

2012

Critical Making | Making Critical: RISD Strategic Plan 2012-2017

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critical making

making critical



executive summary

This strategic plan serves as a guide for Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) over the next five years. It presents our vision of how RISD can best educate and support artists and designers for a changing world in ways that respect our founding ideals and reflect who we are as an institution.

The planning process widely engaged the RISD community and involved careful consideration of the dynamics of the changing landscape—among them a weak economy, intense competition for top students, and emerging technologies that encourage new ways of teaching and learning. The plan articulates our strategic priorities and outlines clear goals as well as how they will be assessed. Setting priorities, in turn, will help guide our choices and direct our efforts and financial resources over the life of the plan.

The highest priority proposed for the plan is to enhance our educational model—one that nurtures critical making, thinking and innovation through immersive, disciplinary learning and engagement in the practice of art and design. Along with an emphasis on teaching and educational excellence, the plan ranks research, critical making and innovation, student engagement and diversity among its priorities. To further our mission, we will strengthen our support infrastructure, focusing on clearly defined objectives. The plan proposes these strategic goals to advance RISD between 2012 and 2017:

1. Dynamic, innovative academic programs through faculty renewal, enriched and flexible curricula, and a culture of teaching excellence and innovation
2. A distinctive culture of research that supports art and design studies and scholarship, connects to society in

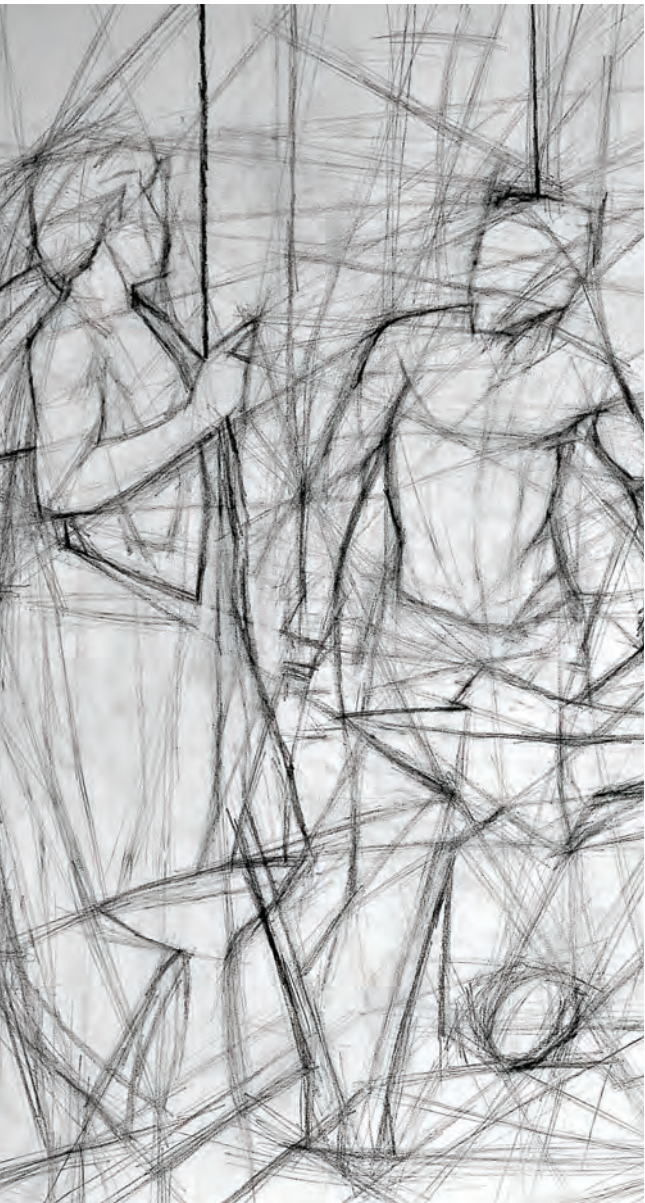
meaningful ways, and makes visible RISD's leading role in this realm

