Innovative Delivery of Master’s Programs

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Low Residency MFA

★ Students: professional artists who can’t leave their studios for long to earn a degree.
★ Their motivation: to get their creative juices flowing again, broaden their professional networks, and/or earn the terminal teaching credential.
★ Their locale: anywhere.
Low Residency MFA

**Faculty includes:**
- College of Art full time faculty
- Adjunct art school faculty
- Visiting instructors who are very successful professional artists, curators, or gallery owners

**Administrators:**
- Director (management, faculty and student recruiting, curriculum, program quality control)
- Asst Director (student recruiting and management, site management)
Program Structure

- **Summer 1-2.** On campus. 12 days. 10-12 hr days. 4 courses plus studios. Work/eat/live together.

- **Interim:** Continue to work on course work thesis project. Counsel and criticism is provided over the internet.

- **Fall 1-2.** Distant site. 6 days. Finish old courses start 2 new courses.

- **Interim.** As above

- **Spring 1-2.** Distant site. 6 days. Finish old courses and start new courses.

- **Interim.** As above

- **Summer 3.** On campus. 12 days. Finish up courses and thesis. Faculty evaluation of thesis and art exhibit. Graduation. Celebration dinner.
Advantages of low residency

- National/International pool of potential students.
- Limited "off-season" use of on-campus facilities.
- National/International pool of potential instructors.
- Limited time for both students and instructors to be away from their day-jobs.
- Enhanced visibility of the program, college, and university.
Disadvantages

- Hiring a director with sufficient reputation and contacts to draw students and instructors.
- Expensive national marketing to kick-start the program.
- Complex and atypical management of the distant sites.
Characteristics of disciplines where low residency works

- Work can be transmitted electronically.
- Students require extensive time to themselves to learn material.
- Work doesn’t require continuous on-site mentoring.
- No required practical training (teaching, internships)
- Work that can be done “at home”.
- Lecture-light instruction
Examples of Programs that might work

• **Fine Arts**: Illustration, Photography
• **Humanities**: Literature, Languages, musicology
• **Science**: Mathematics
• **Field Science**: sociology, ecology
• **Education**: Ed Technology
• **Business**: MBA, Public Admin.
Disciplines that probably won’t work

* Work can’t be transmitted electronically. E.g., Sculpture, Painting, Dance, Architecture

* Considerable on-site mentoring: Music Performance, Dance, Exp. Science, Allied Health

* Special Equipment needed: Exp. Science, Engineering

* Internships required: Teacher education, many allied health and nursing specialties

* Lecture-heavy disciplines: Psy, Pol. Sci., History
Where do Graduate Deans fit in the process?

- Plant the seed with the academic dean and give it a reason to grow.
- Defend the idea against traditionalists
- Carefully evaluate the new program proposal:
  - Academic rigor
  - Credentials of the faculty and instructors
  - Reputation and stamina of the first director
  - Operating budget
  - Recruiting strategy
What do you do that’s different?

- Blended campus/internet instruction
- Internet courses and programs
- Distant site
- Concentrated (weekends, summer only, etc)
- ???