



A Snapshot of Creative Placemaking in Higher Education, October 2017

This report is a follow-up to the April 2016 Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities' (a2ru) targeted survey to examine the role of creative placemaking in higher education. The purpose of the survey was to identify creative placemaking activity in higher education as grounding for the 2016 Arts Business Research Symposium, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Little is known about how creative placemaking intersects with higher education, despite a burst of activity in the last five years within government, nonprofits, community organizers, building sectors, and industry partners (fueled by significant federal, private, and industry financial incentives). This survey was an initial effort to begin this investigation.

In 2017, the Alliance partnered with the Bolz Center for Arts Administration at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to convene alliance partners and creative placemaking leaders to map the field, share best practices, and address challenges. In anticipation, we issued a follow-up survey. This paper identifies new ideas and trends, as well as offers some comparisons to the original survey.

a2ru identifies issues and trends in higher education within arts-integrative research, curricula, and creative practice, and addresses institutional hurdles to implementation. a2ru has identified creative placemaking as an important emergent and rapidly growing collective impact model, with arts at its core. As historical framing, Anne Gadwa Nicodemus notes, "Creative placemaking is a relatively new term for work that's been organically happening in neighborhoods, towns and cities all across the country for decades. Within the last few years it's received new momentum in terms of funding and policy coordination."¹ a2ru is interested in the role arts and design play in the maintenance and development of communities. Specifically, we are interested in the role higher education can play in the advancement of this type of dynamic activity, known as "creative placemaking."

Fueling Creative Placemaking in the United States

In 2010, the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned a white paper on creative placemaking by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus for the 2010 Mayors' Institute on City Design. From this white page came a working definition of creative placemaking that we will refer to in this survey report. This white paper defines creative placemaking as a space where, "partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."²

In the past five years significant national resources have been directed towards creative placemaking activities. The most robust funders of this work in the U.S. include: ArtPlace America, Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town funding opportunity. In 2014, The Kresge Foundation awarded \$21.6M to their Arts & Culture program; a large percentage of that funding is dedicated to creative placemaking. Since 2011 (five years into a 10-year initiative), the ArtPlace America National Creative Placemaking Fund has invested "\$67 million in 227 creative placemaking projects in 152 communities of all sizes across 43 states and the District of Columbia."³

1 Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, "Creative Placemaking 101 for Community Developers," LISC Institute, <http://www.instituteccd.org/news/5014>, para.3.

2 Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, "Creative Placemaking," (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2010), p 3.

3 Brodnax, Traci. "ArtPlace America Invests \$18 Million in Six Place-Based Organizations around the Country to Incorporate Arts & Culture into Their Community Development Work." News release, 2015.

Top Three Coded Themes (2016):

- 1. Education:** The most common role identified was that of education – both of students and the broader community – to serve as “centers for public discourse.” Several respondents believe creative placemaking initiatives serve as opportunities for students to have hands-on experiences in the community.
- 2. Partnerships:** To develop key partnerships with artists, community stakeholders, funders, and officials.
- 3. Research:** Opportunity to advance our understanding of creative placemaking and contribute to the “livability of communities.”



Key Takeaway(s)

By leveraging their institutional, intellectual, creative, and cultural capital, universities become valuable resources for their community partners. This partnership proves mutually beneficial, as these partnerships may aid in the educational development of students and the advancement of creative placemaking research, better embedding universities in their communities. The word “potential” arose multiple times, with many respondents acknowledging that higher education has a vital role to play in the field, and has “barely realized its potential.”

“Institutions of Higher Education are vital to their communities and are often centers for public discourse, art and design, entrepreneurial activity and program sustainability. In addition to providing diverse cultural and social resources for the community, Colleges and Universities often contribute significant economic impact. Because of these social, cultural and economic contributions to the community, universities are vital partners in creative placemaking. They also are poised to provide leadership as well.”

“Creative placemaking requires thoughtful and continuous follow-through. The obstacle is finding the right initiator who will bring people together and stay with the project through completion.”

Top Three Coded Themes (2016):

- 1. Differing Interests:** Having to balance interests of faculty, the university, city officials, and community stakeholders.
- 2. Time and Energy:** Several competing interests leave little time for new endeavors especially collaborative projects.
- 3. Articulation of Value:** The value of the arts in placemaking has not been clearly articulated to those outside the field.



