

Report of the President of the School of the Art Institute

I AM DELIGHTED to be celebrating my first anniversary at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). It has been a fast-paced and exciting year for the nation, the city, and SAIC as well. A new leader invariably brings a different perspective to bear on all manner of issues, and I believe that mine has opened up windows of opportunity on many fronts. We remain dedicated to the time-tested and transformative powers of an education in the arts and design, and I fully intend to make sure that we offer the premier model of its kind at SAIC.

There is no doubt that this year presented many unanticipated challenges from the financial markets and, in turn, to our operations. Numerous stories in the press have documented the retrenchments of universities and colleges in the United States with the largest endowments. As I write this letter, however, the economic fundamentals of SAIC are solid, thanks to the responsiveness of the administrative staff and faculty who have worked with me to make difficult choices. Most impressively, they have secured very positive enrollments for the upcoming year that have exceeded all expectations. This has been complex, but gratifying to witness, given the required collective effort.

Even without the prompting of the recent economic turbulence, the field of higher education is in a major period of transition and innovation. Almost nothing about the delivery of a first-rate education is being taken for granted as we respond to global, technical, and cultural changes. I especially want to thank the Board of Governors for rallying to my request for unprecedented engagement with SAIC as we collectively convert these challenges into opportunities. I would particularly like to thank outgoing chairman Barry L. MacLean for his leadership and welcome my new partner, Cary D. McMillan. SAIC enjoys the good fortune of having capable stewards who clearly delight in the success of our students.

Underpinning much of my optimism about the immediate future of SAIC is the outcome of my interaction with the trustees of the Art Institute and the board's chairman, Thomas J. Pritzker. Not only has Tom endorsed my redefined criteria for the success of SAIC, he has also embraced our ambitions and restructuring.

Without significant donor support and engagement, our mission would be impossible to fulfill. I wish to thank the Pritzker family for their generous support of students who are experiencing unprecedented financial pressures. The endowed Pritzker Scholarship Fund will supply substantial annual funds for use by our officers in enrollment and student affairs in support of student aid. Greatly enhancing our efforts to attract the best students, this fund is an indicator of optimism about the future direction of SAIC.

I also wish to thank our faculty, staff, and alumni. Their hard work and commitment have been rightly recognized through various grants and awards, including Illinois Arts Council Artist Fellowship awards and Fulbright Fellowships for the 2009–2010 academic year.

In summary, I am pleased to be at SAIC and in this great city; it has been a momentous year for both. And while there is ample reason for optimism about SAIC, it is essential that we continue to innovate, establish strong partnerships, and hold ourselves accountable to the students and families that we serve. I have no doubt that we can do this, as I already see a new spirit in the studios, classrooms, and offices of SAIC. For this, I again offer my sincere appreciation to all.

WELLINGTON REITER, FAIA

PRESIDENT, THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO