

ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN
PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
REAL-WORLD CREATIVE CAREERS

SMARTER FASTER
ACCELERATED DEGREE PROGRAMS ARE
TAILORED TO WORKING ADULTS

ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR REAL-WORLD CREATIVE CAREERS

WRITTEN BY PAUL ROGERS



Racing helmet prototype designed by Patrick Park, Art Center product design major. Photo credit Stephen Swintek ©Art Center College of Design

Eighty-five years since its founding, Pasadena's storied Art Center College of Design is thriving like never before. Since 2009, the College has experienced record enrollment and is expanding its campus both physically and programmatically (including last year doubling the size of its South Campus).

These developments stem from an ambitious five-year strategic plan, announced in 2010, called *Create Change*. Art Center is currently developing the plan's second phase under the working title of *Create Change 2.0*.

"The catalyst for change at Art Center is to make sure we continue to be relevant as an art and design college in the 21st Century," said Teri Bond, Media Relations Director at Art Center College of Design. "Our primary goal is to respond to and anticipate the needs of industry and prepare our students for success in the creative economy."

Founded in downtown Los Angeles in 1930 (as Art Center School), Art Center swiftly expanded, moving into larger premises in the city's Hancock Park neighborhood shortly after World War II. By the end of the 1940s it was offering both bachelor's and master's degrees and soon earned full accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Adopting its current name in 1965, the college moved to the Hillside Campus in Pasadena in the mid 1970s, adding the South Campus, in downtown Pasadena, in 2004.

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transportation and social innovation," said Bond. "The College has achieved a reputation for preparing artists and designers to make a positive impact both in their chosen fields and the world at large."

From its inception, Art Center built a nationwide reputation as a vocational school, in its early years preparing soldiers returning from World War II for work in commercial arts fields.

"Art Center is an institution that encourages original thinking while also meeting the demands of the marketplace," Bond explained. "[It] breeds iconoclasts offering a new viewpoint on industry and the world around us. Graduates thrive professionally and have impressive, unexpected and interesting careers."

At a recent symposium of eminent car designers at L.A.'s Petersen Automotive Museum, all of the panelists were Art Center-educated (it's estimated that more than half of the cars on our roads today were designed by Art Center graduates). Art Center alumni are also responsible for everything from the ubiquitous *Got Milk* ad campaign to Disneyland's monorail attraction; the look of sci-fi classic *Blade Runner* to the shape of the celebrated Kikkoman soy sauce bottle.



Art Center soundstage and exhibition gallery. Photo credit Alex Aristei ©Art Center College of Design

"Our alumni and students create your favorite things," said Bond.

Art Center alumni include Nike innovation guru Martin Lotti, Linkin Park bandleader Mike Shinoda, pioneering product designer Yves Behar, and 2015 Caldecott Medal-winning book illustrator Dan Santat.

As well as its full-time programs, Art Center offers year-round educational courses and workshops for children (as young as 4th grade) and adults. Its Art Center at Night part-time continuing studies program includes nearly 200 courses in design and the visual arts, with both studio-based and academic classes.

For degree programs, Art Center reviews applicants' portfolios and high school and community college grades, but is also very interested in essays, which can explain their artistic path and creative goals.

"What we want to see from a student portfolio varies significantly depending upon which of our majors a student is interested in," said Bond. "[Art Center] does not offer a foundation year, requiring that applicants declare their major when they apply."

While many applicants present only their most polished, academic or technical work, Art Center is in fact much more interested in seeing their more personal work, Bond explained.

"Work that students are doing not because it has been assigned to them, but because the student was deeply motivated to do it for their own reasons," she said. "Sketchbooks can also prove really interesting in this regard."

For interested budding artists and designers, Art Center hosts multiple Portfolio Days in numerous U.S. cities every year. These events allow the College's admissions teams to not only talk to prospective students, but to actually see their work and analyze their ambitions.

The next Los Angeles Portfolio Day is in January 2016, while campus tours for prospective students are available Monday through Friday at 2 p.m. when school is in session.



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Eighty percent of Art Center students receive some sort of financial aid, including Pell and Cal Grants, Federal Work Study funds, loan programs, and Art Center's own scholarships (based both on financial need and on the strength of a student's portfolio and application).

"We distribute \$15.7 Million in scholarships per year," said Bond. "There is no separate application process for specific scholarships; the college automatically considers students for any support for which they are eligible."

Once enrolled, Art Center's approximately 1,700 students benefit from small classes, direct access to cutting-edge technical facilities, and a famously supportive environment. The College's faculty is primarily working industry professionals who make time to pass on their expertise to Art Center students.

As well mentoring from such top-flight practicing pros, Art Center students enjoy access to an impressive network of alumni who refer each other to positions and often hire recent graduates themselves.

Art Center's Career + Professional Development department facilitates internships and job opportunities for students, as well as offering professional development workshops, career counseling, alumni mentorship, and experiential education. Three times a year, during graduation week, graduating students are given the opportunity to network with design professionals from top companies and studios looking to identify talent for current or potential job openings. The College also offers academic courses on subjects such as enhancing presentation skills and developing strategies to launch careers.

"Since our founding 85 years ago, we have been unapologetically committed to preparing students to hit the ground running when hired by industry employers," Bond concluded. "Many recent graduates join prestigious design firms; others launch startups or professional practices. The College's alumni are prepared to become exhibiting artists and embrace the economic realities around that pursuit."



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Photo: "Link" archery bow by Product Design student Derrick Tan.