Key Takeaway(s)

Creative placemaking is project-based work occurring outside of the university. This in itself complicates normal modes of operation for faculty and university administration; the geographic distance from campus, combined with multiple stakeholders involved in projects requires extra time, effort and collaborative skill to establish a successful working relationship. Furthermore this extra effort must be justified by some metric that communicates the social value of creative placemaking projects. The words “red tape,” “fear,” “silos,” and the challenges of cross-sector collaborations appeared multiple times.

“How do academic institutions prepare students to be authentic, ethical and responsible practitioners in creative placemaking?”

Where Are the Creative Placemakers in Higher Education?

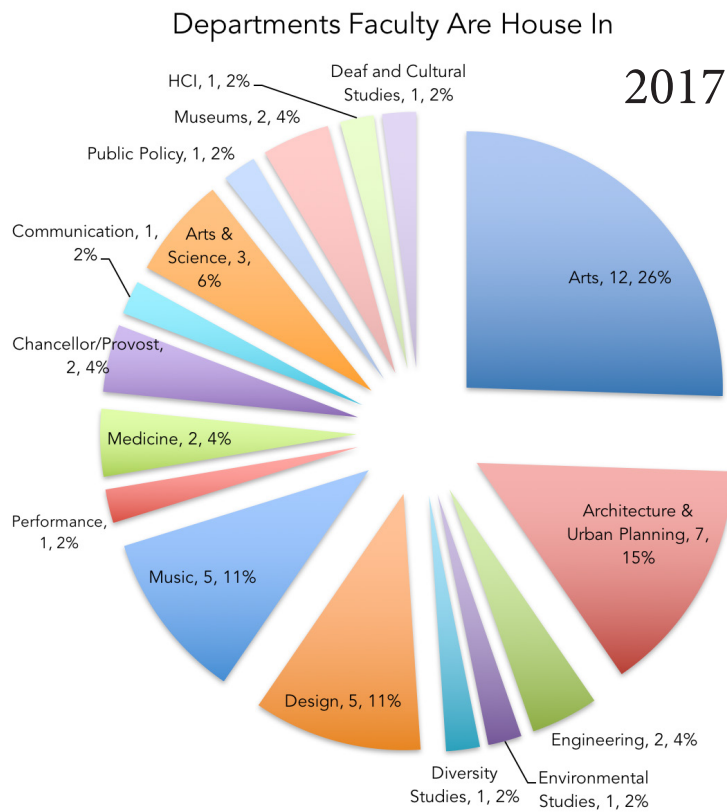


Figure 1: Out of 42 respondents, 67% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were taking place at their institutions. Figure 1 shows which departments these faculty or staff, involved in these projects, are housed.

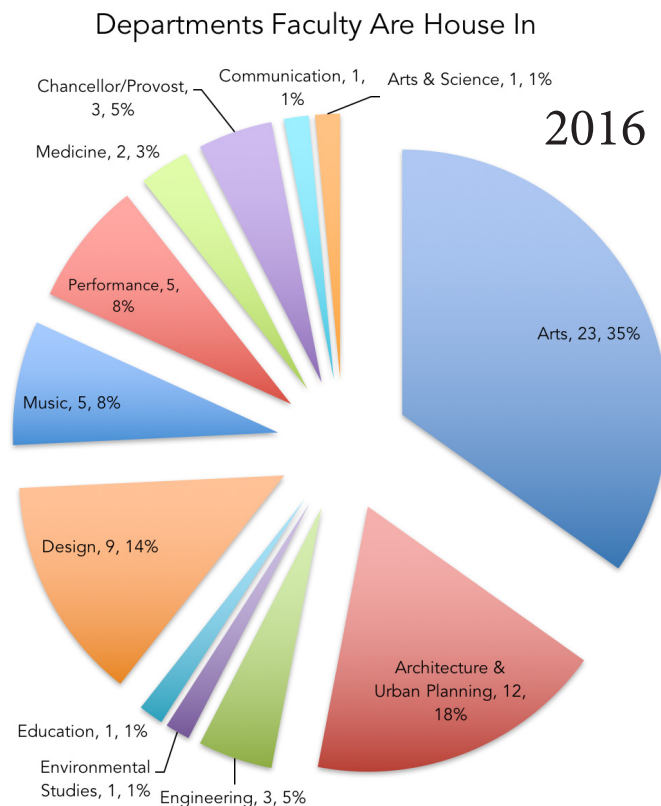
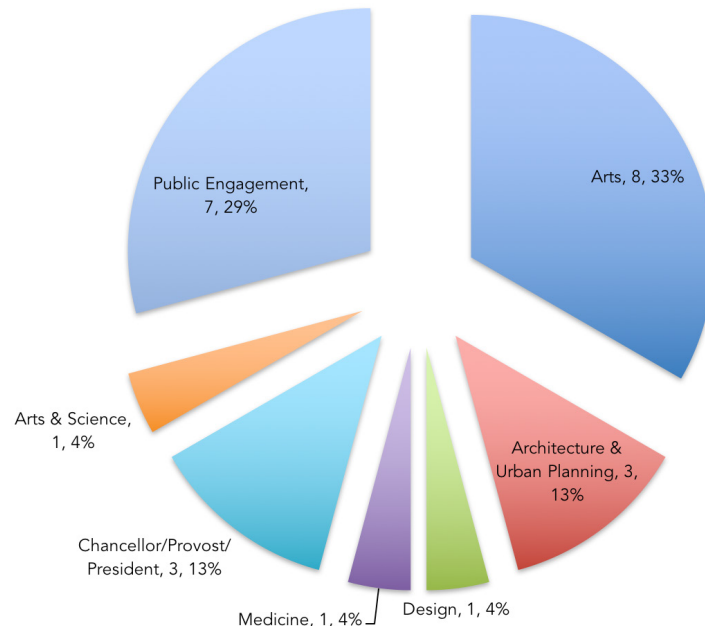


