

Summary

The period from 2010 through 2013 has been a major transition for New Urban Arts, marked by rapid growth in enrollment, efforts to manage that growth, a capital campaign, transition to a new home, implementation of new data systems, transitions in three staff positions, and the creation of a new position. During the most recently completed programming year (2012-13) we saw the culmination of most of these transitions. Most notably, thoughtful management and new data systems allowed our core program, Youth Mentorship in the Arts, to return to a comfortable growth level.

The Youth Mentorship in the Arts Program

Our Core Program

Our long-term goal for the program is that our students make a permanent place for creativity and imagination in their lives. Our interim goals are that students:

- 1) develop close, positive relationships with non-parental adult mentors and peers;
- 2) acquire skills and knowledge in the arts;
- 3) begin to develop their unique artistic voice;
- 4) graduate high school on a path towards postsecondary education.

Program Activities

The Youth Mentorship in the Arts Program in the 2012-2013 school year recruited 18 artist mentors and two studio study buddies (tutors) to mentor 333 high school students from October 2012 to May 2013 in painting, drawing, graphic design, printmaking and other arts disciplines.

As always, our artist mentors underwent a rigorous selection process, conducted by students, including essays, artwork and interviews. Over the ensuing year, artist mentors received over 30 hours of professional development and training in various elements of arts education. While our focus is the creative development of young people, we also recognize that we work with youth from under-resourced communities. To that end, we also provided after-school snacks, free bus passes, daily tutoring and homework help and a strong partnership with College Visions, a college access and success program for first-generation and low-income college students.

About the Students we Served in 2012-13

333 students registered for our after-school programs in the 2011-2012 school year; demographically, they broke down as follows:

- Gender:
 - 35% male
 - 65% female
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - 42% Hispanic/Latino
 - 21% Multi-racial
 - 20% White/Caucasian
 - 10% African or African American
 - 6% Asian/Asian American
 - 1% Native American
- Sexuality:
 - 21% LGBTQQ
- 82% qualify for free/reduced lunch
- Class year: Seniors: 26%; Juniors 28%; Sophomores 26%; Freshmen 21%

Impact of New Data Systems

Heading into the 2012-13 academic year, we had fully implemented a new system for tracking attendance and student demographic data. The new system, built on the Salesforce database platform. Among other improvements, the system easily allows us to cross-reference metrics for student engagement with demographics. This means we have data to ensure that we are effectively engaging the youth that most need our programs, and we find that demographics are similar among all participation levels. In particular, among students attending six or more hours per week 87% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Year-end survey responses **DO WE REALLY NEED THIS IF WE HAVE GOOD QUOTES?**

We collect outgoing survey response data from youth participants. The percent agreeing/strongly agreeing with each statement:

- I am more open to trying new things: 100%
- I have developed more confidence: 97.5%
- I have developed a way of creating that expresses who I am: 95%
- I have built strong, trusting relationships with my peers and artist mentor: 100%
- I have improved as an artist: 100%
- I have developed a better idea of what I want to do in the future: 90%
- I feel New Urban Arts is a supportive and safe environment: 100%
- 85% of students rate New Urban Arts programs "outstanding."

PICK SOME OF THESE QUOTES:

Do you like working with an artist mentor?

- *Yes I really like working with a mentor because they inspire my artwork and also they help me to develop and improve.*
- *I do. I love talking to them, finding out things about them. I love having adults who understand we're all human beings, adults who don't try to teach me, but just work with me, alongside me, and respect me*
- *Artist mentors help you look at things in a different way which eventually positively affects the way individuals look at life.*
- *Yes so much. Some people don't realize that a program like this is a chance to make lasting friendship with amazing artist and i am glad to have this.*
- *I love working with a mentor. It often comes down to a one-to-one level, which I really like. It makes things easier when trying to discover what makes you, well, you.*

What does New Urban Arts Mean to You?



“Wordle” of students answers to this question; the larger the word, the more frequently students mentioned it in responding to the question, “What does New Urban Arts mean to you?”