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ACCELERATED DEGREE PROGRAMS ARE TAILORED TO WORKING ADULTS

WRITTEN BY PAUL ROGERS

Few working adults can afford the luxury of a four-year sabbatical during which to earn a degree. So accelerated degree programs were developed precisely with “continuing learners” in mind. Designed to fit around the work and family schedules of older students, these fast-track programs allow what would normally be a four-year bachelors degree to be completed in as little as 16 months, or a traditionally two-year masters qualification to be earned in a year.

Accelerated programs typically use expedited courses (often involving longer individual class periods) which are designed to run back-to-back in less than the usual 12-week semester schedule. Classes may take only a month to complete. Additionally, these programs usually offer flexible course scheduling – with classes conducted and admissions accepted year-round – and evening and weekend classes which allow students to keep their full-time jobs. In some cases, to further speed things along, a student’s previously completed coursework can also be counted towards their degree. Accelerated degree programs may be delivered entirely or partially online.

“Accelerated programs compact more learning activity into a shorter calendar period



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by running courses without breaks, designing more learning activity to take place outside of the classroom (often in team activities) and by including activities that apply the life experience of the learner in the course," said Mike Echols, PhD, executive vice president at Bellevue University, CEO of Smart Degree and author of *Your Future Is Calling: A Practical Guide to the Education You Need to Have the Future You Desire*. "The life experience activities are especially useful to adult learners."

Bellevue University, a private non-profit college in Nebraska, offers accelerated programs (in-class or online) which, with transferred credits, allow a student to earn an undergraduate degree in as little as 16 months.

The accelerated degree experience is altogether more streamlined and intense than that of a traditional freshman-sophomore-junior-senior semester structure.

"In many cases, the designers of the curriculum of these programs cut out the electives and move students through a cohort model ... where students move through classes as a group and have start-dates all year," said Katie Schellenberg, JD, MA, an educational consultant and founder of Learning Lab LA and Beyond Tutoring. "In other words, the program is narrowly tailored and focused on graduation as the goal with little student choice in terms of classes and often class-times."

The cohort model also means that accelerated degree programs commonly emphasize collaboration and teamwork – more so than in "traditional" programs.

"Because the students all take the same classes together at the same time, they often rely on each other in the form of collaboration and teamwork," Schellenberg explained. "Since the students are often already a team by virtue of their class schedule, the intensity of the program and this model, they often work well together. This model fosters a community spirit!"

With the skyrocketing cost of education over the past 10-15 years, the advent of virtual

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classrooms, and recessions which propelled adults back into school in search of more marketable skills, accelerated programs have proliferated over the past quarter-century.

"The economic downturn of 2007-09 definitely impacted the popularity and proliferation of accelerated programs," said Schellenberg. "Due to many individuals out of work and in need of a new trade, but in a shortened time period, universities created more programs for the working professional. Universities began offering programs at an accelerated pace for individuals who wanted technical training or to create movement in a stagnant career."

Most colleges today offer at least some accelerated degrees and almost every subject and technical training is offered in this form.

"Even top law schools, such as Northwestern [University in Illinois], offer a two year program," said Schellenberg. "Many universities offer an accelerated medical school which is in combination with a student's bachelor's degree."

But the college experience and lifestyle will usually be very different for accelerated learners compared with the "traditional" students with whom they share campuses, as will the study habits they'll need to adopt to not only complete their degree, but also to simultaneously stay on top of work and family commitments.

"Accelerated learning has the benefit of shortening the time in school, but the trade-off is a much more intense and demanding study schedule throughout each term," said Echols. "Accelerated degree programs require focus and discipline that is largely self-imposed, especially if the accelerated program is being delivered online."

Furthermore, without the luxury of taking a number of classes before settling on their specialization (as in a traditional four-year setting), accelerated students need to hit the ground running in terms of focus and commitment.

"In an accelerated degree program, students begin their specialization the very first day," said Schellenberg. "Because of this students must be highly organized, motivated

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A photograph of two men in a recording studio. One man, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, is pointing at a mixing console. The other man, wearing a dark t-shirt and a maroon beanie, is looking at the console. The background is dark and out of focus, showing studio equipment.

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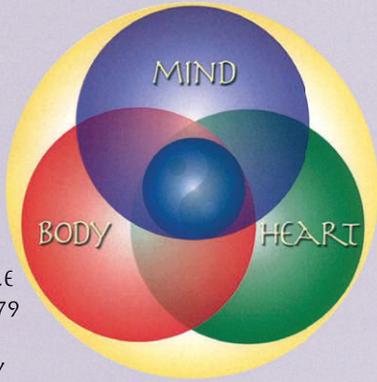
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Crucially, accelerated programs can earn an individual a degree not just faster, but cheaper. Over the past 35 years, the cost of college tuition has, in real terms, nearly quadrupled. The average published tuition and fee price for in-state students enrolled full-time at public four-year colleges and universities is \$9,139 for the 2014-15 academic year, according to The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges. So compressing a four-year degree program into as little as 16 months could mean saving tens of thousands of dollars.

Fiscal factors and a still uncertain U.S. economy suggest that the popularity of accelerated degree programs will only continue to grow.

"Accelerated degrees, in many ways, are the wave of the future," said Schellenberg. "With the increasing United States economic uncertainty, people will be looking to these programs in order to have an edge in the job force. Because of this, I think that accelerated programs are the vanguards of adult learning in years to come."

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