

FOUNDATION SPARK

Brian Brooks - CTL Fellowship - Foundation SPARK

Final Report - 12.22.22

Introduction: The Pratt Foundation Department initiative, “SPARK” is a Teaching and Learning Forum that springs from many sources. It began with Foundation faculty presenting their teaching to each other, fostering pedagogical dialogues across the Foundation department. From this origin, SPARK also expanded into more specific topics or themes relevant to first-year learning, including faculty and students from departments institute-wide. SPARKS are video recorded as a resource for faculty to revisit, adapt, or build upon new or traditional themes and ideas in teaching.

SPARK “Themes & Lenses” include:

- Teacher Presentations (or “Talks”)
- “Cultural Reckoning Series”
- “Live from the Foundation Lab”,
- “Learning Across Pratt Departments”
- “SPARK Conversations About Teaching”

Final Report - Narrative

The Foundation Department has sought, since the spring of 2019, to see whether its faculty would be interested, and motivated to share their teaching experiences in a presentation format. To our surprise, the interest and participation has been high. Since its beginning, 30 or more Foundation faculty have given SPARK talks in at least three of the above thematic formats, or participated in SPARK panel presentations of discussions, and 4 faculty from outside of Foundation (one from Parsons) participated in Cultural Reckoning or Foundation Lab SPARKS. When we consider that most of these SPARK presentations found faculty organizing an original activity, topic or visual form of sharing, the investment taken on by Pratt colleagues to engage with each other in pedagogy, is an even more impressive phenomenon. Currently, the only SPARKS where faculty received honoraria are the Foundation Lab events, this energy and interest has come only from their willingness to share and engage with each other on topics fundamental to teaching and learning.

Included in this folder is my SPARK-CTL Fellowship-SPOTLIGHT, from November with Karen Zieve (HAD), in it is an updated history of SPARK presentations from its beginning.

A very satisfying development created by Foundation Professor, Elise Kaufman and myself, has been a new SPARK format “**Conversations About Teaching - From the Ground-Up**”. In this fall semester we organized 3 of these lunch-time, informal gatherings sharing recent teaching experiences in our Foundation courses. Our goal was to do one meeting a month, on different days to accommodate faculty schedules. The first two gatherings, October 19, November 16, were very well attended with a dozen faculty present for each.

The third, December 12 was a complete no-show likely due to Final Classes. Elise and I estimated that faculty needed to discuss their recent observations about teaching with peers who can connect and understand the day to day nature of building a weekly course, meeting outcomes, and interrelating. But just as importantly, it is clear to us that having a central location to informally interact as teachers is itself a useful goal of this SPARK venue. (An unexpected development of this meeting was that we lobbied to make this classroom where we meet, an informal lunch room for Foundation faculty, approved by the Fnd Chair, Leslie Mutchler.) We hope that such a meeting place will replace the very missed and larger Pratt faculty lunchroom gone now for years. The disadvantage is that it will not allow for the mixes between faculty of different departments.

The potential for this lunchroom development may spark a kind of SPARK where the Foundation invites other departments for informal lunchtime chats on teaching. (This idea is at its infancy)

SPARK and the impact of the CTL Fellowship (Reflection)

SPARK preexisted the CTL Fellowship. However, SPARK has been a collaborative effort with me, the organizer (and encourager), being a feedback supporter for faculty in considering aspects or the feasibility of their presentations, (often but not always). Being the organizer within a support system of a diverse community of colleagues each advancing their own projects, served as an inspiration, and sounding board that had not existed earlier. This became a true boost to thinking about SPARK outside of the Foundation department lens. While SPARK has engaged with colleagues across the Institute through the **SPARK-Cultural Reckoning Presentations**, (with great help from my Foundation colleague Todd Ayoung, with whom I do not go forward unless I consult with him in close collaboration,) SPARK now has a greater presence in the minds of many through the CTL Fellowship process. Some of this also spills into the earlier generations of Fellows, some through the Spotlight given and also with interaction with the CTL Reflection Lab FLC Faculty Learning Community), specifically with the “Broccoli” group in its second year working together. It is noteworthy to also say that the CTL Summer Institute on “Critique as Playground” also expanded the playing field on which SPARK thinking has potential.

