Motion 1

Summary:

We believe that for programmes to be effective in their delivery and for students to get the most out of their programme, it will be beneficial for technical instruction to become of increasing importance in the delivery of programmes, most especially within the SoC.

Breakdown:

Technical Instruction Becoming A Part of Programmes Or The College Placing a Greater Emphasis on Technical Instruction:

One of the biggest reasons people choose the RCA is because of the emphasis the college places on students learning and exploring new mediums and methods of creation. People come here to learn new skills, to grow in their various practices and expand their technical and theoretical horizons. Breaking boundaries between disciplines and forging new paths are an essential part of the College's identity. And every time we speak to students about why they came to the RCA one of the first things that comes up is the opportunity to learn new skills that will help them evolve as creatives and or position themselves for better employment opportunities.

However, just as consistent is the fact that people are tired of the current approach to technical services and its delivery method, students across the SoC, as well as within other schools, regularly complain about an inability to access technical services whether this being due to space being booked up, times clashing with their lectures or a myriad of other issues. Indeed, many students have been forced to change the direction of their projects numerous times because of a lack of access to technical services. Students are playing it safe or finding other ways to get their projects done because they find technical services unreliable or difficult to get to. This is something that has been flagged up at countless rep meetings (especially within the SoC). We've thought of different solutions which we believe can be implemented before the end of the academic year such as technicians allowing students who are deemed capable and responsible to be able to help manage facilities (a model that exists in other colleges) and ought to at least be trialled and considered in ours as well. But despite numerous school meetings discussing this, no significant progress has yet been made on this front.

In one such meeting, it was recommended that we learn on YouTube because teaching students how to use a software from the ground up was not a part of the remit of technical services. Thankfully, a rep correctly called out the fact that many students have travelled half-way across the planet, left family and loved ones, while spending huge sums in order to be able to access the world-class technical expertise and facilities the RCA has to offer, not as a matter of fact, to spend time learning these things on YouTube.

In light of this and a myriad of other challenges with technical services, the seconder, together with myself and other reps within the SoC believe that the only medium to long term fix would be to

restructure how technical services work and have technical instruction become a part of programmes.

We understand that there are two big obstacles to this namely:

1. Facility space is still an issue
2. The multi-disciplinary nature of the RCA means that dedicated technical instruction to one or two programmes could limit the ability for other programmes to access that service.

While we acknowledge these challenges we believe that it is more than possible, if very carefully planned to create a system whereby students in very multi-disciplinary programmes are able to get at least basic to mid-level training in specific technical services, while simultaneously earmarking periods for those whose programmes do not demand these services to be able to make use of them.

Another argument that we often hear is that, facilities all across the college (not just technical services) are underutilized and thus students need to make as much use of the facilities as possible. While this is a fair point, it's also been noted that this challenge is not unique to this current student cohort and indeed facility usage has changed dramatically since COVID. If this is a recurring pattern we are led to argue that this is not a problem students can magically fix but one for the college to come up with strategies and policies to address. Furthermore, underutilized facility space does nothing to change the fact that students struggle to book appointments with technical services. We also wish to make the point that this is not solely down to technical services but how they currently function and not being equipped to deliver their services to the best of their ability.

We recognize that such a massive change is unlikely to occur during our remaining time in the college and that is fine. But we believe that if the RCA is to continue to retain its outstanding record as the best Arts & Design Institute in the world, it is paramount that more attention goes into working with technical services, programme heads and the SU to find a way to make sure that every student that comes to the RCA is given as much opportunity as is reasonably possible to learn, innovate and stretch beyond their current capacities by providing greater access to technical instruction.

Thank You

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