3. Exceptional critical making and innovation through the development and integrated use of traditional methods and new technologies
4. Responsive services that recruit, retain and prepare top students for success
5. An inclusive, diverse learning culture in support of educational and organizational excellence
6. Effective, efficient information technology and administrative systems
7. Effectively maintained and upgraded institutional facilities to support the work of the RISD community
8. Additional resources generated to support RISD's academic goals

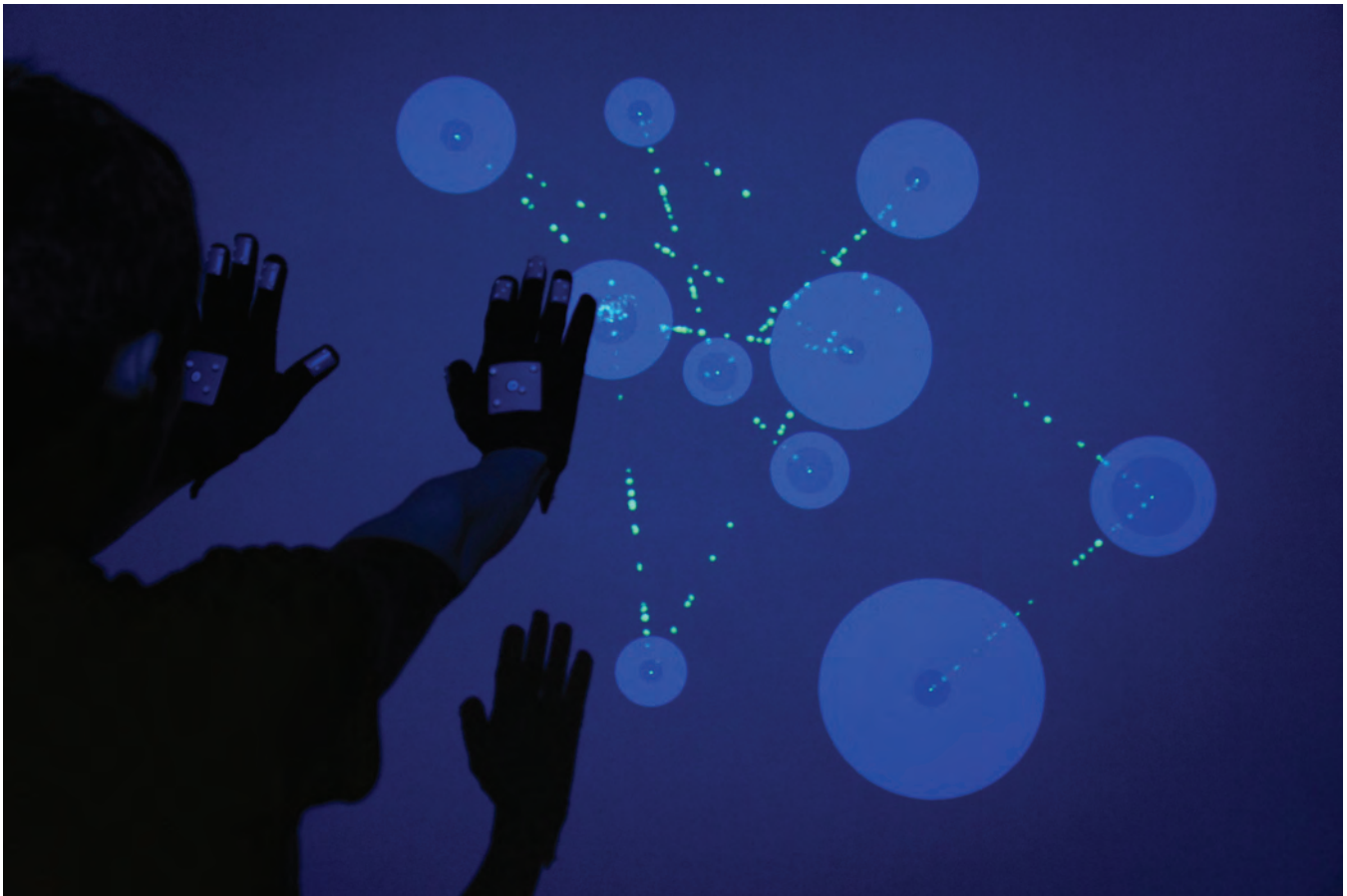
Successful implementation of this plan will enable RISD to prepare our students to be thinkers, makers and innovators in a world of increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. It will expand our role as cultural leaders in the greater Providence community, across the country and throughout the world. And it will honor RISD's rich past while building our capacity to shape the future with confidence, creativity and a passion for excellence in art and design education.



