swipes and you got your face on your cat’s face, whereas ten years ago, you would have to learn how to do that in Photoshop. (Evan, I 2017)

While Oliver strongly echoed Evan’s perceptions about apps, three participants reported that students today are more adept at learning software on their own. Yet Rachel suggests such learning can be superficial, as students still need basic instruction in the medium:

> Even though my students all know how to use all these apps on their phones and filters, do they know how to compose a good photograph? Do they know what [an] aperture is? Do they know how to light it? So there are still a lot of ... basics that they have to learn in digital work.

> The one thing that they are better at is learning the technical stuff on their own. Once you give them the basics ... if they get stuck ... they’re comfortable going on Lynda or YouTube and figuring out how to fix this one thing. But they still don’t really know ... the basic principles of animation. (Rachel, I 2017)

Seven participants stated that they allow (or encourage) students to use cell phones in class for art-related activities (such as for documenting work, conducting online research, or as music devices). However, according to Anna, first-year students may not automatically think of using smartphones as a tool for artmaking:

> We encouraged students to use their cell phone cameras, even [when] ... the photos were of low quality.... We really thought of the smartphone as a pocket tool that was important to the class and to the student. We found ... that students were less quick to understand the phone as an art tool unless we

---

12 Apps, or applications, are commonly defined as downloadable software programs designed to perform specific tasks (that are often highly complicated) instantly.

13 Lynda.com is an online instructional program for teaching digital media and software skills that is commonly available to students via institutional subscriptions.
specifically got them involved in making work that needed the cell phone: interviews, GPS tracking assignments and other apps to help make art. (Anna, FC 2018)

While students may use many of the same digital media skills (associated with photography, video, and animation) in a computer lab or on their phones, the data suggest that students make distinctions between the “art” make they informally on smartphones versus the “art” made using specialized hardware (such as professional quality digital cameras). For example, Lauren reported that some students describe themselves as “inexperienced” with digital media, in spite of their constant use of devices:

They’ll be on their phones tweeting and [say], “I am terrible with technology.” And I’m like, “No, you’re not!” Or ... [in the Lens and Time class] ... students spend like three weeks taking photographs, but on their phones.... They’ll still tell me: “I’ve never taken pictures before,” and [I say], “I just do not believe that for a second! Your Instagram [account] is full of selfies!”... They are not even aware they can use [digital media] as an artist in an interesting way. (Lauren, I 2017)

Students may associate “digital photography” with professional cameras rather than smartphones, but the interview data from Lauren, Anna, and other participants suggest that many instructors (and contemporary artists) do not make such distinctions.14

The intentional versus reflexive use of devices for artmaking may illustrate different orientations that faculty and students have with smartphone technology: as a tool or as an extension of self. Perhaps Lauren’s students conceived of work shared on Instagram accounts or social media as something other than “art”: something more personal, spontaneous, or less crafted than what they would put into an admissions portfolio.15 As Levine and Dean (2012) remind us, college instructors are commonly

---

14 For example, over the last decade as the quality of smartphones has improved, award-winning movies have been shot on iPhones (including the 2015 film, Tangerine), illustrators and artists commonly use apps on iPhones to create professional work (such as Jorge Colombo’s 2009 cover for the New Yorker), and many photojournalists now use iPhones to produce their work.

15 Yet many professional artists today use Instagram as a way to present their work to a wide audience online.
“immigrants” to the digital world while students are digital “natives,” which presents fundamentally different experiences learning and using digital technology. As the youngest participant in the sample, Lauren straddles this generational divide and appreciates how students today reflexively (and subconsciously) use devices in the creative process:

I am technically a millennial.... A lot of the faculty here, everywhere, at all schools, complain about the students’ obsession with technology and especially with their phones. Yes, I, too, am so tired of seeing phones in my classroom.... But one thing [students] do have is a fluency with technology that can manifest itself in certain projects in such a beautiful way. Like, if they are doing a performance and we ask them to document it, 10 years ago we would just have students coming in and printing out laser prints of photographs, right? But now, I don’t even have to tell them ... they document them in Snapchat ... [or] via poems they are writing in Twitter.... This digital fluency that they are not even aware they have ... is just such a part of their DNA now. (Lauren, I 2016)

While the majority of participants support students’ use of smartphones for certain tasks in class, others, including the two community college faculty, have banned phone use altogether due to their distracting nature. As Evan explained:

Technology can be used as a tool. This is obvious.... The really crucial part of this equation is the age, or better stated, maturity of the individual – for them to understand when a smart phone, etc. can be used as a tool and when it’s not. And ... in the hands of an 18- or 19-year-old college student, most of the time, it’s not being used as a tool – it’s being used as a form of escapism or entertainment, as a way to divert their energy and attention from what they actually should be doing, which is paying attention and/or their work. (Evan, I 2017)

Sherry Turkle (2015) confirms Evan’s observations about devices in the classroom, stating: “It is hard to concentrate in class when you are holding a device associated with games and messaging” (p. 217), while also acknowledging that smartphones and laptops “are facts of life and part of our creative lives. The goal is to use them with greater intention” [emphasis in original] (p. 216).

**Perceptions of academic and interpersonal skills.** In addition to traditional skills (such as drawing and 3-D processes) and digital media skills, college-level art study
requires students to develop academic and interpersonal skills that support and facilitate artmaking. These skills include (but are not limited to) research skills, ideation skills, communication skills, collaboration skills, and reading and writing skills. As the art world expands to include new forms (such as social practice, sound installation, and interactive events), supportive academic skills take on a new level of importance within first-year curricula, as reflected in course titles such as: *Drawing as Research, Co: LAB* (collaboration), and *CORE: Ideation*.

**Research skills in first-year coursework.** Research skills are commonly taught in first-year programs, both formally (via library instruction and museum visits) and informally (as collecting materials or information for projects, or material exploration). The interview data suggest that “research” includes a wide range of activities (as presented in Tables 19-21) that serve creative production, the design process, and academic learning, as described by Oliver:

> When I say research, I mean just being able to use the Internet to find solutions to things.... I would say, “Chuck Close does massive paintings.... Research his reason for painting, what motivates him, what is he trying to say.”... “Where do I have to find that?” “There is a library next door.”
> (Oliver, I 2017)

While Oliver asks students to research artists online, other participants are asking students to look inward by engaging in personal research, which might involve exercises such as making lists that inventory their personal interests or skills, as Anna explained:

> For me, this idea of research [is about] ... deepening ... making students aware that art, making art, really has to do with things they are interested in. It doesn’t matter what they are interested in, the fact they are interested is important. And I think that that’s foreign to them sometimes. (Anna, I 2017)

Although David uses different strategies with his community college students (such as material exploration with non-objective assignments), in SRCC’s first-year capstone

---

16For a definition, see Chapter IV, “Defining Research and Ideation Skills.”
course for fine art majors, he also focuses on students’ artistic growth through self-discovery and inventive problem solving associated with personal interests:

[In this class] they end up being in places [artistically] that they never knew they were going to go, but they feel close to it and they usually work really hard.... Each [project] evolves individually.... The level of commitment to the amount of work is really good ... and attendance, people come to every class.

They love it because it’s always about them.... Each week I have individual conferences.... They feel this personal connection.... They’ve never had individual things ... in college. (David, I 2016)

The influence of the Internet. Participants in this and the pilot study reported that students today often begin assignments by conducting online searches for information and examples of successful solutions. Several of these instructors expressed concern about this approach to ideation, which may encourage students to appropriate existing images and ideas rather than develop original thoughts and creative material. Other participants expressed concern about the quality information students may be finding online. For example, the library at the private art institute where Susan teaches is famous for its extensive and accessible collection, yet Susan reported that students today prefer online research:

[There] is less “going to the library” ... for inspiration ... flipping through books ... seeing what appeals ... [and] discovering; whereas [now] it’s just online [research].... You would hope that they are finding more substantive sources, but sometimes it just seems like ... trivial responses to media. (Susan, I 2017)

Oliver perceives a larger problem with using the infinite images available online as inspiration for creative work, and now encourages students to use other approaches:

If you’ve been inundated by images all the time, they don’t inspire as much.... You have got ... to find another way to inspire.... So I try to get them out of that “interface mode” and [to] just interface with me ... to get them off the computer. And they always ask me, “Can I use the computer for this?” “No, I want you to use something else.”... I try to ... break them out of these molds. (Oliver, I 2017)
Three participants reported using the college library or museum as resources in their teaching: Susan introduces students to using the museum collection for research, Oliver brings students to the library for instruction on using databases for research, and Chaim teaches a research-oriented studio course that requires students to physically search for books in the university library as the basis for collaborative projects, rather than using online research methods.

Other participants reported teaching students to use online research for developing ideas and gathering information for projects. For example, Nell described implementing a new research-oriented seminar course to support academic writing skills; however, her colleagues questioned the authenticity of the ideation process being taught to students:

I wanted [the students] to do all this research and for the idea to come from the research and [my colleagues said], “But that’s not authentic. Is that how you get ideas?” I was like, “No. I get an inspiration and I just go and I execute it and I do research along the way that fills it out and changes it.”... It was an interesting conversation ... what we ... settled on is that research is something that ... happens parallel to the work and the two of them inform one another. (Nell, I 2016)

**Communication and collaboration.** It is widely accepted that art students are taught communication skills during the first year of college to be able to articulate ideas about art. This generally involves introducing students to art critiques as a forum for providing feedback and assessment of work, holding class discussions, and facilitating interpersonal communication for collaborative projects. Four participants described the importance of critiques in their teaching and described different strategies for teaching critique skills. For example, Nell discusses her expectations for students’ participation in critiques, and Evan asks his students to write answers to a set of questions for each artwork prior to engaging in the group discussion.

It is also widely accepted that cell phones, texting, and social media have changed the way students communicate, which Sherry Turkle (2012, 2015) suggests has contributed to increased social anxiety and a lack of empathy among teens and young
adults. This may explain why Evan and David have found that the quality of critiques and class discussions has fallen at their community colleges:

The quality of my critiques, in recent years, has suffered. I’ve always conducted very rigorous crits and that’s something that I’ve always been proud of in my classes. They’re still very strong, but I have to do far more pulling to get students to talk about anything. (Evan, I 2017)

Yet, in contrast to the experiences of Evan and David, Nell perceives her students at the private women’s art institute (SWPAC) as having strong communication skills:

The students are much better at [communicating]—they’re much more connected... They do want to share. They want to talk.... I don’t know that I have seen that before.... I remember having a lot more trouble getting students to talk.... I don’t know if that’s me, or if ... it’s because they’re very social. (Nell, I 2016)

Evan attributed the level of interpersonal communication among students to group dynamics and described teaching two sections of the same course where one group was productive, yet playful and boisterous, and the other was also productive, but quiet and serious about their work. Such data suggest that the nature of the group cohort and environment influences the level of interpersonal communication in the classroom.

Six participants described using collaborative projects or presentations in their courses as a way to further develop students’ interpersonal communication skills. Among the participants teaching courses that require collaboration or involve social practice methods, interpersonal communication skills are seen as essential, as Anna explained:

Working with others, learning to communicate things that are difficult ... learning how to describe things is really important.... Collaboration does a lot of those things.... It’s also really good for designers as well as artists ... [and] just “thinkers.” (Anna, I 2017)

While collaboration and interpersonal communication are among the “soft skills” required for working in many fields of art today, developing these skills can be difficult for students. Anna acknowledges this by helping students overcome their discomfort:

To speak out loud, to work together with someone, to make work in dialogue ... it takes you to another place. It allows risk-taking. Obviously,
you’re going to start talking to someone. It may even be uncomfortable at
first, especially with beginning students, but ... I try to make things fun ...
[they’re] comfortable with each other pretty soon. (Anna, PS 2017)

For international and immigrant students in first-year programs, academic
adjustment may depend on developing communication skills and understanding the art
school environment within a different cultural setting. As mentioned previously, three
private art institutes in this study have first-year cohorts with approximately 33%
international students who, according to the interview data, primarily come from China,
South Korea, and Southeast Asia. At two of these programs, new courses that have been
developed to strengthen language and communication skills for international students
also explain cultural differences and expectations of U.S. art programs.

At the community college level, David described his immigrant students as
generally highly motivated, disciplined, and often among the best students in the class,
yet who occasionally struggle with language and communication skills. Similar to the
participants teaching foreign language speakers at the private art institutes, David
reported meeting these students at the end of class to clarify coursework, offer advice,
and provide information about the college.

**Attention spans, patience, and frustration.** The 12 faculty participants in this
study unanimously reported that students today have shorter attention spans and
experience greater frustration when learning traditional skills, in comparison to students
in the past, as Nell explained:

> When [students] ... work on something new and they’re building a new
> skill, they get very frustrated if they don’t see immediate results.... That can
> also manifest as having trouble focusing ... [or not] following through if
> they’re not seeing ... results. (Nell, I 2017)

These findings are supported by research (Levitin, 2014; Seemiller & Grace, 2016;
Turkle, 2015) and by reports in mainstream media (Goethals, 2018; Richtel, 2010, 2012).
Rachel perceives the use of digital devices as contributing to student tendencies toward
distraction and lack of patience, which she believes should be addressed in teaching:
I don’t think [students] are as patient as they used to be. I think we have to train them. I think it’s cultural, it’s time, [and] it’s also the devices that are distracting for all of us, right? So … they are more distracted and have a lot harder time to sit for long periods of time to focus on something the way we used to…. I think they can still do it…. But … it’s something they’re not used to. (Rachel, I 2017)

Several participants, including Tracy, Kat, and Nell, have adopted teaching strategies that foster greater concentration and longer attention spans, and encourage students to persevere when facing frustration:

When I first started teaching … [I would say] “We’re going to draw from a model for three hours straight,” I [now] … have to come up with … different things … to do every half hour, especially in the beginning of the semester. By the end of the year … they have the ability to focus for longer periods…. [I teach] things [in] smaller chunks so they [stay] interested in what we’re doing over that long period of time. (Tracy, I 2016)

I use the “Pomodoro Method” … [based on] research … that says … your brain … can focus on one thing for up to 22 minutes at a time before it naturally needs a recess…. I set a timer for 25 minutes … because when they are facing two hours of work time, they cannot handle it. It’s too much…. It’s mostly psychological…. I will use [the timer] heavily and then … eke off…. Because they are … creatures of habit … they start to articulate work time in these blocks…. When I don’t do it, [they say], “[Kat], where’s the timer?” (Kat, I 2017)

One … really successful [approach] is to keep the emphasis on the process. So … if I see somebody getting antsy or not being able to focus, I look for that moment … where I’m seeing them focus and … praise … that. Like…”You’re really paying attention here…. What might happen … if you dug a little bit deeper?” (Nell, I 2017)

Perceived engagement with skills and coursework. The collected data tell different stories of how first-year students approach studio coursework. Across the sampled institutions, the participants described some students as highly skilled, disciplined and hard working, and other students who have difficulty engaging with coursework. For example, Rachel perceives her students to be more conservative than past students, which may reflect the cost of attending PADI, a private art institute:

In general, I would say the students are a little more [conservative] … I think the cost of education is changing education…. Students [in the past]
were ... freer and willing to experiment and ... to be a little crazy and push themselves, whereas now, they’re good students that are a little more straight and narrow than they used to be. (Rachel, I 2017)

Yet, as Rachel explains, when students fail to engage with coursework, faculty may not be aware of the challenges these students are facing:

Students ... will start having real difficulties and not showing up, and we [say], “What is it?”... They were just so depressed or having so much anxiety, they physically couldn’t get out of bed!... They have documentation, but they don’t want to tell their professor. They think they’re going ... to be okay or ... they feel embarrassed.... I could have helped them if I knew this ... or if I knew that they were so dyslexic they couldn’t read anything I gave them. But if they’re not going tell me ... how can I help them? (Rachel, I 2017)

Data collected across the sample suggest that numerous factors, such as mental health and medication issues, learning disabilities, personal crises, financial stress, employment obligations, and college readiness are contributing to students’ inability to engage with coursework.