Figure 2: Out of 34 respondents, 91% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were taking place at their institutions. Figure 2 shows which departments these faculty or staff, involved in these projects, are housed.

Who on Campus Is Doing or Sponsoring the Work?

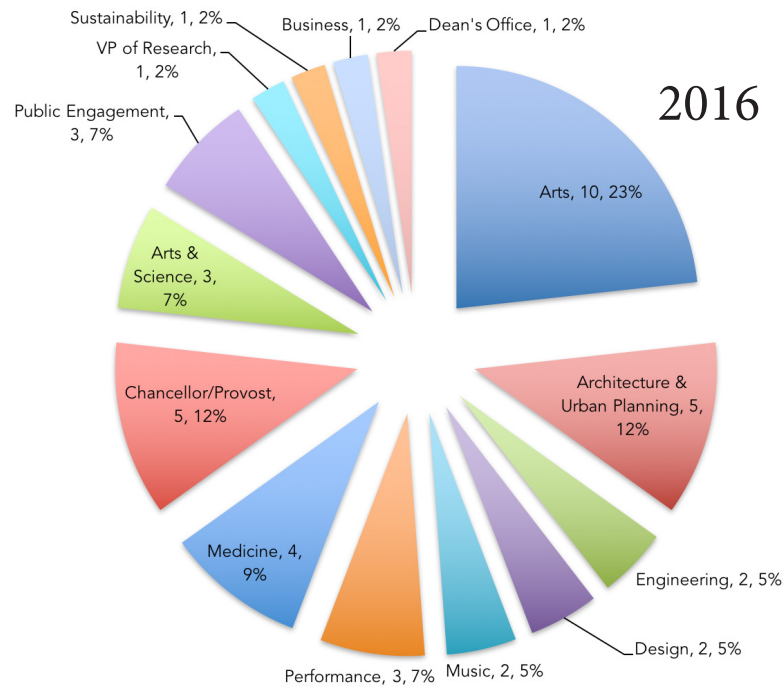
Departments Where Creative Placemaking Is Administered/Supported

