Data Summary Report

Prepared by the Engagement Lab for the Office of the President at Emerson College

March 2015

Introduction

This report summarizes some of the key findings of an innovative strategic planning process supported by the Office of the President and the Office of Communications and Marketing at Emerson College in collaboration with the Engagement Lab. Through the use of an online social game called Community PlanIt: Emerson UnCommon (https://communityplanit.org/emersonuncommon), we sought to obtain broad and diverse input from current students, staff, faculty, academic administrators, and alumni about priority areas addressed by the Emerson College Strategic Plan (http://www.emerson.edu/about-emerson/strategic-plan/five-strategies). The strategic areas addressed by this engagement process were academic excellence, innovation, civic engagement and, internationalization and global engagement. The input obtained from the game will be used to inform on-going conversations and committees across the college in long range strategic planning. Although the Community PlanIt platform, developed by the Engagement Lab at Emerson College (http://elab.emerson.edu), has been used in numerous other planning contexts around the world, this was the first time the platform had been tested in the context of strategic planning at an institution of higher learning. Emerson College was eager to pilot the use of this innovative engagement strategy , developed by its own Engagement Lab , as a means of drawing in wide participation and facilitating public deliberation about issues that matter to the College across the Emerson community in Boston, Los Angeles, the Netherlands and beyond.

In order to ensure content for the game would meet the needs of planning committees and departments across the university, a working group of faculty, academic administrators, member of the President's Council, and other staff convened in the Spring Term of 2014 to determine the priority issues that would be addressed in this process. Table 1 provides an overview of these priority issues, which are strongly tied to the strategic plan area listed above.

Table 1: Emerson Priority Issues

Academics / Learning Environment
Diversity / Inclusion
Civic Engagement
International Programs / Global Perception
Innovation
Ethos / Perception

Although each issue is recognized as important for Emerson College, the planning group recommended concentrating on a targeted set of concerns to enable greater impact. The Office of the President was especially interested in better understanding how the community's experience and aspirations for the college aligned with the goals outlines the Strategic Plan areas -– in particular students, who are not typically included in traditional planning committees on campus, outside of their elected student government representatives.

This report highlights and key findings from the input that was provided from the people who study, teach, create, and work to ensure safe, functional operations at Emerson College. In the sections below, we provide a brief overview of the methods used in this engagement process, which included the online game, an in-person community meeting after the game, and the implementation of small projects that were funded as a result of the game.

In the subsequent sections, we present a summary of key ideas and recommendations that players provided for addressing the priority issues listed in Table 1. This report also is meant to serve as a map into the complete set of publically available, anonymized, raw data from the game, so that other committees and departments on campus may use it to inform their planning and decision-making processes.

Our approach

The Office of the President sought to engage the widest possible input from members of the Emerson College community in applying the Strategic Plan to the decision-making processes underway across the institution. In order to get source this information, the Office of the President wanted an innovative approach to connect directly with the constituents of the college and garner input on their experiences and aspirations for Emerson. With those goals in mind, the College took this as an ideal opportunity to test the use of games to meaningfully engage the Emerson network in planning and the deliberation of serious issues – an area of research, experimentation, and teaching that defines a principle area of inquiry of the Engagement Lab. Specifically, President Lee Pelton saw this as a suitable moment to use the Community PlanIt platform at Emerson College, where it had been designed and researched by faculty at the Engagement Lab interested in games as civic media and possibilities of play for engaging wider swathes of the public in serious issues. For this implementation, the Offices of the President and Communications and Marketing worked in collaboration with the Engagement Lab to develop content for the Community PlanIt platform and publicize the game as a means of gaining a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the issues listed in Table 1. This was the first time that Community PlanIt had been used for strategic planning and community engagement at any institution of higher learning.

Description of the game and on-going local engagement

Community PlanIt: Emerson UnCommon was an online, multiplayer game that took place over a three-week period in September-October 2014. Each week focused on a different theme, or "mission". Mission One, "My Emerson," focused on personal experiences of the players at Emerson College, as students, faculty, alumni, staff and administrators. Mission Two, "Campus/Community," focused on the relationship between Emerson's campus and its surrounding community in Boston, as well as at Emerson Los Angeles and Kasteel Well, particularly around the issue of civic engagement and innovation. Mission Three, "Global Outlook," asked players to consider the ways Emerson College is an international hub for excellence and innovation in the arts and communication with a global future. In all three missions, players contributed ideas about what would make Emerson College a place that promotes breadth of learning, high achievement, networks of collaboration, a spirit of diversity, and the creation of new ideas and works of art that serve to make positive change in the world and enrich the lives of all who come into contact with the institution.

In each mission, players were asked to complete challenges that prompted players to answer questions, contribute media, or solve problems based upon their personal values and experiences. Once players completed a challenge, they were able to see how other players responded. Although players could only complete challenges associated with each mission during the week that a mission was in live play, all responses were visible and players could interact with other players' responses throughout the game. Indeed, a key focus of the design of the game player is this kind of recursive and immersive engagement in conversation with other players.
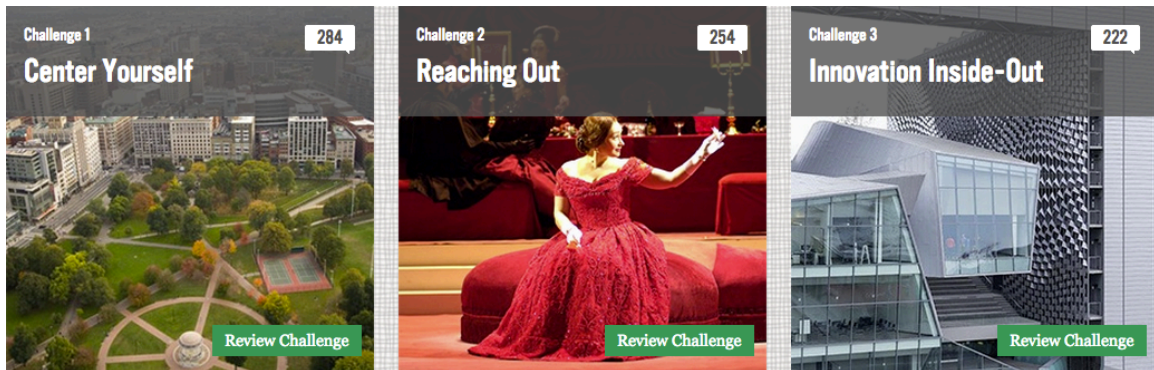
Players earned coins (points) by completing challenges and interacting with others through 'comment' and 'like' features built into the game. Coins functioned to rank players' performance in the game and also served as currency to spend on "local causes"— small, real world, community projects, proposed by players, that would receive funding at the end of the game. The Office of the President provided $3,000 to support these time-limited community projects. Leader boards, badges, and weekly e-mails to players all fostered competition that encouraged game play. At the end of the game, the top three causes, i.e., projects with the most community support (coins allocated by players), were each awarded $1,000 for implementation (Table 2).

