

The logo for the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru). It features the lowercase letters 'a', 'r', and 'u' in a dark grey font, with a green '2' positioned between the 'a' and 'r'.

ALLIANCE FOR THE ARTS
IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Informing, Connecting, and Empowering
The Arts in Higher Education

**a four-year
strategic plan**

2016-2020

MISSION

The Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) advances the full range of arts-integrative research, curricula, programs, and creative practice to acknowledge, articulate, and expand the vital role of higher education in our global society.

OUR VISION

A world in which universities — students, faculty, and leaders— acknowledge, deeply embed, and seamlessly integrate the arts in the pursuit of basic knowledge and in everyday practice.

OUR VALUES

As an organization, we value:

1. The arts as core to higher education
2. Deep disciplinary knowledge and applied research in the arts
3. Interdisciplinary creativity
4. Durable collaboration
5. Diverse community
6. The research university as a driver toward a better world

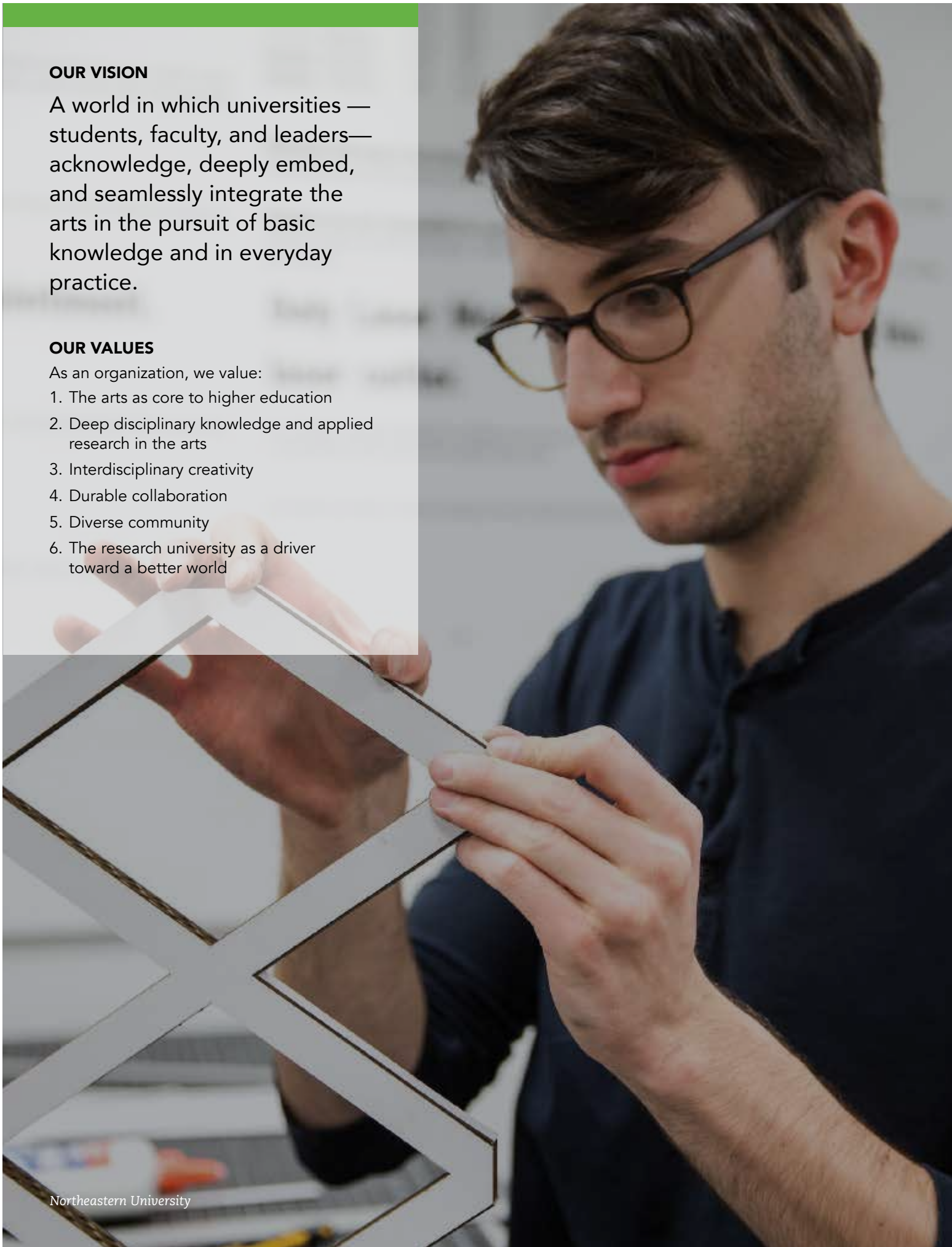


Table of Contents

a2ru Partners and Disciplines	2
Introduction	4
Foregrounding.....	4
Four Goals and Timeline	6
Goal 1: Strengthen the Network.	7
Objective 1A—Serve partner campuses.....	7
Objective 1B—Connect partners	8
Objective 1C—Make the case.....	10
Goal 2: Impact Students and Faculty.....	11
Objective 2A—Support the curricular sphere	11
Objective 2B—Integrate the co-curricular sphere.....	11
Objective 2C—Convene conferences, exchanges, and other events	2
Objective 2D—Stimulate and validate arts-integrative research.	
Promote and publish new and existing a2ru partner research	14
Objective 2E—Fund the work. Develop grants opportunities for members	14
Goal 3: Gather, Disseminate, and Advance Arts-Integrative Research.	15
Objective 3A—Execute and disseminate the current Mellon Foundation-funded research (funding time frame 2015-2018).....	15
Objective 3B—Define and build the future of a2ru’s research	16
Goal 4: Consolidate and Strengthen the Organization	17
Objective 4A—Articulate the value proposition.....	17
Objective 4B—Expand partner recruitment	18
Objective 4D—Strengthen staffing model and increase capacity by leveraging the network.....	19
Objective 4E—Update organization/governance structures and participation.	20
Objective 4F—Extend the “alliance” model.....	20
Acknowledgments.....	22

