

## 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 Nicdemus 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."<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup>

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."<sup>3</sup>

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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Since 2011, the NEA Our Town funding opportunity has awarded 256 grants, with \$21M distributed in all 50 states plus Washington, D.C. This is a total of \$109.6M distributed across the United States for creative placemaking efforts in a five-year span (2011-16).

It isn't definitively known how many of these grants involve higher education partners, with the exception of Our Town grantees. 39 of the 256 Our Town grantees have identified partners in higher education. This constitutes \$2.9M in funding, or 14% of grants awarded between 2011-15 intersecting with higher education.<sup>4</sup> Because the main U.S. creative placemaking grantors fund organizations and not individuals, individual efforts are not being reflected through these funding channels. Our working assumption for conducting this survey, was that much of the work in creative placemaking being done in higher education is being done ad hoc by faculty, program directors and students, and isn't being reflected in the tax form 1099's and published reporting documents of these funders.

#### **Key Questions:**

- What is the role of higher education in creative placemaking and how is the field defined?
- Who is involved in creative placemaking in higher education?
- How are projects funded?
- What are the key challenges for higher education involvement in creative placemaking?

The following results represent the data collected and analyzed in an effort to identify the most prominent themes respondents noted.

# Survey Questions and Responses:

# What is your definition of creative placemaking?

### Top Three Coded Themes (2017):

- 1. Arts to Advance Community Goals: The inclusion of arts and design in service of realizing community goals.
- 2. Multi-Sector Development: Understanding the arts need to be included but also recognizing the collaboration with other sectors, public and academic.

### 3. Thoughtful Placemaking/Placekeeping:

More attention paid to intentional, reflective, and ethical interventions in Creative Placemaking.



### Key Takeaway(s)

While most people have a conceptualization of CP as the inclusion of arts and design in the development of community spaces, more mention has been made around ethical methods towards placemaking and placekeeping, and thoughtful intervention. This year participants mentioned of the NEA guide, ArtPlace, ArtScape, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation as references to good conceptualizations of CP. There is still some slippage however in CP and if it references the campus community or community at large. Some respondents did not know the term, others desire a better articulated definition of the term. Some respondents focused on CP as an opportunity for community embedded student service learning.

<sup>4</sup> Sunil Iyengar, "Office of Research and Analysis," personal communication with Laurie Baefsky (National Endowment for the Arts, 2016).

"Higher education has a critical role to play as it may be one of the few secured spaces for critical reflection. However, there are many ethical considerations to examine and discern when seeking to work with communities."

### Top Three Coded Themes (2016):

- 1. **Development:** This theme represented both economic and community development.
- 2. Activating Places: The use of arts and culture as a strategy for the betterment of a community.
- **3. Identity:** The creation or further articulation of community identity.



### Key Takeaway(s)

There is no agreed upon definition of creative placemaking. Responses align overall with creative placemaking as defined by Markusen and Gadwa (see page 1). Multiple institutions contacted the a2ru office during the survey period, not understanding the term "creative placemaking." A few respondents had no definition, or had a negative response calling it a "buzzword," or "slogan."

"Universities can lead by example and model ways to transform space working with key partnerships with artists, community constituents, funders and officials." What do you view as the current or potential role(s) of higher education in creative placemaking?

#### Top Three Coded Themes (2017):

- 1. Facilitating Community Engagement: Convening and facilitating conversations between stakeholders
- 2. Aid in the Integration of Sectors: Higher Education can play a critical role in facilitating the interdisciplinary components of placemaking
- 3. Provide Intellectual and Creative Resources: Faculty, students, grant writers... The focus expanded from research to a broader categorization of endeavors universities are engaged in that are of value.



### Key Takeaway(s)

There was still a strong acknowledgment that universities have significant institutional, intellectual, creative and cultural capital, however the ordering of priorities has shifted from a resource provider to being an agent in CP. Respondents voiced the need for universities to be embedded in CP process as a elemental mechanism for activating the capital they have.