At the conclusion of game play, the entire Emerson community was invited to participate in a post-game finale event where President Lee Pelton and other key leaders on campus began a preliminary discussion of the data and issues raised by the game with attendees and announced next steps in the various planning processes. At this event, Cause winners received their award checks and top players were publically recognized with certificates. Emerson College plans to continue to engage the community on the outcomes from the game, especially through meetings of the President's Council, staff forums, strategic planning committees, and via email to the wider Emerson community.

Therapy Dogs for Finals
Finals is a stressful time, particularly for Emerson student who strive to do it all: academics, socializing, extra-curriculars, and creative projects. The Library is already a restful place where people can take a step back…but what if it could do something more to actively help students relax? Enter Paws for People, a therapy dog program run by the Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine. These "animal ambassadors" visit healthcare facilities, schools, and libraries all over the Boston area and are trained to provide affection and comfort. There are many considerations that go into hosting such a program in the Library. The comfort animals and their handlers are volunteers, but there may be other expenses such as lint rollers for participants or cleaning of the space. So we propose to use a minimal amount of the $1000 for advertising and set-up of a therapy animal visit during finals week this Fall and hold the rest of the funds in reserve to cover any unexpected costs. If we do not exhaust that fund, and the program goes well, we will hold the event again at the end of the Spring semester and consider other venues around campus. These events would be co-sponsored by the Iwasaki Library, Disability Services, ECAPS, and Residence Life.

Student Immigrant Movement (SIM)
SIM empowers undocumented, immigrant, and documented youth to take their futures into their own hands. By providing training in community organizing and campaign strategies, SIM empowers youth with the tools and networks to create change through their campaigns for college access and comprehensive immigration reform. SIM hopes to instill in its members a sense of urgency, courage, resilience, and accountability. The Elma Lewis Center partners with SIM to support undocumented students who are trying to access a college education.

Interactive Online History of Emerson College
The Iwasaki Library proposes creating an interactive, media-rich updated version of the College's history and making it available online. Emerson College has a rich and colorful community that has engaged in creative endeavors for a long time. But what about all the conversations, milestones, and memorable events in the past? We have a hefty book detailing the history of Emerson up until 1980, but a lot has certainly happened since then. The history would be useful in recruiting new students, keeping alumni interested in Emerson, provide a teaching tool for faculty, and simply be a wonderful way to learn new things about the Emerson experience. Furthermore, we would like to invite all students, staff, and faculty to contribute towards its creation and would use the $1000 to facilitate that collaboration.

Who Participated:

Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Academic Administrators

Nearly 1,000 people registered to play Emerson UnCommon, and 563 of those were active players of the game during the three-week period (September 22 – October 13, 2013), sharing over 12,600 comments. The average completion rate for all players was 35%. 81 players responded to every challenge. Of these 81 players, 23 identified themselves as students, 34 as

faculty or staff, and 14 as alumni. The top 5 identified stakeholders represented in the game were Current Undergraduates (187), Staff (133), Full-Time Faculty (28), Alumni (35), and Current Graduate Students (21). Players were also asked to report other demographic information such as race and gender. 235 players were female. 146 were male and 182 did not report their gender. Table 3 shows the distribution of race among players.

Table 3: Race Representation

About one-third of all active players declined to provide information about their race and gender, which makes it difficult to make any categorical determinations about the diversity of players of the game, from those who did report we, we can see that 42% identified as women and 53% as White.

American Indian or Alaskan Native	1
Asian	11
Black or African American	13
Hispanic Latino or Spanish	23
I prefer not to answer	28
Multiracial	14
Other	7
White	298
Not reported	168

Table 4 shows, by stakeholder group, the representation of active players, their average challenge completion rate, and the average of number of coins earned within the game. The final row in Table 4 represents the total for these categories considering all players.

Table 4: Overview of in-game participation across stakeholder groups

Stake	# of players	Avg. % of Challenges Completed	Average Coins per player
Academic Administrator	17	45%	587.1
Alumnus / Alumna	33	62%	945.2
Current Graduate Student	22	32%	402.7
Current Undergraduate	187	32%	381.6
Full-Time Faculty	28	32%	359.6
Other / Observer	7	34%	490.0
Part-Time Faculty	4	19%	212.5
Staff	108	53%	768.3
Not reported	157	21%	240.6
Total	**563**	**35%**	**455.6**

One of the most informative numbers in this table is the average percentage of challenges completed by all players (35%), or approximately one full mission (12 challenge questions + 4 trivia questions). Emerson Uncommon included a total of 48 challenges, which includes four trivia questions per mission. This means that the average player completed 17 challenges. Of the eight stakeholder groups represented, Alumnus/Alumna had the highest average completion rate of 62%. It is worth noting that many who identified as alumni also identified as staff. Current undergraduate students were the most represented in the game, however their participation rate was on the lower end at 32%. Notable is the participation of staff both in terms of number of players and challenge completion rate. 81 players completed all of the challenges. Figure 1 shows the distribution of completion percentage. It is worth keeping in mind when reviewing results that by Mission 3, nearly one-half (48%) of all the players who completed Challenge 12 identified themselves as staff.

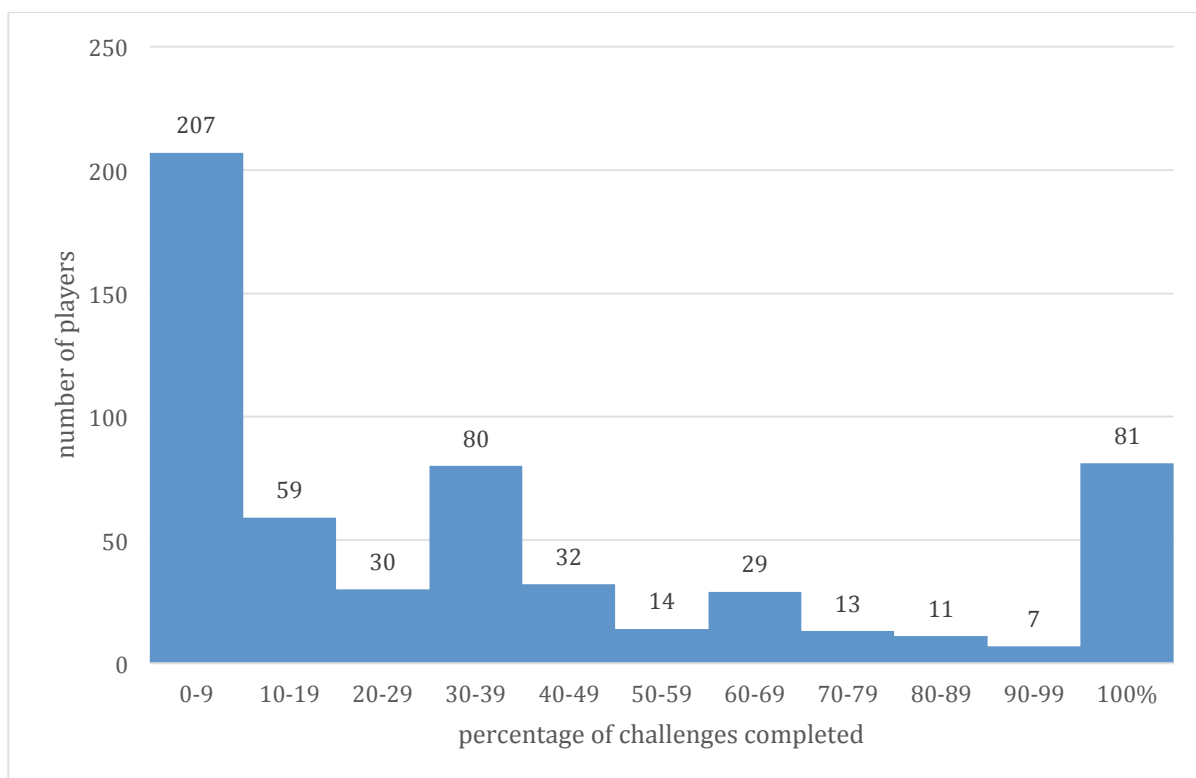**Figure 1. Distribution of percentage of challenge completed for all players**

