



EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD: Art can strengthen education, transform lives



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At Governors State University, art is fundamental to human life. GSU is not an art school, but we better fulfill our mission as a comprehensive public university by our conscious commitment to the artistic experience.

The GSU campus is an outdoor art museum— the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park. Our art gallery hosts numerous events. Paintings, collages, photographs, and ceramics by GSU art students are on display, with a juried, rotating exhibit of student art in the President's Conference Room. In addition, GSU hosts the best in the performing arts in our 1,100-seat theater.

Students, faculty, staff, and community members study, work and play in the midst of art. In 2014, when we open our first student residence, Prairie Place, students will go about their daily tasks with art as an integrated part of their environment.

The GSU campus was a place for artistic achievement even before the university's founding in 1969. In the mid-1960s, when he was a young man, Lew Manilow, the great Chicago art patron, invited artists to join him at his family's farmhouse on what is now the university campus. Mark di Suvero, the internationally acclaimed sculptor, built what many believe to be his best work, "Yes, for Lady Day," during a summer stay in Park Forest South (now University Park).

True to our mission and history, GSU is committed to art as pervasive, not peripheral. My April 14 column used the same phrase — pervasive, not peripheral — for civic engagement. At GSU, we believe in curricular integration — infusing important elements

of life into courses and activities, rather than proliferating separate courses to cover these ideas in isolation. For example, if business students become conscious of the art around them, they will be more likely to think in innovative, non-linear patterns. When future teachers participate in the visual and performing arts, they will be more effective in teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Art is not a frill; it is an essential part of the curriculum — and of life.

When outstanding contemporary poet Nikki Giovanni visited the GSU campus in fall 2012, she fully validated art as a matter of life and death. Giovanni teaches at Virginia Tech, where, on April 16, 2007, a senior shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 others before committing suicide.

Soon after this massacre, the Virginia Tech president called upon Giovanni to create a program of healing for the campus. Giovanni developed a series of artistic events, which have continued throughout the years. Art is essential to psychological and physical health.

It is ironic that demands for education to get back to the basics frequently involve limiting the study of the studio and performing arts. Governors State University is committed to opposing that destructive trend.

Our goal is for the entire university to be open to the power of art to strengthen education and to transform lives.