

## **Makers meetings: Exploring the role of creative work in the undergraduate curriculum**

*Proposing faculty: Heather Corcoran and Todd Decker*

Critical thinking, reading, and writing, scientific process, and mathematical reasoning are central tenets of a liberal arts education at Washington University. The development of creative work—including invention, experimentation, authorship, delivery, interpretation, and dissemination—pushes students to think expansively about what is possible, hone the experimental, and practice a craft of making, ultimately, to make work public through performance, exhibition, or publication. Collaboration is common in many areas of creative work, as described by former WUSTL faculty member Keith Sawyer in his book *Group Genius*. In addition, because of the public nature of much of its dissemination, creative work is often tied to community partnership, potentially linking making to larger university efforts to impact the St Louis region. Making teaches students a set of priorities and values that are adjacent to the critical, analytical, scientific, and historical methods, all of which are more established in the Arts & Sciences BA. At Washington University, the activity of making creative works—writing, coding, music performance and composition, dance, theater, film, design, architecture, art—is a particular and longstanding strength, but one that is spread across multiple schools and departments. It is currently difficult for students to perceive the full range and possibilities for interdisciplinary making and difficult for faculty to build collaborative bridges. This group seeks to formalize a dialogue across relevant departments and schools, in order to build new opportunities for all students to learn some form of “making” in the undergraduate curriculum. Specifically, in this set of conversations, we will seek to define “making” as a principle of a liberal arts education at Washington University, create a list of current courses that fit the criteria of the definition, and make recommendations for new courses to expand the impact of making across the curriculum.

At a moment when Washington University seeks new opportunities to define its excellence and to continue its powerful trajectory of growth, this effort is meant to build on a contemporary, but diluted university strength in a way that is unifying. The goal is to overcome structural factors that prevent interdisciplinary making from crossing department or school “silos,” leveraging current work and promoting new collaborative courses across schools. It is envisioned that at least one of these courses will be a gateway introduction course that allows students to see and compare multiple kinds of making, and that other recommended courses will be specific collaborations between sets of two makers in different fields—such as computer science and music, or design and creative writing, or dance and visual art.

Faculty likely to participate in this BYOI group include co-planners Heather Corcoran (Art/Design, Sam Fox School) and Todd Decker (Music); Julia Walker (English and Performing Arts); Mark Rollins (Performing Arts and University College); Ron Cytron (Computer Science); Liz Kramer (Socially Engaged Practice, Fox); Bruce Lindsey (Architecture); David Schuman (Creative Writing); Penina Acayo (Social Impact Design/Fox); Rob Morgan (Theater); Christopher Stark (Music). Six have formally confirmed; a subsection of this group has met once already. We anticipate gathering for lunch and/or coffee.