ART STUDIO

Cabrillo art dept. continues to excel in face of challenges

In 2010, SB 1440, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, was passed in an effort to facilitate community college students’ access to transfer to state universities. The bill created a set of guidelines regarding how subsidies could be allocated. Community colleges were encouraged to focus on classes to put students on the path to becoming a degree, a career-technical certification or transfer to a four-year college. For the state’s community colleges, the impact of the new funding focus has been most felt in the areas of the arts, ESL (English as a Second Language), other “non-degree” programs, repeatability and “lifelong learning” for older adults. Today, the California community colleges system consists of 112 community colleges in 72 community college districts.

California’s community colleges are continuing to find ways of cutting costs while preserving their mission to provide higher education to their communities. Since the enactment of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, preparing students to transfer to a four-year university has been a core function of the California community colleges. This has created a shift in focus on state funding away from lifelong learning and personal enrichment courses that don’t provide credits or don’t lead to a degree. The Student Success Act is a bill that gives individual state more control over their own education systems, reducing the federal footprint. The student success metrics focus on basic skills, career preparation and transfer credits and stipulates that once a student has successfully completed a class they cannot repeat it.

Here locally at Cabrillo College the issues of repeatability and lifelong learning continue to be examined. And as community colleges throughout the state navigate the future of higher education, Cabrillo College remains one of the top ranked colleges in the state.

Accomplished 3-D artist Dawn Nakanishi is an art studio instructor and head of the Small Metals and Jewelry Area at Cabrillo College. She has taught at Cabrillo since 1997. Dawn received her MA in jewelry and metalsmithing from San Diego State University and an MFA in spatial art from San Jose State University and exhibits her work nationally and internationally. Concerned about the impact of restricting arts students’ ongoing access to classes, over the last year, Dawn has been working diligently with a group of Cabrillo staff and the State Board of Governors to help make the discretion of repeatability the choice of local community colleges.

I spoke with Dawn about the art department and Cabrillo College.

**KIRBY SCUDDER:** I have heard from so many people how important Cabrillo has been to their education. What is it that makes Cabrillo such an exceptional learning environment?

**DAWN NAKANISHI:** I am on the sabbatical leave board and I am always amazed at not only our art department faculty, but the faculty that teaches sciences and English, etc. I read the proposals of our teaching staff going on sabbatical and I have been blown away by their proposed projects. These are proposals whereby they want to enhance their teaching, people in biology who want to go out to sea to study the whales or to go overseas to do research that they ultimately bring back what they have learned to Cabrillo to their classrooms. It is such an extraordinary group of people that teach here and that is what makes Cabrillo such a special place for students to come and to learn. I am always humbled when I read their proposals. For example, this year from the art department, Tobin Keller is on sabbatical doing research for building a new fibers area at Cabrillo with a focus on fashion and apparel construction. He has already spent time in Manhattan and will be traveling to Europe later in the year. He’s on fire. We have really exciting programs, the engineering department received a grant from the Baskin Family that is helping to advance women in science and other exciting initiatives. The art department is looking at introducing a 3-D printing facility by next year while offering classes. There is an increasing orientation to digital arts programs. While we have an amazing facility and staff here, we are still hindered by some of the state’s restrictions. So we are continuing to work with the state to make the case for why students of the arts, in order to master their craft require repeating classes.

For more information about Cabrillo College go to: www.cabrillo.edu

Kirby Scudder is the director of the Santa Cruz Institute of Contemporary Art.