"Higher education is a reservoir of information and ideas essential for creative placemaking because it is the site of research that is not solely profit-driven. Creative placemaking is an inherently interdisciplinary activity; universities themselves could be regarded as an element of a creatively constructed place."

#### Top Three Coded Themes (2016):

- 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."

# Other than financial resources, what are the greatest obstacles to your work in the creative placemaking space?

### Top Three Coded Themes (2017):

- 1. Finding the Right Collaborators: Identified as a critical mechanism in both successful CP initiatives (having the right collaborators) and CP challenges (not finding the right collaborators).
- 2. Building Trust: Community-University relationships are not as strong as they should be. Universities need to put in the time and effort to nurture the relationships with stakeholders.
- 3. Time and Energy: Lack of time and issues around timing have arisen as constant challenges as well. Several competing interests leave little time for new endeavors especially collaborative projects.



### Key Takeaway(s)

Misaligned incentives. Institutional incentives and support structures are misaligned with projects that aren't specifically aligned traditional modes of academic work. Several respondents felt that CP is undervalued by the university and their colleagues. Faculty committed to these efforts are not supported by institutional incentives like promotion and tenure. Respondents noted that CP's value has not been articulated well. Several respondents mentioned that they have found success in their efforts by simply doing the work and being persistent. There is too much talk about how the projects will come to fruition and often just beginning and keeping at it provides the necessary inertia.

#### **Things Not Mentioned Often but Worth Noting:**

- The role of medicine, public health, and disabilities should be incorporated into thoughtful placemaking, 1. i.e. health concerns are critical to CP.
- The need for social scientists especially if more thoughtful action is necessary in the development, 2. facilitation, and implementation of CP projects.

"This type of work, and all community outreach and engagement work, often does not fit into traditional forms of research, scholarship, and creative activity in the academic realm...."

"Creative placemaking requires thoughtful and continuous followthrough. 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?" "Once potential collaborators [hear] what the possibilities might be, they become intrigued. But you have to find those people, those projects and have a chance to become part of those conversations."

Are there creative placemaking initiatives taking place in your community that you would like to be part of but have found difficult to become engaged with? If so, what have been the challenges?

#### Top Three Coded Themes:

- 1. No: This theme arose most often, but for some respondents, it's unclear if their response was *no* in reference to the idea that there weren't any initiatives they wanted to be part of, or that they didn't find it difficult to become engaged in the initiatives.
- 2. Time and Energy: Finding the time and having the energy to work on projects that often don't get the same level or recognition as traditional university work.
- **3.** Funding: Finding money to maintain these long-term projects and ongoing relationships.

#### Other common themes

Connecting with collaborators, differing interests of groups, articulation of value, geographical distance, and bureaucracy. Other key factors also included navigating local town-to-gown politics, and articulating the value proposition.



#### Key Takeaway(s)

Creative placemaking work is minimally incentivized by institutional structures, therefore these projects are often extra work that faculty must take on. Providing some logistical support structures and funding would lessen the two most significant barriers to this kind of work.

## Where Are the Creative Placemakers in Higher Education?

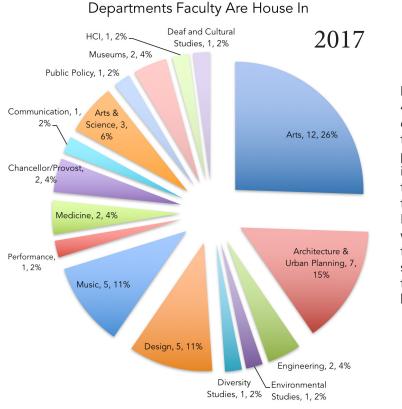
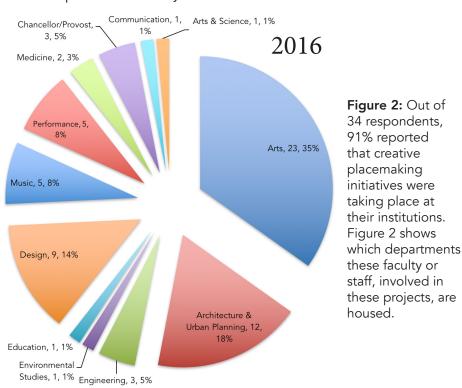
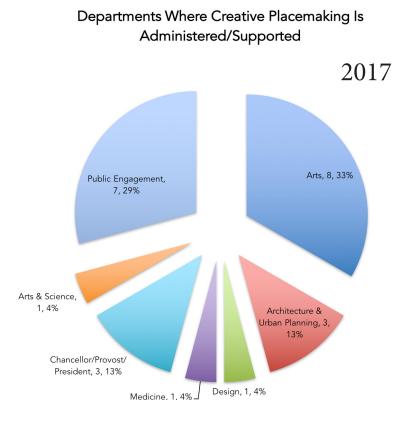


