

## Sunnyvale's new art institute attracts growing audience

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For the Sunnyvale Sun

Article Launched: 08/06/2008 04:11:10 PM PDT  
The exterior of the Art Institute of California - Sunnyvale doesn't look any different than the other office buildings along Kifer Road. A glance inside, however, reveals a bastion of bright colors and creativity.

City officials from Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Santa Clara, Milpitas and San Jose are on hand for the institute's July 31 grand opening. They slip on aprons, roll up their sleeves and grab small cans of paint. The countdown begins. Three, two, one . . . splat! Streams of paint smack onto the canvas with dramatic bursts.

Down the hall, a lynx paces the length of a table, while students furiously sketch its image on large drawing pads.

The Art Institute of California - Sunnyvale, the newest branch of the California Design

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College, opened its doors in March to a class of about 80 students.

The school is quickly proving that an arts college

can thrive in a city that is better known for tech companies than artist communities. More than 150 students are currently attending the second quarter, which began in early July. More students are expected to enroll for the third quarter, which starts Aug. 21.

Despite a smaller selection of course offerings, the individual attention and small class sizes draw students from larger schools in San Francisco.

"Because it was new, they could not offer as many classes. A lot of us had to take the same basic classes anyway, so it did not matter as much," said Chantelle Patel, a second-quarter student in the fashion marketing and management program. "It's been great, though, because we all got to know each other really well."

Currently, the institute offers bachelor's degree programs in culinary management, digital filmmaking and video production, fashion marketing and management, graphic design, interior design, and web design and interactive media. There are associate degree programs in culinary arts, graphic design, and web design and interactive media. More programs will be added as facilities are built and enrollment increases.

Most of the bachelor's degree programs take three years to complete because classes are taught year-round. Students take a set of required courses in the liberal arts in addition to those in their area of study.

The instructors give lectures, but the majority of the students' time is spent in the kitchen, studio or on a computer.

The Art Institute focuses on giving students projects they would encounter in the workplace and helping them build a professional portfolio before



graduation.

Kelly Williams, a first-quarter graphic design student, left her mark on the school when she won the campus-wide competition to design the logo for the school's restaurant.

"A lot of traditional schools are theory-based, but here students are working with the material and touching it with their hands," says Daniel Cardenas, president of the institute.

The Art Institute is working on forging a positive relationship with the surrounding community by hosting events such as the Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce's Aug. 14 Wake up Sunnyvale!

The Career Services Department is also making a concerted effort to build a network of local employers.

"We try to bring in local employers who need part-time employees," says Cardenas. "It gives students experience in the field and it is great because local companies particularly understand that education comes first."

Students are also encouraged to use their skills for community outreach projects. Graphic design students will work with nonprofits to design Web sites and logos.

Second-quarter culinary students baked a large cake, with decorations representing each degree program, to auction off at the grand opening. The proceeds from the auction went to the Second Harvest Food Bank, a donation that the school hopes is the first of many.

Individuals have also taken an interest in helping out the institute.

When Sunnyvale resident Ginny Evans heard that the school was offering culinary classes, she called to donate her collection of about 1,200 cooking magazines dating back to the 1970s. A corner of the library facility will be dedicated to her.

The International Culinary School is one of the most popular programs at the Art Institute, warranting a wing of the campus complete with a la carte and pastry kitchens and a restaurant.

A mannequin dressed in an Art Institute chef's uniform stands sentinel over a cheery yellow hallway. Imprints of maps cover the walls, with the names of dishes printed across them. Photo panels depicting food preparation punctuate the expanse of pale yellow paint in the culinary wing.

An ordinary door opens to a restaurant with a dramatic dark slate floor and walls decorated with art nouveau posters. The dining room is abuzz with industry experts and instructors sitting at tables covered with crisp black linens and stark white table settings, enjoying a pasta lunch prepared by the students.

The defining feature of the restaurant is the large window cut out of a side wall that offers a glimpse of the preparation process. Students glide through the kitchen with plates of vegetables, while others stir pasta sauce as it simmers on the stove.

The Professional Advisory Committee meeting, an event held multiple times a year to get input from professionals on what skill sets the industries are looking for, serves as a trial run for the fledgling restaurant.

The restaurant Aemono is slated to open in September for lunch and eventually dinner as well. It will be run entirely by students.

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The menu offerings will vary based on what style of cooking is being taught in the classroom at the moment. Students working toward a culinary management degree will create the menu, cook the food and act as hosts and waiters on a rotating basis.

"Our goal is to stay as green as possible. That means buying from local producers," says chef Eric Frauwirth, academic director of culinary arts. "We don't even go as far as Napa for the beer and wine we serve. Rabbits Foot Meadery is right here in Sunnyvale, and it produces a line of white wine and beer from honey. He produces right on site, and it is a great way to support local vendors."

Ashley Lopez, a 23-year-old culinary student in her first quarter, was inspired by an impromptu lesson on wines by Mike Faul, Rabbits Foot Meadery's president. Upon completing her three-year program at the Art Institute, she hopes to grow grapes for wine, and own and cook for a small restaurant.

Lopez defines herself in part by the nurturing aspect of cooking for others and sees food as a way to relate to others. "People associate you as a person with how your food tastes. How you feel when you walk into the kitchen is reflected in how what you make tastes," says Lopez. "I am happy when I walk into the kitchen, and I think what I make shows that."

The Art Institute works to help students define their interests and pursue their ideal careers.

"I graduated from a traditional school and I saw too many people get a job in a field that had nothing to do with what they studied in school, but with the Art Institute students they graduate and go out and do something they love," says Cardenas.

"I've sat through so many graduations, and it is incredibly fulfilling to know that the graduates are

going to do what they love."