Introduction

The current work of the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) maps arts-integrative learning, contextually examines arts research developments, explores the value-added results of campus collaborations, and connects multiple stakeholders to advance a more complete national agenda linking the arts and other disciplines in higher education. The plan herein provides a detailed blueprint to: increase a2ru's effectiveness by more deliberately building the case for external audiences; more effectively support student work and faculty collaborations; and guide a robust research agenda through 2020. These will be the agenda items that shape the next four years of a2ru's work.

a2ru acknowledges its limited resources—both human and monetary. We are pursuing a diversified plan, which recognizes the distributed knowledge and expertise across the alliance. This store must be leveraged to achieve the goals of this plan with benchmarking contingent on increased resources garnered. We are intentionally pursuing ambitious goals in response to appeals from members and opportunities identified during our first four years. Broader aspirational goals are dependent on garnering the resources to finance this mission. Certain elements of the plan have funding contingencies as a basic operating principle. Strategies for acquiring these resources have been embedded in this plan, including the creation of a ten-year sustainable business model.

Strengthening the Research University

Formed by a coalition of university leaders in 2012, the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) fosters and champions the role of the arts¹ and design in research, professional practice, and teaching to develop opportunities to communicate, diversify, and scale arts-infused learning on university campuses. Underpinned by research, our work relies on the power of networked knowledge. We uphold and advance the position of the arts at research universities by promoting research, emerging fields, and new initiatives to recognize the arts and arts integration in all of our partnerships and presentations.² a2ru partners with university leaders to evaluate, construct, and advance high-impact creative work, research, teaching, and learning involving arts practice and other disciplines.

a2ru takes as its laboratory, research universities and the communities those research universities impact. With unparalleled scholarly range and

depth, the contemporary research university has a unique capacity to equip faculty and students to confront challenges with expertise and creative confidence. Research universities that support mutually beneficial interdisciplinary approaches spur new solutions and high-impact innovations. a2ru enables research universities to make informed decisions and mitigate the risks of innovative arts-integrative scholarship, creative practice, teaching, and learning. a2ru identifies issues and trends in these areas and addresses institutional hurdles to implementation. a2ru attends to the critical mass of arts-integrative efforts that have already emerged and addresses the next generation of challenges. Informed by our partner institutions' inquiry and pursuits, a2ru advances and tracks research, recommending changes to traditional institutional frameworks.

University of Arizona



1 By using the term "arts," we mean to refer to "arts and design," comprised of over fifteen disciplines, including architecture, dance, fashion design, graphic design, human interaction design, industrial design, interior design, museum studies, music, musical theater, opera, landscape architecture, theater, urban design, and visual arts (painting, sculpture, craft).

2 The term "arts integration" is defined here as combining artistic processes and methodologies with knowledge domains beyond singular arts disciplines.

The productivity of the first four years of a2ru is quantifiable, bringing together a cohort of forward-thinking institutions, mobilized under a shared vision to advance university support for art-making and the arts.

Major Accomplishments

2012-2015

RESEARCH

Foundational research examining the role of arts integration at colleges and universities, resulting in a baseline published report on the role of arts integration in higher education: *Surveying the Landscape: Arts Integration at Research Universities, 2015*, catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100837590. Research funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

SHARING DISCOVERIES

Creation of new tools to amplify, apply, and disseminate baseline research findings and data published in 2015, *Surveying the Landscape* (see RESEARCH above).

TRANSFORMING CULTURE

Leadership in advancing the national conversation around the role of the arts and design in higher education and role as a catalyst for regional and institutional alliances and working groups.

CREATING NETWORKS

Convening of annual national conferences and student summits over the past three years (six total). Deans, provosts, institute directors, vice chancellors, and faculty now exchange knowledge and challenges through a2ru conferences and committee work, developing partnerships to build capacity through shared efforts.



GROWING AWARENESS

Expansion of national awareness and the catalyzing of research around emerging and evolving arts-integrative and transdisciplinary fields (e.g., arts and health, creative placemaking, arts entrepreneurship, science-engineering-arts-design [S.E.A.D.], and arts and humanities).

BUILDING STRUCTURE

Establishment of a formal management structure, including an executive committee with officers, bylaws and procedures, standing committees, and project-oriented task forces.

DEVELOPING BROAD PARTNERSHIPS

Development of strategic partnerships to better advance our goals within industry, governmental entities, and nonprofit organizations.

Next Steps

Membership polling and qualitative interviews reveal that our partners clearly benefit from strong networking advantages, while requesting additional outputs in the following areas:

AGGREGATED DATA on the value of the arts on their campuses to serve as a supplement and counterweight to other forms of assessment.

SYSTEMS to easily connect a2ru administrators, faculty, and students to each other and the a2ru network.

INFORMATION ON TANGIBLE FUNDING MECHANISMS to support arts-integrative efforts on campuses.

USEFUL, SCALABLE EXEMPLARS regarding arts-integrated efforts within universities.

STRONG TOOLS to make the case for associated research that benefits faculty and students.