- *NUA means open and acceptable to me because that is how all the members act towards everyone.*
- *NUA is like home away from home where i can come to and not have to deal with the stress and drama from school. I get to be 100% myself.*
- *It means a place where i find new me. I try to learn thing every day and i feel inspired here. I get chance to explore myself.*
- *New Urban Arts played a very important part in my everyday life. I went to nua as often as I could and tried new things. I really liked hanging out there as well.*
- *New Urban Arts is honestly my home. It means my community, no matter what.*
- *Everything.... It's kind of the centerpiece of my experience in high school, and I don't know that I'll be here much longer. When I go, I'll miss it. So much.*
- *It's a place that motivates me to draw. If I didn't go to this after school I would be at home just playing games, not improving as an artist.*
- *New Urban Arts means a place when I can freely express myself with people who will accept me and not judge me.*
- *To me it means a place to escape the rush and pressures from the outside world. A place for me to work on stuff and not be so pressured about and have to feel stressed about. Its place for me to explore arts and try new things.*

Growth Management

Over the past few years, New Urban Arts witnessd unprecedented growth in enrollment, which peaked during 2010-11. Staff, mentors and students agreed that our program quality suffered this year. Specifically, new students were joining too rapidly to receive sufficient attention from staff, mentors and older students early in their experience. As a result, new students were not acculturating, and, for the first time, we faced behavior and discipline issues.

In response, we launched a program redesign initiative, led by a committee of staff, board members, mentors and student alumni. We implemented two major, long-term recommendations: increased community-building activities early in the school year and a more formal orientation process for new

students. The committee also made the short-term recommendation to suspend new student recruitment in 2011-12 for two reasons: to reduce the student population and to allow staff to focus on the transition that fall to a new physical space. Implementation of these recommendations drastically reinvigorated program quality, but enrollment decreased to a five-year low of 203 students.

In 2012-13, we reinstated new student recruitment, while continuing to implement the other recommendations around community-building and orientation. These orientations keep our programs accessible while giving our staff room to manage new student induction. We also maintained the practice, piloted in 2011-12, of having a senior advising mentor to keep seniors as a visible presence and role models for younger, newer students while providing these veteran students unique and special services appropriate to their needs. The stated goal was to enroll 300 youth and have 200 of them attend, on average once or more per month. Our efforts were successful; last year we enrolled 333 students, 211 of whom attended once or more per month.

Impact of the Capital Campaign

New Urban Arts paid off its mortgage in December 2012, shortly after celebrating our 15th year of serving Providence's low-income youth. We had been making monthly mortgage payments of \$2,500 from operating funds, and we have chosen to continue paying \$1,000 each month into a building reserve fund, so that we can be careful stewards of our new building. Even with this monthly payment, our carrying costs are far lower than before the capital campaign, allowing us to spend more money on the vital youth programs that are central to our mission. In addition, the board has formed a building committee to advise the board and staff on the long-term care of our facilities.

After paying off the mortgage, we had a surplus of \$118,000, which was used to seed an endowment, supporting New Urban Arts' future growth. We officially closed the campaign in February of 2013, but will continue to collect pledges through 2014. Additional pledges collected (an anticipated \$43,000) will also support the endowment. In March, New Urban Arts' board of directors approved an updated endowment policy and, after consultation with a former board member who is an investment advisor, devised an investment strategy for the fund.

Finally, as a result of new donor acquisition during the capital campaign, our annual campaign is now stronger than ever. Since our 2010-11 fiscal year, our annual campaign has grown from \$81,503 from 282 donors to \$115,621 from 390 donors in the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Diversification of Funding:

Our operating budget has grown from \$332,000 in 2007-08 to a projected \$542,171 in fiscal year 2013-14. To support this growth, we continue to diversify funding sources and grow our annual campaign. Beginning in 2013-14, we secured a United Way grant that will provide \$90,000 per year to our youth programs for the next three years, and which is renewable beyond the initial period. Similarly, we continue to receive \$75,600 annually until 2017 through a five-year contract, also renewable, with the RI Department of Education through the federal 21st Century Learning Community Program. We also received new funding for the coming year from the Stranahan Foundation at \$25,000. Meanwhile, annual individual giving has grown from \$62,679 in 2007-08 to a record \$115,621 in 2012-13.