Figure 1 shows some details in the level of participation with Emerson Uncommon. Most players were around the average of 35% but large numbers can also be seen at the extremes—0-9 percent and 100 percent.

What did we learn?

The narrative structure of the three missions moved from the personal, to the communal, to the wider global perceptions and aspirations of Emerson, in order to get at the priority issues (Table 1) from multiple perspectives. Players were given a range of challenge question types, including multiple choice, map questions that allowed players to record their response by dropping a pin on an interactive map, empathy questions that asked players to offer advice to a character in the game in order to get players thinking beyond their own stakeholder position, and open-ended questions. A full list of the 36 challenge questions (not including trivia barrier questions) asked in the game is provided in Appendix A, coded in relation to priority issues. In the following pages, we will present a thematic overview of player responses to these questions, specifically around the priority issue areas: 1) academics / learning environment; 2) civic engagement; 3) diversity and inclusion; 4) ethos / perception; 5) innovation; 6) international programs / global perception; and 7) place / identity. Many of these categories inevitably overlap with one another, even as several of the questions explicitly pertain to more than one theme. Most notably, innovation and what it means to be innovative bleeds into nearly all of the other categories. Likewise, when the college sees diversity and civic engagement as integral to a high quality academic experience and learning environment, those start to become entangled. Similarly, ethos and perception can be easily wrapped up with place and identity. Which is to say, we hope that others at Emerson will take this reading of the data not as definitive, but as evocative of new questions and new ways to explore the data in

ways that specifically relate to particular planning needs. All of the raw, anonymized data from the game is accessible as a downloadable Excel spreadsheet on the main page of the Emerson UnCommon game site, communityplanit.org/emersonuncommon. Another way to revisit the data is to explore conversation threads as they unfolded on the game site; all of the responses to challenge questions, comments on the SoapBox public forum, and all of the proposed Causes are public and available for review online.

Academic Ethos / Learning Environment

There is a prevailing stereotype that students at Emerson are not as academically motivated as might be expected at other high-ranking 4-year liberal arts colleges nationally. However, responses to several challenge questions that focused on this issue tell a much different and more complicated story. In Mission 1, Challenge 4, "Stand-out moment" players were asked to describe an exemplary learning or teaching moment at Emerson and in what context it happened for them. By far, the predominant single response was "in the classroom" (30%). Table 5 gives the complete distribution of response to the question.

Tim B.
Current Graduate Stud...

In the area, I think it's a well-known school, but not everyone really knows the ins-and-outs of Emerson. I think it's often looked at as a theater school or a communications school, but nothing more than that. I also think that it sometimes gets a negative connotation because of its artistic affiliation - it's often thought of as an "easy" school where students don't have t study much. Some U.S.News rankings corroborate this.

Table 5: Distribution of Responses to Challenge 4, Mission 1

Context (n = 268)	% of total responses
In class	30
Peer-to-peer collaboration	18
Co-curricular activity / professional development opportunities	16
One-on-one mentorship	12
Executing a creative project	8
Other	7
Experiencing a speaker, show, exhibit, or collection that Emerson has brought to campus	4
Study abroad	2
Part of an internship program	1

"The best learning experience I had at Emerson was in Intercultural Communication taught by Chester Lee at Kasteel Well. The entire class was about understanding different cultures and how different actions are interpreted throughout cultures. We also spent a lot of time comparing the culture in the United States to those in Europe. I found it to be endlessly fascinating and I learned more about life in that one class than I had in my 19 years on the planet. In fact, because of how much I loved this course, I decided to pick up Leadership and Management as a minor so that I could continue this kind of study." – Sara C.