honoring the past, shaping the future



For well over a century RISD has been among the preeminent institutions of art and design education. Our mission—the education of artists, designers and scholars engaging contemporary culture through works of art and design—is essential. RISD prides itself on educating critical thinkers and makers whose skills and imagination influence the world. The canvas of a competitive, complex and ever-changing world, however, calls for reimagining the future of art and design education and the role RISD plays in shaping this future. As one of the world’s premier colleges of art and design, we embarked on this strategic planning process to enrich educational opportunities.



This five-year strategic plan is both affirmational and aspirational: it reaffirms and builds on the time-honored disciplinary and pedagogical strengths of our institution. It reflects our exploration of the role of art and design education in the 21st century and our vision of how RISD can lead this inquiry in a manner that best represents who we are as a community. Our priorities for this plan stem directly from the central assertion that an art and design education is a professional pursuit. Embedded in our vision is the recognition of our students, faculty, librarians and alumni as creators of works and bodies of knowledge that have significant cultural impact locally, nationally and globally.

This strategic plan makes a commitment to a model of art and design education that is immersive, discipline-based and grounded in studio practice. RISD's education excels by nurturing creativity and innovation through rigorous, deep disciplinary learning and engagement in the practice of art and design. This plan expands our capabilities for research, critical making and innovation, student engagement, diversity and lifelong learning. The plan also commits to organizational excellence in a broad array of critical services—human resources, information technology, financial, legal, health and safety, security, communications and fundraising—that are provided by our

staff, and through administrative systems and facilities. Together, these systems support the success of RISD's mission of providing exemplary art and design education, along with enduring contributions to global culture through critical thinking, scholarship and innovation.

MISSION

The mission of Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), through its college and museum, is to educate students and the public in the creation and appreciation of works of art and design, to discover and transmit knowledge, and to make lasting contributions to a global society through critical thinking, scholarship and innovation.

FOUNDING IDEALS

On March 22, 1877, Rhode Island's General Assembly incorporated Rhode Island School of Design. The corporation's group of forward-thinking artists and business leaders, educators and politicians formed the school "for the purpose of aiding in the cultivation of the arts of design." The original bylaws set forth the following goals for RISD:

First. The instruction of artisans in drawing, painting, modeling, and designing that they may successfully

apply the principles of Art to the requirements of trade and manufacture.

Second. The systematic training of students in the practice of Art, in order that they may understand its principles, give instruction to others, or become artists.

Third. The general advancement of public Art Education, by the exhibition of works of Art and of Art school studies, and by lectures on Art.

VISION

This planning process engaged RISD's faculty, staff, students and Board of Trustees in careful consideration of the role the college plays in the world of art and design. A number of questions guided this process. What is the role of art and design education in the 21st century? How does RISD lead this inquiry in a manner that reflects who we are as an institution? Drawing from our rich past, which core values define who we are, and what initiatives will further our academic excellence? Out of this inquiry an essential question arose: How can RISD best educate and support creative agents for a changing world?