Staffing Transitions

Executive Director

During winter 2012-13, we conducted an exhaustive search, reviewing over 90 candidates, and in March, we offered the position of executive director to Elia Gurna; she accepted and began at New Urban Arts in July. As an artist, Elia has worked in youth programs for more than a decade in both the United States and Europe. She holds a BA in German and Visual Arts from Columbia University and an MFA from Queens College, CUNY. Elia first visited New Urban Arts over a year ago at the urging of her husband, Eric Gurna. Eric met NUA as part of a team studying best practices for the federal 21st Century Community Learning grant program and felt that our program matched Elia's commitment to youth empowerment through the arts.

In an exciting arrangement, New Urban Arts is also collaborating with Eric Gurna. Eric is founder and CEO of Development Without Limits, an organization that works with youth programs around the country. Eric will continue at DWL and will consult with New Urban Arts as Director of National Engagement.

Most importantly, Elia Gurna has proven to be an ideal cultural fit for New Urban Arts; she has shown a fierce commitment to the practices and values that have made our studio a vital, nationally recognized cultural institution. After a few years in which the attention of our executive director was, by necessity, focused the administrative challenges of major transitions and fundraising, we are happy to have a director who is excited and ready to divide her energies more evenly between supporting the program staff and supporting the administrative staff.

Director of Programs

In August 2013, long time Director of Programs Sarah Meyer left New Urban Arts to return with her family to the midwest. Over the summer and fall, students, staff and mentors reviewed over 90 candidates. We cannot yet make public the name of the selected candidate. However, they have a deep resume with youth-serving organizations built on similar values to ours, as well as extensive personal familiarity with New Urban Arts through a long history as a volunteer.

Youth Program Coordinator

In May 2013, Youth Program Coordinator Jesse Banks left New Urban Arts to pursue his career in photography. As an alumni of our youth program and a former mentor, Jesse's familiarity with New Urban Arts and intuitive understanding of our youth was a vital element of the studio dynamic. Fortunately, Sarah Meyer had already cultivated an ideal replacement. Ashley Paniagua was a student at New Urban Arts from 2001 to 2005 while a student at Classical High School in Providence. With guidance from College Visions, Paniagua graduated from Wheelock College in 2009 with a B.A. in Liberal Arts, majoring in Studio Art and completing the Community Based Human Services Certificate Program. She remained actively involved with New Urban Arts as an alumna, volunteering for various events and working as staff during the 2009 Summer Youth Workforce Training Mural Program. After three years working in various youth-serving organizations in Hawaii, Paniagua has returned to Providence to take this position at New Urban Arts. As a Latina from Providence that has a long history with New Urban Arts, she, like Jesse, has an intuitive understanding of the challenges our students face.

Studio Organizer

Through the United Way, we have secured three years of funding for the new, studio organizer. We decided in early 2013 that, given our new building, our first priority for a new staff position was to increase capacity around facilities management. Thus, the studio organizer position includes most of the elements of a typical facilities manager. However, consistent with our values, the studio organizer's job will be to work with the studio community, including students, mentors, staff, and volunteers, to create and implement systems and practices to maintain the physical studio space,

including long term maintenance and daily preparations for programs and events. In other words, we are looking, not for a custodian, but for someone with the skills to lead others in doing their part to care for the physical space. So far we have reviewed almost 30 candidates. The final round of interviews for this position will take place during the second week of October, and we expect to hire someone by November 1.

Looking Forward

New Urban Arts heads into the next 15 years with a renewed sense of commitment to our mission. We strive to ensure that, despite our —in physical size, staff, and student enrollment—we remain true to the values and practices that have made our studio a home for so many youth that have few options for creative participation.

In the next few years, a central question we expect to confront is this: as art education trends increasingly emphasize technology and virtual relationships, how do we maintain a space that values analog processes and physical community? We affirm the merits of digital media, digital design and digital literacy. However, we are wary of initiatives that respect students' creative impulses only when they fit into a digital learning rubric. Our vision is a learning space nimble enough to teach traditional and new media, which in either case, will inspire learners as inquisitive, critical thinkers.

In short, we want to be able to adapt to changes we have made to the organizations and to external shifts, but we want to do so without changing the level of freedom that we offer the youth we serve.

Postsecondary Transition and College Enrollment

New Urban Arts invited 21 seniors to participate at its year-end Art Party and graduation Ceremony. Generally, New Urban Arts recognizes seniors at its year-end graduation ceremony who have participated actively over multiple years or enrolled in their senior year of high school and made great contributions to our community. All 21 successfully completed their high school diplomas (two completed alternative GED programs).

