



October 24, 2018

To: The Faculty and Staff

From: Lorenzo Candelaria (guest author, Dean of the School of the Arts)

Dear Colleagues:

Reflecting on nearly twenty years of professional life in public higher education, I find it remarkable that every institution I have served is known--nationally--for something *big*.

At the University of Texas at Austin, for better or worse, it was football. (Go Longhorns!) At the University of Texas at El Paso, it was an inspiring mission of access and excellence in a severely under-resourced border community. Its peerless impact on our growing "21st-century demographic" earned Diana Natalicio, its president of thirty years, a spot on *Time* magazine's list of 100 most influential people in the world, and *Fortune* magazine's list of the world's top 50 leaders.

Here at Purchase--which I shamelessly consider the envy of the SUNY system--it is the arts. Among SUNY's sixty-four (*sixty-four!*) colleges and universities, Purchase is known for something--it has an identity. Purchase is an arts school. And not *just* an arts school, but a *public* arts school of the highest caliber--something to be embraced and extolled at a time when the arts in American public education are perceived as expensive, extravagant, and--ultimately--expendable.

Purchase stands--uniquely in my view--as a bulwark against those who find the arts an acceptable pass-time only for the lucky few with time and money enough to enjoy them. That is what attracted me here. Now, in my third month as Dean of the School of the Arts, I have not been disappointed.

My love for Purchase--and its identity as a public arts school--is rooted in seminal experiences that forever transformed my life. I was born into a family that, at best, would be described as "working poor" today. My dad trucked eighteen-wheelers while mom held the fort down at home. We got by, but barely. Not a single person known to me was, or had ever been, an artist, musician, actor, or a dancer. My best shot at a different life was the military. As a kid--with some guidance from my dad--I aspired to go to college, get commissioned as a second lieutenant in the army, and become a demolitions expert. That was settled pretty early on, and it made sense to me. The die had been cast.

Then something miraculous happened. Someone--I will never know who--thought it a good idea to bus my entire fifth-grade class to see our hometown symphony (The El Paso Symphony Orchestra) in performance. The specifics of that concert are lost. I can't for the life of me tell you what they played. But I know that by the time that concert was over, I was convinced that I had to play the violin. My public elementary school, in the farthest reaches of West Texas, had an orchestra program that made it possible for me to do that with very little cost to my parents.

Long story short: I excelled at the violin and, appropriating Western European culture through the music of dead white men--Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms--I earned scholarships to Oberlin and Yale. This led to multiple degrees, a Fulbright, and very satisfying careers as a college professor and administrator. It was through public arts education that I became a first-generation college student (and a first-generation musician, too.)

The moral of my story is simple: socio-economic mobility was effected through the arts--the very arts that our society now considers too Western, too white, too male, too elitist, and far too extraneous to a meaningful public education. (Particularly in our STEM-obsessed world.) My life bears witness. I am just one of many.

Looking to the future, when I think about the greatest opportunity we have here at Purchase, the clear answer comes in two words: Arts Advocacy--driving and shaping a national conversation on the central role of the arts in society. The headwinds are strong. Yet, however "difficult," however "impractical," however "out-of-step" in our country's current educational climate, arts advocacy remains our most authentic platform. If Purchase can't make the case for public arts education, who can?

If arts advocacy is the platform, its pillars are three critical areas that should guide our everyday work across the School of the Arts, and across the College: integrative engagement, inclusive communities, and global citizenship.

By "integrative engagement" I mean intentional programming that actively fosters transdisciplinarity across our college campus.

By "inclusive communities" I signal the importance of moving beyond the static issue of diversity and toward the active involvement of people from every background to create meaningful and rewarding experiences for society.

By "global citizenship" I encourage reflection on how our talents and efforts are (or might be) fruitfully deployed outside of our immediate spheres of influence--how being a successful artist, musician, dancer, or actor at Purchase impacts our neighbors in Benin, the *colonias* of West Texas, or the family just down the street.

As a new dean on campus, I have rejected the obligatory "initiatives" (read "imposed and distracting activities") that routinely accompany transitions in leadership. Instead, I have invited students, alumni, staff, and faculty to reflect on how their interests and the incredible work they are already doing intersect with one or more of those pillars. The result has been galvanizing, inspirational, and--above all--authentic.

Like many of our students, staff, and faculty, I was drawn here by "The Purchase Promise"--our capacity to work proactively and creatively across disciplines, specializations, and the *necessary self-interests* that power the academic machine to realize transformational work for the betterment of society.

At this crucial time, something transformative--something *big*--is needed in public arts education. Exceptional and accessible conservatory training in the arts is key. But it will not be enough. Also indispensable to the task is thoughtful immersion in the Liberal Arts and Sciences. These in tandem are essential to rediscovering, communicating, and advancing our story of humanity and its shared treasury of knowledge and creativity.

Purchase has long enjoyed the distinction of an arts school of the highest order. This year we were recognized nationally as a "Top 10" liberal arts college. Purchase's moment has arrived. And with that, the hard and perhaps unenviable task of saving public arts education in America.

But advocacy is in our blood. It's why we are here. It's what motivates us to think, to make, and to act. It's why we cannot fail to present a model of public arts education for America in the 21st century. The work was set in motion here--maybe prophetically--at the end of one of the most turbulent decades of the 20th century. Today, with renewed purpose and the wisdom of our collective experiences, let us continue.

Provost Office Reminders: Upcoming Award and Leave Application Deadlines

- [Faculty Support Awards](#): **November 1** (to your chair or director)
- [Part-Time Teaching Support Awards](#): **November 15** (to your chair or director)
- [Chancellor's Awards for Excellence](#): **November 13** is the deadline for peer review of [Adjunct Teaching](#) nominations. For all other categories, the deadline is **February 19, 2019**; the call for nominations will be issued by the respective peer review committee.

For more information, including the leave application form and application deadlines in spring 2019, please visit the [Faculty Awards](#) section on the Office of the Provost website. Information on awards and leaves offered through the New York State/United University Professions Joint Labor-Management Committees (JLMC) is available at nysuup.lmc.ny.gov.

ART + DESIGN:

Visiting Artist Lecture Series:

Each semester, weekly visiting artist lectures host noted artists, curators, critics, and historians to share their perspectives, expertise, and current work, and to give insight into contemporary issues facing artists and designers.

All lectures will take place on Wednesdays at 5:00 pm in the Perception Lab (Visual Arts Building 1016) unless stated otherwise.

[Lisa Sigal](#) Wednesday, October 24, 5 pm

[Hank Willis Thomas](#) Wednesday, October 31, 1 pm

[R. H. Quaytman](#) Wednesday, November 7, 5 pm

[Samuel Ekwurtzel](#) Wednesday, November 14, 5 pm

[Kris Graves](#) Wednesday, November 28, 3 pm

[Mark Thomas Gibson](#) Wednesday, November 28, 5 pm

[L.J. Roberts](#) Wednesday, December 5, 5 pm

Art Exhibitions:

[The Mess Just Beneath the Veneer of Order](#)

October 15 – November 15 Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery, Visual Arts Building

[Purchase College Days of Action and Dialogue](#)

October 29 – November 7 Throughout Purchase College Campus

[Fall 2018 MFA Group Exhibition](#)

November 28 – December 14 Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery, Visual Arts Building

DANCE:

Students – Perform During BAM's Next Wave Festival

Renowned Italian choreographer Luca Veggetti will showcase Purchase students in his re-imagining of Jerome Robbins' *Watermill* at the internationally acclaimed Brooklyn Academy of Music during the Next Wave Festival. *Watermill* premiered in 1972, performed by the New York City Ballet with music by Teiji Ito, and has rarely been staged since. Described as daring and controversial at the time, the dreamlike piece, based on Japanese Noh theatre, explores the nature of time and perception.

Performances run from Wed, Oct 24 through Sat, Oct 27 at 7:30pm. All tickets: \$25. [Visit BAM for tickets](#)

HUMANITIES:

The School of Humanities is hosting its inaugural Faculty Book Celebration!

Please join us for a reading and conversation with **Monica Ferrell**, Associate Professor of Creative Writing, as we celebrate the publication of her newest poetry collection, *You Darling Thing!*

When: Wednesday, October 24

Time: 4:30-6:00 PM

Where: Library, 2nd floor

"Throughout this striking collection, Ferrell balances elegance and chaos, beauty and urgency, lyricism with a veiled threat."—*Publisher's Weekly* starred review

MULTICULTURAL CENTER:

The Office of Community Engagement and the Multicultural Center, now part of the Office of Affirmative Action, will be hosting First-Generation College Celebration on November 8, 2018. This celebration started in 2017 by the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) and the Center for First-Generation Student Success. To prepare for this celebration, we want to engage faculty and staff who are also first gen and compile this information to share with students. If you identify as first in your family to go to college, also known as first-gen, please complete this [short form](#).

Days of Action and Dialogue

The 2nd Annual Days of Action and Dialogue will take place from October 29 through November 7, 2018. Join students, student clubs, faculty, staff, and offices for a campus-wide week of action, service, and dialogue. Through action, we are hoping to create much-needed dialogue across a wide set of beliefs and to engage civically. Event details will be available after October 24 on the Days of Action and Dialogue [page](#) on the college website. Questions? Email Janine.polak@purchase.edu and daisy.torresbaez@purchase.edu

PAC 2018-19:

Visit www.artscenter.org to learn more about what's in store, follow Purchase PAC on social media for the most up-to-date information, and be sure check your purchase.edu email inbox for event reminders and special offers exclusively for the campus community.