The CTL Fellowship experienced mentored me in an environment with teaching colleagues and the CTL Leadership (Judit, Maura and Holly) beyond the specific pedagogical content of my department and through lenses that build upon and expand disciplines into larger questions of pedagogy. This wider lens uniformly asked questions about how do disciplines go beyond courses and programs to another level that enhances departments and perspectives within art, design, and wider educational learning. For all of the diversity of projects, educational questions, and various new ways to organize learning and research, the commonality was Pratt’s larger learning impact on students. SPARK can appear to be about teaching but teaching is the middle of the thought and is nothing without questions about learning.

The Fellowship and its participants attracted the kind of colleagues who were able in seeing the needs of their own projects as parallel to those of others, and always yielded in curiosity because many projects had “problems” to solve, meaning solve as connecting more, expand outreach, better articulate its goals, searching for more clarity in direction, no one’s project was complete, but in a creative flux. This meant (and maybe I speak only for myself,) that when I hear others update and reflect on the dynamics in their Fellowship projects, it mirrors aspects of my own, and here is where it relates. Not having this group of colleagues and facilitators to share with, for the sake of the projects in focus, allowed me to imagine and adventure in new ways. I felt empowered to ask, imagine and see from new perspectives not encountered before. Now ending this Fellowship process, I have a wider contact pool from which to draw, a new expanded vocabulary that presents me with different ways of thinking, and a deeper feeling of support within the institute. This is critical because SPARK originally developed to give Foundation faculty more voice in reflecting and sharing their teaching efforts. Then it seemed logical to include the voices of other teachers in the institute to literally share their teaching with the Foundation department because our students (in the first year) become the Institute’s students afterwards. Shouldn’t we learn more about this connection and relationship ? Wouldn’t our students benefit from this shared classroom based experience, and wouldn’t it help upper level teachers get a glance of what happens in the first year classroom also ?

From these questions, the newest faculty and student SPARK lens was created: **“AFTER FOUNDATION”- What Does Learning Look Like In Your Next Year Pratt Majors ?”** This SPARK is described as follows:

First-year students meet their upper level sophomore and junior peers and professors through presentations on projects, learning paths and processes from their upper level major courses. Presentations of “assignments” will be organized by the upper level faculty with their students discussing their processes, steps, realizations, changes in mind, and how final states or works were realized. These presentations will help first year students see and hear concerns, vocabulary, and learning outcomes that are critical in that major or discipline and will hopefully spark the imagination within our Foundation students. This SPARK provides a taste of what learning looks like in a major, but begins the process of first-year students connecting to what happens after Foundation.

While being a CTL Fellow, this SPARK was crafted, with Fnd Chair Leslie Mutchler as sounding board with an department wide and administrative vantage point, and further developed in conversation with other Fellows’ thoughts and practical considerations. Several colleagues from the fellowship are potential participants in this SPARK and possibly in the “Cultural Reckoning” SPARK also.

While SPARKS are given by Foundation faculty on a semi regular basis this upper department connection through the “After Foundation” SPARK has potential to be another way in which our department looks at and values our own teaching and learning perspectives in the greater Pratt community. What may distinguish this efforts, along with the other efforts Foundation is engaged with to connect beyond ourselves, is that it will be a way to learn from our colleagues’ direct teaching processes and our own former and their current students who will also be teaching first year students and faculty. Said differently, “After Foundation” may be a useful forum because it can be an “intimate” one. Teaching is a close-knit space. So is how students learn in the “classroom” or studio. It is a community from the onset. For classroom learning to be shared (which is a related goal with the “Broccoli” FLC’s interest in supportive peer observations with colleagues), is a very imaginative space where students and faculty can empathize with each other, learn from each, (though in

different college years/levels and majors) and first year students trying to picture themselves both in Foundation and beyond, where we want the Foundation to transfer to... This SPARK forum may be very enlightening for all who present and participate. As they are planned to be documented, can also be a useful and valuable archive resource accessible by Foundation students and faculty to come. As of now, none of these SPARKS have happened.

In conclusion, the SPARK initiative is an evolving form and process of sharing, my hopes are that it will be perceived as a necessary instrument for first-year Foundation. It is an extension of Foundational thinking that Pratt sees as being critical to the 4 years of an art and design education. Through SPARK, faculty demonstrate how they create the curriculum and cannot do it without a close attention to how their students actually form the course through their action, personality and energy. SPARK witnesses the evolution of pedagogical thought in time. SPARK is just one of Foundation's cycles of teaching, learning and reflecting.

I am grateful to all of my CTL collaborators for shepherding me to encounter a wider and still open landscape of teaching and learning !

Below are the most recent and previous SPARKS, followed by a full history.