Nine of our seniors were eligible to participate in our College Visions partnership based on socioeconomic and educational criteria. College Visions (CV) is a Providence-based nonprofit organization focused on college access and success for first-generation college students from low-income households. CV was founded by an alumni artist mentor, Simon Moore. Every year, 7-15 seniors participate in intensive college advising and placement. Seniors who have participated at New Urban Arts for one year at New Urban Arts are eligible to apply to participate. Since this partnership began, 98% of participants have successfully enrolled in college. Last all participants successfully enrolled in a colleges including Rhode Island College, The University of Rhode Island and Salem College.

Gallery Attendance and Exhibitions

In addition to our core youth programs, New Urban Arts presented 24 public events ranging from small art workshops. Last year, we had record overall attendance, as well as record attendance at our year-end event, The Art Party, which drew 640 people. In total, 3,075 people attended events at New Urban Arts in 201-13.

Beyond attendance and demographics, the various writing assignments that youth participants

complete serve as a vital assessment tool. By insisting that youth reflect on their practice, we understand the extent to which they are building knowledge in the arts, and we understand the value of the mentoring relationships that they build with artists. 200 students submitted enrollment forms with reflections on their own creative practice, and about 150 students showed artwork in our gallery shows, submitting detailed artist statements on which they reflected on their process, personal growth, and the meaning of their artwork.

The 2012 Summer Art Inquiry

The theme of the 2012 Summer Art Inquiry was *Mythology*. Through independent research, field trips, visiting artists, and a mix of structured individual and group artmaking activities, students invented fictional worlds and imaginary creatures, developed origin stories and hero archetypes, and uncovered the evolutions of their own personal mythology. Students met with local artist Pippi Zornoza during a visit to the Natural History Museum located at Roger Williams Park. Another fieldtrip was to the Tomaquag Memorial Museum, which fosters dialogue regarding native culture, history, the arts, and modern-day native topics. Students learned the history of indigenous people of Rhode Island through stories and mythologies about their home state. Artist and scholar-in-residence Peter Hocking, a professor at RISD and Goddard College led an art critique on the last day of the program.

Progress Toward Youth Participant Objectives

The Art Inquiry is a rigorous internship; to receive their \$400 stipend, youth participants must successfully complete both collaborative and independent art projects demonstrating their learning, meeting standards for success established by students, their artist mentors and the Program Director:

- 1) Students must complete both collaborative and independent art projects that demonstrate what they have learned and prepare their work for a public exhibition of their original artwork. The success of these projects should meet the standards for success established by students, their artist mentors and the New Urban Arts Program Director. **All students met this objective. Their work was exhibited at New Urban Arts in a public gallery show on October 5, 2012 for an audience of 153 people.**
- 2) Students must complete written artists statements that demonstrates their learning and describe their artistic process, their inspiration, and how they created their project. An excerpt from one student's artist statement reads: *Even though it was my first attempt to make a staff, I was so afraid that people would find something wrong with it, but my mentors and my friends at Art Inquiry have given me so much support that I was able to let go of that fear. The best part about this project was that I completed my first sculpture and I am very satisfied with it. Also, my Art Inquiry group was the best. It's been a while since I've been a part of something so unique and supportive as this group was.* **All students met this objective. These statements were displayed at New Urban Arts in a public gallery show on October 5, 2012.**
- 3) In teams, students must plan and facilitate at least one workshop presentation that demonstrates their learning. **All students met this objective.** In August 2012, students designed and facilitated four workshops for the public through four partnering organizations: The Greater Providence YMCA, Providence City Arts, Olneyville Housing, and Youth Pride, Inc.
- 4) Students are to meet all other contractual obligations necessary, including attendance requirements. **All but one student met this objective who had to miss the last week of program due to a family crisis; all students received stipends.**

As mentioned the summer Art Inquiry program culminates in a public art exhibition, the publication of a program resource guide as well as public workshops in the community facilitated by students. We are grateful for the support that The Textron Charitable Trust has provided for the Summer Art Inquiry, a program that uniquely combines art, academics and employment skills for youth.