These faculty participants often presented contrasting examples of students’ engagement within the same institution and classes. For example, Oliver discussed how different students approach coursework in his classes at PCoA, a private art institute:

[Some] kids aren’t doing work.... I started calling them out in class.... “How long did you spend?”... “I did it just before I came to class.”... “I could tell.”... What they hate about the Asian kids ... [is they] start right as you give them [the assignment]. So their problem is never “half-assing” it ... [but rather] “when to stop.” They overdo it.... Most of the time ... it’s miscommunication.... A lot of [the Asian students] sit with me and make sure that they get the right gist. (Oliver, I 2017)

Six participants (from both selective and open-access programs) spoke of entering students who resist exploring concepts or honing skills beyond the minimum required, or who only want to engage in the art experiences for their chosen major, or who approach studio work as a series of activities to get through (so they can move on to the next assignment), as Lauren reported:
They ... think that once you’ve learned a concept, that’s it. They have checked that box off and don’t want to fully investigate that more ... [and have] an inflated sense of accomplishment. Like, “I [already] know how to do [web design],” and [I say] ... “Fine, go make me a website,” and they’re like, “I forget how to start it.” (Lauren, I 2016)

David also spoke of the reluctance shown by some of his community college students to further refine or develop their drawings:

In drawing, sometimes ... somebody gets to a certain level ... and from their perspective ... “It’s correct. It’s right. I’ve gotten drawing. I’m done.”... From my perspective, I ... want different things ... to get them [beyond]. “Well that’s a really nice thing here.... Maybe we could try ... something about scale or line quality or composition.”... Loosening something up ... but they [say] – “it looks fine to them.” (David, I 2017)

**Using teaching strategies to influence engagement.** Teaching students to become more open, flexible, and risk-taking in their art practice is a common goal in first-year teaching. However, teaching students to explore techniques and concepts for the sake of learning (rather than for grades or for teacher approval) can be challenging when students have been conditioned to approach artmaking in a particular way in high school. For example, Tracy spoke of students who want to pre-visualize projects rather than respond spontaneously to the concepts, processes, and materials taught in her class. To address this predisposition, Tracy and her colleagues use a teaching strategy that emphasizes process and open-ended solutions in artmaking, rather than the final product:

We try to structure projects so that they don’t know what the end result is going to be.... We only give them a little bit of the information at a time, and that really frustrates our newer students because they [think]: “I’m starting today, I am putting so many hours into it, and I’m going to get a painting at the end.” They want to know what that end is so they can reverse-engineer stuff, and we really try to shake them of that expectation so that their artmaking is more of an inquiry. (Tracy, I 2016)

**Assessment and grading strategies.** Five participants from different types of institutions described using instructional tools (such as assignment rubrics and frequent grading) as a way to influence students’ work habits and clearly communicate course requirements. Throughout this study, the participants reported using a wide variety of
grading strategies that reflect course content (such as collaborative video projects versus weekly design assignments), the instructors’ teaching philosophy, and the demographic of students in the program. For instance, David gives students in his community college courses weekly project grades to effectively communicate course expectations and progress to students:

    I give students a grade every single week in ... all my classes ... so they really know where they stand.... I give ... a check plus, a check, a check minus, or zero if they don’t do it... It’s so easy to understand: “You did a really good job,” “Okay,” and “Not very good.” And everybody, generally, after they see the other projects, [understands]. This semester ... I did not have one student complain about a grade. (David, 1 2016)

Other participants, including Evan and Kat, use grading systems with points awarded (or lost) for assigned work and behavior (such as participation, arriving late, or inappropriate phone use). Rachel uses rubrics for speed and fairness when grading, but rarely shares the rubrics with students, while Nell provides rubrics to students for each assignment.

According to Mary Hafeli (2009), an art education professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, finding authentic ways to assess student work and progress is challenging, even for college art teachers17 who have studied art education:

    We have produced assessment models with criteria that reflect the kinds of behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and qualities that characterize how artists go about their work and the objects they produce.... We’ve also managed to adopt a range of approaches that confuse or dilute the very richness and complexity that constitute artistic thinking and practice. These latter approaches are problematic because they: (1) include criteria lacking essential, authentic art content, (2) feature undefined concepts, (3) seek to assess qualities that cannot be evidenced reliably across students, and (4) assume unrealistic clustering of criteria and levels of student performance and achievement. (p. 100)

17While it is generally not a requirement for college art instructors to have taken education coursework, in this study, three participants (Nell, Evan, and Jason) studied art education in the past, and Nell worked as a certified art teacher in public schools for two years earlier in her teaching career.
Given the difficulty in developing rubrics that authentically assess art activities, it is not surprising that four participants reported they do not use rubrics when grading. This may also reflect a philosophical approach to teaching entering art students. Rather than providing students with familiar rubrics and explicit criteria and directions for projects, many first-year instructors have told me they want to disrupt the high school mentality of satisfying teachers to earn good grades (and asking, “What do you want me to do for an A?”) and instead, have students grapple with the vagaries of artmaking that manifest as unanticipated outcomes, opportunities, and failures.

These four participants keep track of their students’ work and participation, but do not give project grades, and instead use one-on-one meetings at midterm to convey progress. Susan explained how her grading evolved at PloD, a private art institute:

When I first started, I’d give ... feedback on each project. I’d write ... a grade [and] “concept,” “craftsmanship,” or whatever.... Another faculty [told me], “You know, they’re not even reading what you’re writing.... You’re wasting your time. [They just look and say], ‘Oh that’s a B+.’”... [Even] my dean [said]: “Everything’s an evaluation with you ... ‘this versus that.’... I [wouldn’t] do that, a lot of people don’t.”... I thought, “I’ll just ... talk to them in the crit.... If they’re ... worried ... [we can talk] privately, but [I won’t] give ... individual [project grades].”... At midterm, I sit down and ... give them feedback ... [which] seems to work. (Susan, I 2017)

From Susan’s description, it appears that some faculty and administrators want to deemphasize the focus on grades for creative work, which may reflect the demographic of highly skilled and motivated students who attend PloD. However, this issue was also raised in the pilot study among the participants teaching at a selective state college.

**Use of open-ended assignments.** Three participants (from the pilot study and in this recent research) spoke of the inhibiting nature that grading (and fear of failure) can have on motivation for creative work, and the awkwardness of assigning grades when students have been instructed to take risks and experiment in their work. Two
participants, Ryan and Evan, reported experimenting with classes\(^{18}\) where grades were not given until the end of the term, and consequently found the quality of student work and participation to be high. Evan’s sophomore-level course at his community college uses open-ended assignments that allow students to develop their own content through experimentation with technology:

I always tell the students ... “Don’t be concerned with results. Be more concerned with the process. Develop your own creative capacities through technology.”... I started ... to not issue any grades during the semester.... I just [wanted] to see what happens.... [I thought] “The first student that asks me for a project grade, I’ll give all of them...grades.”... To my utter amazement, nobody asked me for a grade the entire semester.... It was awesome.... I had 18 students.... I issued about 15 As. It was unbelievable. I don’t know if [deemphasizing grades] had anything to do with it ... but the students made amazing work.... I never give grades in that class anymore during the semester. (Evan, I 2017)

David teaches an honors-level course for first-year art majors at a community college where students are motivated by open-ended assignments and personal content. In this class, the students generate their own projects and are challenged by their classmates’ efforts, rather than the instructor’s feedback:

In the Fine Art Seminar, we have ... ten students ... and every person is working individually on their own things.... They’re all good students.... They see what good students are doing because there will always be somebody ... doing really good work.... If you’re falling behind, you feel like you’re falling behind.... I almost have to say nothing in that group.... It’s completely that group pressure.... They end up being in places [artistically] that they never knew they were going to go, but they feel close to it and they usually work really hard.... Each [project] evolves individually.... The level of commitment to the amount of work is really good ... and attendance, people come every class. (David, I 2016)

While this approach may work for some, according to Lauren, the student demographic at SCon requires teachers to provide clear instructions and guidelines for assignments:

\(^{18}\)Evan teaches a sophomore level course for art majors this way, but not first-year courses. Ryan has experimented in first-year courses by telling students on the first day that if every student agrees, no project grades will be given, and all students with regular attendance will receive grades of B- or better.
The whole [right way to do an assignment] thing is most challenging with students on the autism spectrum.... I’ve been told [by the] autism specialist on campus ... [that] clear-cut directions and written ... instructions and parameters are so important to the way these students function and can succeed, because they don’t necessarily pick up on things that might be said in critique.... They have a hard time catching social cues. (Lauren, I 2016)

Lauren has also found that implementing “strict rules” for work habits and behavior has been effective in preparing these students for subsequent art study:

We have so many strict things ... really strict attendance ... [and] homework policies. Because all of that is strict, maybe [students] are happy to have some open-ended projects.

Since the start of the new foundation program five years ago, the people who teach at the sophomore level have said that it’s pretty remarkable … [students] are coming in ... a little more responsible, a little more ready for critique.... We are strict ... like a conditioning “boot camp” art school. (Lauren, I 2016)

**Perceptions of How Students Experience the First Year of College**

As mentioned previously, one mission of first-year art programs is to prepare entering students for future art coursework (by teaching skills, media-related content, and effective work habits) while helping students transition to the college environment. Yet academic adjustment involves student development, which is fostered by negotiating the demands of college life while simultaneously engaging with education in new and challenging ways. Research suggests that significant personal growth, skill, and identity development occur for art students during their first intensive art training, which, for many, happens in college during the first year.

**Artistic development and initial intensive art training.** In 2010, the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) surveyed 4,031 arts alumni who had attended specialized arts high schools and undergraduate and graduate art programs about their personal artistic development. Miller and Lambert (2012) analyzed this survey data and found:
It was at first glance counterintuitive that the “lowest” level of education, high school, actually showed the highest perceived development of the skill. On further reflection, it may be that for [specialized arts] high school alumni, their experience at their institutions was the first intensive arts training they had ever received, and therefore they made large strides in their development of artistic technique. (p. 7)

While differences likely exist between the quality art education received by students attending specialized arts high schools and most public high schools, it is apparent that the initial intensive art training plays a role in art students’ skill and identity development. Such findings are provocative and relevant to this research because, for some students, first-year art programs serve as their initial intensive art training.

Specifically, Miller and Lambert (2012) found that certain aspects of artistic development (described as “artistic techniques,” “communication skills,” “social skills,” and “personal growth”) were perceived by the art alumni to develop during their initial intensive art training (in specialized arts high schools) (p. 7). Miller and Lambert also found that the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of attending arts high schools (i.e., studying and identifying with like-minded students and faculty) support students with personal growth and artistic development (p. 7) and, hence, in developing their artistic identity. These researchers described social and developmental dimensions to acquiring art skills, which are perceived to develop at different stages of arts education: with artistic techniques and interpersonal skills primarily developed in the arts high schools, and more “abstract” or “higher level” skills (including technology and research skills) developed as undergraduates and graduate students (pp. 7-8). While the reported sequence of skill development may reflect traditional curricula as much as cognitive development, the indication that students’ personal and artistic growth is fostered through social interactions within cohorts during initial intensive art training is predictable, yet significant for art educators to acknowledge.

**Identity development and personal growth.** Many administrators and first-year art instructors understand the importance of creating a community of like-minded
students to support academic adjustment to the college environment. Some first-year students with prior art education will enter college already identifying as art students, while others, particularly in open-access programs, may see art as one of several personal interests or abilities to explore. While selective programs expect their admitted students to strongly identify as committed art students capable of the rigor of demanding studio courses, open-access programs will likely have a mix of art and non-art students.

Anecdotal evidence and literature, as well as interview data from this study, report that some highly skilled art students who enter college with established artistic identities encounter challenges when confronted with different conceptions of what it means to be “a good art student” when surrounded by other highly skilled students. Such conflicts appear to reflect the dualistic thinking Perry found to be common among first-year students (Evans et al., 2010), and prompts reflection on one’s skills and artistic identity. Elsa Bekkala documented first-year art students facing similar challenges in her 2001 dissertation examining the artistic development of undergraduate students at Rhode Island School of Design. It appears that, in some cases, when students have developed “artistic techniques” in high school, their artistic identities may be associated with skill mastery, and when challenged to make artwork differently (i.e., such as exploring new forms of representation, new uses of materials and techniques, or different aesthetic values) in first-year art courses, these students may experience confusion, insecurity, and even personal crises.

In this study, two participants, Susan and Lauren, who teach at selective programs, reported issues with teaching students who have highly developed drawing skills. For example, Susan described her perceptions of drawing instruction at PloD:

I think ... the drawing faculty feel...part of their job is to keep students from using ... [drawing] “tricks” ... and to really re-train them in how ... to

---

19This was the case for one participant, Lauren, who reported having a double major (economics and art) as an undergraduate.
really look and see, and not draw from photos and not be focused on mere rendering versus just really understanding space.... So, in some ways, they are almost happier [to have students without drawing abilities]. (Susan, I 2017)

Lauren spoke of some highly skilled students at SCon who struggle to work conceptually and with abstraction:

That ... is a really difficult transition for them...because they have been taught ... to render something so well ... from observation that drawing something abstractly that doesn’t “look good” to them is a really big challenge ... thinking abstractly ... [and] making connections between various concepts. (Lauren, I 2016)

The data suggest that highly skilled art students may also encounter problems in open-access programs, particularly when asked to reconsider aesthetic values (such as “beauty”) or how they approach artmaking (as with illusionistic rendering), which may have been learned, applauded, and reinforced in high school. Over the years, many art instructors have told me of highly skilled students who experience a form of “artistic foreclosure” that prompts them to drop an art course rather than alter their conception of what “good art” means to them. For example, David recalled a recent incident with a community college student who yelled out in his class, “You’ve ruined my experience of art! It used to be so much fun and this is no longer fun!” (David, I 2016).