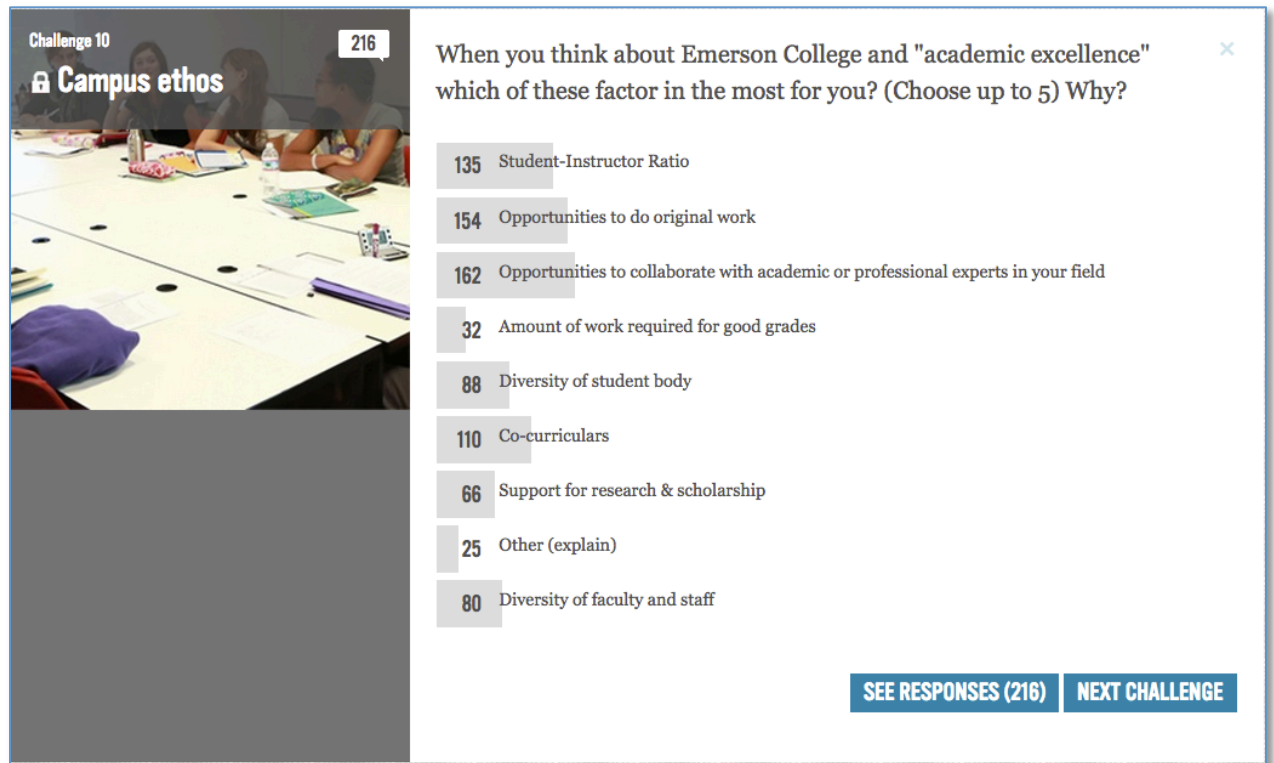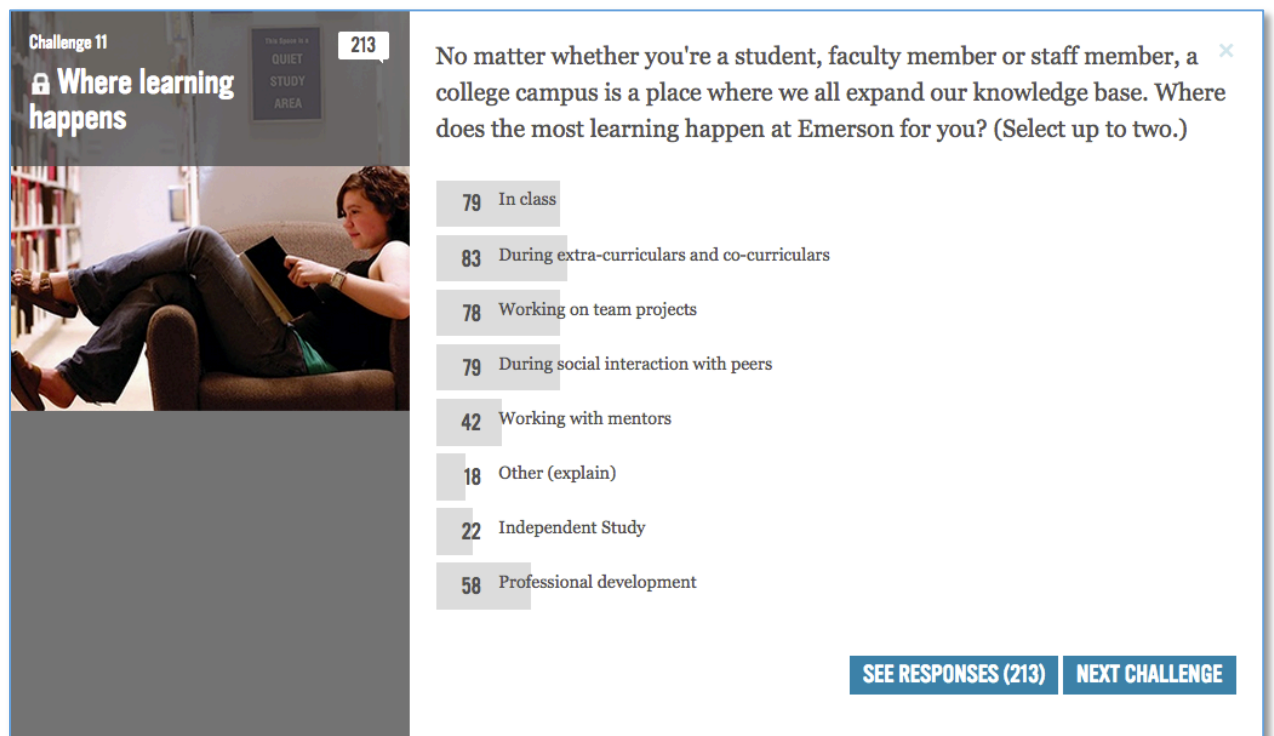**Figure 2: Responses to Challenge 10 - Mission 1, "Campus Ethos"**

Challenge 10
🔒 Campus ethos   216

When you think about Emerson College and "academic excellence" which of these factor in the most for you? (Choose up to 5) Why?   ✕

135 Student-Instructor Ratio

154 Opportunities to do original work

162 Opportunities to collaborate with academic or professional experts in your field

32 Amount of work required for good grades

88 Diversity of student body

110 Co-curriculars

66 Support for research & scholarship

25 Other (explain)

80 Diversity of faculty and staff

SEE RESPONSES (216)   NEXT CHALLENGE

Figure 3: Responses to Challenge 11 - Mission 1, "Where Learning Happens"

Challenge 11
🔒 Where learning happens   213

No matter whether you're a student, faculty member or staff member, a college campus is a place where we all expand our knowledge base. Where does the most learning happen at Emerson for you? (Select up to two.)   ✕

79 In class

83 During extra-curriculars and co-curriculars

78 Working on team projects

79 During social interaction with peers

42 Working with mentors

18 Other (explain)

22 Independent Study

58 Professional development

SEE RESPONSES (213)   NEXT CHALLENGE

Marissa Z. 🏳

I have had two professors at Emerson that have completely changed my life. Hassan Ildari and Linda Reisman have been two of the most influential people in my life and have inspired a lot of direction and strength in me. Through their experiences and words, I have developed new skills and found out a lot about myself through my work in their classes. They are incredible and I will always value their influence on me.

Nancy A.
Full-Time Faculty

I love when students email me after the semester ends to forward me an article, a story, a description of a conversation, etc. that reminds them about something they learned in my class. All I can think is, "it stuck!"

The quotations from Marissa Z. and Nancy A. above are representative of tens of other responses that reference specific classes and professors or one-on-one moments with mentors that defined their careers at Emerson. Peer-to-peer teaching and learning goes on quite a bit between staff members, faculty and undergraduates at Emerson. One undergraduate, Lina B. described her stand out moment this way, "My biggest learning experience at Emerson was part of my Emerson Stage Assignment last year, when I was thrown into organizing a group of first year Performing Arts Students and I had to lead them as a crew to create the production. I learned a lot about leadership and organization, and general calm because my Stage Manager said 'Go.'" This hands-on, learn-by doing approach was cited numerous times by students and others as a desirable and distinctive part of the Emerson experience.

Students and faculty are not the only ones taking part in this learning environment. Staff also get a lot out of professional development workshops and seminars on campus, though a significant number also cite peer-to-peer moments as the most inspiring. The entire Emerson community is learning new things practically every day, as the responses to Challenge 5, "Mind Expanding" in Mission 1 show in Table 6, indicative of a highly motivated, dynamic culture.

How often at Emerson do you learn something completely new? Please elaborate on your response or share a story in the comment section.