In response to such questions, a vision emerged of a RISD characterized by:

- Exceptional education grounded in deep, disciplinary learning that cultivates critical thinking + making, creativity and innovation, and also continually advances the practice and understanding of art and design
- Pedagogical innovation and the integrated use of traditional and emerging technologies
- An open, enriching curriculum in which students may construct individualized paths of learning with greater flexibility

- A culture of research and discovery that celebrates and encourages myriad forms of art and design studies and scholarship, engages with society in responsible and consequential ways, and encourages new hybrid forms
- Exemplary service in support of students, from enrollment to entry into professional life
- A commitment to quality and excellence in all aspects of our operations

VALUES

- **CRITICAL THINKING + MAKING:** Foster making as a critical kind of intelligence that advances thinking and understanding in multiple ways
- **CREATIVITY:** Imbue our learning environment with imagination and innovation
- **IMMERSIVE INQUIRY:** Cultivate disciplinary learning that is deep, sustained, varied and textured
- **CURIOSITY:** "Make" questions and explore new ways of thinking, knowing, doing
- **ENGAGEMENT:** Engage the world and influence culture through consequential practice
- **DIVERSITY + INCLUSION:** Create a culture of respect that recognizes and celebrates our rich differences
- **EXCELLENCE:** Demonstrate the highest quality in all that we do, from the creation of exemplary works of art, design and scholarship to dynamic teaching and learning, and optimal support operations





goals

+

strategic
initiatives

TEACHING + LEARNING

Dynamic, innovative academic programs

OBJECTIVE A

Strategically increase faculty in academic areas and ensure sufficient institutional resources in support of our academic priorities.

INITIATIVES

1. Ensure baseline teaching and operating resources—including additional full-time faculty—to support departmental and institutional strategic objectives.
2. Prioritize fundraising for new endowed and named professorships.

OBJECTIVE B

Enrich curriculum offerings to address dynamic, contemporary opportunities and areas of interest to faculty and students.

INITIATIVES

1. Develop new and support existing disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses.
2. Foster greater integration of diversity and public engagement in curriculum and course materials.
3. Collaborate with other institutions and local, national and international partners in educational initiatives and activities.
4. Strengthen connections between academic programs and the Museum to enhance educational and research opportunities for students and support new initiatives and research.

OBJECTIVE C

Offer students options for more flexibility and access to a broader range of learning opportunities, including opportunities for interdisciplinary, collaborative and engaged work.

INITIATIVE

1. Inventory and increase existing options for flexibility within current department structures and across the curriculum, including credit requirements, electives and courses for non-majors.

OBJECTIVE D

Recognize, support and encourage teaching excellence in art and design education.

INITIATIVES

1. Develop a college-wide program to enhance the pedagogical and leadership skills of faculty and graduate students grounded in different educational contexts and models.
2. Develop new pedagogical methods, and recognize and celebrate transformative and inspiring teaching.
3. Honor the pedagogical expertise of faculty members and archive their valuable knowledge for the future as a means of understanding historical development and consequential practices.
4. Improve the integration of appropriate learning technologies into teaching and curriculum delivery.

DISCOVERY + KNOWLEDGE THROUGH RESEARCH

A distinct culture of research at RISD that supports art and design studies and scholarship, and connects to society in meaningful ways

OBJECTIVE A

Define and develop a research culture that is distinct to RISD—one that supports faculty research and that connects in responsible and consequential ways with local, national and global communities and encourages new hybrid forms of study.

Increase opportunities for faculty to conduct research within their fields, across disciplines and with partners from other institutions, organizations and agencies.

Make the development of research processes, methodologies and innovative applications a fundamental characteristic of a RISD education at the graduate level, and an increased opportunity at the undergraduate level.

INITIATIVES

1. Develop a multifaceted, proactive and inclusive conception of research at RISD.
2. Support faculty research and increase research opportunities for students.
3. Enhance the curriculum by integrating faculty research that broadens the scope and content of existing courses and stimulates the development of new courses.