Instructors in first-year programs often encourage students to abandon prior assumptions about artmaking, skills, and aesthetics to engage in more open-minded, experimental, and risk-taking approaches to making art. While this process can be difficult and deeply upsetting for some students, it also produces reflection and cognitive dissonance (i.e., in terms of artistic identity, artistic values, and past art experiences, etc.), which promotes further personal and artistic growth. This issue also highlights the emotional aspect of studying art (in terms of confidence, vulnerability, and insecurities) associated with perceptions of personal skill development, accomplishments, and talent among peers, which, according to Bekkala (2001), changes upon entering the environment of a competitive art program.
The data collected from the pilot study and this recent research suggest that first-year art courses bring some students to the realization that majoring in art is not appropriate for them. Several participants mentioned that first-year courses test students’ commitment and interest in studying art, as Oliver explained:

> If I don’t see kids showing me that desire and that stick-to-itnesseness ... I call them out.... I ask them to really question what they’re getting into.... “If you’re not willing to put in the hours, this is not the profession for you.”
> (Oliver, I 2017)

**Academic adjustment and life skills.** Across the study, the faculty participants described different ways students negotiate independence and the responsibilities of college life during the first year. Whether students live at home or on campus (and away from family for the first time), developing “life skills” (such as managing finances, time, relationships, employment, health, personal hygiene, etc.) may pose as much of a challenge as coursework.

In this study, questions about students’ life skills were added to the interview protocol as member checks after two participants expressed concerns about sleep-deprived students, and others mentioned that some students wear pajamas to class. For example, Nell reported the casual nature of students in her classes, which may reflect SWPAC’s demographic as an all-women’s undergraduate art college:

> They’re very comfortable. They don’t wear makeup when they come to class. They often wear their pajamas. They don’t do anything with their hair. They just sit and work and they talk a lot and they’re critical of one another in a constructive way. It’s ... a very wonderful, nurturing atmosphere.
> (Nell, I 2016)

Yet Tracy’s observations describe how students change over the course of the first year:

20Member checks are prompts added to the interview protocol to confirm, or test the reliability of the interview data collected from other participants.

21Wearing pajamas in public was a trend among students when I was a high school art teacher (2005-2010). First-year students may not perceive pajamas as inappropriate clothing if they want to feel comfortable and “at home” in their studio classrooms.
Our students roll into class in pajamas sometimes.... We don’t tell them ... but I think ... that they are working out all these different selves, like different identities. Through that first year, they start realizing, “Oh, I have to start presenting myself in a particular way in order to be taken more ... or less seriously.” (Tracy, I 2016)

Yet three participants dismissed my prompts about life skills (and pajamas) as irrelevant, with such responses as: “Define a life skill. I didn’t have very good life skills until I was 40” (Chaim, I 2017). When I explained that life skills could mean time-management or learning to drive, or perhaps coming to class in pajamas, Chaim replied:

Well, I teach an 8:30 [a.m.] class on a campus-oriented school. That’s like a given most of the time. If they start doing it in my night class, maybe I’ll tell you stuff. (Chaim, I 2017)

In hindsight, I see several possible reasons why faculty may be reluctant to comment on students’ life skills (or lifestyles): First, this prompt could be seen as an attempt to elicit negatively biased data about students, and faculty may not want to engage in superficial judgments of vulnerable students. Art students often present unconventional attitudes and attire, and in this context pajamas worn for studio work may be seen as unremarkable. Lastly, faculty may prefer that students come to an 8:00 a.m. class in pajamas rather than arrive late or miss class.

Leaving judgment aside, Tracy perceive negotiating life skills as part of a process that all students at SRSC undergo during the first year of college:

When we talk to them one-on-one, we say, “Look, you know, you got a C+ at midterm. I’m sure that is disappointing to you, but think about it: This is six weeks in to the semester. You took the six weeks to figure out where you should be eating food, how to wash your laundry and ... go to all of your classes.” So we ... explain to them that this is the process that you go through over two semesters and part of the process is about learning to be independent and figuring out your time. (Tracy, I 2015)

Time-management and studio coursework. The collected data present time-management skills ranging from first-year students described as working too hard and sleeping too little, to not putting in enough time or effort into coursework. Participants across the study reported students who struggle with class participation or with the
workload of studio courses, which may be for different reasons, such as unrealistic expectations, lack of commitment to art study, immaturity, or mental health issues. In particular, the participants from the three private art institutes (PIoD, PADI, and PCoA), with the highest cost of attendance and longest class sessions, perceived some students to be sacrificing their health and well-being for coursework, as Susan and Oliver described:

There is ... a history ... [and] expectations that [PIoD students] ... have to [work extraordinarily hard].... [In] the worst case ... students ... feel like they shouldn’t be sleeping normally, or ... they don’t do anything else but their work all the time.... They consider the liberal arts classes ... an infringement on the time ... [for] doing the studio work.... It can get to ... where they just get over-consumed by it and, obviously, at certain point, lack of sleep isn’t productive. (Susan, I 2017)

In my class, I see them not eating, not showering, not shaving, and they’re looking, like, all unkempt.... My [colleague] ... believes that students don’t take good enough care of themselves and ... don’t sleep enough ... and it’s getting worse.... A lot of these kids already stay up late and they come to class looking like zombies.... She asked one student ... “Why you falling asleep in my class?” and she’s like, “I haven’t slept in the last 48 hours.” (Oliver, I 2017)

Time-management, sleep-deprivation, and unhealthy lifestyles may have always been a factor for students in art programs\textsuperscript{22} due to the time-consuming nature of studio work; however, the data suggest these problems may be changing with the times. For example, Lauren sees a new time-management issue that affects her students at SCon:

I would say that more than 50% [of the students] ... don’t have any phone calendar, physical calendar, anything.... They think they can just store it all in their heads. Which ... works when you are in high school ... taking the same class every day and homework is due the next day.... There is no long-term planning.... They don’t come with any time management skills. (Lauren, I 2016)

\textsuperscript{22}When I was a first-year art student in the 1980s, sleep deprivation was common among art students at all levels of undergraduate art study. Years later, in the early 2000s, I also witnessed sleep-deprivation among students taking first-year courses, as studio courses can be very time-consuming.
Lauren has addressed this problem through interventions (such as distributing weekly planners and using peer-advisors to teach time-management skills). At the community colleges, where college readiness is a factor for the student demographic, Evan sees students who underestimate the workload for studio courses, or who procrastinate:

Time-management is a huge aspect of being a college student that I’ve noticed more and more students struggling with. There are some students that never really get a handle on time management and being productive. If they are given four weeks [to complete] an assignment, the first three weeks they ... blow off and then cram their effort into one week at the end ... and you ... see that in the work.

At least half [of the students] ... in studio courses ... don’t realize that they are going to have to do significant work outside of the college to complete their work. They think that they’re going to have enough time in class or be able to complete their assignments in the design lab outside of class. (Evan, I 2017)

This discussion shifts when describing students who work while attending school. Jason and others participants spoke of the determination shown by students who work full-time jobs while taking a full course load. Research indicates that students who work fewer than 20 hours/week, in general, do better academically than their peers; however, according to Anthony Carnevale of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, students who work more than 20 hours/week tend to suffer from lower GPAs, have difficulty pursuing internships, and are “more likely to face exhaustion and consider dropping out” (EAB Daily Briefing, 2017).

Carnivale et al. (2015) explain how employment and academic success can reflect students’ financial resources, as some “working learners are more concerned about enhancing résumés and gaining work experience than paying for tuition” (p. 21), while others report that “students who work more than 20 hours a week generally do so out of necessity—often, these students come from low-income families and hope to minimize their college debt burden” (EAB Daily Briefing, 2017). Based on this research, one could argue that students with part-time jobs generally appear to manage time well; however,
students who work over 20 hours per week may simply lack the time necessary to excel in coursework, regardless of their time-management skills.

**Student transformation during the first year of college.** In the interviews, some faculty participants were asked to describe how they see students change over the course of the first year of college. Rachel, at PADI (a private art institute), and Evan, at LSCC (a community college), provided the following responses:

> It’s so fun because usually by the end of the year, they have their own little personalities and they have ... deep friendships with some of the kids in the class. You can tell they’ve really found something they’re really jazzed about, [and] maybe discovered something different about themselves. It’s ... fun to see them like that.... And generally, if they’ve stayed in the program, they feel really confident.... They’re really proud that they made it through and they’re very excited about going into their major the next year. (Rachel, I 2017)

> Well, it’s not always good—the change goes both ways and ... ultimately depends on so many factors. It could be that [the student] didn’t click with a certain instructor, or [they weren’t pushed] enough ... to reach their potential. What’s going on in their personal life? Did this affect their performance? So I think ... the ones who grow in their first year ... understand quicker than others that “Oh, this isn’t high school. They don’t have to just pass me through the system. They will fail me if I don’t do the work.” And some make tremendous progress because they realize that they have a talent [and] it’s rewarding to hone their skills, etc.... Some learn through failure.... I think most of them ... understand at the very end of the first year, “Okay. If I’m serious about this, I need to start [organizing] my time better and making ... use of my schedule.” (Evan, I 2017)

These interview excerpts represent the most diverse institutions in the sample: a highly selective program versus an open-access art program; a private four-year institution versus a state-funded two-year community college; the highest costs of attendance versus the lowest costs of attendance; and the respective student demographics served by such institutions. However, there is much these excerpts have in common:

- Students feel confident when they have completed the first year of college, as not all students make it through these programs.
- Personal growth comes from the challenge of coursework that fosters greater self-knowledge about personal artistic strengths and interests.
- By the end of the first year, some students feel excitement or the reward of their artistic pursuits, but most will realize what is required to succeed in future coursework.

According to these participants, students are changed, even transformed, by the first-year experience. They exit as more mature and with a better understanding of themselves and of the college environment.

These excerpts also illuminate the differences in students’ experiences at such diverse institutions. For example, Rachel spoke in upbeat terms of students’ emerging personalities, friendships, and excitement fueled by self-knowledge of abilities and interests that have led them to their chosen major. In contrast, Evan spoke warily of students whose personal lives and demeanors intrude on their ability to be academically successful. Like Rachel, Evan sees students who discover their artistic abilities, interests, and drive; but he also sees students who lack college readiness and fail, and must reckon with changing their lifestyles and priorities if they want to continue in college.

**Perceptions of Art Departments and Institutions**

In addition to examining faculty perceptions of students and teaching in first-year art programs, this study also explores how college art instructors perceive institutional forces that affect teaching. The forces may come from within the institution (in the form of curricular changes, accreditation mandates, or from changes in staff and facilities) or come from outside the institution (as with enrollment trends, the development of new technologies and art forms, and the financial conditions faced by students). Often, such institutional pressures emerge as a combination of internal responses to external forces
(as with changing student demographics that result from recruitment efforts that require new courses, content, and pedagogy).

**Perceived Internal Forces Shaping Curricula and Teaching**

This study found that first-year teaching is greatly shaped by curricular and course changes that come from initiatives within art departments to include new technologies and approaches to artmaking, and awareness of the changing needs of students in their programs. These changes can appear on a small scale, as with modifying a course to include digital technology, or can involve restructuring the entire first-year program to reflect a different philosophy about teaching art.

**Curricular and course revisions.** Faculty participants at eight of the 12 first-year programs in this study reported implementing major curricular changes over the past decade. Two participants stated that they had been hired specifically to develop and implement new first-year curricula at their institution, while six participants reported participating in the development of new courses and curricular changes within their existing programs. At the time of the interviews, eight of the 12 participants held positions as coordinators or chairs of their first-year programs, and six of these teaching-administrators reported major changes to their curricula in the last decade.

The participant interviews and online institutional data suggest that first-year programs are integrating new technologies into the skills taught to first-year students and, in some cases, intend to break away from the Bauhaus model of first-year art teaching. While the Bauhaus model featured courses in 2-D Design, 3-D Design, and Drawing, course and curricular descriptions (accessed from program websites) suggest that newly implemented courses generally feature digital media and 4-D/time-based art forms, and research, collaboration, and ideation skills. The titles of these courses often describe concepts rather than just the art media, domain, or processes (as with PADI’s Drawing 1: Visualization/Representation or PCoA’s 3-D-oriented Body/World/Machine).
**Changes involving course content and faculty.** In some cases, course titles have stayed the same, but the instructors have modified the content. For example, Evan reported that all first-year art courses at LSCC are supposed to teach at digitally-oriented assignments; and Nell described continually revising SWPAC’s first-year courses to effectively teach the skills required by upper-level art programs. Some institutions in the sample, including the community colleges, have kept traditional Bauhaus course titles, which, one can speculate, may be due to articulation agreements that ensure that transfer students will receive credit for courses taken.

Changes in faculty and program administrators also affect teaching, curricula, and course development. For instance, Lauren developed a new photography-based first-year course (*Lens and Time*) when there was a staff change:

> We ... needed to bring in photography. The reason why the foundation program never included photography before was because the photography faculty was very concerned with [introducing] photography ... through a black and white darkroom experience, and there wasn’t enough room for ... foundation students ... in our darkrooms. Now [the photo faculty] are much more open to cell phones being [used in] a valid form of expression, so we were able to bring that into the foundation program ... [in] response to changing technology. (Lauren, I 2016)

This is an example of how the artistic expertise that new faculty bring to art programs can prompt curricular changes.

**Changes in response to students and their needs.** The interview data also describe changes made to address perceived changes in the skills, dispositions, and demographics of entering students. For example, Nell created a one-semester *Advanced Drawing* course for students who enter with highly developed drawing skills, as it became apparent that most students entering her program today need two semesters of basic drawing instruction. At SCon, Lauren reported lobbying successfully to change the book used for a graphic design-oriented first-year course, *Visual Language*:

> One change that was really hard to make ... was for *Visual Language* ... where we do a visual translation of a book. For a long time, it was Ernest...
Hemingway’s *A Movable Feast* ... but that book was not resonating with our students. ... Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* [became] the new book.... The reason we needed it to change ... is that our student body is more and more comprised of minority students, more students from less fortunate economic backgrounds; and to have a book where it was just like white guys in France being “poor” but they are drinking champagne at the bar every night was just unethical, really.... So, to have a book that deals directly with race in an academic setting seems like the least we could do. (Lauren, I 2016)

Shifts in student demographics have prompted changes not only in terms of course development, but also in terms of pedagogy and content. Rachel and Oliver (who both teach at private art institutes) described new courses designed to support foreign-language speaking international students. Rachel explained that instructors teaching in the first-year program at PADI have been encouraged to modify their pedagogy to accommodate different kinds of learners, including international students and those with learning disabilities:

[It’s] been hard for our faculty.... We’re telling [them], “You have to teach all these students, so there’s different ways of scaffolding ... and doing critiques.”... Not everybody wants to change their teaching.... It’s not dumbing down.... It’s just [using] different methodologies ... [to make] critiques more intentional ... for a variety of people. That’s going to help everybody: your shy Americans as well as your foreign students, even the confident Americans, to know that they need to step back sometimes. (Rachel, I 2017)

**Changes supported by professional development.** The interview data raised the issue of faculty requiring professional development when changes are made to curricula and course content, particularly when digital technologies are involved. F. Robert Sabol (2013), a professor of art education at Purdue University, explained the added burden faced by art instructors who teach with digital technology: “Educators find themselves in the unenviable position of being required not only to use technology for educational purposes, but also to continue to learn about advances in technology” (p. 44).

When instructors with expertise in a particular area (i.e., drawing) are asked to teach lessons or courses that involve a different media (i.e., video or social practice), the faculty may need formal or informal professional development to build their knowledge
base and to develop experience working with the unfamiliar media. This burden may affect first-year programs (with their generalist curricula) more than upper-level media-specific programs (where demands for cross-media instruction may not occur). Faculty committees charged with revamping curricula often face resistance from colleagues who perceive that skills they strongly believe in are being devalued or replaced by other skills that will require further training, as Oliver reported:

We ... need to change our curriculum ... because the kids are so different now.... I [argued] with a [colleague] ... because I’m always for digital stuff ... she hates it.... “You’re gonna make me have to get trained again.”... “Then you get trained again.... Are we gonna be spitting out the same crap to these kids for 25 years?”... “But do we have to use the computer?” I’m like, “No, but it is there ... like the camera back in the day ... the new technology. It’s like a paintbrush. You need to know how to use it.” She finally ... realized I wasn’t trying to get rid of the old. I’m trying to explain we have to change. (Oliver, I 2017)

**Perceived External Forces Influencing Curricula and Teaching**

The literature suggests that changes in enrollment and the college costs have, and will continue to have, a significant effect on the demographics of students attending postsecondary institutions across the country (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2016; Bransberger, 2017; Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2015; Jaschik, 2017; Kovacs, 2016; Loudenback, 2016; Lu, 2016; Marcus, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Mellow, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2017; Sallie Mae/Ipsos, 2018b). The interview data indicate that these shifting enrollments produce changes in the student demographics at institutions, which require changes in curricula, pedagogy, and scheduling.

**Indications of shifting enrollments.** In this study, the interview data suggest that some of the art programs in the sample have experienced changing student demographics and enrollment, as evidenced in the following collected data:
• The three most expensive private art institutions in the sample have first-year student cohorts with approximately 33% international students, reflecting recruitment efforts to maintain enrollment. At two of these institutions, courses designed specifically for international students were implemented.

• At the time of the interviews, falling enrollments were reported at one private art institute (SWPAC), at one selective state liberal arts college (SRSC), and at one community college (SRCC).

• Participants at three selective programs suggested that standards for admission (based on portfolios) had changed (or should change) to reflect more diverse skill sets and fewer students able to produce portfolios in public schools.

• Enrollment has increase at SCon, a selective state conservatory college, and enrollment appears to be robust at LSCC, a community college.

• At the four state research universities, the enrollment trends are unclear; however, LNSRU reported budget cutbacks resulting in fewer first-year course offerings.

• Participants at three of the four state research universities reported that large numbers of students transfer to their institutions, including some who will take required first-year art courses as juniors or seniors (to fulfill graduation requirements).

• At one community college, LSCC, it was reported that the majority of students today plan on transferring to four-year programs and want daytime, rather than night classes. This is a shift from 10 years ago, when the majority of students sought to improve job skills or to receive training for entry-level design jobs. As a result of this shift, it was reported that more daytime courses are now offered than evening courses.

The impact of college costs on enrollment. From the data presented here, we can describe ways college costs may be influencing enrollment at some of the institutions in
this study. For example, Oliver perceives that the cost of attending PCoA (a private art institute) is creating a less diverse student body:

I really do feel that we’re at the point where, if we keep charging 57K to these kids, we’re going be getting one type of student.... Hence, the reason why talent doesn’t seem to be at the top of the list anymore, it’s all about who can afford to be here. (Oliver, I 2017)

Among the six selective programs, the three most expensive private programs (PIoD, PADI, and PCoA) have responded to enrollment concerns by recruiting more international students, and two other programs (private SWPAC and state SRSC) have seen enrollments fall in recent years; however, one state program, SCon, reported robust and increasing enrollments.

Explanations for SCon’s higher enrollment may include the following factors: lower tuition costs (than SRSC and the private art institutes) for in-state residents; a conservatory program structured like more expensive private art institutes; and a demographic of highly skilled students from nearby public arts high schools, including minorities and students from lower socioeconomic background. One can assume that some students at SCon have opted to attend a more affordable state program over a private art institute to save money. The location of these public colleges may also be a factor for enrollments, as SCon is located within a short commute to a major city and SRSC is rurally isolated, over 1.5 hours drive from the closest city. Students may also prefer to attend a program that is more easily accessible and where the student demographic and surrounding community better reflect their background.

The diverging enrollment trends described at the two community colleges in the study indicate the impact that tuition costs for in-state residents at four-year public institutions can have on community college enrollment. In this case, Evan’s large suburban program has a robust enrollment, while David’s rural community college has seen falling enrollments. The in-state tuition costs for four-year state-funded colleges and universities in Evan’s state are significantly higher (approximately $10,000/year) than in
David’s state. Therefore, in Evan’s state, the apparent savings for students who transfer to four-year programs after earning a community college degree are far greater than in David’s state. According to David, many local art students now choose to attend four-year state institutions directly after high school rather than transferring with a two-year degree. Consequently, David perceives that the academic readiness of the overall student population at his community college has fallen in recent years.

The impact of shifting demographics on teaching. As mentioned earlier, at the programs in this study with large numbers of international students, courses have been created to help that student population, which is an example of how teaching can be influenced by demographic changes. Yet, as Bransberger and Michelau (2016) describe in the WICHE report, college enrollments over the next two decades will increasingly reflect more first-generation and minority students from urban and rural high schools, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds who lack adequate preparation for college. According to a 2016 report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an estimated 68% of high school students now choose to attend college immediately after high school, and over 50% take remedial coursework, but “only about 60% of students earn a bachelor’s degree, taking, on average, almost six years to complete their studies” (p. 1). It is clear that millennials and Generation Z students have internalized the message from parents, guidance counselors, and college recruiters that a college degree is required for financial and career advancement in today’s economy.

As the data suggest, instructors of first-year courses serve on the proverbial front lines of these shifting student demographics, as Lauren explained:

I’m sure you’ve heard this from other schools: we are also combating, I don’t want to say “decline,” but the “changing” student body. We do as much as we can to build them up, but ... some students ... are never going to [succeed]…. It’s just a challenge. Sometimes I do feel pressure from other faculty members, and we [say] “You don’t know what we are dealing with when they come in!” (Lauren, I 2016)
Such changes in college readiness have prompted numerous formal and informal course modifications and interventions, such as SCon’s peer advisor program. The participants across this study also described students entering their programs with mental health issues and learning disabilities, or having suffered traumatic life events that threaten their ability to succeed. A further consideration involves working students, who may take longer to graduate and who may be less able to participate fully in coursework or to be involved in campus activities. The financial hardships faced by many students, especially first-generation students, may not be evident to faculty, but according to research by Goldrick-Rab (2018), these students may suffer from food and housing insecurity, which is increasingly common among college students today.

According to the interview data, the faculty participants are teaching differently today than in the past for many reasons, but many expressed feeling empathy toward students who are struggling in their classes. There is a sense that today’s students would not respond to the kinds of teaching (harsh, dismissive, and teacher-oriented) that older generations of art students were subjected to, as Evan explained about his own approach to teaching at a community college:

If I think about how I [taught] eight years ago, there’s no way I could have the same approach and demeanor that I had then; now ... I’d lose half my class in three weeks.... I feel like I’m much easier and much more liberal with what I’ll tolerate in my class and it’s not just because I don’t care. I think it’s ... the population of students ... coming in. (Evan, I 2017)

Contingent Issues

Growing Concerns about Mental Health Issues

The majority of participants reported that anxiety, depression, and mental health issues are increasingly common among their first-year art students. As widely reported in the media, these issues are now considered to be common among adolescents and young adults today, as a recent Pew Research Center study found that 70% of the 13-17 year-
olds surveyed state that “anxiety and depression are a major concern” among peers in their communities (Horowitz & Graf, 2019). Although the mental health crisis affecting college students today has prompted institutions to respond by hiring more therapists for counseling centers and investing in wellness centers (Wolverton, 2019), studying art in first-year programs may exacerbate these conditions, as Rachel suggested:

Mental health ... either we just didn’t know about it ... or it’s becoming a much more prominent issue, and it’s very confusing.... These are freshmen, so it’s not like they’re getting the mental health issues [here].... Maybe the program, because it’s rigorous, it may be exasperating [to] some of them. It has been a big problem and I don’t know why students are more anxious or seem to have more problems with depression than they used to, but it seems to be huge. (Rachel, I 2017)

While most students experience stress when learning to negotiate academic demands, new relationships, and financial obligations, etc. during their adjustment to the college environment, such stress often fosters growth (through reassessment of values) and identity development (with mastery of adult responsibilities). However, making art in studio courses can be physically demanding (with long class sessions and coursework that requires hours of effort and concentration) and frustrating (when new skills are learned). On a deeper level, studio coursework, to some extent, requires self-expression, self-reflection, and self-discovery, which can result in personal crises for students.

**Crises prompted by first-year coursework.** Oliver, who teaches at PCoA, a private art institute, articulated a common sentiment among the majority of participants:

When you deal with art students, it gets really very tricky and, at times, I actually felt like I need to go get a psychiatry degree or something.... I’m not joking, because I push them out of their comfort zone. “We will be doing stuff that you haven’t done before.” (Oliver, I 2017)

Oliver described an intense meeting with a student whose “self-portrait” video assignment explored her prior sexual assault by a family member. While processing such difficult content into art may be both traumatic and cathartic for students, the data suggest that these are not uncommon situations for art faculty teaching in first-year programs.
Students ... feel like they can talk to me.... Since I started here full-time, every year I’ve had to deal with cases of sexual harassment, sexual assault, pregnancy, all kinds of stuff.... I’m telling you, art school is really, really scary as an instructor sometimes. (Oliver, I 2017)

First-year art courses may provide students with an opportunity to confront personal issues that they could not before (in high school or while living at home). According to Jason, such emotionally charged self-exploration is a natural part of studying art:

There are tears and I always try to produce an environment that’s supportive.... I think, “If tears come out in an art class, it means they’re beautiful people,” right? Like, it’s nothing to be ashamed of and you should just try to make [the students] feel comfortable and thank them for being such a sensitive person, because that’s why they’re in art school. (Jason, I 2017)

**Variations in the data collected on mental health issues.** In this study, the data collected about mental health issues vary in quality by institutional type. As Table 26 shows, the data collected from the participants at selective institutions were richer (more extensive and detailed) than the data from participants at open-access programs.

This variation in the quality of interview responses may be the result of several factors. Given that these interviews were exploratory in nature, and the participants were encouraged to focus on issues most relevant to the teaching environment (i.e., low enrollments, revamped programs, etc.), the data collection about mental health issues was inconsistent. Also, data loss (due to technical problem) affected the interviews with two participants at open-access research institutions, further impacting the findings.

While further research is needed, it appears that the participants from selective institutions expressed greater compassion or concern for students struggling with anxiety and mental health issues than the participants from open-access programs. This finding may reflect a greater level of personal involvement between students and faculty at selective programs (due to longer class sessions) and a perception that these are talented and committed art students specifically chosen by the art program who, in many cases,
are making a great financial sacrifice to attend, which further contributes to their anxiety.
For example, Susan spoke of the concern she has for her students at PLoD with anxiety:

Table 26. Data Collected about Mental Health Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Data Collected about Mental Health Issues</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>SWPAC</td>
<td>Yes: new issue, more anxiety, art made about anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>PLoD</td>
<td>Yes: recent issue, anxiety, medication, debilitating, compassionate</td>
<td>Private Art Institutes (Selective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>PCoA</td>
<td>Yes: anxiety due to financial stress, personal crises, worse now, art about personal crises, compassionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>PADI</td>
<td>Yes: prevalent, debilitating, medication, not sure if new, international students also, compassionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>SCon</td>
<td>Yes: prevalent, personal crises, wellness initiatives, compassionate</td>
<td>State Liberal Arts Colleges (Selective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>SRSC</td>
<td>Yes: more students use campus services, medication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaim</td>
<td>NSRU</td>
<td>Yes: it is real, not sure it is worse than in past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>SSRU</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>State Research Universities (Open-Access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>LNSRU</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>LWSRU</td>
<td>Yes: always has been there, as with personal crises, not insurmountable</td>
<td>State Community Colleges (Open-Access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>SRCC</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>LSCC</td>
<td>Yes: it is obvious when students have such problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Technical problems with data collection

[Anxiety] seems like it is more out in the open.... It’s just heartbreaking if a student tells me that they’ve had a panic attack and they couldn’t come to class and they are just the sweetest ... talented student, and you are just trying to work with getting them through it.... Obviously, I’m not a counselor.... Those kinds of students are usual already ... working with counseling.

Students are probably more commonly on medication than they used to be ... and every once in a while there is just some kind of tragic
breakdown.... There was a suicide this fall ... a second-year student. That was just awful. (Susan, I 2017)

Rachel reported that some students struggle with managing their treatment:

Sometimes ... as freshmen, if they’d been medicated through high school and they really wanted just be done with it ... they’ll stop their medication and then they’ll have issues because they’ve gone off their medication. Or ... they don’t report to health and counseling that they have difficulties. (Rachel, I 2017)

Three participants reported that there is less stigma associated with discussing trauma, mental health issues, and anxiety today, as evidenced in advising sessions or in class critiques. As program coordinators, Lauren and Rachel reported regularly advising students with varying levels of mental health issues or trauma:

Because a lot of [students] have grown up in an age where there’s no shame about mental illness, they freely talk about it, sometimes a little bit too much. In rare cases they can use it as a crutch.... “I had a touch of sadness when I was 15.”... “Well, come on, let’s go to class.” But they are pretty open about therapy and getting help, for the most part. (Lauren, I 2016)

I think it’s ... what [students] feel comfortable about saying.... In the past ... if [the trauma] was way too much of a stigma, they would never go down there and enable it.... Maybe they feel more safe doing it now.... It’s hard ... because it’s such an individual case and a lot of it is really valid and it’s really good that they’re getting the help. And then [sometimes] it’s like, “Well, they have to grow up sometime.” Have they just been ... babied their whole life [so] they can’t handle any pressure? Well, life as an artist or designer has a lot of pressure and deadlines and situations that are difficult, so they have to learn how to be able to deal with difficult situations. (Rachel, I 2017)

Rachel’s statement suggests that first-year programs today must teach students stress-management as a life-skill for future employment, particularly when overly involved parents have prevented their children from fully experiencing pressure and failure.

The data collected from participants teaching at the open-access programs also describe students with trauma and anxiety, but appeared in more matter-of-fact, generalized terms:
A lot of them do their projects about their anxieties.... And I think that’s good. I don’t like to think of art as therapy, but I do think it’s a great place to sort of work through issues.... I’ve had so many students in the last year do projects about sexual assault.... They’re so bold and courageous.... On one hand, sure, I acknowledge the anxiety, but on the other hand, I see a group that is willing to ... look at one another in the face and talk about their deepest, darkest secrets, like the things that would have been shoved under a rug ten years ago. These kids are making projects about it and they’re not ashamed and I’m so proud of that. (Jason, I 2017)

Jason’s response may indicate less direct interaction between first-year students and full-time faculty at research universities, who, in the case of two participants (Kat at SSRU and Jason at LWSRU), mentor the graduate students who teach first-year art courses. The process of training graduate instructors may result in faculty articulating issues associated with first-year teaching as generalizations (much like Perry and Kniefelkamp), rather than focusing on the experiences of individual students.