Timeline of Goals

2016
YEAR 1

2017
YEAR 2

2018
YEAR 3

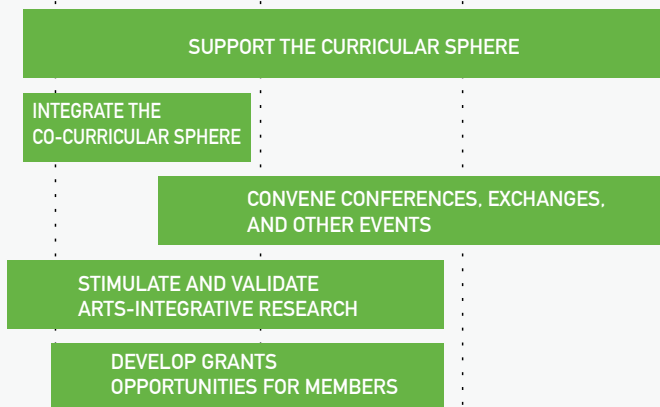
2019
YEAR 4

2020
YEAR 5

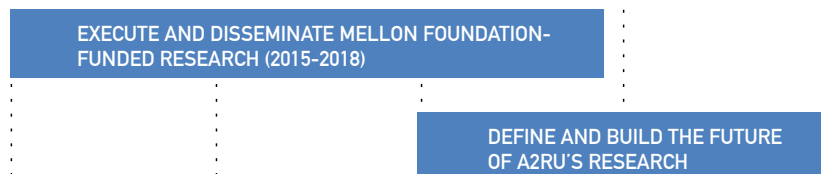
**GOAL 1
STRENGTHEN THE NETWORK**



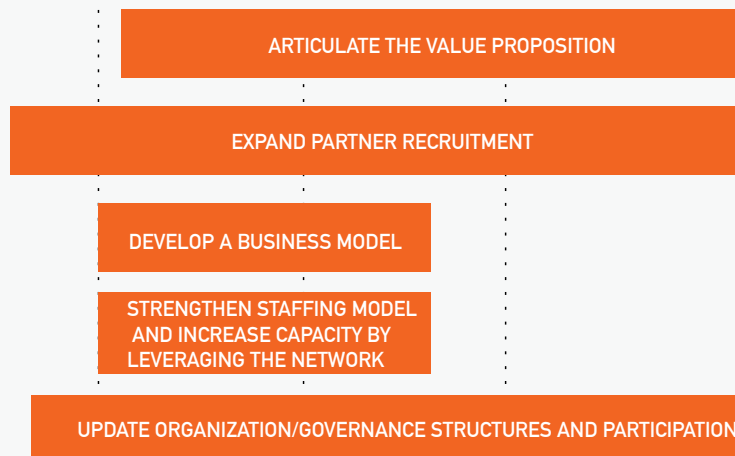
**GOAL 2
IMPACT STUDENTS & FACULTY**



**GOAL 3
GATHER, DISSEMINATE,
AND ADVANCE
ARTS-INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH**



**GOAL 4
CONSOLIDATE AND STRENGTHEN
THE ORGANIZATION**



Goal 1

Strengthen the Network

We will create and promote programs, practices, resources, and advocacy that encourage arts-integrative practices by addressing the current and emerging needs of partner institutions—their faculty, students, and leaders—and of the network as a whole

The greatest strength of the connected alliance model is the vast networking capabilities of so many peer institutions (with complementary programs) and like disciplines. In this model, a2ru is a “partner for our partners,” serving not only as a knowledge repository and disseminator but also as a consultant, marketer, communicator, connector, convener, and advocate. The power and coherence of the alliance depends on regular and meaningful communication between a2ru and its partners and between the partners themselves. a2ru will strive to be the central resource for realizing a fuller capacity and more efficient use of resources by amplifying the arts in all manifestations on research institution campuses.

Objective 1A— Serve partner campuses.

We will become an effective resource for faculty, students, and administrators on partner campuses, illuminating options for coordinating institutional interfaces, standards, and artistic agency.

ACTIONS

1A.i Promote partner stewardship.

Increase touch points and communication between a2ru office and partner campuses.

- a. Establish a pattern of regular communication. Develop more regular and meaningful “touch points” for interacting with members that expand beyond the “transactional.” [8/2016]
- b. Develop a broad communications plan and branding around the premise of “getting the most out of your a2ru membership.” Amplify a2ru work and serve member campuses through tools, interfaces, and messaging [see 1A.iii] geared toward discrete audiences (e.g., leaders, administrators, faculty, and student audiences). See Objective 4A. [9/2016]
- c. Develop campus advocacy cohorts on each a2ru campus: students, faculty, department heads, and upper administration on each campus drawn from diverse disciplines within and outside the arts. Increase points of contact from one to two per campus to a minimum of five per campus, inclusive of administrators and faculty. This may include the development of a faculty fellows program. [8/2016]

1A.ii Increase partner communication with a2ru.

Regularly convene the research university community and organizations aligned with our mission around issues, ideas, and advances in arts and arts-integrative research, curricula, programs, and creative practice.

- a. Create subcommittees/task forces around emerging and evolving field topics. [12/2016 and ongoing as Mellon II modules develop]
- b. Use materials funded by Mellon II (e.g., shared practice modules for emerging and evolving arts-integrative fields, keystone guides, and workshops) to broaden engagement with member faculty and students. See Objective 3A. [Calendar Year 2017, 2018, 2019]
- c. Promote, expand, and develop Third Space Aggregator and Peer Review Platform. Showcase exemplars and build legitimacy for transdisciplinary fields of research at a2ru conferences. See Objective 2E. [7/2016-11/ 2017]
- d. Create feedback mechanisms that allow for partner needs to be communicated and addressed. Implement a plan to engage partners around organizational input and institutional network efforts. [Ongoing]

1A.iii Provide consultative expertise and services.