8	Once a semester
74	Weekly
180	Almost everyday
11	Monthly
2	Almost never
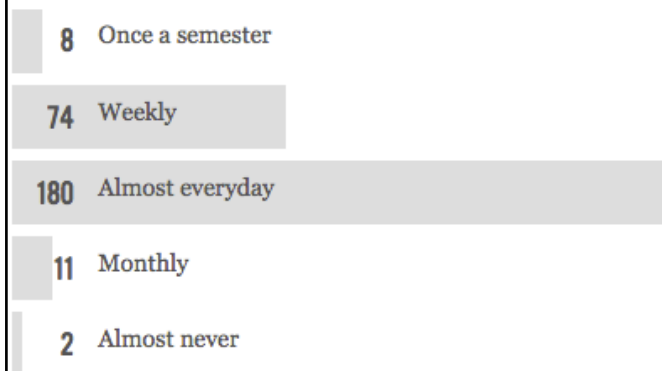
Figure 4: Distribution of Responses to Challenge 5, Mission 2

Classroom settings are certainly not the only environments in which learning is taking place. One valuable element of the learning experience for the Emerson community is service learning. When asked in Challenge 5, Mission 2 how important they considered service learning, 87% of respondents said it was "important" or "very important." Only 10 out of a total 199 respondents to the same question deemed it "of little importance" or "irrelevant" to their studies. Some qualified their answers, saying they saw service to the community as important, but didn't want it to be a required part of class, "While service learning is obviously a great thing, I don't think it would work for most Emerson classes. Emerson students pay staggering amounts of money to learn very specific skills, and class time should be devoted to doing that. It could work for certain electives, though," said Jacob C. Meanwhile, others saw it as fundamental to burgeoning artists, journalists and scholars, as another current undergraduate remarked, "Emerson seems to exist in its own little bubble. This would help expose students to more of the city beyond campus. It's important to connect with the people living in Boston" (Ben C.). Still another undergraduate put it this way, connecting her degree experience to the wider liberal arts ethos of becoming a good citizen: "If people are in contact with their community, they are in contact with a little portion of the whole world. This teaches students how to be a part of the world and be productive citizens" (Andrea V.).

These sentiments are borne out by the responses of many others to Challenge 6 "Meet Julian" in Mission 3. Students were introduced to the fictional undergraduate, Julian, and asked to consider the following scenario and question: "Julian is taking a philosophy class as an elective course outside of his major. He enjoys the class, but sometimes worries that his time is not being spent efficiently, and wonders whether this class will help him, or whether philosophy even matters in 2014. Is he right to worry about this?" Overwhelmingly, people sympathized with Julian's worrying, but ultimately advised him to let himself enjoy the philosophy class while he had the opportunity to study such things in college.

Several others pointed to value of being a well-rounded person, especially as a film-maker or other kind of creative artist. Out of 149 responses, only 11 said he was right to worry and that he should focus exclusively on courses in his major. Notably, all of those who gave a reply along those lines were current undergraduates. Perhaps, time and maturity give people a little more perspective on the situation. Then again, there were several undergraduates who encouraged Julian to be open to his elective courses, like Paulina P. who wrote, "I think this is a very real worry for a lot of Emerson
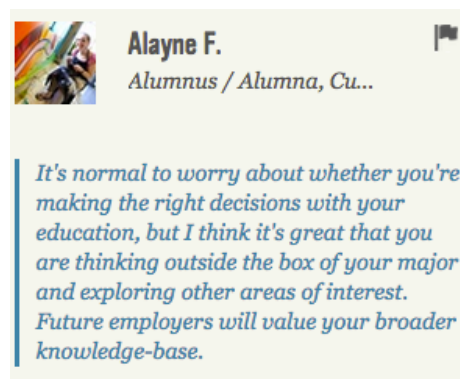
students, but after talking with other Emerson students with similar thoughts, I think what it really comes down to is how a student applies themselves in the classroom and how they take what they learn to other aspects of their education and lifestyle. Some of my gen ed classes at Emerson have provided better insight into myself and my studies than some of my major classes have." Another undergraduate, Rachel F., took a more Epicurean approach, "I think philosophy matters. Also, if he enjoys it he shouldn't worry about wasting his time. Time enjoyed is never wasted, especially when learning." Those who were more circumspect suggested Julian's timing was wrong (during his semester at Emerson LA), but that, otherwise, general education classes were valuable, provided the professor was good. Overall, though, the vast majority of respondents (77%, n=148) encouraged Julian to give himself over to getting everything he could out of the philosophy class, even if they sympathized with his tendency to worry over this kind of thing.

> **Joshua W.**
> *Current Undergraduate*
>
> *He's absolutely right to worry about this. Yes those skills are beneficial, and he has (like I have) probably enjoyed and gotten a lot out of these liberal arts classes over the past 3 years, but at this point, he feels that he needs to focus on is larger goal, his thesis project. It's tough to give other classes, especially with heavy workloads and reading assignments, the required time, since so much of his energy is dedicated to his passions. But hopefully the class will benefit his ways of thinking in the long term, and he should stick it out.*

Which brings us to the question of what kind of school Emerson is. Situated in Boston, a city well known for the number of world-class colleges and universities in a concentrated geographical area, Emerson College holds its own in the minds of faculty, students, staff and alumni. Rather than categorize Emerson College as an arts school or professional school, 38% of all respondents thought of Emerson as a liberal arts college while another 40% construed it as "something else entirely" (Figure 5).
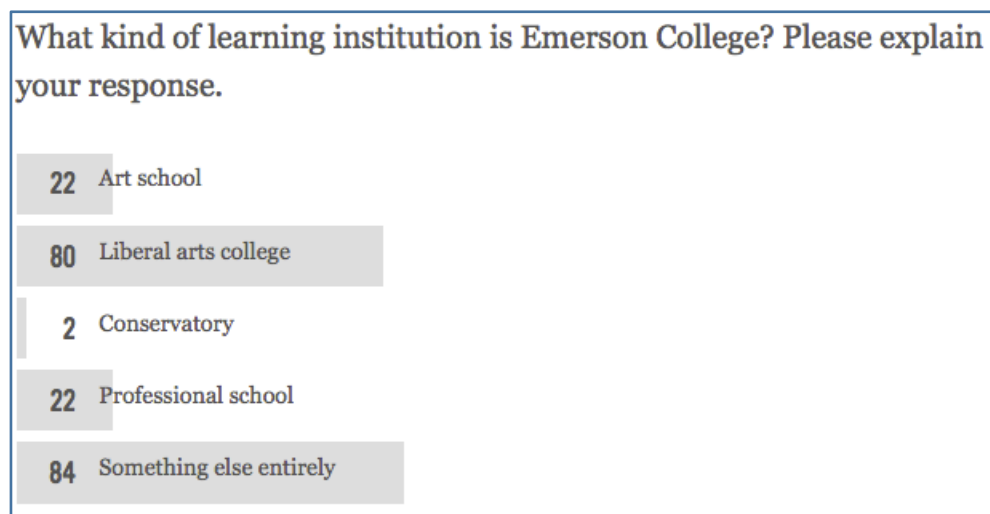
What kind of learning institution is Emerson College? Please explain your response.

