

### **Making Intelligent Choices**

Policy makers and young people both confront educational choices. In the economic context outlined here, both should ask which options would serve to enhance creativity and respond to the needs of our time. For a young person, the choice is not between being artistic and being productive; rather the long-term choice is between being creative in a job, or taking a job where originality is rejected in favor of repetition and uniformity. In the coming decades when change will be the operative word, those who choose the creative path will prosper.

This conclusion may come as a surprise to some, but not to those who work in the arts. In the journey from being artistic to becoming a professional in art and design, many important lessons are learned. An Otis education emphasizes the following:

- » Honing an individual vision while learning professional skills
- » Crossing fields and disciplines to achieve the most creative solutions
- » Embracing new technologies while mastering traditional skills and practices
- » Anticipating what's ahead with knowledge and appreciation of what has come before
- » Generating multiple compelling solutions to a problem by considering varied points of view
- » Aligning content and context in ideation and creation
- » Applying oneself to work with passion and commitment
- » Using one's talents and views to affect positive change

Just as these lessons will benefit an individual's lifelong development, so too will they enrich our society.

Sincerely,



Samuel C. Hoi

*The next President's letter will detail how Otis' curriculum addresses the above lessons to prepare students for success in the creative economy.*



## *President's Letter*

number 3



## **Leave No Child Behind?**

*The education of our youth* must embrace creativity as an essential goal. "No Child Left Behind," President Bush's educational policy, establishes standards for students' math and reading skills. While laudable, the policy embraces an incomplete view of human intelligence. When politicians tout the benefits of higher academic standards, they inevitably mean literacy and numeracy. No one denies the importance of these goals, but they are merely two important pieces of a well-rounded education. Other urgent but sadly neglected elements include the arts and humanities. These disciplines are not frills. They are central, not simply for educational vigor, but to meet the needs of individual development as well as the economic needs of our society.

# “Creativity

is one of the last remaining *legal ways of gaining an unfair*  
**advantage over the competition.”**

— John Howkins, *The Creative Economy*

*When I speak* with industry leaders, they tell me that the skills they most desire in employees are these: (1) the ability to work in teams; (2) flexibility in the face of change; and (3) creative thinking and creative problem solving. An educational system focused obsessively on literacy and numeracy will never meet employers' expectations precisely because it is not designed to advance people's inherent creativity.

This is the real cost of relegating the arts to the curricular periphery—students are unprepared for work in a world in which competition is fierce and the pace of change is staggering. In his book *Out of Our Minds*, Ken Robinson, Getty education advisor, comments, “[Businesses] are trying to fix a downstream problem that originates in schools and universities. ...Current approaches to education are hampered by ideas of intelligence and creativity that have wasted untold talent and ability.”

*America's consumers—their aesthetic senses sharpened by everything from the Design Within Reach catalog to Queer Eye for the Straight Guy—increasingly think that how a product looks is as important as how well it works.*

*Appearance can have a huge effect on how much money a product makes. For example, Apple has sold 1.4 million of its brilliantly minimal iPod MP3 players for hundreds of dollars a pop since they debuted two years ago.* — Jason Tanz, “From Drab To Fab”

Fortune magazine 12/8/03

## **An Arts Education: Just What Business Needs**

Historically, the arts have not fared well in the competition for scarce educational resources—which includes both dollars and time in the classroom. One of the primary reasons is that the arts and economic productivity have been seen as being at odds with one another. This is a false dichotomy. Residents of Los Angeles, one of the most active creative communities on the planet, know this. Successful business leaders here know that good design—whether in clothing or information—provides a significant competitive edge.

In his book *The Creative Economy*, John Howkins documents the magnitude of creative enterprises by identifying fifteen creative industries, ranging from advertising to film, from art to video games, and from fashion to research and design. (These creative industries are the lifeblood of L.A.'s economy.) In 1999 the economic value of America's creative industries was \$960 billion.

In the course of two decades (1977–1997) these sectors grew at 6.3 per cent annually, while the country's overall economic growth was only 2.7 per cent. Howkins notes: “Overall, they contributed more to the American economy than almost any other industry: more than chemicals, aircraft and aircraft parts, cars and car parts, electronic equipment, and industrial machinery.” This growth has been fueled by the changing needs of American consumers. In a country where those individuals with high levels of disposable income have satisfied their material needs, the goods and services produced by the creative economy are prized.

*The aesthetic discovery process is too unpredictable for fixed, uniform standards. Even individuals with settled tastes and identities want some variety over time, as the enduring power of fashion demonstrates. New technologies, from air-conditioning to computer-assisted design, make new styles possible, while cultural and ideological changes generate new identities demanding new aesthetic expressions.*

*When functions of gears and levers are buried in the infinitesimal etchings of computer chips, product surfaces have the freedom to follow the designer's pleasure – shapes can be free of function.* — Virginia Postrel

The Substance of Style

