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Laser Cutting Informatics

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Status Reports

Thinkfinity Informatics

Cornerstone #2: Community Outreach and Empowerment

Professor Charlotte Becket, Dyson College: Art Department

Spring 2011

Mid-Project Report

- A) I received a Thinkfinity grant in January 2009 for Laser Cutting Informatics. I partnered with the Joan Mitchell Foundation (a not for profit arts organization that provides grants and educational opportunities to artists and underserved k-12 students) and St.Nick's Alliance Community Center, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to create a program where Pace art students work with local underserved high school students to make a public sculpture. The program has continued to develop and expand. In 2010 an additional grant was requested for funds to up grade the old computers currently being used to run the laser cutter and to purchase additional software.
- B) The computers and software have been updated, increasing efficiency and productivity. The new equipment is integrated into the art department foundation curriculum and a summer workshop wherein college and high school students collaborate is scheduled to take place this July.
- C) Since 2009 the project has impacted numerous classes of Pace and local high school students. The equipment has been a key component in foundation art classes and provided an opportunity for advanced students to explore the use of technology in independently based work. Each summer and winter session since 2009 I have held workshops for 20-25 high school students where Pace students functioned at peer-leaders and mentors. The culmination of each workshop has been an exhibition of artwork either at the Pace Fingesten Gallery or St. Nicks Community Center's 5,000 square foot gallery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This summer I am working with Olivia Hu and Wanda Ward (Pace Students) to work with 25 local high school students from the Joan Mitchell Foundation. As an extension of the program, Wanda Ward will also be interning at the Joan Mitchell Foundation, where she hopes to work after graduation.
- D) Professors Roger Sayre, Jillian McDonald, Linda Herritt, Jane Dickson, and Barbara Friedman have all incorporated the new technology into their courses at various times, particularly in *Project Studio*, the department's capstone course. Additionally, these faculty members have also used this equipment for their own research. It has been inspiring and motivating for our students to see faculty working in the Pace Art studios on their own work.
- E) The next phase of our grant is hosting this July's workshop and holding an exhibition of student work in the Fingesten Gallery at the end of the month. Our other main goal is to find space to set up a table saw which was also provided by the Thinkfinity grant. The saw is a state of the art, computerized saw that shuts off when flesh touches the blade. This saw will help us cut materials to fit into the laser cutter. Currently there is not enough space in our studios to install it. We are working with the Dean to open up more studios.