OBJECTIVE B

Enhance the visibility of RISD's role as a leader in the global discourse about art and design, and in research.

INITIATIVES

1. Make RISD research more visible through focused communications and public engagement activities.
2. Develop support structures to increase the visibility and agency of faculty and student research.
3. Represent faculty research both internally and externally through appropriate forums.

CRITICAL MAKING + INNOVATION

Distinction in critical making and innovation through the development and integrated use of traditional methods and new technologies

OBJECTIVE A

Increase the use of advanced technologies in classroom learning, studio fabrication and research, and develop systems for sharing traditional and new technologies.

INITIATIVES

1. Assess current academic facilities to ensure they meet programmatic needs.
2. Coordinate a survey of existing technologies within departments that can reasonably be shared in order to foster access and collective use, and to enhance study and research within and across disciplines. A detailed study should help determine when appropriate flexibility and greater access can be achieved.

OBJECTIVE B

Enrich the learning environment for faculty and students with the creation of a center of critical making and innovation.

INITIATIVE

1. Create a new center to house advanced resources, tools and shops; promote multi-departmental access; facilitate cross-disciplinary teaching, learning and research; and focus technical support and training for new projects and research.

OBJECTIVE C

Provide high-quality learning environments that are secure, safe and healthy.

INITIATIVE

1. Ensure that quality, access, safety and green practices within shops, labs, studio workspaces and classrooms adhere to the best design, access and management practices, and that facilities are staffed by appropriately trained personnel.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Responsive services that recruit, retain and prepare top students for success

OBJECTIVE A

Develop effective recruitment strategies to stabilize the number of applicants within three recruitment years and achieve gains in applicant pool to match national trend increases. Increase yield for top candidates.

INITIATIVE

1. Initiate and maintain comprehensive recruitment strategies. Set and meet enrollment goals to support academic program planning in each department and division.

OBJECTIVE B

Maintain and seek to improve excellent retention rates.

INITIATIVES

1. Create an integrated network of student support services.
2. Provide a network of support—from first contact with RISD through graduation—that assures that the pathways through RISD result in excellent retention and graduation rates.

OBJECTIVE C

Ensure that the highest quality students from all backgrounds have access to a RISD education. Move RISD out of the lowest category in its peer group for percentage of financial aid awarded as designated by the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD).

INITIATIVES

1. Define tuition and financial aid strategy linked to enrollment goals for undergraduate and graduate students for the next 5–10 years.
2. Increase scholarships and funding for financial aid.

OBJECTIVE D

Create more experiences and connections that allow our students to translate their RISD experience to the world. Lead art and design schools in revealing how an art and design education can translate into the broadest professional realms, both within the practice of art and design and beyond.

INITIATIVE

1. Broaden and diversify the programs and services offered by the Career Center.

DIVERSITY + LIFELONG LEARNING ACROSS THE CAMPUS

An inclusive, diverse learning culture throughout RISD in support of educational and organizational excellence

OBJECTIVE A

Build a respectful and inclusive culture of faculty, staff and students who represent and celebrate a broad, multi-dimensional concept of diversity and inclusion.

INITIATIVE

1. Implement programs and initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity awareness and dialogue.

OBJECTIVE B

Make progress toward a more diverse faculty and staff through new hires and enhanced retention efforts.

INITIATIVE

1. Enhance programs and policies to attract and retain underrepresented groups of faculty and staff.

OBJECTIVE C

Promote lifelong learning through programs that support employee development and growth.

INITIATIVE

1. Expand professional development opportunities and recognition programs to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of staff.

OBJECTIVE D

Promote a positive workplace and strive to be an employer of choice for all staff.