While the participants at the selective programs perceive mental health issues to be a recent concern, this may not be the case for community college instructors, who have always served a student demographic with wide-ranging abilities and learner characteristics, including students who are managing mental health problems.

**Professional development and campus support.** It is widely accepted that college students value personal relationships with instructors and seek counsel in those they trust. However, several participants and many college art instructors I have spoken with informally described advising students in crises as personally stressful and emotionally draining. While such advisement often arises from coursework, entering students may see first-year faculty as mentors who understand the importance of artistic expression that arises from personal conflict.

Oliver suggested that instructors are not adequately trained to advise students in crisis beyond referrals to other campus services. This may be a greater problem for contingent instructors (with whom students have trusted relationships) who may lack knowledge of available college services. In such cases, adjunct instructors may refer
students to other full-time faculty and first-year administrators, which can create additional responsibilities for full-time faculty. The intensive nature of advising first-year art students in crisis may not be fully recognized by administrators (beyond contractual office hours), yet this aspect of support may be particularly important for student retention. In this sense, offering professional development that supports first-year faculty when advising students in crisis would likely benefit faculty, students, and the institution.

Consideration of Technology’s Effect on Creative Work

Although perceptions of students’ digital media skills were discussed earlier in this chapter, the focus was on how students approach learning digital media skills and engage with technology for artmaking in studio courses. However, the influence that digital technology has had on creative work and learning is a broad and multifaceted topic. This section addresses two aspects of how digital media and computer technology use affects art students and teaching in first-year studio courses: First, how changes in classroom behavior impacts learning is discussed, followed by what research tells us about the cognitive effects technology use can have on creative production.

Technology use and classroom learning. In 2013, when the interviews for the pilot study were conducted, the majority of participants expressed exasperation about students’ cell phone use in class. Several years later, in 2016-2017, the participants in this study expressed a wider range of responses about cell phone use, including: frustration, resignation, expectation, and even acceptance. This aspect of device use indicates a lack of awareness, control, or concern on the part of students that their behavior often disrupts the communication between the teacher and students.

Six participants in this study mentioned that student distraction from smartphone use was a problem in their classes. The other six participants expressed less frustration, and even acceptance of smartphones in their courses (for their function as an art tool). The only direct relationship between institutional type and the data collected about digital
devices occurs with the two participants teaching at community colleges, who expressed the most frustration about students’ phone use in class. This may indicate that disruptive phone use reflects a lack of college readiness, which was reported to be more of an issue at community colleges, as Evan explained:

    Every semester, especially in my foundation courses where students fall into that 18- to 19-year-old category, there are at least two students (in a class of 15) who simply cannot put their iPhones away.... I’ll warn them, they’ll put it away, and five minutes later they are on it again. It’s literally an addiction for many students, and it’s not going away any time soon. (Evan, I 2017)

At the selective programs and research universities, acceptance of cell phone use in classes varied. Cell phone policies are commonly addressed in course syllabi, although three participants spoke of conflicts that arise when they (or their colleagues) take phones away from students in class. (Several participants also stated that it was inappropriate or “not allowed” for faculty to take phones from students in class, as they are adults.) Kat expressed sentiments about student phone use that appeared throughout the data:

    I have colleagues that fight about it completely.... “No, you can’t use it at all.”... I think that’s unrealistic.... “Let’s engage in technology and find healthy ways to put it in our studio practice, as opposed to trying to negate it completely.” So I work on that ... [Laughter] it’s a struggle.... I’ll say, “I really don’t want to be ‘high school’ about this, but I am going to take your phone.” As soon as I say that, it’s this inherent thing and I usually only have to take it from one person ... before it’s established and they are better about it. Sometimes it’s compulsive. (Kat, I 2017)

The data suggest that student behavior may be changing as well, as Anna reported that many of her students realize there are downsides to phone use, and three participants stated that issues of professional communication should be taught to first-year students.

Six of the participants reported allowing smartphones to be used in ways that support artmaking in their classrooms (i.e., as music devices, for instantaneous research, as cameras to document projects, as sound and video recorders, as calendars, and for taking notes). Yet the distracting nature of smartphones can be a major issue for some
students, particularly when facing difficult tasks or learning new skills. Three participants described teaching students who resist “being in the moment,” and resort to using their phones to avoid engaging in challenging tasks, suggesting that some students have a compulsive need for distraction or lack the ability to concentrate, as David explained:

> I have a problem with ... instant, continual gratification or entertainment, or not focusing on what we want them to focus on. They can always escape.... Some classes are really bad.... But it is really, like, not being “in the moment,” not being right there. We have to get them in the moment...in the classroom. But they don’t want to be in the moment all the time.... It’s hard for them to be in that moment. (David, I 2016)

As with the reports of shorter attention spans mentioned earlier in this chapter, it appears some students have been conditioned by a lifetime of screen watching to find certain activities boring. Research by Dr. Dimitri Christakis, the director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle Children’s Hospital, suggests that: “Students saturated by entertainment media ... were experiencing a ‘supernatural’ stimulation that teachers might have to keep up with or simulate. The heavy technology use ‘makes reality by comparison uninteresting’” (Richtel, 2012). This may explain why David has found some of community college students to be so vulnerable to distraction and multitasking when they should be focused on studio work:

> I’ve caught kids watching TV as they’re drawing. They’ve got their little TV set [smartphone] going.... I’ve had it several times ... watching a movie instead of drawing.... I’ve just put a stop to that. “You can’t really be drawing here and watching that.”... We have music on in the class, too. (David, I 2016)

The other issue pertaining to smartphone devices that was repeatedly mentioned in the pilot study and in this research involves the lack of communication that takes place between students who prefer to engage with their phones, as David described:

> Today before class ... we had 18-19 students ... sitting in the circle ... and not one of them was talking to the other one. They’re all individually on their devices, and this is constant ... they’re really cut off from each other. (David, I 2016)
While some participants found this lack of conversation to be unnatural or disturbing, others were less bothered. Jason finds this aspect of phone use to be understandable:

[Students] see these phones as an extension of their mind and their body.... It is a “go to” for social awkwardness.... As soon as I say, “Okay, take a ten-minute break” ... that’s the first thing that happens. They don’t turn around and talk to their peer about the project. They pull out their phones and ... as long as it’s not happening while I’m lecturing, I’m okay with that. (Jason, I 2017)

**The cognitive effects of device use on creative work.** Over the past decade, numerous researchers and educators have connected technology use to shorter attention spans and distractibility in ways particularly relevant to first-year art education (Carr, 2010; Levine & Dean, 2012; Levitin, 2014; Purcell et al., 2012; Richtel, 2010, 2012; Rideout & Fox, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Thompson, 2013; Turkle, 2015). Understanding how social media, multitasking, and device use affect how we think, learn, and communicate provides insight into how teaching methods can be devised to counteract the negative consequences of technology.

For example, in his 2010 book, *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr described his experiences with a diminished attention span after years spent multitasking and surfing the net as a technology writer. His exploration into the science associated with his reduced capacity for reading, concentration, and deep thought became a form of therapy for Carr, whose book is proof of his recovery. Carr concluded that attention span and focus can be regained and improved through awareness of technology’s effects on cognition and by adopting a more restricted or mindful approach to technology use.

Daniel Levitin, a cognitive psychologist and neuroscientist at McGill University (who has also been a musician, music producer, and sound designer), explains how technology use can affect the brain in terms of creative work. In *The Organized Mind* (2014), Levitin describes the serotonin bursts our brains receive when we compulsively check our phones for messages and emails. According to Levitin, “Multitasking creates a dopamine-fueled feedback loop, effectively rewarding the brain for losing focus and for
constantly searching for external stimulation” (p. 96), which overwhelms our limited mental capacity for processing new information.

Of particular concern for artists is the loss of mental “down time” (in the form of boredom and daydreaming) to ever-present devices, social media, and the Internet, which offer continuous entertainment and distractions. This constant stimulation disrupts what Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (2008) identified as cognitive “flow,” or the state of immersive focus on a task, as such complete concentration is required when making significant works of art (Carr, 2010; Levitin, 2014; Turkle, 2015). According to Levitin (2014), experiencing the state of flow causes regions of the brain associated with self-criticism and fear (located in the pre-frontal cortex and amygdala) to deactivate in order to intensely focus on a limited perceptual field or activity, which may explain why artists are sometimes perceived as risk-taking or arrogant (p. 203). To facilitate immersion into creative flow, Levitin suggests minimizing unnecessary distractions in one’s life by prioritizing activities and organizing one’s surroundings, and provides examples of how various successful artists organize their homes and lives in ways that enhance their creative output (pp. 207-210).

Sherry Turkle has been researching human interaction with computer technology throughout her long career at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In Reclaiming Conversation, Turkle (2015), like Levitin, is concerned that ever-present devices are eliminating boredom, daydreaming, and solitude (as a time for intrapersonal dialogue and reflection), which she considers essential for personal well-being and creativity: “Creative ideas come from reveries of solitude.... Our brains are most productive when there is no demand that they be reactive” (p. 62). Turkle questions the widely held perception that brainstorming and group-think are effective ways to generate creative ideas, stating that “new ideas are more likely to emerge from people thinking on their own. Solitude is where we learn to trust our imaginations” (p. 62). Turkle (2012) advises that children be taught to embrace solitude and engage in face-to-face conversations, as
the constant use of devices and social media prevents deep reflection and connection with others, which has led to increased anxiety, loneliness, and a lack of empathy among young people.

Common themes in this literature include awareness of technology’s effects on the brain and behavior, and conscious (or mindful) use of devices in ways that do not diminish our cognitive capacities to work as productive artists. This literature provides insight into students’ dispositions by explaining the cognitive and psychological effects that technology use fosters, which should inform pedagogical approaches to address these dispositions.

Art instructors in first-year programs are faced with a complicated mandate: to teach the tools and skills of digital media for artmaking while simultaneously grappling with the consequences of technology use (in terms of artistic dispositions, changing skill sets, and negative behaviors). The data collected in this study suggest that instructors take into consideration the specific demographics of their students, the subject matter of the course, the culture of their institutions, and their personal experiences with technology when teaching with technology, as every situation should dictate the pedagogical approach for the content. Teaching students the appropriate use of devices in class is yet another task that falls to first-year teachers, which, if effective, goes unrecognized by other faculty.

**Summary**

This discussion addresses the specific findings of this study, based on the perceptions of 12 college art faculty, as they pertain to entering students and teaching in first-year art programs within the context of existing research and literature. This exploratory case study reveals that the student demographics served by the four types of institutions in the sample (private art college, public research universities, public liberal...
arts colleges, and two-year community colleges) differ broadly in terms of access to prior
art education, commitment to art study, and college readiness. However, a major
distinction among the students served by these institutions is not necessarily artistic
skills, but appears to be access to financial resources (and the kind of college experience
that provides) and family support to pursue college-level art study.

There is no apparent consensus regarding the specific art skills taught in first-year
art programs, which seem dependent on the particular characteristic of the institution (i.e.,
mission, resources, faculty, facilities, and student demographics). However, the programs
in this study share a common goal of helping students through their adjustment to the
college environment and fostering the self-knowledge, disciplined work habits, and skill
development required for success in subsequent art study. These instructors use pedagogy
to shape first-year students’ dispositions toward artmaking and to encourage active
engagement with education. Forces within the institution, such as curricular and staff
changes, appear to strongly influence teaching in art programs, as do external forces, such
as enrollment figures, rising college costs, and changes in student demographics.

Many students today are pursuing college degrees as a necessary credential for
upward mobility in the job market, and the college art programs in this study are seeing
increasing numbers of entering students with a fixed intention to major in career-oriented
art fields. This inclination reflects fear on the part of students and parents about pursuing
an art degree, which is associated with limited employment opportunities and low wages.
As a result, decisions about pursuing career-oriented majors may not be based on the
students’ experiences, interests, abilities, or even an understanding of the kinds of arts-
related jobs that exist (or will exist in the future). Moreover, these rigid conceptions of
artistic intentions counter the goal of first-year programs, which is to introduce students
to different artistic processes, media, and domains as a way for students to find their
strengths and artistic passions before they choose their major.
For a variety of reasons, the participants in this study described students who have difficulty engaging with art coursework at different times during their first year of college. In some cases, students may lack the readiness and life skills required for college coursework, or they may realize that college studio courses are not what they expected, which leads to a re-evaluation of their commitment. During the academic adjustment to college, students confront moments of cognitive dissonance that occur when they encounter experiences or ideas that conflict with personal beliefs (which, in this case, may involve aesthetic opinions and past art experiences) that result in growth when these conflicts are resolved. This dissonance can be painful and cause anxiety, yet is essential for development. The 12 faculty described teaching in ways that encourage student engagement and foster the dissonance that allows students to adjust to the college environment through teaching strategies that reflect the philosophy of the faculty and the demographic of the students they teach.

Two factors that are having a powerful influence on higher education in general, and on college art education in particular, are mental health concerns that affect students, and the effect digital technology has had on teaching, learning, behavior, cognition, and interpersonal communication. Mental health emerges in the data via descriptions of students debilitated by depression and anxiety, which may be exacerbated by demanding workloads in a new environment. First-year studio coursework opens the door for students to engage with personal expression through open-ended assignments and commonly leads to reflective exploration of difficult personal topics (such as sexual assault and traumatic experiences). These faculty offer support and guidance, which can include referrals to campus counseling centers, with the understanding that such artistic explorations are common in college art study.

Digital media technologies facilitate new and exciting opportunities for artmaking while simultaneously influencing how students approach creative production. Some students, as a consequence of multitasking, may struggle with shortened attention spans
and frustration that hinders the concentration necessary for creative work. Furthermore, the tendency for students to conduct Internet research for solutions to creative problems may encourage some to appropriate images and ideas rather than to engage in personal explorations using iterative creative processes.

As the data from this study suggest, much has changed in college art education over the past two decades, yet many things about teaching art in the first year of college remains the same: Art students face many new responsibilities and challenges over the course of that first year that lead to personal transformation and greater insight. These students are supported and challenged by art faculty in ways that never appear in course descriptions or syllabi. Art instructors today navigate shifting mandates, the changing needs of students, technological advances, and ever-expanding artistic possibilities to teach entering college art students with purpose and authenticity by responding intuitively and bracing for uncertainty.
Chapter VI
CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study serves to document different kinds of student and teaching experiences that compose first-year art education in the United States today. While there have always been variety and distinctions among first-year art programs and faculty, the pace of change over the last two decades has created a palimpsest of the traditional goals that had defined Bauhaus-oriented foundation-year studies in the past. According to Elkins (2001), the original intention of the Bauhaus foundation year was to train the senses, train the emotions, and train the minds of art students (p. 32). In the past, first-year students were taught skills using exercises that few teachers questioned, assuming that “this is how art is taught in the first year of college.” As a consequence, one can argue that acquiring art skills through rudimentary exercises is simultaneously fundamental to art education and has little connection with our contemporary (art) world and everyday experiences.

