

Unfortunately I am unable to participate in the public hearing for Visual Art Education this afternoon. However, I would like to express my opinion in support of the Visual Art Education program at the University of Kansas.

I first attended KU as an undergraduate in VAE in the 1960s. For a complicated variety of reasons, I burned my KU bridges and left before completing my degree. Thirty years later, I explored the possibility of finishing what I had begun all those years earlier. I looked into programs at several institutions and determined that the best course of action was to return to the University of Kansas. The first person I talked to at KU was Dr. Denise Stone, laying out my plan to take as many classes at Johnson County Community College as I could before returning to KU. She noted my age and advised me that she thought it was possible but I'd "better hurry". Following my Phoenix Plan, I returned to KU as a non-traditional student under the special circumstances of Academic Forgiveness. I earned a Bachelor of Art Education degree in 1998 and began teaching at Olathe East High School while continuing graduate studies leading to a Master of Arts degree in 2005.

My story is important to this discussion because it's about adversity, second chances, determination, longevity, and eventually, success. Before returning to college, I evaluated the programs at other institutions and once I was in the profession I observed the graduates from those programs in practice. I'm firmly convinced that the rigorous, deep and thorough education that I received from Dr. Stone and Dr. Elizabeth Kowalchuk in the VAE program at KU were the best possible preparation for my career as an art educator. I am grateful every day for their mentorship and for the opportunities they opened up for me.

Dr. Kowalchuk wrote a concise and compelling analysis of Art Education and the Visual Art Education program at KU for the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She established that the impact of the VAE program far outweighs its size, at a cost to the University far less than similar programs. Simply reading that paper should convince anyone of the value and importance of the program. KU VAE graduates work across the state as classroom educators and many other capacities. They all contribute to the reputation and stature of the University of Kansas. It would be a betrayal to their loyalty to discontinue such a critical program.

Sincerely,

Sherri Hanna, f'98, g'05

Visual Art Educator, retired