Figure 1: Out of 42 respondents, 67% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were taking place at their institutions. Figure 1 shows which departments these faculty or staff, involved in these projects, are housed.

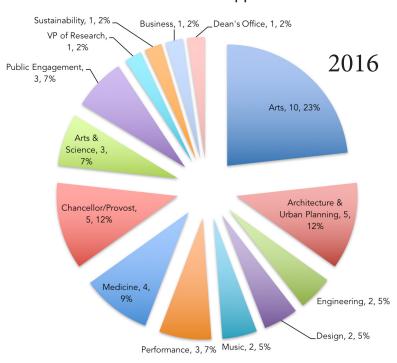


Departments Faculty Are House In

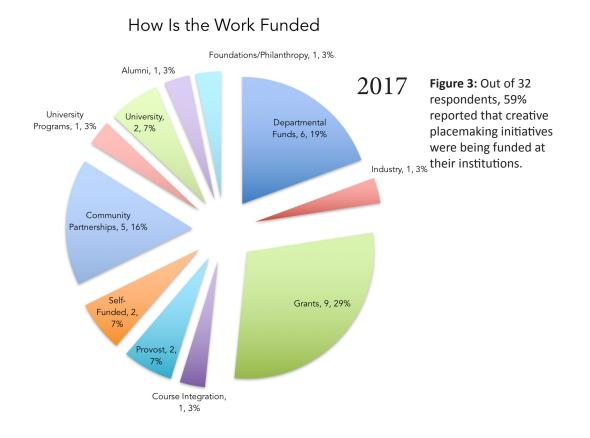
## Who on Campus Is Doing or Sponsoring the Work?



#### Departments Where Creative Placemaking Is Administered/Supported



## How Is Creative Placemaking Being Funded?



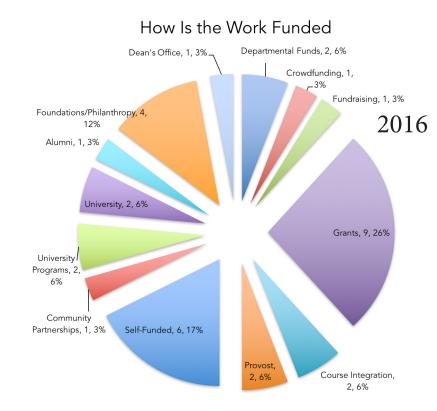
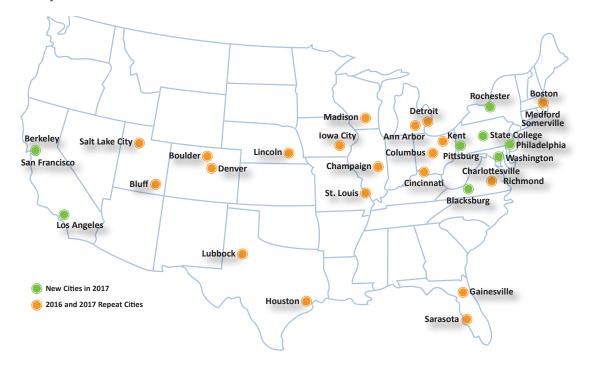


Figure 4: Out of 35 respondents, 77% reported that creative placemaking initiatives were being funded at their institutions. Figure 4 shows the breakdown for how these projects are funded. Grants are the most common method of funding. Self-funded is the second most common, meaning that respondents identified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

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.