

Message from the Provost



Dear faculty and staff,

I hope you are enjoying your summer. As you likely read in [Chancellor Marks' recent memo](#), the campus has been alive with activity over the last several weeks, and the College of Arts & Media (CAM) has been a centerpiece of that activity with its national summer camps, the launch of the Imaginator Academy and a companion imagination survey, and other important creative endeavors. CAM is also experiencing some changes, which I'd like to share with you.

Beginning June 30, Dean Laurence Kaptain, who has served as dean since 2014, will shift roles and serve as a special assistant to me for the 2022-23 academic year and then as a faculty member. In his new role, he will support CAM and CU Denver to advance the 2030 Strategic Plan, as well as work on two new classes for academic year 2023-24 and focus on leveraging ArtsHub Asia semester abroad programs, finding ways to attract international students from Asia to CU Denver.

Dean Kaptain has nearly 30 years of experience in higher education leadership and has been CAM's dean for eight years, serving as a fearless leader who advocates for innovation and an international lens in the creative industries. Under his leadership, the college welcomed outstanding visiting artists, including Latinx scholars Vidblain Balvas López, Anaïs Ornelas Ramirez, and Diego Zavala Scherer; recording artist Drew Young; and many esteemed creatives who hosted exhibitions at our campus' iconic Emmanuel Art Gallery. CAM students get hands-on experience working with state-of-the-art creative technology. Its instructors bring a wealth of industry experience. Its graduates are handpicked by leading creative firms including Apple, Pixar, Google, Rolling Stone, HBO, and Disney. And its alumni are making an impact on the international music scene, joining acts like Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats, the Fray, and Wildermiss, to name a few. We credit Dean Kaptain's leadership for helping lead a college that teaches students how to elevate the arts and culture scene in Denver and far beyond.

Dean Kaptain made this decision in order to focus on his career goals and passions from a faculty lens. He will use the transition year to focus on strategic initiatives underway that will help advance CAM and the greater campus community, and after that, he will focus on an area he is deeply passionate about: working in the classroom with students.

As for next steps, earlier this month, I met with CAM faculty to gather feedback on the direction for CAM leadership and spent the last several weeks interviewing interested candidates for an interim role. As a result of that process, I have decided to name Interim Department Chair and Associate Professor of Film and Television Nathan Thompson and Visual Arts Professor and experienced Administrator Joann Brennan to a one-year term as co-interim deans effective July 1, 2022. Professors Thompson and Brennan will retain selected aspects of their current portfolio of responsibilities on a reduced load basis while serving in this interim capacity.

Nathan (Nate) Thompson holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Technical Direction for live performance practices of theater, opera, and dance, and has served the CAM as an educator since 1999. He has worked with production companies, including the Denver Center Theater Company and Central City Opera, and has directed technical aspects of production in venues like the Ellie Caulkins Opera House and the Buell Theatre. As a leader, Nate models inclusive collaboration and strives to advance student, staff, and faculty autonomy, mastery, and purpose in the creative arts and to explore the human condition in its immense complexity.

Joann Brennan is a dedicated educator, accomplished artist, and academic leader with over 34 years of experience in higher education, of which 24 have been at CU Denver. She has also taught photography at the University of Rhode Island, at the School of Art and Design of the State University of New York, and at Princeton University. Her artwork has been presented in exhibitions and publications nationally and internationally, and her accolades include a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2003 and a Smithsonian Fellowship from the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in 2010. Since joining the faculty of the CAM in 1998, her focus has been on enhancing the success and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

Deans play a critical academic leadership role in crystalizing the vision for and sourcing and allocating resources to support the design, execution, and assessment of programs administered by their respective colleges. As an equity-serving, urban research university determined to make education work for all, CU Denver understands the importance of maintaining a balanced and diversified portfolio of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) offerings.

We will initiate a formal dean search beginning in fall 2022 and will share more details at that time. Until then, please join me in welcoming Nate Thompson and Joann Brennan into their new roles, and thanking Dean Kaptain for his commitment to CAM and for helping to transform the creative arts through our talented students, faculty, and staff.

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