Fall 2022 (All SPARKS are video record and available)

SPARK Talk:
"EQUITY TO METACOGNITION"

Presented by [Kim Sloane](#)

Foundation is about a diversity of students coming together to learn how to learn in a School of Art and Design. Equity means, among other things, making certain that all students have the same opportunity for success. Metacognition, or knowledge of the thinking, learning and making process, is what will allow students to transfer what is learned in Foundation to their future studies. The same strategies that promote equity will also promote metacognition. This presentation will explore methodology and provide examples of a curriculum designed to achieve these outcomes.

SPARK: From the Foundation Lab:
"DESIGN INSPIRED BY NATURE"

Presented by [Rebecca Welz](#)

For 3.8 billion years, nature has been designing life forms. Many of the organisms have adapted and changed as needed for survival or have died out. In looking at how nature solves problems, we can develop more efficient, effective and elegant solutions to design that reduce or eliminate the need for heat, beat and treat manufacturing practices and/or save energy in

other ways. Biomimicry or bio-inspiration is a field that has been drawing the attention of designers in many different fields due to the increasing awareness that nature solves problems in brilliant ways.

SPARK Conversations: **"FROM THE GROUND UP"**

Sharing Experiences from the Foundation Studio Classroom

Hosted by Elise Kaufman & Brian Brooks

This SPARK series is an open, informal, and participatory conversation about teaching First Year art & design students. We gather and share experiences, concerns, insights, and challenges about the dynamics we notice with our students' learning and development - pre and now post (?) pandemic. What comes up for you in your recent teaching? Please bring a one-word teaching thought to share for openers - No pressure.

SPRING 2022

SPARK: From the Foundation Lab:

"ORGANIC MATERIALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DESIGN COMMUNITY"

Presented by Oliver Kellhammer & Derek Haffar

Methods will be demonstrated to demystify processes for growing kombucha leather and compressed mycelium sheet material. We aim to make these processes accessible to design-ers who are passionate about sustainability in design studios and are curious about organic alternatives.

SPARK: From the Foundation Lab:

"THE BIOGRAPHY OF BLUE"

Presented by Dani Levine

Through lecture and demo, this SPARK presentation on The Biography of Blue will discuss alternative histories to the color blue as it runs parallel to narratives of trade, innovation and sociocultural ideas. As color theory is traditionally guided by aesthetic principles, the aim is to develop a more complete picture of pigments as it exists within a cultural context. While some technical aspects of pigments within the Foundation Lab will be discussed, this SPARK talk is a chance to elucidate the meaning embedded in materials artists already use.

SPARK Talk:

"FACING IMPLICIT BIAS: MY GRADELESS CLASSROOM"

Presented by James Lipovac

As part of my work as a CTL Fellow, in the Spring of 2020, I began transforming my VR and LCD courses into gradeless classrooms. Now, two years later, I would like to share how that

experience has changed me as both an instructor and a person. Please join me for a short presentation, followed by an organized discussion.

SPARK Talk:

"NARRATIVE AS STRUCTURE"

Presented by Sophia Kayafas

The final project begins with five simple words: a noun, an adjective, a verb, an environment, and a light source. Let's create a scene that incorporates these words and at least one full figure into a believable scenario, no matter how fantastical. Students are asked to engage in a variety of disciplines, including creative writing, problem solving research, compositional intent, tonality, and project planning in order to create this moment in time as a fully realized image! The project gives students a form of mediated freedom, where they can step into ownership of their own ideas, and processes

From the SPARK 2021 Report

SPARK Talks: **"TINY DANCER - LCD IN SPACE AND TIME"**

Presented by Deborah Johnson

This presentation will demonstrate how many of the core concepts Foundation are translated in Time and Movement using light, color, space and time by compositing three-dimensional planes and layers, lights and cameras. In this exercise, we will create a virtual stage for a tiny ballet dancer and have her 'interact' with a small animated object.

SPARK Talks: **"PAGE AS STAGE - DRAWING ANIMATION"**

Presented by Jackie Hoving

See how hand drawn animation can be used to track the process of a drawing. By thinking about the drawing page as a stage I will explain how animation can help students make decisions in drawings that address time, movement, composition and transformation.

SPARK Talks: **"DRAWING UNDERWATER"**

Presented by Luis Alonso

Trying to find and fix order within the slippery slope of nature's slime.

SPARK Talks: **"DEVELOPING LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING"**

Presented by Micki Spiller

Sharing the Methods of paired discussion, this presentation aims to show how language skills are necessary to promote student learning. Though I will present examples from a Space, Form, Process class, the methods will apply to all disciplines. I will be presenting at the FATE conference and would like to get some feedback please!

