

Strategic Plan Implementation Team Activity 38 update (Spring 2022)

After its first meeting, the team proposed the following change in the language of Key Activity 38, which more accurately reflects the objectives of the Strategic Plan:

ORIGINAL

“By June 2025: Engage Arts Alive SDSU to display 10 permanent outdoor representations of diverse communities (such as statues, murals, sculptures) across the university campuses.”

PROPOSED

“By June 2025: Enlist faculty and students from selected arts curricula to design and to facilitate 10 placemaking projects across the university campuses that reflect our diverse community.”

“Placemaking” is the current and preferred term among arts practitioners for transforming a space to reflect the values of and serve to inspire the community inhabiting that space. The activity could certainly generate such works as sculptures and murals (as well as a host of other expressive media that interest our faculty and students), but unlike a commissioned work, where an artist would be charged with developing the work independently and then departing, a "placemaking" project would deliberately include local stakeholders at various stages in the creative process as a way to sustain engagement. In other words, "placemaking" not only beautifies the space, but also strengthens the community.

There are many pathways for achieving the objectivity of this key activity, and the faculty and students of the School of Art + Design, the School of Music & Dance, and the School of Theatre, Television, and Film, along with the Arts Alive SDSU team, have the aesthetic sensibilities, technical skills, and enthusiasm necessary to enrich our campus environment with compelling placemaking projects. It should be noted, however, that most, if not all, of these projects could and should be integrated into the curriculum of different academic departments and involve as many students, faculty, and staff as possible. The main challenges are securing funding to support sustained residencies for guest artists, institutional restrictions on painting university structures (some of these restrictions have been based on standard practices of public image and some relate to maintenance costs), and having sufficient time to integrate the proposed projects with curricular and extracurricular programming, all of which are essential to achieve the level of sustained engagement and impact of an effective placemaking project. An issue also emerged in relation to the proposal for a student designed banner to commemorate the achievements of Ellen Ochoa, which requires us to balance student skill and passion with the priorities of URAD and StratComm, who must navigate donor and alumni preferences.

When considering projects, there should be a clear distinction between a placemaking activity, which produces art through community engagement, and a commissioned artwork, which pays an artist to create work independent of our community. The advantage of a commission is the professional quality of the work and the speed at which it can be designed and executed, but there is relatively little investment in the community, which contradicts our stated commitment to inclusivity. Although funding is an important factor with both enterprises, placemaking also requires much more time to cultivate relationships with students, faculty, staff, and community members. A logistical advantage to placemaking is the university's pre-existing infrastructure, which provides a network of human, financial, and physical resources that are closely bound to an academic curriculum and auxiliary programming. By deliberately integrating arts activities into this curricular and extracurricular network, we could ensure wide participation, share resources, and implicitly confer institutional value on arts engagement by granting credit to students as part of their program of study and to faculty as part of their teaching load.

It is crucial that all placemaking projects are collaborative, not only in terms of design and execution, but also in terms of human and budgetary resources. Arts Alive is proficient at facilitating interdisciplinary partnerships across academic departments and student centers, including the production of campus-wide art and culture festivals, and they can offer suggestions for best practices of arts integration. However, in its current construction, Arts Alive consists of two full-time personnel—a professor and a staff member—and five student workers and interns who work less than 10 hours per week. They are dedicated to contributing to this “Key Activity,” but the current workload is unsustainable, and the time, effort, and resources being directed toward these valuable placemaking projects are compromising their ability to deliver their main programming at optimal levels (the Interdisciplinary Collaborative Teaching Program and the Discovery Series, both of which are high impact programs based in the curriculum).

COMPLETED PROJECTS

1. Social Justice Mural Project I (2021–22)

Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, the School of Art and Design, and Arts Alive SDSU distributed a CFP for interdisciplinary teams of students and/or alumni to propose mural designs based on social justice issues. We selected five teams who were awarded \$1500 each for their art to be created and installed at various campus locations.

Artists: Mila Eliashev, Departments of Women Studies and Philosophy
Nicole Eliashev, Department of Political Science, Minor in Sustainability
Margaret Danhof, Department of Psychology

Location: SDSU Aztec Recreation Center

Description: In celebration of diversity and inclusivity, this mural emphasizes the skateboarding culture of helping one another and being in a space that is free of judgement. It focuses on the artists’ belief in the importance of inclusivity, community, and individual pride.

