



Dear Academic Studio Families,

Welcome to the 2016-2017 school year! This will be another exciting year for all of us. We will be building from strength. We will be spending more time refining and improving versus innovating and inventing.

Last year was a challenging year. We spent a lot of time and energy talking about taking things away from NOCCA through the enacting of budget cuts by the state. I am proud that we did not have to sacrifice any of the incredible members of our faculty and administrative teams to accomplish this work.

For example, I had the chance to teach a group of seniors in Academic Studio last December and we studied city planning in New Orleans. This happened to be the same week as the conversation about the removal of the statues. The task I gave to the students was to not think about taking away, but rather advocate about what they wanted to add to New Orleans. NOCCA is in much the same space and place- I look forward to ending our conversations about what gets removed and move the dialogue forward as to what our next year together and the decade to come should look like.

I said this last year, but I think it is important to say it again: ***NOCCA, like art and life itself, has no real defined beginning and no real defined end.*** Every year we have a first day of school and a last day of school. Like a show's opening and closing nights, like the plates arriving full and leaving empty at the end of a course, like the gallery exhibit with its opening and closing night, like the story, like the song- they all have a beginning and end that we insinuate. The creator of the work decides and defines those parameters.

But the school year, like the art, does not begin on the first day. Thought and preparation by faculty and student are prelude to that first day. Faculty and student alike have ideas which have percolated over the summer and generated questions that need to be researched and discussed. And, like art, the school year does not end on the last day. The art and thoughts generated at NOCCA should and did linger through the summer the way the notes of Jazzfest hide and show themselves in the memories of the moments.

We are going to continue the work to expand the ideas of plurality, to really take advantage of having different young people with different perspectives in this one incredible place. We are good at putting people in proximity of one another, but cannot grow comfortable or complacent with what we have accomplished to date. We will continue to work on the question of how we use our collective differences to our advantage and make all of us better through our individual and collective work.

For those of you families that are entering your first year at NOCCA, welcome and we look forward to many more.

For those of you back for your second, third year or very exciting Senior Year, we look forward to continuing to learn and grow with you.

In service,

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