22	Art school
80	Liberal arts college
2	Conservatory
22	Professional school
84	Something else entirely

Figure 5: Responses to Challenge 1, Mission 3

It's worth noting that several of the people who selected "something else entirely" did so because they wanted to combine elements of the other choices. For example, Matthew F. put it quite simply, "Emerson is an institution dedicated to arts and communication in a liberal arts context." Again, in almost identical language, Jessica G. writes, "An Emerson education is fundamentally oriented in liberal arts with the mission of preparing students to assume positions of leadership in communication and the arts." One almuna and current staff member, Eleana O., registered the tension in the identity complex at Emerson, "I think of it as a cross, or

perhaps an uneasy truce, between a liberal arts college and a professional school."

This attitude is reflected in a significant number of the answers to the final question of the game, Challenge 12 – Mission 3, "Global Perception" (Mission 3, Challenge 12). When asked how they would like Emerson to be perceived by the world, 14% of respondents said they wanted Emerson to be thought of as an institution with a strong liberal arts ethos; a place of open possibilities for students and faculty to explore and succeed in their specialty fields, with focus on students and faculty thriving in their career paths. As alumna and staff member, Jessica S., put it, "I think Emerson is perceived by the world as a liberal arts college with creative and driven students. A college with a good network of alumni. I like this perception of Emerson but I'd also like the college to be perceived as having an awareness of what is happening beyond our school and that the students have been trained to make a difference in not only their field but in the world. "

Frankie F.
Alumnus / Alumna, Staff

| *Liberal arts college*

When I applied back in 2004, Emerson was alluring because it was a 4-year Liberal Arts college (meaning I could get a Liberal Arts degree) that also had a lot of hands-on opportunities and valued hands-on work. In that way, I was often able to get an art school experience.
[10.9.2014 @ 10:53 a.m.]

[N.B., in Appendix B, we have gathered all of the candid, personal detail rich responses to the question, "What do you think a degree from Emerson means in 2014? What do you think it will mean in 2020 or 2030?" (Mission 3, Challenge 7 "Now and Then"), which gives a clear glimpse into the multi-faceted way in which Emersonians value a degree from the college today and what they hope a degree from Emerson will mean for themselves and others in the future.]

Civic Engagement

Mission 2 of Emerson UnCommon, "Campus / Community," most strongly emphasized the role of civic engagement in the College's identity. Players were asked to reflect on and discuss the challenges posed in this mission through the following lens set up in the introduction to the mission: "Emerson College has an amazing community, but how do we fit into the broader communities in which we make our home? We are inextricably tied to Boston, to Los Angeles, and to Kasteel Well. How do we understand and affect those communities? How do they understand and affect us? What can we do to strengthen those ties?" As we saw from the responses to how service learning impacts the overall academic experience at Emerson, players mostly feel a strong sense of duty to reach out beyond the Emerson campus to the wider community. Throughout the game, players cited their connections to the Elma Lewis Center for Civic Engagement and the Engagement Lab as important nodes of connection between Emerson and the communities surrounding the campus. As mentioned above, 87% of respondents saw service learning, "learning that benefits a community or organization beyond the classroom," as an important to very important component of the Emerson experience.

> "Service learning is an important opportunity to learn about yourself and about others by broadening your engagement and experience with the community/country/world around you. Embrace it!" – Robert F., Academic Administrator

"Applying skills learned in class beyond the classroom is important, and what better way to do it than helping the communities one is a part of? It also can apply a sense of relevance to the classwork, when you can see a direct result of your work influence or affect someone else, it can bring what you're learning into a different perspective. Especially general education classes that are sometimes viewed as pointless." – Sean C., Current Undergraduate

One alumnus and current staff member, Sam L., who selected "important" for service learning being integrated in classrooms wondered, "When I was at Emerson this was never once brought up by a professor or staff member (that I recall). Why is that?" Another alumna and staff member also saw it as important, but was concerned about the high stakes for students working with real world problems in class, "I think service learning is quite important, but it's not appropriate for every class. Sometimes in classes, you need the opportunity to fail at something. In service learning situations, people can be dependent upon you _not_ to fail" (Elena O.). Others who selected "no opinion" were open to idea, but also thought it might depend on the class to which service learning was attached, "It depends on the class. It would be a difficult task to force people in a writing class to go serve the community when they should be/are paying for a class to teach them writing skills. If you were in a nutrition class, for instance, and you needed to learn how to plant healthy foods or sustain organic food, then, maybe, something like this makes sense. But I don't think it is fair to force this into every class at Emerson. Some things are just meant to be learned from trial and error, not always service learning. I also believe in 'learning by doing.' You can't really learn by doing if you aren't doing what you're supposed to be learning," (Christina C., current undergrad). Another player, faculty member Russell N., fell into a similar camp; namely, open to the idea, but concerned about the exegencies of coordinating community needs with an academic calendar, "I'm agnostic. It truly depends. 'Service learning' can be a positive experience for all involved, or it can result in stop-start short-term relationships, little reflection, an 'individualization' of the issues addressed by an organization as opposed to tying the filled need to broader social/structural issues. The broader context needs to be considered and real partnerships need to be established (with deep reflection of the organization's/community's needs alongside the structure needed by the school), otherwise more harm than good can result, with voluntarism-as-a-solution taking precedence over a realization of possibilities of broader policy or political change."
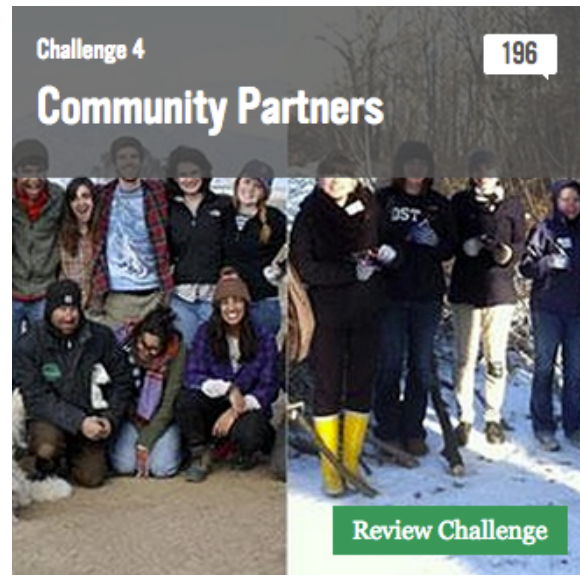
Nevertheless, an overwhelming number of players saw some kind of engagement with the community as important, be it through the classroom or extracurricular activities. When asked to name up to three organizations with which they would like to see Emerson College partner, or continue to build stronger partnerships, players responded with the following list:

Organization name / Area of interest	Citizen Schools
350MA	City Mission Society
826 Boston	City of Boston
ABC School	City Year
Adoption organizations	Colored Pencil Project
AIDS Action Committee	Coolidge Corner Theatre
Allandale Farm	Cradles to Crayons
Anxiety and Depression Association of America	Dana Farber Foundation
Artists for Humanity	Design Exchange Boston
Arts Matter	Discover Roxbury
ArtsBoston	Documentary Educational Resources
Banditos Misteriosos	East Boston High School
Berkelee School of Music	Environment League of Massachusetts
Big Brother/Big Sister of Mass Bay	Environment organizations
Bike Boston	Fenway Health
Bikes Not Bombs	Friends of the Boston Public Garden
Bird Street Community Center	Future Boston Alliance
Bootstrap	Future M
BOSCPUG	Generation Citizen
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)	Girls Rock Campaign Boston
Boston Arts Academy (BPS)	GitHub
Boston Athletic Association	GlamourGals
Boston Ballet	Google
Boston Bike Party	Greater Boston Food Bank
Boston Book Festival	Grub Street
Boston Cares	Habitat for Humanity
Boston Children's Theatre	Hack / Reduce
Boston Children's Hospital	Haley House Food Pantry
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Association	HarborArts in East Boston
Boston Creation Pro Users Group	Hearth
Boston Cyclists Union	Homeless shelters
Boston LGBT Film Festival	Horizons for Homeless Children
Boston Living Center	Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)
Boston Neighborhood Network	Join for Justice
Boston Organics	JumpStart
Boston Partners in Education	LGBTQIA Health Center
Boston Public Health Commission	Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts
Boston Public Library	Local Community Development Centers
Boston Public Market Association	Mass Creative
Boston Public Schools	Mass General Hospital
Boston SOS	Mass IFF
Boston StreetLab	Massachusetts Hugh O'Brien Leadership, Inc.
Boston Women's Fund	Massachusetts NARAL
Bottom Line	Massachusetts Youth Leadership Foundation
Boston Asian American Film Festival	Media Girls - Brookline
Caribbean Education Foundation	Media Literacy Now
Casa Myrna	Metro Pedal Power
Ceres	Minutes for Memories
Chinatown Storefront Library	More Than Words

MSPCA
National Center for Afro-American Arts
National Sexual Violence Resource Center
New England Center for Homeless Veterans
Non-profit youth and art programs
Non-profit youth dance programs
Occupy Boston
Olin College
One Village at a Time
ONEin3 Boston
Organizations to fight drug abuse
Organizations to help the homeless
Other small colleges to leverage resources
Partners Healthcare
Peach Farm
Pine Street Inn
Press Pass TV
Pro-Arts Consortium
ProArts Consortia
Project Bread
Project Hip Hop
Public Conversations Project
Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy
Rosie's Place
Rosie's Place
Rule Boston Camera
Sound Track Group Boston
Soup kitchens
St. Francis House
Stepping Stone Foundation
Student Immigrant Movement
Success Boston
Suffolk University
The Boston Globe
The Brattle Theatre
The Esplanade Association
The Free Masons
The French Cultural Center
The Goethe Institute
The Innovation District
The Jimmy Fund
The Justin Amorrantanasuchad Scholarship Fund
The Lawn on D
The Massachusetts Prdeuction Coalition
The National Broadcast Society
The Quebecois Delegation
Theater groups that work with people with disabilities
Transcultural Exchange, Inc.

Tufts Medical
Ubuntu Package mirrors
United Nations Association of Greater Boston
United South End Artists
United South End Settlements
Veteran organizations
VHL Alliance
Villa Victoria Center for the Arts
VSA Massachusetts
WGBH
Women in Film and Video New England
WriteBoston
YMCA

Figure 6: Response to Challenge 8 - Mission 2, "Giving Back"

86	Volunteer work
15	Internship with community organization
5	Community service work study
29	Political activism
32	Other political engagement
15	Service learning courses
51	Other
33	I don't engage beyond the campus

Figure 6 shows how Emersonians back up their civic engagement values with action.

Mission 3 expanded the reach of engagement to the entire world. Asking in what ways they see

Emerson addressing larger social problems or they would like to see Emerson doing more, players responded as outlined in Table 6. The largest proportion of respondents saw Emerson creating opportunities for open dialogue or action on campus as most appealing.

Table 6: Responses to Challenge 9 - Mission 3

In what ways does/should Emerson address larger social problems in the world? (n=122)	Percent of responses
Creating opportunities for open dialogue or action on campus about issues through classes, workshops, student groups; creative projects (films, art, writing, installations, etc.)	49
Community Engagement / Service / Civic Engagement	24
Diversity in hiring and student acceptance	2
Enacting policies that reflect values	3
Taking a public stand on issues as an institution (e.g., gun violence, sexual violence)	2
Emerson does not address larger social problems in the world	5
Other	7
Not sure / No answer	8

"Emerson is a microcosm of the larger society, so as we work to develop creative solutions to some of our community problems, we can model new ways to address these problems in the greater community. For example, if we can come up with innovative and effective programs to change our campus climate around the issue of sexual assault, other colleges could follow our example. Our mission is education, so we can have the greatest impact on society's problems by developing resources and strategies for educating people about problems. Dr. Pelton's gun violence initiative is a good example. I'd like to see us extend our efforts outward also, however. I believe education is the best tool for changing the world, but it has to reach beyond academia. Emerson students could be active in designing programs and workshops for younger area students. This would be a win win for Emerson and for the surrounding community." – Maureen T., Staff

"The ways in which Emersonians work to address societal problems are far too numerous to list here. A major obstacle for Emerson to overcome is educating the public on the value created through communication and the arts. I think we often look at addressing societal problems in very traditional terms: volunteer days, direct service, cleaning up a park, etc. This game is a great example of one way in which Emerson has worked to address societal problems - not one, but many. The liberal arts context of an Emerson education must play a role in this effort. In the future, I'd like to see the Emerson community focus on the ways in which we can use our strengths and mission to make a positive impact on both the local and global levels." – Claude B., Academic Admin, P/T Faculty

The above quotations represent exemplary responses in the "creating opportunities" groups of answers. Those who responded with, "It does not" also said they'd like to see Emerson doing more.

"I don't see a lot of Emerson addressing society's problems, at least not in the forefront at the school. We don't tend to reach out far beyond our school. That is, a few people and programs do, but it's not a central focus of the school. Find an aspect of society that could use our help that also relates to the Emerson student body, and that could generate interest in more social activism." - Joshua W., Current Undergrad

"I don't think it does sufficiently. I'd like to see it do more." – Tulasi S., Faculty

"The CSD programs are really focused on helping people. In general though, I don't think Emerson focuses on this." – Cate H., Staff
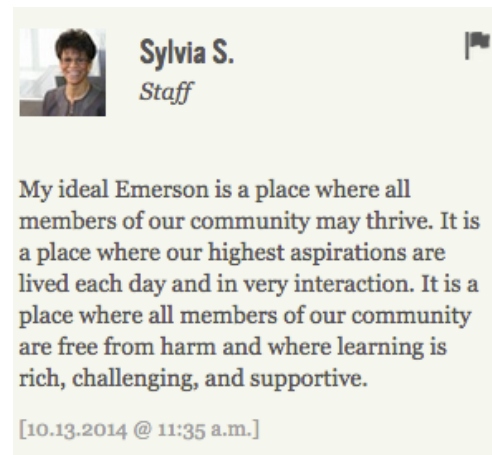
One player surmised that the problem was with publicity, "I haven't really seen or heard anything in the press about how Emerson gets involved with matters outside of the College community so...perhaps a bit of visibility is needed first" (Eugenia K., Staff). The question remains whether the perceived lack of civic engagement on social issues that matter to the College is more a problem of publicizing the work Emerson is doing, or the need to do more of the work itself.