2017



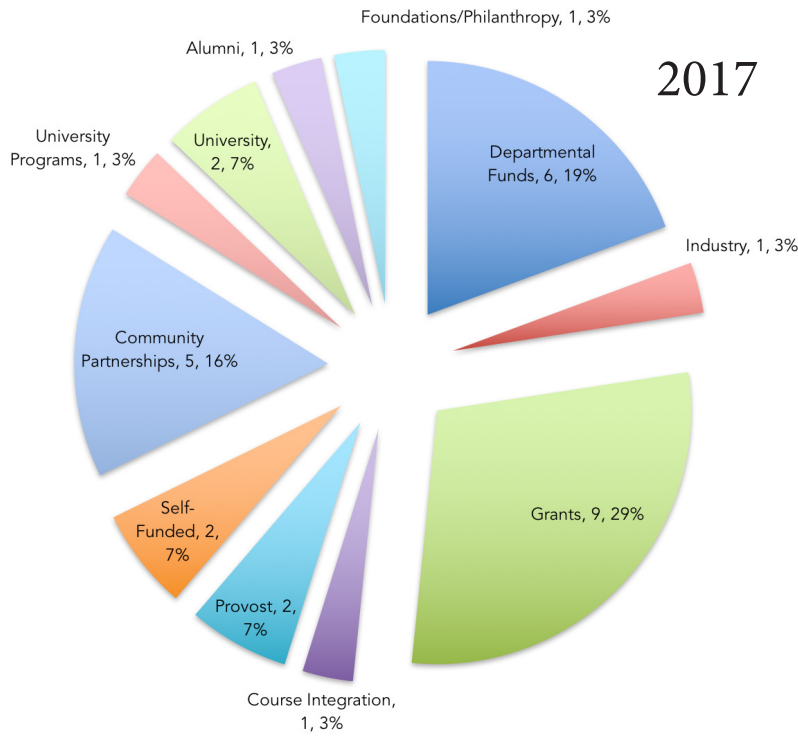
Departments Where Creative Placemaking Is Administered/Supported

2016



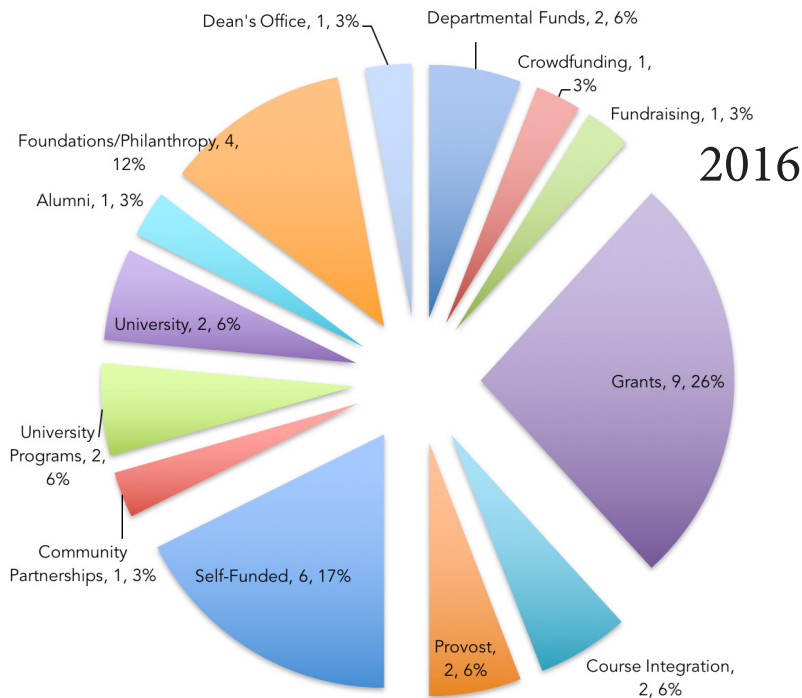
How Is Creative Placemaking Being Funded?

How Is the Work Funded



2017 **Figure 3:** Out of 32 respondents, 59% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were being funded at their institutions.

How Is the Work Funded



2016 **Figure 4:** Out of 35 respondents, 77% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were being funded at their institutions. Figure 4 shows the breakdown for how these projects are funded. Grants are the most common method of funding. Self-funded is the second most common, meaning that respondents identified faculty salaries as a common funding source for creative placemaking projects.