Provide expertise to partner institutions.

- a. Formalize a2ru consulting services and fee structures as appropriate. [1/2017]
- b. Create intentional sampling surveys, time frames, data distribution, and maintenance strategies for the purpose of assessing member needs and delivering quick-turnaround, readily accessible information about arts within research universities and their reach into community and industry sectors. [Ongoing]
- c. a2ru research department will deliver one or more deep-dive administrative surveys per year for three years [Spring 2016, 2017, 2018]. SNAAP will administer an a2ru cohort module. [Late spring 2016]
- d. Generate a simple “dashboard” of agreed-upon data metrics. [12/2016]
- e. Develop group workshops and materials for organizational and faculty professional development. See Objective 3A. [Calendar Year 2017, 2018, 2019]
- f. Develop recognition systems (e.g., awards/certificates) to recognize exemplary work in the a2ru network. Create the “a2ru Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” for a2ru-supported areas. [12/2018]

Objective 1B—Connect partners.

We will deepen communication with campuses to better promote partner activities; we will also connect partners via shared initiatives and multiple platforms. Peer-to-peer linkages and member investment are fundamental, and leveraging collaborations (within and outside the network) is essential. a2ru will connect partner institutions—their faculty, staff, and administrators—through national and regional conferences and events, regional relationship building, and informal partner-to-partner interaction.

ACTIONS

1B.i Increase communication between partners within the broader network.

Encourage collaborations, networking, and communication among partners.

- a. Broaden digital communications interfacing with campuses to improve access and create a vivid partner presence. [12/2016]
- b. Create an a2ru system of sharing information, such as a group of topical listservs (e.g., one platform for deans and upper administrators, one for faculty, perhaps another for students). Actively manage, populate, and monitor digital information sharing. [1/2017]
- c. Publish an online directory of members of key contacts at each partner institution (name, title, contact information, headshot, bio). [3/2017]
- d. Develop partner profiles with peer comparisons. See Objective 3A. [6/2017]
- e. Catalyze three regional interest groups across the network. Identify and facilitate research partnerships and focused collaborations. (Interests in arts and health/well-being and creative placemaking have been identified thus far.) [Ad hoc and ongoing]
- f. Support regional cohort activity by connecting partners and assisting with regional convenings. Incentivize these efforts through aligning regional interests with conference themes. [Ongoing]

1B.ii Host national conferences, summits, and convenings.

Bring examples of evolving practices to membership through conferences, summits, and convenings as a networking hub for students, faculty, leaders, and administrators.

- a. Produce national conferences that are compelling and significant events. Leverage the results/successes of these events to inspire and accelerate collaborations across institutions. Document and quantify this expansion through conference reports and publications. [November annually]
- b. Raise brand identity and content quality by widely marketing conferences to increase the number of proposal submissions and enhance the overall selectivity. Explore opportunities to create buzz with a commissioned “event” or “work” for an enhanced conference experience. [11/2018]

- c. Develop and promulgate learning outcomes and after-action agendas to extend the value of national conferences to the entire network. [1/2017 and ongoing]
- d. Pursue corporate and philanthropic sponsorship for events where appropriate. See Objective 4C. [11/2017—Boston]
- e. In conjunction with business plan development, consider biennial conference delivery versus annual conferences, to focus resources and increase attendance. Business model will determine this outcome. See Objective 4C. [2017, 2019, and ongoing]

Objective 1C—Make the case.

We will strategically pursue and support ad hoc advocacy opportunities to advance our mission.
We will communicate research insights to key audiences to increase funding and support for the arts and arts integration in higher education.

ACTIONS

1C.i Develop an advocacy and cultural policy working group. [Fall 2016]

Develop the working framework for creating an on-campus and national voice.

1C.ii Serve as a resource. [Ongoing]

Be an expert resource and spokesperson for both institutions of higher education and local, state, federal, and community entities and initiatives when appropriate, helping to shape the full conversation and policies around the importance of the arts in society.

- a. The a2ru executive director, research director, or associate director will serve as “expert” and point person (as appropriate) to local, regional, and national entities.
- b. Executive Committee members may serve as needed.

1C.iii Cultivate a national presence. [Calendar year 2018 and ongoing]

Cultivate a targeted presence in Washington, DC, at “. . . On the Hill” days (booth/speakers/ planning) and other relevant events. Include: Arts on the Hill, STEM on the Hill, and others.

- a. Encourage a2ru students to attend (e.g., charter a bus and focus on one region).
- b. Catalyze relationship building of university faculty and administrators with state and federal government representatives by providing easily communicated information regarding the needs and importance of supporting the arts at their university.
- c. Invite state and federal representatives to conferences and local convenings to present and discuss the importance of the arts for education and cultural development.

1C.iv Encourage a2ru authorship. [Calendar year 2017 and ongoing]

Generate position papers and op-eds around issues of shared importance.

- a. Tap membership to coauthor publications that may appear in peer-reviewed journals, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, newspaper outlets, etc.
- b. Create a timeline, framework, and communications strategy around a2ru publications.

1C.v Develop durable case-making framework.

Create frameworks and data sets that support successful case-making for funding and stature for the arts within the research university and higher education, especially where potential forms of funding and sponsorship may be impacted.

