

## The Role of Higher Education in Linking Arts, Culture, and Economic Development

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### Abstract

In the knowledge economy, colleges and universities are realigning academic initiatives to link more closely with regional needs. They are unique catalysts for forming community alliances to focus on issues of economic development, neighborhood revitalization, and cultural tourism. In partnership with business, municipalities, and cultural organizations, institutions of higher education must develop and attract the creative talent associated with university communities that will sustain regional vitality. The New England Council has pursued a regional approach to strengthen New England's economic competitiveness by developing the Creative Economy Initiative, a partnership of New England business, government, cultural, and educational leaders. In response to this initiative, the University of Massachusetts Amherst has spawned an organization called the Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance that fosters community-based arts activity through building relationships and collaborations among diverse cultural organizations, artists, arts educators, business organizations, and community groups in the four counties of Western Massachusetts. Since its inception, the alliance has provided professional development training, organized nine programs that have served hundreds of participants, and published a map of cultural attractions that has been distributed throughout the region.

### Introduction

As the transition from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy evolves, many of the former manufacturing towns in the Northeast aspire to become technology hubs. Each wants to emulate the success of Silicon Valley, Seattle, Austin, and the Boston 128/495 corridor. To attract technology companies, a region must offer a ready supply of technologically trained workers. Retaining and attracting knowledge workers is not only about providing good jobs; it involves providing a quality of life that incorporates arts, cultural, and recreational opportunities. This paper will illustrate the vital role that colleges and universities play in contributing to the quality of life in surrounding regions, not

only in terms of arts and cultural venues, but also in linking arts organizations, businesses, tourism groups, and educational organizations to promote a healthy economic climate.

### Linking Arts, Culture, and Economic Vitality

On the national level, Richard Florida, Heinz Professor of Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University, has done extensive research about the new economic geography and what it takes to attract knowledge workers to a region. One component of his theory, put forth in his recent book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, is that people don't move to jobs; jobs move to people (Florida 2002). As keynote speaker at the 2002 Society of College and University Planners Mid-Atlantic Conference, Florida stated that to create economic vitality an area must possess three T's:

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*"[T]o create economic vitality an area must possess three T's: technology, talent, and tolerance."*

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technology, talent and tolerance. For states, cities, and regions to attract creative people, generate innovation, and stimulate growth, all three must be in place. Creativity, those people involved in creative industries (listed below), and diversity work together to attract talent, generate high-tech industries,

and spur regional growth. Florida refers to clusters of creative people as the creative class, which constitute 31 percent of the American workforce and generate 48 percent of its wages, or \$1.7 trillion dollars annually.

Through the Richard Florida Creativity Group (RFCG), in association with Catalytix, Inc, Florida has developed a tool he calls the creative index to predict creative capital and potential for regional growth by analyzing creativity and diversity factors. His newsletter, *Creative Intelligence*, describes the four factors that are used to determine the Creative Index: (1) the creative class—the number of workers categorized as working in creative industries; (2) technology—the number of high-tech companies; (3) diversity—the gay, bohemian, and foreign-born population; and (4) the innovation index—the number of patents generated.

Creative Industries are based on Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) and the North America Industrial Classification System (NAICS). The creative class has two major components:

the *super-creative* core (computer and mathematical occupations; architecture and engineering occupations; life, physical, and social science occupations; education, training, and library occupations; and arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations) and the *creative professionals* (management occupations; business and financial operations occupations; legal occupations; health care practitioners and technical occupations; and high-end sales and sales management). One of Florida's critics, Joel Kotkin, journalist and professor of public policy at Pepperdine University, argues that Florida lumps together everyone from ballerinas to software coders to accountants (quoted in *Bass 2003*).

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*"Arts and culture are catalysts of community revitalization efforts."*

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Florida uses three indices to obtain the diversity index.

1. The Gay Index, based on research done by Gary Gates, the Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., measures the representation of gay couples in a region. This is considered a general indicator of an area's openness to different kinds of people and ideas;
2. The Bohemian Index reflects a population's artistically creative people, including authors, designers, directors, artists, and performers (based on the 1990 U.S. Decennial Census Public Use Microdata Sample); and
3. The Melting Pot Index indicates the relative percentage of foreign-born people in a region (based on the 1990 U.S. Decennial Census Public Use Microdata Sample).