INITIATIVE

1. Offer a work environment conducive to supporting RISD's mission.

TECHNOLOGY + ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

Effective, efficient information technology (IT) and administrative systems that enable RISD's mission

OBJECTIVE A

Develop an up-to-date information technology infrastructure that enables support operations to provide services that meet or exceed the expectations of prospective students, current students, faculty, staff and other key stakeholders.

INITIATIVES

1. Employ information technology to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of critical support services and processes.
2. Ensure students, faculty and staff can easily and quickly get the information, goods and services they need in a timely manner and at the lowest cost.
3. Develop a technology strategic plan for the Office of Information Technology that addresses all applications and functions including data storage, other software and hardware, network, desktop and user support, operations, user training and the college's technology infrastructure.

OBJECTIVE B

Build and improve technological capacity for collecting, reporting and analyzing data to effectively support ongoing institutional planning and decision-making.



INITIATIVE

1. Provide enhanced technology and employee training to enable timely and improved data reporting and analysis.

FACILITY PLANNING

Institutional facilities effectively maintained and upgraded to support the RISD mission

OBJECTIVE

Develop a vision for campus facilities and implement strategically focused, cost-effective enhancements and effective space management in support of RISD’s academic programs, student experience and support operations.

INITIATIVE

1. Develop a comprehensive campus/facility master plan driven by the strategic priorities of the college, including the principles for environmentally sustainable development and operations of the RISD campus. Engage the RISD campus community and our urban neighbors in developing an actionable vision for the next decade.

FUNDING ACADEMIC GOALS

Secure funding support for academic programs

OBJECTIVE

Develop and execute a strategy to raise significant philanthropic resources for RISD’s academic programs.

INITIATIVES

1. Fully incorporate fundraising for the “Teaching and Learning” and “Critical Making and Innovation” elements of the academic plan into development efforts, which are currently focused on student support, renovation of the ISB (Illustration Studies Building) academic facility and the annual fund.
2. Ensure full participation by Institutional Engagement in the RRI process so that fundraising expertise is incorporated into the development of a new conception of research at RISD, allowing for rapid exploration of potential gift and grant support for research initiatives.
3. Create an effective culture of collaboration between Institutional Engagement and all members of the RISD academic community.

conclusion

RISD is recognized for its distinctive, immersive and discipline-based model for art and design education that is grounded in studio practice. This strategic plan is aimed at enhancing the unique model that we have developed throughout our 134-year history.