SPARK Talks: "UTOPIA / DYSTOPIA - NARRATIVE FORM AND DEFINING COMMUNITY"

Presented by Elise Kaufman

This 2nd semester final project is designed to expose students to new ways of seeing and understanding a range of narrative expressions across disciplines (including film, photography, Asian painting, architectural blueprints, Mughal miniatures, and book illustrations) in order to explore what 11community11 means to them, what community could look like (Utopic or Dystopic) and ways that this can be expressed through drawing. The project requires them to consider how to use, apply and synthesize the acquired skills, learned concepts and materials from both Vis/Rep and Vis/Rep/Concept, order to create and reflect their personal conceptions and experiences of community

SPARK Talks: "12 FACES, 20 EDGES, 30 VERTICES + DEI: PROS, CONS, OBSERVATIONS"

Presented by Todd Ayoung

Introducing the making of a regular dodecahedron, as a Space, Form, Process semester starter assignment. I asked each student to "surface" their polyhedra as a way to introduce themselves to the class. This is a work in progress, and I welcome feedback on how to make this assignment work better, with SPF curriculum, given the Pratt campus wide conviction, to address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, in Foundation pedagogical thinking, making and doing.

SPARK Talks: "ICE BREAKER ACTIVITIES – CREATING A HEALTHY STUDIO COMMUNITY"

Presented by Molly Roberts

Several years ago, and just 8 minutes into starting my semester teaching 3D, I launched into a spontaneous ice breaker activity that ended up triggering strong and personal interaction amongst me and my students. This led me to query how I could better create a first-day activity that breaks the ice and initiates dialogue amongst new classmates to better grow a healthy studio community. My presentation will explore several of my own personally-crafted icebreaker activities and shall include successes and failures in my attempts to launch each of my semesters since.

SPARK Talks: "1 OUTCOME; 15 WEEKS- THINKING + LEARNING & THE DEATH OF THE STILL LIFE"

Presented by James Lipovac

The how's and why's of my new approach to Visualization and Representation and using the first term to make way for the second term's process-based projects. I will discuss my struggles with the new curriculum, our changing students, and my hopes for teaching and learning.

SPARK Talks: "NATURE, FORM AND INVENTION"

Presented by Doug Wirls

In my presentation I will talk about and show some examples of how I use the study of a variety of natural, organic forms to inspire investigation and imaginative application in my students' work. This will include examples of both in-class study and extended projects.

SPARK Talks: "MYRTLE AVE PUBLIC PROJECTS"

Presented by Corinne Ulmann, Beth Warshafsky, Aaron Davidson, Juan Jofre and Jonathan Peck

Are you interested in incorporating a public art / design project into your curriculum to engage with ideas of research, community and experiments in teaching outside the classroom? Join us on Myrtle Avenue Plaza to learn more about Pratt Foundation's Public Projects program. We will visit four possible sites for student proposals and discuss the frameworks for each project.

SPARK Talks: "BAUHAUS SQUARES - BEYOND THE FORMAL"

Presented by Iona Fromboluti

Prof. Fromboluti has been working with this introductory design problem for a long time. It was not an original problem. It came from the Bauhaus. Over the years, Prof Fromboluti keeps returning to this problem although many other assignments have come and go in her curriculum. She has experimented with its perimeters and stretched its potential going beyond the formal principles of the requirements of the original problem. In her talk she will offer the evolution of her approach. It is hoped that through this presentation the ensuing discussion might be more about the thinking behind this pedagogical journey, rather than the assignment itself.

SPARK Talks: "GESTURE IN SPACE"

Presented by Charlotte Segall

See how perspectival systems can empower students to invent dynamic figure

drawings. Then see strategies for gesticulating within digital systems. I will present my experiments with remote figure drawing sessions and ways to guide urgent interpretation of complex form in the digital realm.

SPARK Talks: **"VISUAL REPRESENTATION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ONLINE FIRST SEMESTER - FALL 2020"**

Presented by Patrick Webb

Patrick Webb will present an overview of the curriculum and results of his online first semester Visual Representation classes. Special attention will be directed to the arc of the semester — building the connections and sequence of assignments. Examples of most of the assignments are available on Milanote.

SPARK Talks: **"NOW WHAT"**

Presented by Leslie Roberts

Teaching as a creative process, teaching the creative process, making room for the creative process, getting out of the way of the creative process.