In Florida's study, on a statewide basis, Massachusetts, California, and New York rank highest on the Creative Index list. The wage shares for creative workers in specific cities such as Boulder (63%), San Jose (63%), and Washington, D.C. (60%), are among the highest. Florida asserts that these rankings bear out his premise that creative/knowledge workers are attracted by vital places, not jobs. In his keynote address, Florida asserts that knowledge workers want to be in smart places, that is, cities and towns with great universities and learning opportunities. It is the *quality of place* that attracts creative people.

Ann Markusen and David King, authors of an article titled the "Artistic Dividend: The Arts' Hidden Contributions to Regional Development," (2003) agree with Florida's general premise by saying that artists, like firms, have locational preferences and gravitate toward certain metropolitan regional economies such as New York and Los Angeles, and second-tier cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Albuquerque, and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Markusen and King demonstrate that artistic activity is a major and varied contributor to economic vitality. The *artistic dividend* of artists to an area is a product of long-term commitments by philanthropists, patrons, and the public sector to regional arts education, and individual artists. It is enhanced by entrepreneurial activity among artists that fosters and contributes to a high urban quality of life.

With the premise that arts and culture, including companies and workers that are part of a *creative cluster*, can stimulate the economic vitality of a region, this paper examines a broad approach that was initiated in New England, several examples of colleges that have manifested this approach, and a more detailed examination of an alliance to promote arts, culture, and economic development at the University of Massachusetts.

#### A New England Regional Approach: The Creative Economy Initiative

The New England Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), and the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) embarked on a study in June 2000 to understand the role and impact of New England's creative industries, creative workforce, and creative communities on the economy. This multiyear study, called the Creative Economy Initiative (CEI), identified this grouping as a creative cluster. While most economic impact studies focus solely on nonprofit contributions, this study included both commercial activity and individual artists. It examined strategic linkages between the nonprofit and commercial sectors and determined that creative workers contribute to the knowledge economy by spearheading innovation, technology, and change. According to the NEFA study, in New England the creative cluster, as an economic engine, employs 250,000 people, with a payroll of \$4.3 million (cultural tourism impacts are not included in these figures). Total employment in the creative cluster exceeds that in biotech, software, and innovation services.

In June 2001, a second report, called *A Blueprint for Investment in New England's Creative Economy*, challenges the regions' businesses, institutions, and government agencies to implement a forward-thinking regional strategy to maximize the New England Creative Cluster, its workers and its communities.

Beth Siegel of Mt. Auburn Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts, consultant for the two reports, described four contributions of arts and culture to the Blueprint's implementation at a recent Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance forum called *Creativity Sparks Economy* (Siegel 2003):

- Arts and culture are key aspects that define attractive communities for knowledge workers.
- Arts and culture are key components of the tourism market, and cultural tourism is a critical economic engine.
- Arts and culture are catalysts for community revitalization efforts.
- Arts education is critical to enhancing the skills of youth and developing a base of human capital.

In their 2003 study conducted under the auspices of the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics of the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, Ann Markusen and David King support the premise of *A Blueprint for New England's Creative Economy* and illustrate that artistic activity is a major and varied contributor to economic vitality. For example, they suggest that artist-dedicated spaces in older industrial buildings converted to live/work spaces can provide occupation-dedicated gathering venues like the Open Book in Minneapolis.

Markusen and King propose that the productivity and earnings in a regional economy rise as the number of artists increases because their creativity and specialized skills enhance the design, production, and marketing of products and services in other sectors. Artists also help firms recruit top-rate employees and generate income through direct exports of artistic work out of the region.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a major contributor to the New England Creative Economy Initiative, has been working diligently at the state level to bring constituents together through a series of regional forums to explore the links between arts, culture, and economic development. In spring 2002, the MCC presented the success story of the development

of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA) in North Adams, Massachusetts, at a conference called Linking Arts, Culture, and Economic Development. The forum highlighted a number of budding community-cultural partnerships; presented a how-to approach to acquiring and developing live/work spaces for artists in renovated municipal buildings; and introduced concepts of cultural tourism to a group of Western Massachusetts attendees.

The initial conference was followed by a cultural tourism forum in winter 2003 in Central Massachusetts to discuss tourism trends, new cross-sector relationships that promote cultural tourism; and other innovative cultural tourism coalitions. Last spring saw the Arts in Balance conference in Eastern Massachusetts, which fostered discussions among legislators, business partners, and nonprofits; highlighted collaborations for working

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together and building community; and discussed increasing participation through advocacy. Richard Florida was the keynote speaker at the Arts in Balance conference, where he stressed that we all must create the environment to nurture and harness creativity. He asserted that arts and culture are the most needed investments for creative communities and that higher education is a vital part of this infrastructure.