- a. Regularly gather and disseminate field benchmark data that help partners plan and advocate. Establish a communications plan for disseminating information at national conferences and in-person subcommittee working sessions. [5/2017 and ongoing]
- b. Create opportunities for a2ru to specifically engage upper administrators from partner institutions (e.g., targeted meetings, enhanced conferences, special retreats, AAU Provosts meetings, etc.). Explore opportunities to engage partner institution administrators with "Michigan Meeting"-type event, faculty showcases, grant challenges. [Calendar year 2017 and ongoing]

Goal 2

Impact Students and Faculty

We will support and disseminate the development of arts and arts-integrative curricula, research, programs, collaborations, and initiatives to meaningfully impact students and faculty at research universities.

We will improve the creative, intellectual, and cultural climates at research universities by employing arts and arts-integrative practice through a2ru programs. We will track how this affects student learning, raises examples of relevance, and advances both curricular and pedagogical practices. We will take an active role in developing, branding, and advancing an “emerging creative” cohort of students, faculty, and professionals. We will encourage the inclusion of arts and arts-integrative practice in key aspects of our institutions through intentional peer-to-peer networking, grant funding, project team building, intercollegiate internships, scholarship showcases, interdisciplinary publishing opportunities, and on-campus communication efforts.

Objective 2A—Support the curricular sphere.

We will catalyze, aggregate, share, and promote high-impact innovative approaches to teaching and learning through arts integration and develop rubrics and strategies to assess and evaluate those efforts.

ACTION

2A.i. Develop new resources.

Deliver new resources to support high-quality arts and arts-integrative instruction, collaboration, research, documentation, and evaluation.

- a. Expand and establish a regular schedule for a2ru Circuits Webinar Series. [12/2016]
- b. Utilizing a2ru’s “best practice” research and partner expertise, leverage the creation of tool kits and workshops for faculty to begin to document, evaluate, and assess arts interdisciplinary student learning and the impact of instruction. Develop strong rubrics for evaluation. See Objective 3A. [2019-2020]

Objective 2B—Integrate the co-curricular sphere.

We will catalyze, aggregate, share, and promote strategies for effectively integrating the arts into relevant aspects of student life and develop rubrics and strategies for measuring their impact.

ACTIONS

2B.i. Develop tools, resources, interest groups, and communications.

With partners, develop more specifically focused tools, resources, interest groups, and communications for students engaged in arts and arts-integrative work outside the classroom. This affinity supports and advances the national conversations about the advantages of high-impact practices.

- a. Distribute the a2ru Circuits Webinar Series to students. Create podcasts or other digital resources (e.g., blogs, salons, newsletters) that advance student engagement. [12/2017]
- b. Create student a2ru “chapters” on partner campuses. [12/2017]

2B.ii. Enrich the collegiate experience and support career pathways.

With partners, develop, promote, and deliver new resources to enrich the collegiate experience and career pathways for students working in the arts and arts-integrative sphere.

- a. Create career-related tools, workshops, and resources for better connections, articulation, and outcomes for students engaged in the arts and arts-integrative work (e.g., ePortfolio, targeted interview strategies, internship information). [6/2017]

2B.iii. Increase student footprint and participation at a2ru events.

Increase opportunities for presentation of student creative output and production at a2ru and affiliated organization events. [12/2017]

- a. Ensure that every a2ru event with an open attendance model has at least one showcase opportunity for student creative work. [11/2016]

2B.iv. Create partnerships with on-campus student organizations.

Identify and cultivate relationships and resources with student organizations doing arts and arts-integrative work and the university departments and units that serve them on partner campuses. [6/2017]

Objective 2C—Convene conferences, exchanges, and other events.

We will convene conferences, exchanges, and events that create meaningful and long-lasting academic, social, and career paths for students and faculty.

ACTIONS

2C.i. Standing committee engagement.

Engage standing committees to determine agendas, action steps, opportunities, and timelines for student and faculty engagement at conferences and summits over the next four years. [Ongoing]

2C.ii. Increase student and faculty participation at a2ru conferences.

Encourage broad student and faculty participation at national conferences and student summits.

a. Increase opportunities for presentation of student- and faculty-authored articles and creative production.

1. Increase student and faculty representation on the a2ru digital communications platforms and other communications channels. [6/2017]

2. Develop student and faculty RFP process and presentation tracks for conferences, sponsored through a2ru or other affiliated organizations. [9/2017]

2C.iii. Leverage the a2ru student summit as a catalyst for cross-campus collaborations.

Enhance the a2ru Emerging Creatives Summits to support ongoing interdisciplinary student project work and team development between partner campuses.

a. Encourage online and collaborative student work across campuses through student summits. [12/2018]

b. Develop extension activities that bridge between student summits to engage more students who don't attend the summits on their home campuses. [12/2018]

c. Identify and engage faculty mentors to encourage, support, and elevate student projects, maintaining momentum after summits and conferences. [12/2018]

2C.iv. Develop Summer Student Exchange Programs.

Develop a two- to three-week program hosted by a partner a2ru institution,

engaging a2ru students across the network into an existing on-campus initiative or program (e.g., University of Florida's Digital Worlds Institute). [8/2017]

2C.v. Deliver integrative cross-campus research-focused activities.

Deliver meaningful professional development resources to faculty.

- a. Develop workshops and retreats for faculty, creative practitioners, and industry partners. [6/2018]
- b. Create and train a professional cadre at the interface between artists, designers, scientists, humanists, and software developers. [6/2018]

2C.vi. Increase student and faculty participation in a2ru and in collaborative arts and arts-integrative work.

Create intentional peer-to-peer networks (through a2ru student organizations, student participant alumni tracking, faculty research cross-network matching, and online communities) to create enduring relationships among partner campuses. [6/2020]

Objective 2D—Stimulate and validate arts-integrative research. Promote and publish new and existing a2ru partner research.