Yet many instructors in first-year programs today deeply value and teach the traditional skills they had learned as first-year art students (such as observational drawing and the principles of design) that played an important role in shaping their artistic identities. As first-year art programs restructure to keep up with technology and the art forms defining contemporary art today, and to address the changing needs of students, deeply held values about the nature of art and teaching art are placed under scrutiny.
The reassessment of deeply ingrained structures, concepts, and methods of first-year art education presents an important challenge for teaching faculty who, like their students, will continue to grow and change through the resolution of these conflicting values. Lee Knefelkamp, in a keynote lecture at Towson University, articulated the crux of this challenge facing first-year programs and faculty:

The curriculum is actually the collective autobiography of the faculty, and when you start tinkering with curriculum, you start tinkering with our souls, and so we should be very careful if we are on curriculum committees. (TU Office of Academic Innovation, 2015)

A confluence of forces are now shaping and defining the skills and attitudes considered essential for future artists. These forces come from within art schools in the form of history, values, and the core beliefs of teachers, and from administrators and faculty who want to craft relevant and challenging experiences for art students today.

The findings of this study, based on conversations with 12 college art faculty, offer insight into the decisions made by programs and instructors regarding how best to serve the needs of first-year art students today.

**Considerations: Today’s Students**

This research indicates that students pursuing a college art degree today face very different circumstances than previous generations of art students, which has fundamentally changed the college experience. The financial burden of attending college has affected students across the different types of institutions in this study, yet parents and society reinforce the message that a college degree is essential for social mobility. For many students, financial pressures have changed the college experience from being a time for personal exploration of knowledge and discovery of strengths and passions into a series of courses to be completed for earning a degree.

More and more, students are living at home to save on housing costs and working jobs that limit the time and energy that can be put toward coursework. Many students
today face food and housing insecurity at different points in their academic careers, which highlights the challenge to pay for the basic requirements of a college art education, which include the laptop computers, art supplies, lab fees, and software subscriptions that are commonly required by art programs.

For many art students, financial pressures and parental concerns manifest in choices of career-oriented majors (regardless of personal abilities and interests) or in decisions to first attend community college and transfer later to a four-year art program. Given the financial sacrifices being made to attend college, it is not unreasonable for students to want to know the relevance of what they are being taught and how this will help them in their lives and careers. Students are pursuing knowledge outside of formal education through access to online information and tutorials, and they enter college art programs with many self-taught skills that reflect their interests.

This study has found that art students are entering college today with a wide range of skills and educational experiences, and are often managing anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, and past traumatic experiences more openly than students in the past. Some students transitioning to the college environment are less prepared to deal with adult responsibilities due to parents’ constant involvement in their lives, while others, including first-generation college students, struggle to succeed in college without the financial support and advice of family. Furthermore, the technology and devices that have become a part of many people’s everyday lives are exerting unknowable influence over how we think, behave, communicate, create, and experience the world.

Yet, in spite of all of these changes, there are still many deeply committed art students who want to learn art skills by making art and solving problems creatively, and who develop knowledge that will contribute to their pursuit of living a creative life.
Considerations: For Teachers and Administrators

This study reinforces the perception that every teaching situation is unique and dependent on multiple factors, including: the art expertise and teaching experiences of the instructor, the demographic and preparation of the students served, the facilities and resources available, and the mission of the larger art department and institution. Some participants in this study have structured their teaching around clarity and development of specific skills, dispositional work habits, and understanding of the creative process; while others acknowledge the ambiguities inherent in artmaking that come with risk-taking, experimentation, and failure, and perceive the exploration of content, concepts, and personal aesthetic interests to be as relevant as developing traditional art skills.

Technology provides exciting new options for artmaking, and digital media skills are now widely accepted as “essential art skills” in first-year art programs. Many of these programs are becoming more interdisciplinary in nature, breaking down the traditional domains and program orientations of the past. Looked at conceptually, if the opportunities offered by technology have become the new “paper” for artmaking, then research has become the new “drawing,” and the “observational skills” that were previously honed in traditional artmaking have expanded to include researching data that describe the world around us, facilitating “marks” that can record personal experiences, visualize the complex problems of contemporary society, and chart our daily lives.

All of the college instructors in this study perceive their role as helping first-year students develop the art skills and dispositions required for further art study. However, they also see the larger context in which these skills and dispositions are taught, which is the year of growth and transition for students adjusting to the college environment. These faculty participants reported modifying their teaching in response to the needs of students today, perhaps by articulating greater clarity, or presenting more flexibility in teaching, and expressing concern about the well-being of students. Not only will such changes in
teaching help students succeed in courses, but they may also improve retention rates and maintain college enrollment.

**Educational Implications**

After years of “research involving 5000 college students and student affairs practitioners from over 270 diverse college campuses” (cover text), Arthur Levine and Diane Dean, in their 2012 book, *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today’s College Student*, presented a new framework for postsecondary education:

> We have proposed an education to prepare students for the twenty-first century….

This proposal is not only about subject matter and content. It is also about pedagogy. We know there is a mismatch between how professors teach and how their students learn. The education being suggested seeks to marry the two approaches, that is, integrating concrete and abstract knowledge through active and passive learning. (p. 185)

Levine and Dean clearly articulate what the participants in this study have told me:

> “Students [need] both things: concrete and abstract knowledge and the ability to learn actively and passively” (p. 185), and emphasize the importance of specific types of skills that are required during times of change: critical thinking, creativity, and continual learning (p. 164).

The following statement by Levine and Dean (2012) summarizes my conclusions concerning this research:

> This generation of college students is no better and no worse than other generations but, like every generation before, they are different and will live in a world demanding a different set of skills and knowledge to thrive. As a result, this generation requires a different brand of education that will enable them to attain their personal dreams and to serve the society they must lead. (pp. 163-164)

This study recognizes that students today are entering all types of institutions with wide-ranging skill sets and academic goals. To effectively address these differences
among students, many faculty participants described marrying the teaching of concrete skill learning with open-ended assignments to successfully engaging students. In the arts, the goal is to facilitate experiences for students that lead to immersive concentration and focus, also known as creative “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). This requires teaching skills in ways that stimulate students’ interests and are appropriately challenging for active engagement in the task at hand. While many artists experience flow when working in their own studios, few college art instructors seem to know of Csikszentmihalyi’s work or refer to it directly in their teaching.¹

This study suggests that cooperation, communication, and understanding between first-year and upper-level art faculty are essential for art departments moving forward, as ongoing tensions and competing goals can negatively impact teaching environments and confuse students. Such cooperation will involve compromise and clarification of program goals. All faculty must acknowledge the role of first-year teaching in terms of addressing the characteristics of incoming students and supporting their transition to the college environment, in addition to teaching the art skills required for further coursework.

The interview data suggest that when upper-level art faculty regularly teach courses in first-year programs, there is greater mutual understanding within the larger art department concerning the content and goals of first-year teaching. Furthermore, if every upper-level art faculty taught just one first-year course at some point in their career, such experiences would lead to more informed discussions of first-year teaching in the future. Similarly, providing first-year faculty with opportunities to teach upper-level, program-specific art courses may produce insight into how first-year programming can better address the needs of the entire art department. For department chairs, facilitating such

¹At the 2019 FATE Conference: Foundations in Flux (held in Columbus, Ohio, April 4-6, 2019), I asked the audience during my panel presentation, Digital Devices as Classroom Tools: The Need for Safety Manuals, if anyone knew of Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow, and out of a room of over 50 people, only one person raised their hand.
teaching opportunities could be difficult due to faculty resistance and staffing issues; however, it may be worthwhile for programs seeking to reduce tensions within a department, or when restructuring courses for a more relevant and integrated curriculum.

As first-year art programs change to better attract and serve the needs of students, the lack of communication between first-year programs and secondary art teachers must be addressed. Without explicit information and guidance, secondary art teachers may continue to prepare students for college-level art study as they always have, or leave it to the students to find out what colleges are looking for in terms of art skills and experiences. While many secondary schools rely on Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art courses\textsuperscript{2} to prepare students for art study at the college level, the interview data from this and the pilot study indicate that many first-year instructors question the approach to artmaking espoused by the AP. Furthermore, many selective programs do not accept AP credits in lieu of their first-year art courses for art majors.

The participants acknowledged the difficult circumstances faced by secondary art teachers and were reluctant to criticize their efforts. Rather, these first-year instructors made suggestions encouraging the use of various approaches to artmaking that seemed to address certain dispositions they see in their entering students. For example, one pilot study participant recommended that secondary teachers show more contemporary art to students because some students react as if first-year art education functions as a “bait and switch” for the kinds of art they made and studied in high school. Collectively, the participants suggested that high school students should be encouraged: to work more independently, to spend more time on projects, to spend less time on individual works and explore ideas iteratively, to work less iteratively and to work more broadly exploring materials, and even, to make less artwork but to look at more art and to read more. Such

\textsuperscript{2}The College Board administers Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art courses, which are offered in 2-D Design and Drawing.
contradictory suggestions reinforce the notion that art study is ultimately a personal journey for the students who will hopefully find their way in a world where the definition and goals of art are continually shifting and expanding.

There are implications for this research that go beyond the field of art education. These include the fact that students are entering college with a wealth of knowledge that was learned on their own informally, outside of school, by pursing personal interests via the Internet and engaging in “just-in-time” learning\(^3\) though video tutorials, chat rooms, and online forums. Colleges may be slow to recognize and integrate the knowledge students bring to the classroom, but many of these participants actively encourage students to explore their capacity to pursue personal interests and to see themselves as a source of knowledge. When teachers deny students the ability to pursue personal interests or content, students are denied agency within their education, which is less about course content than about the perceived role of students and teachers in the classroom.

Much of this study has to do with student development, which often goes unrecognized by faculty in higher education. Across all fields, the developmental needs of students in the first year of college seem to be changing in ways that reflect our contemporary society. College teachers would benefit from understanding more about how students develop as they go through their undergraduate experience and tailor they coursework appropriately. This research suggests that students want to know the value of what they are being taught, which should be taken as an invitation to dialogue about learning, rather than an affront to an instructor’s efforts to carefully design a course.

The effort of instructors to cultivate creativity, innovative thinking, risk-taking, and determination in ways that are respectful to the needs of students should not be limited to

\(^3\)“Just-in-time” learning is discussed in Collins and Halverson’s (2009) book, *Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology*.
art education. Many fields are recognizing the importance of such habits of mind and should consider if similar approaches to education would benefit their students.
EPILOGUE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research endeavor began with questions I developed as a high school art teacher in 2010, and ended with data collected from over 30 college art instructors. My questions arose from changes I had observed in my high school students that seemed somehow related to the increasingly common use of iPods and cell phones. These changes included shorter attention spans and the desire to copy images from the Internet for projects, rather than developing ideas through sketches as students had before. I wanted to know if other art teachers were observing similar dispositions among their students, and what was happening to these students when they went off to study art at the college level.

In essence, this study is about change: in students, in skills, in dispositions, in teaching, in art curricula, in pedagogy, and in society. This study is only a momentary snapshot of first-year art teaching because the field of first-year art education is changing so quickly. Such change was documented in the interview data of several participants who discussed teaching particular courses, yet several months later, these courses had been rewritten or eliminated due to the implementation of new curricula.

This perception of change was further reinforced at the 2019 FATE Conference: Foundations in Flux, held April 4-6, 2019 in Columbus, Ohio, where I saw six participants in this current study and two participants from the pilot study. Lauren, who teaches at SCon, suggested “we should have a follow-up interview because so many things have changed in our program since we talked [in October 2016].” These changes include steadily increasing enrollments, which likely reflects SCon’s selective conservatory program, which offers an environment similar to private art institutes for the cost of a public college. Lauren had previously reported SCon’s first-year enrollments
increased from 75 students in 2015 to 105 students in 2016. Yet in 2018, SCon had nearly 160 first-year art students and 40 transfer students. These increases in enrollment have stressed Lauren’s position as advisor to all the first-year students, and the overall program in terms of classrooms and faculty to teach additional course sections and the impending shortage of studio spaces for BFA students. On a positive note, Lauren’s full-time contingent position has become a tenure-track job.

Overall, the conference presentations seemed to center on ways to address the needs of students and incorporate technology in meaningful ways. For example, in a presentation about device use in the classroom, Iancu and Causey stated, in essence, “Yes, we have students who used smartphones in class, but we take them away from the students by making them use them for artmaking,” and explained how their students use their phones for making stop-motion animations of their drawing process. The tenor of the presentations suggests that instructors are adjusting to the presence of smartphones and are developing better ways to utilize them as accessible and powerful tools in the classroom.

Since beginning this research in 2012, many of the issues raised in the interviews (such as mental health concerns, extended adolescence, shorter attentions spans, and financial hardships) have become the subject of articles in scholarly journals and in the mainstream media. While my high school students were millennials, most students entering college today are considered Gen Z and may exhibit significant differences from earlier generations. Instructors will need to address such changes among students through modifications in their teaching as more is learned about the needs of this new generation.

Throughout this study, I have frequently discussed what participants have told me with my husband (a photography professor who often teaches first-year students) and

---

1The panel presentation by R. Iancu and W. Causey was titled, *Yes to Devices: Integrating Technology into the Art Process*, and showed similar projects like these during the 2019 FATE Conference: *Foundation in Flux* held in Columbus, Ohio, April 4-6, 2019.
with my son (who was a first-year art student at SCon, but is now in his junior year at a private art college). As unofficial participants in my study, they, too, have offered important information about first-year education. For example, when my son recently said, “Students don’t know how to use software because they only use apps,” I thought I had mentioned this to him, but he responded that his instructors say this and it was obvious in classes. Similarly, when asked if he sees many students making artwork about trauma and anxiety, he confirmed that this is “very common and often has an effect akin to people over-sharing on Facebook.”

Based on recent experiences teaching in a selective art program at a public liberal arts college, my husband frequently mentions how bright and engaged his students are and how much personal knowledge and technical expertise they bring to his courses. They tell him of interesting young photographers to look up, of newly available photo books and equipment, and share their own solutions to technical problems. Furthermore, many of his photography majors enthusiastically volunteer to curate exhibits and design catalogs, and participate in extracurricular art events on their own initiative, without direction from the faculty.

