

In the ~~In~~ the fall of 2015, Robynn Smith of the MPC Art Department was awarded a FASA grant to attend an Artists' Residency Program in the north of Iceland. While there, she visited MTR, a public upper secondary school, the Icelandic equivalent of a community college.

The MTR curriculum is offered entirely through an arts lens. Creative problem solving is emphasized. All classes, history, math, science as well as the arts, are developed on a project based timeline, as an artist develops his or her work. Many courses are interdisciplinary, and many activities take place in shared learning spaces. Innovative programs in Distance Education and Student Equity have been implemented. The school's motto is Innovation, Creativity and Courage. These words are embedded in curriculum, written on the walls and spoken daily by students and faculty.

The result of this approach has resulted in higher retention, graduation and transfer rates, young people returning to the area after further education, entrepreneurial projects that are boosting the local economy, and a deepening sense of community.

Through another FASA grant as well as support from the MPC Printmakers Student club, MPC's Student Equity and Distance Learning programs, four Icelandic educators are visiting our campus in January and will be the keynote speakers at our Flex Day on Wednesday January 18. They will also lead breakout sessions on Thursday and participate in a clay printing workshop with the MPC Printmakers on Friday January 20.

During Spring Break in March, Robynn Smith, Jamie Dagdigian, Margaret Niven and Claire Thorson of the MPC Art Department, will travel to Iceland to offer their services as educators, to our friends at MTR.

Throughout this year, the educators from both institutions will be working on a creative project entitled The Shared Seas. With the help of local institutions in both countries, faculty and students from MTR and MPC will base instruction and personal creative development on the idea that the oceans are one shared resource. That what happens in Monterey Bay affects the fjords of Northern Iceland. We will research and respond to the history, social patterns, geography and beauty of our Shared Seas. The project will culminate with an exhibition of our work in the MPC Gallery in spring 2018.

On behalf of the students, faculty and staff that are supporting and facilitating this exciting project, we would like to extend an invitation to the MPC Board to attend our Flex Day activities and join us for a reception for the Icelanders on Wednesday afternoon January 18. Formal invitations will be sent.

Thank you