2. Social Justice Mural Project II (2021–22)

Artists: Sergio Ojeda, Department of Education/Psychology (SDSU-IV)
Alma Rosio Medina, Department of Education (SDSU-IV)
Samantha Ramirez, Department of Education (SDSU-IV)

Location: Imperial Valley Campus, SDSU

Description: This mural is a virtual representation of the many of the obstacles and barriers on the Latinx/Chicano community when trying to obtain a Bilingual education, depicting ways that the education system has silenced Latinx students. Featuring quotes from Gloria Anzaldua, the artists wanted to show the real consequences of silencing *nuestra lengua*, as well as celebrating diverse linguistic identities.

3. Social Justice Mural Project III (2021–22)

Artists: Itzel Ortuno, alumnus, School of Art and Design (Graphic Design)
Jonathan Villamar, alumnus, School of Art and Design (Graphic Design)
Margarita Marroquin, alumna, School of Art and Design (Graphic Design)

Location: SDSU Student Union

Description: In appreciation of the artists’ experience of meeting people from all over the world while studying at SDSU, this team chose to use papel picado to indicate a celebration of community. The cut outs position SDSU as the heart of San Diego and a center of diversity, specifically acknowledging Dreamers. A quote hidden in the lacey cut outs serves as a reminder that together, more can be achieved.

4. Social Justice Mural Project IV (2021–22)

Artists: Johnny Villamar, Alumnus, School of Art and Design
Itzel Ortuno, Alumna, School of Art and Design

Location: Art North Exterior Wall

Description: Subjects like equality, reform, justice, respect, and diversity can all be seen coming

out of the megaphone of this interactive mural, as viewers can pose next to the megaphone. The artists' goal of empowering the SDSU community to affect change in our own unique ways is increased through a #makeyourvoiceheard campaign on social media.

5. Social Justice Mural Project V (2021–22)

Artists: George Shaffer, Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Eirein Gaile Harn, Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Location: Love Library, 24/7 Study Area

Description: Representing the Filipinx-American struggle to have stories of their history heard, this mural recognizes social justice movements in the United States and a visual history of Filipinx labor. The text, “Makibaka! Huwag Matakot!” (which translates to “Struggle! Don’t be afraid!”) was and continues to be used as a rallying cry for Filipinx social movements.

6. Black Resource Center Mural (Fall 2021)

Internationally renowned graffiti artist Maxx Moses met with students and staff of the Black Resource Center to examine their new media space and discuss the tone and style of an original mural, which was installed in September 2021.

7. Black in Crimson and Black Mural (Fall 2021)

This project, which was facilitated by the Division of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity in collaboration with the Prison Arts Collective in the School of Art and Design, was installed in the Infodome of the SDSU Library.

8. Native American Art Benches (Spring 2022)

With designs based on Native and Indigenous themes, fourteen wooden benches in the SDSU Mediterranean Garden were painted by students under faculty and staff supervision in two classes in the Department of American Indian Studies (“Indigenous Women and Arts”) and the Native Resource Center.

9. Arts Alive SDSU Artist in Residence: Zeal Harris (2020–2021)

Zeal Harris, a professional visual artist who specializes in Black history and culture, met with various academic units and student centers during 2020–2021 to discuss arts activism and racial justice, which informed her creation of an original artwork. Arts Alive SDSU also produced a 25-minute documentary that features reflections by program participants, original student artwork, and the unveiling of Harris’s new painting, “Recipe for Acorn Grits,” which was installed in the foyer of the PSFA building.

10. Arts Alive SDSU Artist in Residence: Vincent Whipple (2021–2022)

An interdisciplinary advisory committee (including representatives from American Indian Studies, the Native Resource Center, the Native American Student Association, the School of Music and Dance, and Arts Alive SDSU) selected Artist in Residence Vincent Whipple, a professional musician and dancer with extensive experience working with the Native community, to work with students, faculty, staff, and community members. In Spring 2022, Whipple designed and produced the “SDSU Native Music and Dance Conference,” which included performances and panel discussions.

11. Arts Alive SDSU Artist in Residence: Herbert Siguenza (2022–2023)

An interdisciplinary advisory committee (including representatives from Chicana/o Studies, the Latinx Resource Center, the Undocumented Resource Center, the School of Theatre, Television, and Film, and Arts Alive SDSU) selected Artist in Residence Herbert Siguenza, a professional artist, dramatist, and filmmaker, with extensive experience working with the Latinx community, to work with students, faculty, staff, and community members.