Cities Impacted by Creative Placemaking in Higher Education

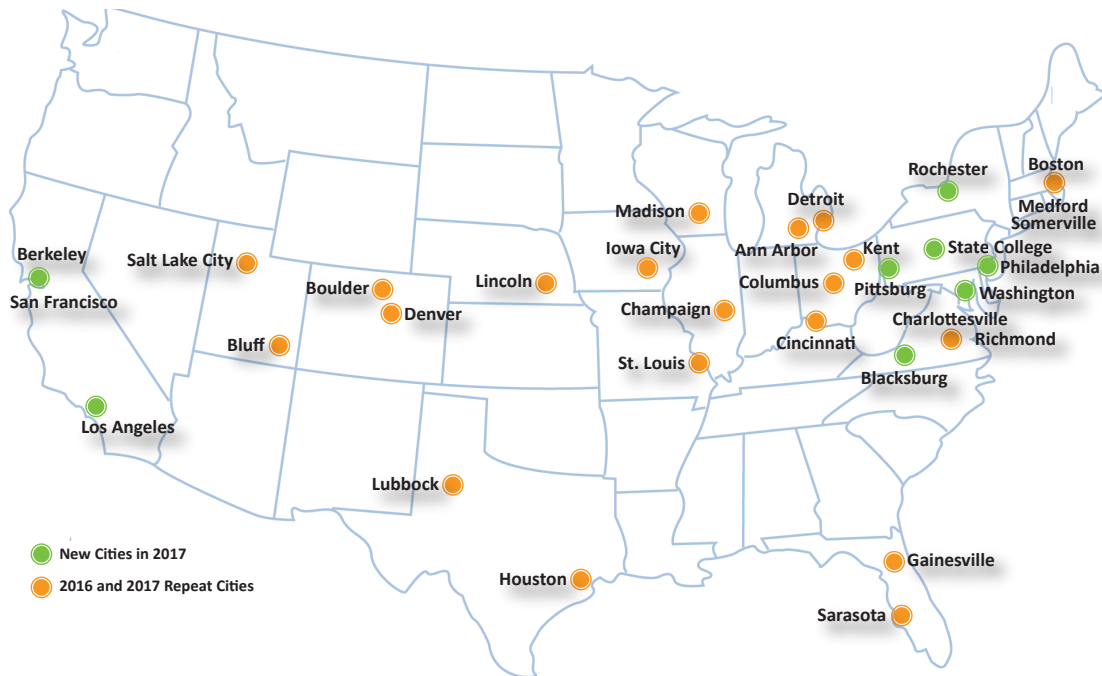


Figure 4: Survey respondents identified more than 30 cities where their universities or colleagues were involved in creative placemaking projects. Almost all cities were in direct proximity to the research university respondents.

Survey Participants

We received 42 responses from 22 organizations.

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Boston University | Northwestern University | University of Houston |
| California College of the Arts | Penn State University | University of Michigan |
| Carnegie Mellon University | Rochester Institute of Technology | University of Texas at Dallas |
| Iowa State University | San Francisco Art Institute | University of Virginia |
| MIT | The Ohio State University | University of Wisconsin |
| National Endowment for the Arts | University of Cincinnati | Virginia Tech |
| Northeastern University | University of Colorado at Boulder | Washington University in St. Louis |
| Northern Illinois University | University of Florida | |

Methods and Analysis

This survey was designed in coordination with Arizona State University's Herberger Institute. The survey was sent to 35 a2ru partners, and was open from April 20-24, 2016, allowing four days for completion and submission. We received 35 responses from 19 universities in the a2ru network.

The follow-up survey had the same questions as well as some additional questions and was conducted starting August 2 to October 6, 2017. We received 42 responses from 22 organizations.

Survey responses were analyzed with the NVivo and Dedoose qualitative software package. We ran word frequencies, visualized as word clouds for each question; setting the minimum word length at 3 letters, identifying additional stop words, as well as stemming word responses. We coded each open-ended response into discrete categories to help identify emerging themes from respondents.

Next Steps

Survey results indicate there is wide participation in creative placemaking efforts by faculty, students, and program leaders in higher education. These efforts are focused in the communities geographically aligned with universities. There is consensus that this work is challenging and necessary, as well as barely realized and minimally supported. There is an express desire by respondents to expand the role of higher education institutions in creative placemaking. The responses do not specifically identify if national funding organizations are advancing projects their universities are involved in; they do point to some investment being made by universities internally.

This was a very quick, targeted survey. Our broader goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the intersection and challenges of higher education within creative placemaking in order to better connect the faculty, students and staff to:

1. The tools and resources to foster better partner communication and collaborations, and reduce institutional barriers.
2. Identified funding initiatives.
3. The ability to foster the necessary relationships and collaborations that help alleviate the time and energy pressures often experienced by faculty and staff.

a2ru will develop a Creative Placemaking Program Module in 2017, building on these findings. We received many comprehensive content-rich responses. Anonymized responses from this survey are available upon request.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the a2ru network of leaders who provided detailed and thoughtful responses to this survey. This survey report was created and processed by: Greg Esser, Arizona State University's Herberger Institute, survey design; Edgar Cardenas, a2ru, comprehensive analysis and data visualization; and Laurie Baefsky and Maryrose Flanigan Porter, a2ru, data translation and synthesis.