We will increase opportunities for publication and broad dissemination of student- and faculty-authored articles and creative production, along with effective evaluation, through the creation of a web-based, peer-reviewed platform.

By fostering research and the peer review processes that document the value and output of interdisciplinary efforts, we will validate scholarship for students and faculty working in the interdisciplinary realm. We will provide ready access to new research, including resources to support faculty integrating arts practices into their teaching and research. This will encompass new research-driven and field-tested models for integrating the artistic practices of broad ideation, experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and critique into prevailing research paradigms throughout the university.

ACTIONS

2D.i Launch and sustain a peer-reviewed, web-based platform for evaluating and disseminating the highest quality arts-integrative work.

Grow a robust, critical community of practice in support of research-based, multidisciplinary collaborations that include artists.

- a. Identify platform and publish first methods and process information. [8/2016]
- b. Identify and create editorial board. [4/2017]
- c. Establish criteria for rigorous transdisciplinary peer review. [11/2016]
- d. Present the process and the platform at the annual conference. [11/2016]
- e. Use 2015 a2ru conference exemplars to build and test new platform. [11/2016]

Objective 2E—Fund the work. Develop grants opportunities for members.

We will increase support for student and faculty research and creative activity through a2ru granting programs, funding information, and other means as the organization builds revenue and capacity.

ACTION

2E.i. Expand, market, and maintain a2ru student and faculty grant programs and other funding opportunities.

Use seed funding to support and encourage cross-campus collaborations.

- a. Expand Emerging Creatives Student Challenge Grant in size and scope. [3/2017]
- b. Develop a2ru Faculty Seed Grants program, including funding application processes, tools, and mechanisms to encourage collaborative projects between faculty on partner campuses. [11/2017]
- c. Aggregate and publicize external funding programs that may be open to faculty and students inside and beyond the a2ru network. [12/2016]
- d. Develop Student Conference Travel Grant program to promote attendance and presentation at a2ru conferences and summits, as well as opportunities to present arts and arts-integrative work at other regional and national conferences. [11/2016]
- e. Create and implement a development plan to increase and expand student and faculty funding programs offered through a2ru as part of overall development efforts described in the 2017 a2ru Business Plan. [12/2018]

Goal 3

Gather, Disseminate, and Advance Arts-Integrative Research.

We will catalyze and disseminate a2ru-directed research, surfacing the impact of, and best practices for, arts integration across research, teaching, learning, and community-engaged learning in higher education. We will act as investigators, aggregators, and archivists for arts and arts-integrative research projects. We will also collect data for, about, and through a2ru's partners and associations, such as research universities, governmental entities, emerging and established industries, and other nonacademic nonprofit organizations, such as libraries, museums, and presenting organizations.

As an alliance, such research positions a2ru to more clearly articulate the measurable impact of arts integration on students, faculty, academic units, individual institutions, and higher education. Our research program assists partner institutions in "making the case" for arts integration and secures support necessary for such activities on campuses. Our research will also better equip us to work collaboratively with other organizations to advocate for greater resource allocation for the arts in higher education at the state and national levels.

Objective 3A—Execute and disseminate the current Mellon Foundation-funded research (funding time frame 2015-2018).

We will develop resources tailored to the decision and activation needs of different constituencies, including administrators, faculty, and students.

ACTIONS

3A.i. Produce a "Keystone Guide" to facilitate arts integration on partner campuses.

Utilize this document and associated workshop to provide a road map for how to engage in integrative collaborative research and creative practice endeavors.
[11/2016]

3A.ii. Develop four “Shared Practice Program Modules” and associated workshops.

Produced by a2ru partners and research staff, these will address: arts and health, arts and humanities, arts and STEM, creative entrepreneurship, and creative placemaking. [Annual kickoffs begin 11/2016]

3A.iii. Transcribe Mellon Foundation-funded interviews from 2012-2015.

Undertake complete transcription of interviews from the first round of Mellon Foundation funding, making them broadly available to a2ru in a new repository. [12/2016]

3A.iv. Gather partner institution information for archive.

Collect additional documentation from partner institutions in order to update existing data and generate an easily accessible archive of supporting materials. [12/2016]

3A.v. Mine 2012-2015 Mellon Foundation-funded interviews.

Explore the full transcriptions of participant narratives for threads, themes, and other forms of qualitative sense making. [First phase roll out 1/2017]

3A.vi. Create and make available across the alliance “Partner Profiles” of each a2ru institution.

Create Partner Profiles for each a2ru institution, which will contain information gathered from interviews, peer comparisons, and other means. When appropriate, base this information on Mellon Foundation-funded 2012-2015 research, as well as new data collection. Note: not all members of a2ru were interviewed in the initial research. [6/2017]

Objective 3B—Define and build the future of a2ru’s research.

We will communicate a2ru’s role in setting a foresight-driven research agenda for the network.

ACTIONS

3B.i Produce and share the a2ru research strategy with the network.

Work with the a2ru standing Research Committee to define goals, benchmarks, and timelines for next-phase agenda beyond 3A [above] Mellon Foundation-funded agenda. This may include building on the 2015-2018 research agenda. [11/2017]

3B.ii Define a2ru’s role as research synthesizer.

Articulate a2ru’s role as convener, facilitator, catalyst, aggregator, advisor, and matchmaker. Note: a2ru’s role is not to do the primary research of its members. [Ongoing]

3B.iii Act as a resource and advisor for funding agencies.

Cultivate trusted relationships with agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Academy of Sciences. [Ongoing]

3B.iv Envision multi-university research labs.