A subtext to these conversations are the personal struggles faced by many students: experiencing the death of a loved one, dealing with a family member’s substance abuse, having experienced homelessness as a child, or helping a parent through a health crisis or job loss; in addition to the kinds of mental health problems, personal traumas, and financial concerns that were described throughout this study. Yet in spite of working over 30 hours a week or commuting long distances to school, many of these highly motivated and disciplined students are generous in their support of each other. These conversations describe an educational environment where teaching and learning about art and life among students and faculty are genuinely mutual.
Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study are worthy of further exploration and confirmation, and the field of art education will benefit from continued research of this topic. As this study relies upon the perceptions of 12 college art professors to provide information about first-year students’ art skills, dispositions, and teaching, our knowledge of first-year art education would be greatly enhanced by subsequent studies with larger samples and other data sources, such as classroom observations, interviews with students, or wide-scale surveys of faculty, students, and administrators. Furthermore, it is essential to include the voices of students and more non-administrative faculty, including the part-time instructors who commonly teach these courses, as they can provide a different perspective of the educational enterprise of college art study.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Participant Profiles

Participant #1

Name: Nell  Code: SWPAC  Institutional Type: Private Art Institute
Title: Chair  Access: Selective
Program Title: Foundation Program
Courses Taught: Drawing, Visual Thinking, Design I

Position: Full-Time Tenure Track  Present First-Year Enrollment: 75
Rank: Assistant Professor  Prior F-Y Enrollment: 100-120
Expertise: Drawing, Photography  Location: Northeast, Major City
Total Teaching Experience: 11 years  Type: Residential/Commuter
Years at Present Institution: 4 years  Total Enrollment: 400 (full- and part-time)

Age: 35-40 years  Cost of Attendance: $57,000/year

Nell attended PCoA for her undergraduate Fine Arts BFA and Teaching MAT, and went to Ivy League School of Art for an MFA in Painting and Printmaking. She was a high school art teacher for 2 years and taught first-year and painting courses as a part-time adjunct and full-time instructor at several colleges before arriving at SWPAC to chair the Foundation program. Nell’s position involved restructuring aspects of the program, including integrating digital media and research skills into the existing curriculum while coordinating with upper-level faculty to ensure students develop the prerequisite skills for the BFA areas. Nell’s training as an educator is evident in her teaching methods and focus on skill mastery.

SWPAC has a long history as a women’s college of art that offers a range of majors in commercial design fields and fine arts. Falling enrollment is an ongoing concern. There is also a co-educational graduate program.

SWPAC’s Foundation Program offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

Design I: Surface and Image  Foundation Drawing I  Visual Thinking
Foundation Design II  Foundation Drawing II  Color Theory
Participant #2

Name: Susan  Code: PloD  Institutional Type: Private Art Institute
Title: Professor  Access: Selective

Program Title: Experimental and Foundation Studies
Courses Taught: Spatial Dynamics I + II

Position: Full-Time Tenured  Present First-Year Enrollment: 450
Rank: Associate Professor  Prior Enrollment (est.): 300
Expertise: Sculpture, Furniture Design  Location: Northeast, Small City
Total Teaching Experience: 25 years  Type: Residential
Years at Present Institution: 18 years  Total Enrollment: 2500 (full-time)
Age: 55-60 years  Cost of Attendance: $66,200/year

Susan studied architecture as an undergraduate and worked with historic renovation prior
to receiving an MFA in industrial and furniture design at a prestigious private art
academy. For 7 years, she taught furniture and industrial design courses at a private art
college prior to coming to PloD, where she has taught 3-D-oriented courses in the first-
year program for 18 years and has witnessed the college’s expansion over time.

Susan described her role as introducing students to 3-D processes and tools that most
have never used in high school (i.e., power tools, table saws, etc.) She has a humane
approach to students, who she perceives as experiencing too much stress at times, and
simply tries to facilitate their self-expression through the material processes taught in her
course.

PloD is highly regarded as an elite, historic institute of art and design that offers
undergraduate and graduate degrees in commercial design fields and fine arts. Student
enrollment has remained robust, with a population of approximately 33% international
students. PloD is highly selective and requires applicants to submit a challenging
“hometest” with the admissions portfolio.

PloD’s Experimental and Foundation Studies offers the following studio curriculum:

| Drawing I | Design I | Spatial Dynamics I |
| Drawing II | Design II | Spatial Dynamics II |
Oliver attended PCoA as an international student on a competitive, fully funded scholarship for his Painting BFA and stayed to earn a MA in Digital Art. Oliver’s background in computer programming led to work in the corporate sector before returning PCoA as a full-time instructor. Oliver has served on committees for the recent restructuring of the first-year program and offers insight and support to students and colleagues as a person of color and former international student.

As a former PCoA student, Oliver has high standards for how students should approach their college art studies and is, at times, frustrated by the changing demographics at his school. While the increasing numbers of international students arrive with highly developed skills and work ethic, Oliver sees other students who lack basic skills and commitment to art. In response, Oliver continually modifies his courses to teach skills more effectively and to expose and engage students in different ways of working artistically, which includes community-engaged projects and digital media.

PCoA is a historically significant elite college of art that offers a range of undergraduate majors in fine arts and commercial design fields, and a highly regarded graduate program. PCoA has expanded over the years and the enrollment now includes approximately 33% international students.

PCoA’s First Year Experience requires the following courses in its studio curriculum:

- **Forum I (studio/seminar)**: Drawing: Tradition & Innovation
- **Forum II (studio/seminar)**: Drawing: Contemporary Practices

And one course chosen from each of the following categories:

- **Color/Design**: Found and Focused, Surface and Screen
- **Form/Space**: Body / World / Machine, Prototype / Situate / Fabricate
- **System/Time**: Haptics and Optics, Cartographies
Participant #4

Name: Rachel  Code: PADI  Institutional Type: Private Art Institute
Title: Assistant Chair  Access: Selective
Program Title: Foundation Program
Courses Taught: Time and Movement and digital media courses

Position: Full-Time, Contingent  Present First-Year Enrollment: 600
Rank: Adjunct Associate Professor  Prior F-Y Enrollment: N/A
Expertise: Digital Media, Sculpture  Location: Northeast, Major City
Total Teaching Experience: 19 years  Type: Residential
Years at Present Institution: 19 years  Total Enrollment: 5000 (full- and part-time)

Age: 50-55 years  Cost of Attendance: $63,400/year

Rachel studied fine arts and fashion as an undergraduate and has an MFA in Painting, but worked in the fashion industry, in elementary education, and in the educational software and technology sector before teaching multimedia digital art courses at PADI. Rachel now teaches and is Assistant Chair in the Foundation program, which has recently undergone a curricular reorganization.

Rachel’s experience teaching digital media for years has given her an overview on how students have changed. She perceives students as using technology fluidly but needing to learn basic skills, such as understanding lighting and camera features for photography. She has concerns about the stress on entering students and describes the goal of PADI’s foundation program as helping students in their transition to college and independence as young adults while immersing and exposing them to a broad range of artmaking approaches.

PADI has a strong reputation as an art and design institute offering undergraduate degrees in a range of commercial design fields and fine arts. PADI has a robust graduate school, and undergraduate enrollment includes an estimated 33% international students.

PADI’s Foundation Program offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

Drawing I: Visualization / Representation  Light, Color, and Design Studio
Drawing II: Visualization / Representation / Concept  Light, Color, and Design Lab
Time and Movement  Shape, Form, Process
Lauren studied fine arts at a historic research university and earned an MFA Sculpture degree from Ivy League School of Art. Shortly after graduate school, Lauren was hired at SCon in an administrative position and taught foundation courses as an adjunct instructor. Three years ago, Lauren became full-time Foundation Coordinator and instructor, tasked with modifying the curriculum to include photography and formalizing the Peer Advisor Program that support first-year art students. Lauren teaches foundation- and upper-level studio courses and works closely with faculty to refine and improve courses, programming, and support structures for students. Unlike most of the programs in this study, SCon has faculty from upper-level art programs regularly teach Foundation courses, which reduces curricular conflicts within the art department as each BFA area develops their respective introductory foundation course.

Lauren is committed to helping SCon’s students to be more successful through practical and institutional interventions. Her relative youth gives her insight in how digital devices can be used as tools for artmaking and the importance of supporting SCon’s diverse student population through programming, such as visiting artists and field trips.

SCon is a small, state-funded liberal arts college with highly respected and selective conservatory schools in art and design, dance, music composition, music performance, and theatre. As SCon is located in the suburban outskirts of a major city, the faculty is highly accomplished and active in their fields, and the diverse student demographic is drawn from specialized art high schools in the nearby city and public high schools throughout the state. In contrast to some programs in the study, enrollment in SCon’s Foundation program has grown in recent years.

SCon’s Foundation Program offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

- Foundation Drawing
- Lens and Time
- 3-D Processes
- Visual Language
- Extended Media
- Com X (seminar)

---

Lauren, Coordinator, SCon, State Liberal Arts College, Selective Access, Foundations Program, Lens and Time, Com X, Visual Language, Peer Advisor, etc.
Participant #6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Tracy</th>
<th>Code: SRSC</th>
<th>Institutional Type: State Liberal Arts College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title: Division Head</td>
<td>Access: Selective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Title: Foundations Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses Taught: All courses in the foundation curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present First-Year Enrollment: 65</th>
<th>Prior First-Year Enrollment: 150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location: Northeast, Rural</td>
<td>Total Enrollment: 500 (full- and part-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 40-45 years</td>
<td>Cost of Attendance: In-state: $36,000/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out-of-State: $43,000/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracy joined SRSC’s Foundations program 14 years ago. She attended a Canadian art college and later a major U.S. research institution for her sculpture MFA. Tracy had previously taught in foundations programs at two other universities, which influenced her teaching philosophy before coming to SRSC. The three designated foundation faculty are capable of teaching all of the courses within the program, which they describe as a generalist curriculum. Tracy taught at SRSC with Anna (who is now at LNSRU) for 12 years.

Tracy perceives the role of foundations as helping students negotiate the transition to the college environment. Students learn about themselves in terms of artistic interests and learning styles, and to think broadly about what it means to be an artist by learning how to develop necessary skills and to think creatively. For Tracy, teaching art is a fluid, responsive and creative undertaking, and an opportunity to learn from colleagues and students.

SRSC’s Foundations Program is an outlier within this study for its use of thematic concepts that change each year and shape the content and programming. Courses are team-taught with art faculty from BFA programs with new assignments designed to relate to the concept and teach the stated learning outcomes. Communication and collaboration between instructors is essential for the program’s success and these values are authentically conveyed to the students as: Everyone here is learning, inventing, sometimes failing, and spontaneously developing creative solutions.

SRSC, as an isolated state-funded art school of historic significance, has an unusual symbiotic relationship with an adjacent private university to provide the required liberal arts courses. This arrangement results in higher tuition charges than most of the other public colleges in the state. While the art department has impressive facilities, accomplished faculty and staff, and a highly regarded graduate program, enrollment has been dropping in the Foundations program over the last decade. In response, the Foundations Program is considering replacing the portfolio requirement for admission.
with other evaluative tools, as Tracy speculated that recent cutback to public school art education has reduced the number of students producing portfolios.

**SRSC Foundations Program** offers the following courses in its studio curriculum, with Foundation Art 101 + 102 taught in the Fall and Spring semesters respectively, each for 8 credits, but with comprised of four 7-week course modules and a weekly seminar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Art 101:</td>
<td>Foundation Art 102:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing: O</td>
<td>Co: LAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing: X</td>
<td>See: LAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio: MAKE</td>
<td>Fuse: LAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio: RESEARCH</td>
<td>Make: LAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art Seminar</strong> (Full Year Weekly Seminar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Participant #7**

Name: **Chaim**  
Code: **NSRU**  
Institutional Type: **State Research University**  
Access: **Open-Access**

Title: **Director (Former)**  
Program Title: **Foundations Program**  
Courses Taught: **Concept, Process and Application**

Position: Part Time, Contingent  
Rank: Adjunct Professor  
Expertise: Drawing, Painting  
Total Teaching Experience: **16 years**  
Years at Present Institution: **16 years**

Present First-Year Enrollment: **N/A**  
Prior F-Y Enrollment: **N/A**  
Location: Northeast, Suburban  
Type: Residential, Commuter  
Total Enrollment: **21,000** (full- and part-time)

Age: **45-50 years**

Chaim grew up in a small town in the Midwest, but studied art at summer programs and at a private art institute where he eventually earned his BFA degree. He received an MFA in Painting from Ivy League School of Art and worked in video production for several years. A friend recommended Chaim as an adjunct instructor to the art department at NSRU where he has taught part-time for 16 years. After a course he proposed was added to the first-year curriculum, Chaim was offered an additional part-time position as Director of Foundations, which included a range of administrative duties.

Chaim is passionate about teaching students to think about cultural influences and their personal interests and passions as a foundational approach to generating ideas for artmaking. As the only long-term adjunct instructor with a part-time status included in the study, Chaim’s contribution is important as representative of the many contingent instructors who teach in first-year art programs across the United States.
In the time since Chaim was director, the Foundation Program at NSRU has undergone significant changes, including the elimination of the portfolio requirement and an overall restructuring of the first-year curriculum. Chaim was unable to provide detailed information regarding these changes and the status of the course he developed is unclear.

NSRU is a large, state-funded suburban research university with an art department that offers a range of undergraduate minors and majors in both the commercial design and fine art fields. The collected data about NSRU’s present Foundation Program is incomplete. Based on the institution’s website, it appears that the different art programs require different specific Foundations courses. Chaim mentioned that the foundation program was a smaller component of the art department because NSRU has many students who transfer in for their junior year.

Foundations Program offers the following courses in the core curriculum, but not all programs require students to take all of these courses:

- Process and Media I: Surface Perceptual Drawing
- Process and Media II: Space Drawing as Research
- Process and Media III: Time Color and Media
- Digital Literacy Concept, Process and Application

Participant #8

Name: Kat Code: SSRU
Title: Director Institutional Type: State Research University
Program Title: Foundations Program Access: Open-Access
Courses Taught: Drawing 2-D Design

Position: Full Time, Tenure Track Present First-Year Enrollment: N/A
Rank: Assistant Professor Prior F-Y Enrollment: N/A
Expertise: Drawing, Painting Location: South, Small City
Total Teaching Experience: 12 years Type: Residential
Years at Present Institution: 6 years Total Enrollment: 20,000 (full- and part-time)

Age: 35-40 years Cost of Attendance: In-state $23,000/year

Kat was born in the Midwest and attended large state research universities for her BFA in Fine Art and MFA in Painting. Her area of art expertise is in drawing and painting. Before being hired to direct the Foundations Program at SSRU, Kat had taught at three different institutions for a total of 6 years. Due to technical problems that occurred during the interview, the data collected was limited but insightful about the student demographic and structure of the Foundation Program at SSRU.
Kat clearly expressed her intention to teach students basic art skills and help them develop work habits that will lead to self-confidence and independence in their artmaking.

SSRU is a large state research institution located in a small city in a southern state where many students do not have access to art education in public schools. Kat estimated that 85% of students taking foundation courses either major or minor in fine art, regardless of prior art education. For this reason, SSRU has a traditional first-year program that emphasizes skill acquisition over ideation. Kat also teaches graduate students to teach these Foundation courses, which is why prescribed syllabi are used with specific assignments and assessment rubrics developed through inter-rater reliability exercises. At the time of the interview, the foundation curriculum was in the process of adding a digital media course by moving a second semester drawing course to upper-level coursework.