### Role of Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities are the stewards of their host communities, offering lifelong learning opportunities, transferring knowledge, creating employment, and providing cultural enrichment. They act as catalysts (entities that can combine elements in unique ways) to bring communities, other institutions, organizations, and individuals together to address issues of economic development and regional vitality. Consider this example: the University of Massachusetts entered into discussions with the

city of Holyoke, Massachusetts (about 15 miles from the university), to relocate its art department into a rundown mill building that would have provided an important economic stimulus to the local economy.

The mill could provide a large contiguous space to house the whole department, artist-loft space for faculty and students, gallery space, and educational spaces for community outreach.

Colleges and universities have always been seen as centers for arts, culture, and entertainment. However, institutions of higher education play additional roles in investing in the cultural vitality and economic development of their region:

- *Arts outreach*—sharing the resources of their institutions through performances in schools and community centers, artist residencies in the public schools, and arts workshops;
- *Arts advocates*—serving an important role as advocates to their legislators for programs and resources that support arts education, cultural organizations and individual artists;
- *Arts educators*—providing both formalized teacher training and continuing education, which form the basis for training in the arts that provides creative thinking skills for children;
- *Professional development coordinators*—conducting seminars and workshops for artists, cultural organizations and instructors;
- *Cultural tourism leaders*—connecting cultural resources and promoting collaborations among tourism, hospitality, cultural organizations, economic development officials, and artists to promote a cultural tourism agenda;
- *Community builders*—providing the venues and opportunities for community connections and interactions;
- *Information clearinghouses*—providing a depository for information about the arts, artists, and cultural resources;
- *Technology supporters*—providing assistance in developing Web sites and geographic mapping to support cultural tourism and other art-related endeavors.

#### Survey of Higher Education Best Practices in Arts, Culture, and Economic Development in the New England Area

Many colleges and universities are actively engaged in linking and expanding the arts and cultural resources in their regions. Consider these best practices in New England that illustrate the diversity of roles institutions play:

*Hampshire College* in Amherst, Massachusetts, in partnership with the town of Amherst, received a Livable Communities grant to study how an "ecological and cultural village" might be developed at the edge of the campus, adjacent to an existing farm market and residential neighborhood. The Cultural Village Center concept provides housing, retail, commercial, and cultural venues that will connect to two recently developed venues on the Hampshire College campus: the Yiddish Book Center, which attracts thousands of international visitors, and the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, which hosts art classes and storytelling hours for children. Though it has been opened barely a year, the Eric Carle Museum has surpassed all visitor projections, the number of its visitors far exceeding that of the new Basketball Hall of Fame in nearby Springfield.

*Clark University* in Worcester, Massachusetts, in partnership with the Worcester Arts District, is focusing on the economic redevelopment of a major thoroughfare to create an arts corridor. Anchored by Clark University, a pioneer in community engagement, this district will provide affordable housing in the form of live/work spaces for artists in abandoned mill and industrial buildings. A continuing education center, schools, mixed-use retail, and other indoor and outdoor cultural venues are part of the proposed plan. Jack Foley, assistant to the president at Clark, says that once you're part of a community partnership, people look to you to be a leader and be involved.

*Salem State College* spearheaded an effort to organize and link cultural institutions north of Boston, Massachusetts, to establish a cultural identity beyond this major metropolis. The organization *ArtsNorth* was formed to foster collaborations among nonprofit organizations and for-profit galleries to promote joint marketing of cultural venues in this suburban center. A number of other colleges are part of this consortium, including Gordon College, Endicott College, and Monserrat College of Art. The organization is membership based and hosts a Web site calendar that posts all of the events in the area.

*Trinity College* in Hartford, Connecticut, Hartford Hospital, the Public Radio station and several other SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance) partners redeveloped an abandoned tract of land between the college and the hospital into the *Learning Corridor* that has become a model for college



engagement. The project constructed five schools ranging from a Montessori center to a high school. One of the educational venues focused on expanding arts and culture by establishing the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, attended by students from more than forty school districts for afternoon courses and programs in music, drama, dance, and creative writing. Opened in fall 2000, it continues to be a thriving pre-K through 16 educational experience that links academic initiatives to community needs.

These examples have influenced the formation of an arts alliance at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which has embraced New England's Creative Economy Initiative through a multidisciplinary approach connecting university representatives, area cultural organizations, public schools, businesses, tourism groups, and individual artists. Encompassing the four culturally rich counties of the Western Massachusetts region, the Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance (WMAA) was spawned by the university as an arts outreach effort to connect cultural resources through collaborations that contribute to the cultural, social, and economic vitality of the region.

