

Leadership Academy

Creative Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Group

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Science has proven that the human brain requires stimulation to maintain and improve function.(Schmiedek et al., 2010; Belleville, 2008; Willis et al. 2006). Additionally, several recent studies have shown that engagement in the arts and arts integrated activities improves academic abilities, as well as mental and social health amongst students. Creative activity and divergent thinking, which is a benefit of participation in the arts, is a benefit which is positively reflected in all people not just “artists” or arts practitioners. Graduate students, while constantly engaged, generally, do not consistently experience stimulus outside of their area of study. Our group set out to develop an interdisciplinary organization that supports creative expression, brain training games, and arts-integrated activities for graduate and professional students. During the Leadership Academy we:

I. Made contact with the University Center for Interdisciplinarity: Our first thought was to identify entities on campus which were already doing the work we were interested in. We found that there are no graduate student organizations which serve this purpose but that Michigan State has developed a University Center for Interdisciplinarity. With a little bit of research, we determined that this is an organization with which we should make contact. We did not receive a response until after the completion of the academy but we hope to meet with a representative soon.

II. Began the formal process of starting a graduate student organization: We committed to completing a draft of an organization constitution, which is a requirement of starting an

on-campus organization. While this sounds pretty simple, this was no simple feat. The hardest part, it seems, is coming up with a name that is equally representative of the organization's creators and its mission.

III. Identified areas of focus: We decided that our organization would focus on four areas and that each member of the group would develop/define the area of engagement:

A. Advocacy: How can we advocate for the integration of “creativity” into our work, are their policies that affect us that we should know about it? ex: arts in higher education

B. K-12 outreach: How can we use what we are learning through the arts to build relationships with local k-12 students and support their aspirations?

C. Professional development

1. CV/Professional ↔ Artist Development Perhaps there are career opportunities that go beyond traditional industry parameters. How can we support the exploration and career preparedness of our colleagues?

2. Sneak Pee(a)k: Company “InFocus” Presentation: Much like the previous bullet, there are plenty of career opportunities that go beyond traditional career pathways. This is an opportunity for graduate students to explore opportunities within different types of creative industry organizations which broadens career opportunity.

D. Student support (social, stress management, etc..)

1. Game Night – let’s exercise our brains.

2. Creative Expression Night

Creating an organization is not as easy as we anticipated. We experienced many bumps and barriers to reach this point. Yet, our work continues. Many of the things we wanted to ac-

comply simply did not happen within the time frame of the leadership academy. Still, we hope to be a fully functioning organization by fall.