SPARK Talks Across Foundation Disciplines: **"CROSS POLLINATION"**

Presented by Carol Diamond, Andy Lenaghan, and Natalie Moore

"Here is what I learned from the teaching of one course that I applied to another". Faculty teaching in Foundation found that they were able transfer and apply a process, concept, practice or method of teaching, to or from a first year course to a completely different course in another major, discipline, or age level. These teachers will present visual, conceptual and process examples of how they discovered Cross Pollinations from one course to another. What informs us about first-year learning by teaching in different learning environments? What can we learn from Cross Pollination between teaching experiences and contexts?

SPARK Exhibition and Event: **"GESTURE AND LEARNING ACROSS PRATT INSTITUTE"**

Faculty Participants:

Nanette Carter, Elise Kaufman, Chris Wynter, Andrew Lenaghan, Pier Luigi Consagra, Veronica Lawlor, Kim Sloane, Jackie Hoving, Mona Brody, Jong S. Lim (a.k.a. Mark Lim), Lynne St Clare Foster, Andrew Prayzner, James Lipovac, Molly Roberts, Charlotte Segall, Brian Brooks

In the spring of 2020 we prepared for our largest SPARK event to date: Gesture Drawing and Learning Across Disciplines - which included an exhibition of student work from across the institute, and plans for an open drawing and workshop style conversation for faculty, and a celebratory opening. In-person programming was halted due to COVID. However, the exhibition was

mounted and has been documented.

Participating Faculty /
6 Upper Department Faculty
1 PYS Faculty
10 Foundation Faculty

SPARK - "Cultural Reckoning" is a space for re-envisioning and repositioning learning by questioning settler colonialism, white privilege & supremacy, underlying racist perspectives, microaggressions, Euro-centrism, and cultural dominance and hegemony in arts and design education. Roundtable panelists will respond to any or all of the following questions and then we welcome further discussion as the session opens up to participants attending the Forum.
(*"Cultural Reckoning is organized by Professors Todd Ayound and Brian Brooks*)

SPARK - "Cultural Reckoning"
"EATING TOGETHER AGAIN: FOOD DESIGN & SOCIAL CHANGE"

Presented by Amanda Huynh

Amanda Huynh is a product, interaction, and food designer whose research focuses on community-building, race equity and sustainable design. She is an Assistant Professor of Industrial Design in the School of Design at Pratt Institute. In Eating Together Again: Food Design and Social Change, Amanda will lecture on her practice, her path to food design, and how food bridges the gap between ourselves, the land, and each other.

SPARK - "Cultural Reckoning"
"NEW WAYS OF BECOMING"

Presented by Scott Ruff & Jeffrey Holgreffe

In search of African American and Indigenous Space is a transdisciplinary, world shaping and world making research practice, which contributes to the development of new ways of becoming for Black, Indigenous, and Peoples Color, LGBT and allies through practices of collaborative teaching and learning, publications, conferences, symposia, curriculum development, pedagogy and community development. The transdisciplinary research collaborative engages across the disciplines that inform architecture and performance in media, representation and experimental poetics through the work of intersectionality and spirituality.

SPARK - Cultural Reckoning Roundtable Discussion:
Pratt Institute - FALL FORUM 21: Pedagogies of Reparation and Rebuilding Pratt Foundation

Panelists:

Nida Abdullah - Assistant Professor in the Department of Undergraduate Communications at Pratt Institute.

Jeffrey Hogrefe - Professor of Humanities and Media Studies, the co-founder of the Architecture Writing Program

Amanda Huynh | 黃珮詩 - Assistant Professor of Industrial Design in the School of Design.

Andrea Merckx - Adjunct Assistant Professor in Pratt's Foundation Department teaching Time and Movement.

Migiwa Micki Spiller - Adjunct Associate Professor - CCE, teaching Space Form and Process in the Pratt Foundation Department

Todd Ayoung - Adjunct Associate Professor - CCE in the Foundation Department

Discussion:

- How can an expanded and diverse range of cultural contexts play a dynamic transformative role in first-year Foundation Art and Design Studio Learning ?
- The Pratt Foundation Department has in recent years clarified its learning outcomes, but where and how can an expanded breadth of cultural perspectives, less often represented or visible, make outcomes and pedagogy more impactful, relevant, flexible and embracing of Diversity?
- How can Pratt Foundation make a difference through anti-racist revisioning of our curriculum and teaching pedagogy ?
- Where are Pratt upper departments making headway in this process that would benefit teachers in the Foundation Department ?