Cultivate and promote pathways for a2ru universities to work collaboratively toward common research goals. This may be through regional cohorts and/or around shared research interests (e.g., a2ru’s four Virginia universities in discussion around arts and health). [1/2019]

3B.v Integrate arts and health and possibly other “shared practice program module” topics into a2ru’s ongoing research agenda.

Identify and prioritize which of the five identified “shared practices” module topics in the 2015-2018 funded research will be pursued and expanded. These include: arts and health; creative placemaking; S.E.A.D.; arts and humanities; and arts entrepreneurship. [1/2018]

Goal 4

Consolidate and Strengthen the Organization.

We will consolidate and strengthen the organization by delivering and communicating exceptional partner value, implementing visionary strategic and business planning, broadening member participation, and providing outstanding staff and resource management, as well as inspiring employee engagement and agency.

a2ru was built on the investment of twenty-seven founding members and two Mellon Foundation-funded research grants (2012-2015 and 2015-2018). In 2015-2016, the first major membership renewal request brought a ninety percent partner return coupled with the addition of seven new members, bringing the current partner total to thirty-five.

However, we face significant challenges including the high cost of institutional membership, challenges for sustaining member organizations, and the future need for new grants such as those obtained from the Mellon Foundation (2012-2015 and 2015-2018). We must create and implement a sustainable ten-year business and membership model to fully articulate the a2ru value proposition. Recruitment and development efforts must also be intensified to ensure that the progress made will be ongoing and maintained.

Objective 4A—Articulate the value proposition.

We will fully articulate and disseminate the mission, vision, and value proposition to our potential and current partner institutions. The value of our partnership deliverables will be measured in our ability to provide high-quality networking opportunities, student/faculty incentives and initiatives, aggregated national data on trends, exemplars, and scalable models, and advocacy tools for campus support. See Objective 3A.

ACTIONS

4A.i. Develop and maintain exceptional recruitment packets and processes in all media (print, online, person-to-person).

Packets and processes should clearly articulate the value proposition for new and continuing partners. This includes activating current members as ambassadors. [12/2016]

4A.ii. Create and implement the a2ru Amplification Communications Plan.

Extend a2ru value into and onto member campuses.

- a. Develop and maintain exceptional amplification materials for the specific and unique needs of partner students, faculty, and staff. [12/2017]
- b. Identify and cultivate key communicators to serve as skilled ambassadors for the a2ru value proposition on their campuses and beyond. [6/2017]
- c. Develop specific curricular and co-curricular communication channels (e.g., listservs, salons, newsletters, website features) to include faculty, staff, and program directors and to broaden the impact. [12/2016]

4A.iii. Aggregate and report on annual impact of a2ru partnership to all key communicators on member campuses.

Create and distribute an annual report for members and stakeholders.
[6/2017, 6/2018, 6/2019, 6/2020]

Objective 4B—Expand partner recruitment.

We will expand to a larger segment of research universities to increase geographic, global, disciplinary, and cultural diversity of the network.

ACTIONS

4B.i. Identify top prospects at leading research universities.

Assign partner cultivation to a2ru Board and committee members to increase membership. [Ongoing]

- a. Regularly refresh prospect list, identifying top ten, twenty, and thirty targets. [Ongoing]
- b. Consider inclusion of Canadian, EU International, and East Asian universities, as well as institutions that are part of SNAAP, as cultivation targets. [7/2017]
- c. Refine and enhance ancillary materials (e.g., invitation letters) and conversation protocols for use in recruitment. [Ongoing]
- d. Assign prospects to Board and committee members, and undertake regular progress and updates on recruitment. [Monthly, starting 1/2017]
- e. Utilize relevant aspects of the Mellon-funded (2015-2018) research deliverables as a recruitment tool, with possible inclusion of campus profiles, onsite workshops, and exemplars as part of packet. [7/2017]
- f. Expand traditional partner membership targeted to match the objectives of the membership model. [7/2017]

Objective 4C—Develop a business model.

We will develop a ten-year business model (2017-2027), which will include an examination of increasing membership, alternate membership models, and sustainable structures and revenue streams. We will evaluate if current membership cost is a barrier to recruitment and retention. Membership will need to be expanded (doubled) in the next three years, and the current cost of membership may need to be decreased to retain members.

ACTIONS

4C.i. Develop and implement a realistic and adequate business model.

Expand membership and develop other revenue sources to sustain a2ru for the next ten years and beyond.

- a. Establish sustainable alliance size, member duration, and annual membership fee. Possibly double or triple partnership numbers (to a total of sixty to ninety partnerships). Numbers to be identified in sustainable business model. [7/2020]
- b. Establish membership types (e.g., affiliate; multiyear vs. single year; individual; departmental; and others). [7/2017]
- c. Assess feasibility of a lower membership rate beginning in fiscal year 2019 following the second-round renewal of founding members. [7/2018]
 1. Forecast the impact on overall membership, and determine necessary growth needed to increase net revenue to offset lower rate. [3/2017]
- d. Create an affiliate member option and have affiliate members, as outlined in the ten-year business plan. [5/2017]

4C.ii. Develop a ten-year ratified business plan.

Enlist a business consultant to assist in this plan development. [2/2017]

4C.iii. Commission a funding audit.

Identify, contact, and cultivate other funders who will fund research and possible operating costs besides members and The Mellon Foundation. This will include government, nonprofit, and industry targets. [12/2016]

- a. Develop a working group to cultivate large foundation relations. [8/2016]
- b. Maximize partnerships and collaborations to share costs and to avoid duplication of resources and services. [8/2016 and ongoing]
- c. Develop a sponsorship model/plan for conferences. [2/2017 and ongoing]
- d. Diversify funding to support research activities. [12/2018]

Objective 4D—Strengthen staffing model and increase capacity by leveraging the network.