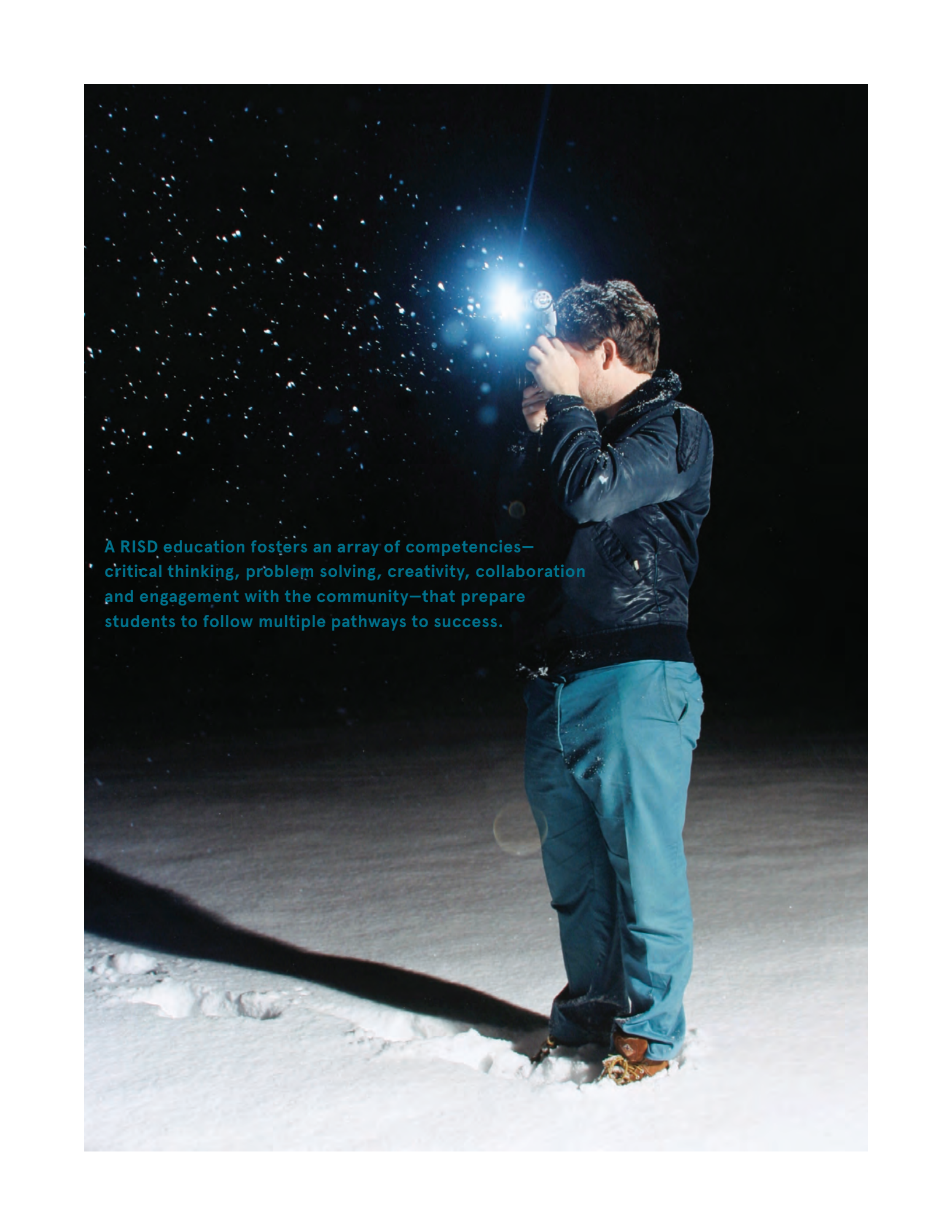
This planning process was undertaken during a period characterized by dynamic change. The goals and initiatives expressed in this plan were developed to respond to the set of questions at the root of the inquiry, exploration and self-reflection that defined this planning process.

The implementation of the initiatives we have outlined in this plan will guide how RISD will change and adapt over the next five years. If we successfully implement the


initiatives we have identified, RISD will have enhanced its capacity to continue its leadership role in art and design education, explored and expanded into new areas of research and making, built processes that will provide the best services for our students, increased diversity and strengthened our community of lifelong learners, extended our technological capacity to support learning and administrative processes, developed systems to more effectively maintain academic and institutional facilities, and secured funding to support our institutional goals and initiatives.

Creating a strategic plan is the first step of an ongoing planning process. The measures of success and quality indicators we will identify as a next step of this process will assess progress toward achieving our goals and the outcomes that will result from their accomplishment. How we track and measure our progress is the foundation for the ongoing planning and continuous assessment and improvement that will help to ensure that this plan remains a living document.



A person wearing a dark jacket and teal pants is standing in a snowy, dark environment. They are holding a camera with a bright light attached, illuminating the scene. The background is dark with many small, bright spots, possibly snow or stars. The person's shadow is cast on the snow in the foreground.

A RISD education fosters an array of competencies—critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, collaboration and engagement with the community—that prepare students to follow multiple pathways to success.

A studio space featuring a large, crumpled white backdrop against a light-colored wall. A track lighting system with several spotlights is mounted on the ceiling. In the foreground, three black metal stools with wooden seats are arranged on a polished wooden floor. The scene is brightly lit, creating a clean and professional atmosphere.

The unique impact that artists and designers make—whether through the production of their own work or as collaborators in an external effort—is gaining broader understanding.