**Foundations Program** offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

- Drawing I
- Digital Art and Design Foundations
- 2D Art and Design Foundations
- 3D Art and Design Foundations

---

**Participant #9**

Name: Anna  
Code: LNSRU  
Institutional Type: State Research University  
Access: Open-Access  
Title: Program Head  
Program Title: CORE Program  
Courses Taught: Various courses within Core Program  
Position: Full-Time, Tenure Track  
Rank: Assistant Professor  
Expertise: Social Practice, Events  
Total Teaching Experience: 19 years  
Years at Present Institution: 1 year  
Present First-Year Enrollment: N/A  
Prior F-Y Enrollment: N/A  
Location: Northwest, Large City  
Type: Residential / Commuter  
Total Enrollment: 17,000 (F-T) 10,000 (P-T)  
Age: 50-55 years  
Cost of Attendance: In-state $24,000/year  
Out-of-State $40,600/year

Anna’s art focus involves social practice and she has been working with a collaborative group to create interactive art events throughout her career. After attending a large public research university for graduate school, Anna taught for several years at a private and a public research institution. She then taught with Tracy at SRSC for 12 years and developed the structure of the Foundations program as concept-oriented, responsive, and educationally experimental. Anna was hired a year ago to oversee the re-structuring of the first-year program at LNSRU, called the CORE Program, which has a very different educational environment than SRSC.
Anna is passionate about empowering students to be active participants in their education by identifying themselves as an important source of knowledge. Her focus centers less on preparing students for a gallery career and more on how creative work and thinking enriches people’s lives.

LNSRU is a large state research university with a large number of part-time students. The art department has many students who enter as transfer students and need to fulfill first-year art requirements later in their education, which creates a different dynamic than many first-year art programs. Budget problems have resulted in a limited number of art course offerings, which prompted discussion of changing the admission policies to include a portfolio requirement with the re-structured CORE program. Although these changes were not implemented, Anna encouraged her colleagues to consider students’ commitment when providing access, and advocates for teaching courses in ways that draw on instructors’ personal expertise (rather than course standardization). The academic year uses a 10-week long trimester structure.

The newly implemented CORE Program offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

**Studio Courses:**
- CORE: Surface
- CORE: Space
- CORE: Time

**Toolkit Courses:**
- CORE: Digital Tools
- CORE: Ideation

---

Participant #10

Name: Jason  
Code: LWSRU  
Institutional Type: State Research University  
Access: Open-Access

Title: Chair  
Program Title: First Year Experience  
Courses Taught: Experience

Position: Full-Time, Tenure Track  
Rank: Associate Professor  
Expertise: Video, Performance, Sound  
Total Teaching Experience: 17 years  
Years at Present Institution: 10 years

Age: 40-45 years  
Cost of Attendance: In-State $27,000/year  
Out-of-State $50,000/year

Jason grew up in the Midwest and studied art at two different large public research universities for his BFA and MFA degrees. He studied art education briefly before focusing on painting as an undergraduate and became involved with performance and video in graduate school. He taught at a public research university for 6 years before being hired by LWSRU to implement a new foundation program. Like Kat, Jason teaches
and trains graduate students to teach first-year course modules. At the time of the interview, Jason was the sole full-time faculty designated to the foundation area, but a second faculty has since been hired.

Jason has a strong vision about teaching art at the first-year level for his student population. Because the students at LWSRU may take first-year courses for elective credit, many of the students lack prior art experience and commitment. Jason described the program as “a welcoming gate” that invites students to try artmaking and gives permission to students to pursue art. The structure of the LWSRU’s First Year Experience rejects the Bauhaus tradition and embraces digital media and contemporary approaches to artmaking in course modules that are 8 weeks long. Students majoring in art are required to take 3 specific course modules but may choose among the 5 other modules to satisfy the first-year requirements. A portfolio review is required for art majors, but can occur at the end of the first year for students who enter without a portfolio.

LWSRU is a very large land-grant university located in the southwest. The art department offers undergraduate and graduate programs in both fine and commercial art fields. Jason mentioned that many students are struggling financially and work jobs while in school.

The First Year Experience offers the following course modules in its studio curriculum:

Three required:
- Mapping
- Space
- Surface

Three chosen from:
- Gaze
- Experience
- Amalgam
- Propaganda
- The Body

Participant #11

Name: David Code: SRCC Institutional Type: State Community College
Title: Coordinator Access: Open-Access (2-Year)
Program Title: Fine Arts A.A. Course Sequence
Courses Taught: All fine arts A.A. first-year courses

Position: Full-Time, Tenure Track Present First-Year Enrollment: 20
Rank: Professor Prior F-Y Enrollment: 100
Expertise: Sculpture, Drawing Location: Northeast, Rural
Total Teaching Experience: 26 years Type: Commuter
Years at Present Institution: 26 years Total Enrollment: 1600 (full- and part-time)

Age: 65+ years Cost of Attendance: Living at Home $8,500/year
with Housing Costs $15,500/year
David became an artist later in life. After earning an undergraduate degree, he settled in another country and worked as a farmer while raising a family. With a family background of woodworkers and inventors, David used these skills to become a self-taught sculptor and took drawing classes. Upon his return to the US at the age of 40, David pursued an MFA at a small private college and soon after taught sculpture at SRCC. When a full-time position opened up at SRCC, David was hired as Program Coordinator and spent most of his career building the art program. Eventually, a second full-time faculty was hired to teach computer-based art courses, and David has recently returned to the Coordinator position tasked with improving enrollment to avoid their program’s elimination due to worsening budget cuts.

David’s teaching philosophy emerged from his life’s experiences. He developed and teaches all of the non-digital art courses for the first-year A.A. sequence. He focuses on “inventive thinking” and uses non-objective art assignments to help students identify their aesthetic preferences through skill development. While he still has some highly skilled and motivated students, he sees an overall change in the student demographic that requires a more entertaining teacher persona for engagement in coursework.

SRCC is a small community college in a rural, bucolic setting, with a designated art building with a gallery space and studio facilities for ceramics, sculpture, drawing, and computer labs. The enrollment has fluctuated with the needs of the economy and, at present, is at a precariously low level of 20 art majors from a high of over 100 majors in the early 2000s. The students studying art at SRCC may be fulfilling elective requirements or planning to transfer to BFA programs at 4-year institutions, and come with a wide range of art skills and dispositions.

Foundations Program offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

- **Visual Arts-2D**
- **Basic Drawing**
- **Visual Arts-3D**
- **Figure Drawing**
- **Fine Arts Seminar**

---

**Participant #12**

Name: Evan  
Code: LSCC  
Institutional Type: State Community College  
Access: Open-Access (2-Year)  
Program Title: Foundation Core for A.F.A. Degree  
Courses Taught: First-Year 2-D and Drawing Courses  
Position: Full-Time, Tenure Track  
Rank: Assistant Professor  
Expertise: Painting, Graphic Design  
Total Teaching Experience: 10 years  
Years at Present Institution: 10 years  
Present First-Year Enrollment: N/A  
Prior F-Y Enrollment: N/A  
Location: Northeast, Suburban  
Type: Commuter  
Total Enrollment: 8200 (full- and part-time)
Age: **35-40 years**  
Cost of Attendance: Living at Home **$9,100/year**  
with Housing Costs **$18,100/year**

**Evan** grew up in the Northeast and has been passionate about making art since childhood. He attended a small college with a strong reputation in the arts on full scholarship for his BFA, with a focus on painting and graphic design. He pursued teacher certification for a year, but left upon acceptance to a prestigious graduate MFA painting program at a private art academy. He started teaching at LSCC as an adjunct instructor and was hired for a full-time position that includes running the gallery and teaching graphic design and foundation courses.

**Evan** is focused on teaching students the skills necessary for future studies in BFA programs and in particular, critique skills, but sees a decline in students’ manual and communication skills over time. He empathizes with the life struggles some of his students face and fosters a relaxed and comfortable classroom atmosphere.

**LSCC** is a large suburban community college with a robust enrollment. Evan reports that the student demographic has changed in recent years from night students seeking additional job skills to full-time students pursing associate degrees for transfer to 4-year BFA programs. Because Evan is not in an administrative position, he could not describe certain details about the program in terms of enrollment trends or particular initiatives. The Foundation Core program has a traditional, Bauhaus orientation, which is helpful to students transferring to other programs in terms of course articulation agreements.

**Foundations Program** offers the following courses in its studio curriculum:

- **Two Dimensional Design**
- **Basic Drawing 1**
- **Three Dimensional Design**
- **Basic Drawing 2**
- **Color Theory**
Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

For the purpose of this study and throughout this dissertation, I have used common terms with specific and limited meanings.

**Art:** is intended to be inclusive of fine arts, visual arts, or design, while acknowledging that many art forms also involve performance, time, sound, light, smell, and other sensorial explorations, events, and interventions. It is not intended to describe music or theatre arts education.

**College-level Art Education:** describes the education of college students as artists, not as K-12 educators, and as such, is distinct from college art education programs.

**Studio Art:** These courses directly involve artmaking, material exploration, and skill development, as distinct from art history and art criticism classes; however, some first-year art programs teach seminars courses that include art criticism.

**First-Year:** is used to describe the first year of college in gender-neutral terms, unlike the term “freshmen.”

**First-year Art Education:** is intended to describe studio art and art seminar courses required in the first year of college for intended art majors. Also commonly called “foundations,” but first-year term is inclusive of programs with different philosophical bases. Many first-year art programs offer elective studio courses that are not intended for art majors; however, in this study, this term describes only those courses within the stated first-year curriculum for art majors.

**First-year Art Students:** Intends to describe art majors in their first year of college. The terms “Incoming,” “Entering,” and “Transitioning” also describe first-year students transitioning to the college environment. “Academic Adjustment” similarly refers to this period of transition.

**Skills, Dispositions, and Processes:** When discussing the skills and dispositions of art students, specifying the intended definition of these terms is essential.

“**Skill**” is defined as:

1: Proficiency, facility, or dexterity that is acquired or developed through training or experience

---

2: An art, trade, or technique, particularly one requiring use of the hands or body
3: A developed talent or ability

“Disposition” is defined as:
1: One’s usual mood; temperament
2: A habitual inclination; a tendency

“Process” is defined as:
1: a series of actions or operations conducing to an end
   especially: a continuous operation or treatment especially in manufacture
2: a phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead toward a particular result

“Ideation” is defined as:
1: the process of forming ideas or images
2: a step in the creative process, in design thinking, and in design education
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for interview with ______________ from ______________

Thank you so much for letting me interview you today.

It is _______________ and I am with _______________, who teaches at _______________, and we are at _______________.

Thank you for participating in this study, which is seeking information about first-year art students and teaching in foundation programs. Let’s start with a reminder that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

To begin with, I’d like to know a little bit about your background as an art student and teacher. Can you briefly tell me:

1) How did you enter the profession of being an artist?
2) How did you enter the profession of being a teacher?
3) How do you describe your own art practice in terms of your area of expertise?

Can you tell me about your present teaching situation, specifically:

4) How long have you been teaching at this institution?
   Where did you teach before?
   What is your job title here?

5) _______________’s first year art program is called _______________, correct?
   What courses do you generally teach?

6) Do you or your foundation program use textbooks or common assigned readings in your foundation classes? Which ones?

7) Does your art department use standardized syllabi for foundation courses, or does each faculty write their own syllabi?
   How is your program structured?
   How do you decide what to teach?

8) What role do portfolios play in your foundation year program?
   Do you ever review portfolios?
   How have they changed over time?
Now I would like to ask you about your **experiences with students and teaching** over the duration of your teaching career:

9) When you think back over the last 5 years of teaching, and if you think about 3 specific students in your classes, either presently or in the past, how would you describe the kinds of art skills or dispositions they brought to your classes?

   What experiences do you see students bringing to college?
   How do you know this or reach these conclusions?

10) Can you describe how you see these students going through their foundation year?
    What are the difficulties they face? Why?

11) Have you changed your approach to teaching over time? Why?
    How do you decide on what to change in your teaching?

12) How is digital technology being used in your courses?
    How do you see students using technology?
    Has this affected how you teach?

13) Can you address the following issues raised by other participants in the study:

    Communication issues?
    Patience and frustration levels?
    Life skills?
    Mental health and wellness?
    Willingness to read?
    Grades and assessment?

14) Do you have students develop research skills in your classes?

15) Is there something about students in general today that you feel you want to address in your teaching?

    A skill deficit or technical strength, or something about how they go about making art?

16) Lastly, can you offer any advice to high school art teachers about how to better prepare their students to be successful in foundation year art studies?
Appendix D

IRB Consent Form

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Foundation Year Teaching in College Art Programs: Faculty Perceptions and Pedagogical Responses
Principal Investigator: Judith Mohns, Teachers College 212-678-3360
IRB Protocol #16-404

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study tentatively called “Foundation Year Teaching in College Art Programs: Faculty Perceptions and Pedagogical Responses.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are an experienced teacher of art at the college level and primarily teach foundation art courses. Approximately 12 people will participate in this study and it will take approx. 1-2 hours of your time to complete.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
This study is being done to determine how college art faculty perceive changes in the artistic skills and dispositions presented by students in their foundation art courses, and how their teaching has changed in response to these perceived changes in students.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed in-person by the principal investigator at a time and location of your choosing (office, studio, home, quiet café, etc.,) and this interview will take about an hour. During the interview, you will be asked to discuss your training as an artist and educator, about your perceptions of students, and your experiences as a college teacher of foundation art courses. You may be asked for a follow-up interview, which may be conducted by phone or via Skype, and this will take less than 30 minutes. These interviews will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recordings are transcribed, the audio-recording will be deleted. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript for approval, or for clarification of the responses. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. You will be asked to provide course syllabi and related documents, and if possible, the investigator may photograph the classroom and facilities you use in your teaching. You will be given a pseudonym and
your institution/art program will be identified by a code in order to keep your identity confidential.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed or frustrated when discussing perceptions of your students or teaching experiences. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don’t want to talk about while participating in the study.**

**You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.** You might feel concerned that things you say might get back to your colleagues or administrators at your college. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and using a de-identified code for your institution and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

**WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of art education and teacher training at the secondary and college level to better understand how to teach and prepare students for foundation art studies.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not be paid to participate in this study, and there are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

**WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**

The study is over when you have completed the interview and possible follow-up interview, and review the interview transcripts for accuracy. However, your participation is entirely voluntary and you can leave the study at any time, even if you haven’t finished.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer hard drive that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym, nor of the institution where you teach and the code it is assigned. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.
HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?
This study is being conducted as part of the doctoral dissertation of the principal investigator. The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you or your institution will not be published.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO-RECORDING
Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don’t wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____ I give my consent to be audio-recorded ______________________________ Signature

_____ I do not consent to be audio-recorded ______________________________ Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY
_____ I consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College ______________________________

Signature

_____ I do not consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University ______________________________

Signature

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT
The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes ________________________   No_______________________
Initial                                Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes ________________________   No_______________________
Initial                                Initial
WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Judith Mohns, at 845-255-8740(H) or 845-901-2610, or at judithmohns@gmail.com. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Judith Burton at 212-678-3360.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS

• I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
• I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
• The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
• If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
• Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
• I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Signature: _____________________________