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Since its inception in fall 2000, the Alliance has organized and hosted nine programs, including:

- *The Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Frameworks Training:* Training on a standardized curriculum in the arts, offered in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Education.
- *Making a Living as an Artist Workshop:* A panel presentation and discussion designed to expose artists to resources in the region that will help them form a business. Panelists included the Small Business Development Center, the Valley CDC, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and successful artist-run businesses. This was offered in collaboration with the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

- *A Forum for Funding in the Arts and Learning Partnerships:*  
A half-day convening with a panel of five regional and state funding organizations, small group discussions, and interactive workshops that provided attendees with information and skills to utilize available funding resources and opportunities.

In 2002 the university and the Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance partnered with members of the New England Knowledge Corridor to create a Connecticut River Valley Cultural Corridor map brochure that portrays nearly 250 cultural attractions along the Interstate 91 corridor between Hartford, Connecticut, and Franklin County on the Vermont border. The alliance worked with a coalition of cultural organizations, economic development and tourism agencies, and area businesses to produce the map brochure, which is viewed as a cultural overlay to the knowledge corridor. After an initial publication of 100,000 brochures, this map has been updated and printed several times to include new venues.

By way of background, the New England Knowledge Corridor was established in 2000 to promote a cross-border collaboration between Connecticut and Massachusetts to envision the Greater Hartford and Pioneer Valley as a single market area to attract business and industry. With 120,000 students at thirty-two higher education institutions, the corridor declares itself an economic powerhouse of intellectual capital, thinking systematically and building cooperative efforts to grow the economy. One of the first initiatives of the collaboration was an economic impact study of the corridor conducted by the University of Massachusetts and the University of Connecticut, which documented the major employers, diverse economy, and opportunities in the area.

The Creative Economy Initiative developed by the New England Council provided the initial cornerstone for discussing an overlay to the knowledge corridor. This initiative studied the impacts of arts and culture on the creative economy. Another overlay, the Regional Technology Alliance, paralleled this study. Funded by a two-year National Science Foundation Partnerships for Innovation Grant, the RTA identified key technologies that are used in the region's companies, and examined strategies for boosting the region's technology strengths to attract new business to the area.

As a follow-up to mapping the regions cultural attractions, the Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance embarked on a Cultural

Tourism Initiative funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and administered by the university's Arts Extension Service. It seeks to expand the *knowledge corridor* and to build a cultural tourism coalition across the four counties of Western Massachusetts. The first step was to define cultural tourism in terms other than those used by the travel and tourism industry, to be inclusive of travel and visitation activities directed at an area's arts, heritage, recreational, and natural resources. Activities include multi-cultural, multigenerational educational and entertainment experiences that contribute significantly to the regional economy.

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The initiative culminated in a May 2003 event, Creativity Sparks Economy: Cultural Tourism in Western Massachusetts, which brought together regional leaders, artists, and organizations to learn more about the Creative Economy Initiative and the potential contributions of each entity to spark economic development. Themes included: Artists and Audiences; Innovative Sponsorships and Marketing Ideas; Fairs and Festivals; and Sense of Place: Preserving, Interpreting, and Celebrating through the Arts. The follow-up to the cultural tourism forum is the development of a WMAA regional arts Web site that includes calendar links, professional development opportunities, arts education resources, advocacy information, cultural venues, organizations, and artist listings.

The next steps for the Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance include: promotion of listening tours for the MCC; funding for a cultural census and economic impact study (in conjunction with Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts (MIFA) and the CEI Blueprint); participation in MAASH events (the Massachusetts Arts Advocacy for Science and Humanities organization); collaboration with the MCC on a spring 2004 cultural tourism summit; an arts education initiative supporting educator needs through workshop training; and support of the June 2004 regional NECAP (New England Consortium for Artist-Educator Professionals) Conference.

While this survey of best practices is not nationally comprehensive, a key element in all of these success stories is the role that higher education plays in supporting and promoting the arts and cultural activities that advance regional economic vitality. It is not enough to provide the cultural venues that are so sought after in college towns. In a time of scarce resources, both for institutions and municipalities, colleges and universities must share their expertise in the arts, especially in the area of promoting and providing arts education. Institutions are the catalysts to engage multiple partners in cooperative efforts and collaborations, advocating for arts activities that improve the quality of life for the campus and community. Although colleges and universities have not typically been engaged in promoting cultural tourism and recruiting workers to the creative cluster workforce, they are intentionally enhancing their academic and outreach missions while stimulating the economic and cultural vitality of their regions.

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