We will examine our current staffing model and adjust it to better match the needs of the organization. Our current administrative structure must be expanded. We acknowledge having limited resources and recognize that the distributed knowledge and expertise across the alliance must be leveraged to achieve the impacts stated above. Growth in this arena will be dependent on partnership cultivation, retention, and increased membership to develop a larger full-time staff.

ACTIONS

- 4D.i. Communicate opportunities, expectations, and value for durable collaboration across the alliance network to expand a2ru capacity.**
Partner with a2ru universities to create a model that leverages the knowledge, expertise, and resources on member campuses for the collective benefit of the alliance. [7/2016 and ongoing]
- 4D.ii. Optimize use of University of Michigan on-campus professional resources**
Work with University of Michigan communications, marketing, lobbying, etc. [9/2016 and ongoing]
- 4D.ii. Add staff to support members' services.**
Explore staff expansion to include position focused on member services and stewardship. [Consider this in 2017 concomitant with expanded number of members]
- 4D.iii. Add research staff as permanent staff.**
Provide hard funding for the research staff (two positions), based on increased membership and more diversified funding streams (currently grant-funded positions). [7/2018]
- 4D.iv. Add grant writer and development officer for sponsorship cultivation.**
Increase staff to support a designated grants writer and sponsorship officer. [Consider this in 2017 concomitant with expanded number of members]

Objective 4E—Update organization/governance structures and participation.

We will update and strengthen our organizational and governance structures to increase alignment with our strategic goals and increase member participation.

ACTION

4E.i. Develop a2ru’s organizational and governance capacity.

Develop specific capacity so that a2ru can achieve its strategic ambitions.

- a. Revisit bylaws to be sure they align with this five-year strategic plan. [8/2016]
- b. Review and evaluate the strategic plan annually, and conduct a midpoint review of plan. [6/2017, ongoing each June]
- c. Energize and empower standing committees to increase participation and alleviate some staff workload.
 1. Redefine committees around specific tasks relevant to Mellon Foundation 2015-2018 second-round funding and aspects of the strategic plan. [Ongoing]
 2. Frame select committees as “working groups” rather than “standing committees” to highlight focus on the achievement of specific tasks rather than perpetual oversight. [Ongoing]
 3. Develop onboarding strategy for all committees and task forces. [9/2016]
 4. Clarify committee chair expectations to include creating and adhering to action-oriented meeting agendas. [Ongoing]
 5. Identify and develop working groups and strategies to match tasks, encouraging strong and diverse partner support. [Ongoing]
 6. Develop specific onboarding procedures and training for faculty participation in a2ru task forces and committees. [11/2016]
 7. Explore student representation on committees. [9/2017]

Objective 4F—Extend the “alliance” model.

We will look beyond the academy to cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborators in industry and nonprofit organizations, because pooling strengths and expertise is key to sustainability with limited resources and to relevance outside the academy. Diversity of partners beyond the academy is key for cross-pollination and gaining multiple perspectives.

ACTIONS

4F.i. Consistently attend other national convenings.

Represent a2ru at six national convenings a year, and cultivate a2ru convenings at national conferences. [Ad hoc and ongoing]

4F.ii Affiliate status for nonacademic institutions.

Establish an affiliate status option with organizations that serve aspects of a2ru constituencies. [10/2016]

4F.iii. Develop non-university partnerships.

Identify, initiate, and continue building relationships with non-university entities (e.g., industry, museums, cultural centers, independent art schools). Invite representatives from these sectors to a2ru meetings as speakers. [12/2016]

4F.iv. Develop an external advisory board.

Cultivate an external advisory board or board of trustees to include industry and nonprofit organizations from outside the research university community. [12/2017]

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Strategy Consultants

AEA Consulting
Adrian Ellis
Brent Karpf Reidy
Sarah Bainter Cunningham, a2ru Senior Strategic Policy Advisor
Sharon Hoover, Pennsylvania State University, Planning Analyst
Andrew Schulz, Pennsylvania State University, a2ru Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Staff

Laurie Baefsky
Gabriel Harp
Michelle Krell Kydd
Debra Mexicotte
Cristina Sanchez
Lauren Fretz Thompson

Executive Committee

Barbara Korner, Chair, Pennsylvania State University
Edward Feser, Treasurer, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Leila Kinney, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Robert Palazzo, University of Alabama at Birmingham
Mónica Ponce de León, Princeton University
Luis Rico-Gutierrez, Iowa State University
William Sherman, University of Virginia
Winston Tabb, Johns Hopkins University

University of Michigan Hosting Deans

Aaron Dworkin, School of Music, Theatre and Dance (also serves on executive committee)
Christopher Kendall, School of Music, Theatre and Dance (emeritus)
David Munson, College of Engineering
Gunalan Nadarajan, Stamp School of Art & Design

At-Large

Carmon Colangelo, Washington University in St. Louis
Laurence Kaptain, University of Colorado Denver
Anthony Kolenic, University of Florida
Lucinda Lavelli, University of Florida
Dan Martin, Carnegie Mellon University
Marvin Parnes, University of Michigan (retired)

a2ru Standing Committees

Curricular/Co-Curricular and Research Committees

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ALLIANCE FOR THE ARTS
IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

University of Michigan
Duderstadt Center, Suite 1400
2281 Bonisteel Boulevard
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2094

www.a2ru.org

