

## **Basic Training: Inspiring Institutional Change in Higher Education in the Fine and Professional Arts Through Wholistic Practice and Sustainability Education**

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### ABSTRACT

This paper documents the process by which I developed “Basic Training”, a wholistic program for the education of artists, and came to see this program as a model for sustainability education more generally.

I am an artist who, shortly before joining the Critical and Creative Thinking Program (CCT) at the University of Massachusetts/Boston (UMass), left my full-time job so I could have more time for painting. I have done this – establishing a studio, a practice, and networking – culminating in both solo and group exhibits of my small and large paintings and works on paper. To make ends meet, I took on a half-time position as a painting studio manager at Massachusetts College of Art (MassArt). Finding that I was the first person in this position, I put into place studio guidelines and organization to ensure a personally healthy and environmentally responsible workspace. This led me to develop a three-part program, “Basic Training” for artists, embracing the three responsibilities (as I define them) of the artist (personal, environmental, community), making use of the tools for personal and organizational change I learned about through my course work in CCT – strategic planning, evaluation, problem-based learning, dialogue, teamwork, and reflective practice.

“Basic Training” not only includes health and environmental concerns, but also an artist’s responsibility to engage with the communities that artists rely on to experience and support our artwork. In this spirit, I took up an offer of use of a storefront in Jamaica Plain, and initiated the Efka Project. As Efka Project’s director and coordinator I coach emerging artists to prepare, publicize, curate, and staff their first exhibits. In turn, Efka Project provides an opportunity for the public to gain exposure to, and education about artists in their community who are about to embark on their careers.

I went on to develop a curriculum for MassArt and explore the institutional challenges of getting the Basic Training Program implemented. I was also drawn into education for sustainability efforts at UMass/Boston and have translated my MassArt course into a possible UMass course for a more general group of students – not only artists. It is my hope that the CCT program at UMass/Boston, and perhaps other departments and campuses, will in fact be able to work my course into their offerings in the near future.