Another group of players (6%) turned the question inward, back toward the institution, and signaled how Emerson best engages with larger social issues is by enacting policies that reflect its values - chief among these, a commitment to diversity and inclusion on campus. As one player noted, "Emerson tries to address society's problems by acknowledging its own struggles with diversity, for example, and encouraging members of the Emerson community to think and act positively on the issue, professionally and personally" (Billy P., Alumnus, Current Grad Student, P/T Faculty, Staff). Or, as another undergraduate, Courtney A., put it, "I think Emerson helps problems of social equality and acceptance. I think I'd like to see more dedication to that cause by providing more resources, counseling, advice, and aid to students with mental and physical disabilities, all sexualities, all [races], all genders, all religions. I think all the students need a little more personalized attention to be offered to them to ensure a smooth adaptation to the Emerson Community" (Mission 3, Challenge 9).

Diversity and Inclusion

Another priority issue for Emerson College is the commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion on campus. The quotation from Sylvia Spears, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion at Emerson expresses the aspirations of many Emersonians eloquently in the quotation to the right (Figure 7).

The question of diversity on campus is explored head-on in Challenge 11 of Mission 2. Players were asked to identify where they encounter diversity on campus and then to elaborate on their response (Figure 8). Most people who answered this question did give some additional input, and the sentiment of their response is tabulated in Table 7.

Sylvia S.
Staff

My ideal Emerson is a place where all members of our community may thrive. It is a place where our highest aspirations are lived each day and in very interaction. It is a place where all members of our community are free from harm and where learning is rich, challenging, and supportive.

[10.13.2014 @ 11:35 a.m.]

Figure 7: Response to Challenge 10 - Mission 3 "Ideal Emerson"

Figure 8: Responses to Mission 2 - Challenge 11 (Players could select as many as applied.)

It's clear from the responses that most people say experience diversity inside the Emerson community (78%), some specifically through classes, others through co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. When describing the places and contexts they found diversity, many students also divulged some sentiment about whether they thought the level of diversity and inclusivity was good and didn't need more improvement, while others were critical and saw areas where more work needed to be done.

> *"My major seems to have a lot more diversity than anywhere else I have experienced on campus. I come from a very diverse place, so the lack of diversity (of people) here I still, even in my fourth year, find quite shocking." – Emily Y., Current Undergraduate*

How/where do you experience diversity at Emerson? (n=152)	Percent of responses
POSITIVE (Lots of diversity on campus and it's great)	35
CRITICAL (Not enough diversity on campus)	12
NEUTRAL (I see it; no explicit sentiment about it)	31
MIXED FEELINGS (Different areas of campus are less diverse than others; improvement needed)	11
None given	2

Table 7: Sentiment of players responses to Mission 2 - Challenge 11

There is still plenty of room for conversation on this topic, as the notion of "diversity" seems to put some people off balance when it come to identity categories like race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation. On the other hand, those who approach the concept from the perspective of college being a place of "diversity of ideas," regardless of representation, then there is more homogeneity in the

responses. Here are some answers to this questions that stood out as exemplars of this phenomenon:

I think I experience diversity in my class, African-American Theatre and Culture, which is an amazing class! Everyone should take it.

I find a lot of diversity of ideas at Emerson college. However, I don't find as much diversity of people.

There are a lot of assumptions leading up to this question.

I most value the diverse nature of passions, interests, abilities, and desires in the Emerson community - but I believe that diversity could span a greater swath than it currently does. I want to hear new ideas, see new means and methods of addressing more and more complex and novel concepts as our students learn and grow and develop here. I know a hefty portion of becoming an adult and a practitioner is reconciling with the past and recognizing strengths and flaws while expanding notions of what is authentic, what is possible, and even what is right and wrong.

I distinguish multiculturalism from diversity, and am uncomfortable with the idea that one means the other in current discussions. Multiculturalism is a worthy goal, but methods of achieving it can be not just discriminatory, but hateful and hurtful. I'm not sure how well we've confronted that. But for the most part, our efforts are responsible and respectful.

I... I know we try really hard for diversity, and with the resources we have within the student body, we do embrace each others differences. But I don't know how we can be more proactive about trying to get more students of color on campus without coming off as "We're only talking to you because you're black/mexican/filipino/native american/etc." Because honestly that's how it felt for me if when was being recruited to a bunch of other schools when I applied for college.

We have a ways to go to achieve diversity here on campus, but we are making progress. We're fortunate to be geographically connected with some of the city's most diverse neighborhoods. And there's that incredibly talented and diverse Dragon Boat team!

Emerson is located in a very diverse part of Boston. Located near Downtown Crossing and Chinatown, I enjoy walking the streets to experience many types of people, cultures, and languages.

Working in the Cabaret I've seen lots of multicultural events, both from campus-dwellers and people outside campus. I have also seen numerous meetings in the Campus Center in general where multitudes of ideas have been thrown around; it's because of these meetings and events that we can move forward as a community with ideas and respect for one another.

"I find Sylvia Spears's sessions on diversity and inclusion to be particularly enlightening. The material itself opens my eyes, and watching how gifted she is in facilitating a group is an education as well."
–   Christine H., Staff

International Programs / Global Identity

Although the latest addition to the Emerson presence outside of Boston this year – the new facility in on Sunset Boulevard housing the Emerson Los Angeles program – has gotten a lot of well-deserved attention this year, the study abroad program in the Netherlands at Kasteel Well has been a mainstay of Emerson culture for some time. Additionally, Emerson's External Programs allow students to take classes in cities around the world. One current undergraduate expressed his gratitude for Emerson opening up the world to him this way:

> "I have been fortunate enough to study abroad in Beijing, China through Emerson's External Programs. I was the first student from Emerson to utilize our partnership with the Communications University of China in Beijing and I spent Fall 2013 there studying Mandarin and Communications. My greatest learning experience occurred when I first arrived to the CUC campus in Beijing, immediately got lost, and then realized: I am on completely my own.
>
> Of course I had the wonderful support of my family as well as David Griffin (Director, International Study & External Programs) via electronic communication; yet, everything I knew was on the other side of the planet! I was "a stranger in a strange land". But this has become one of my greatest experiences and life lessons. Even with love and support, I must still find my own way." – Devon M., Mission 1 – Challenge 4 "Stand-out Experience"

Graduate Student, Richard K. also noted how travel to a foreign country for research was integral to Masters' degree work: "My best learning moment at Emerson happened while working on my thesis. I was able to travel to Zambia for research and it was an incredible experience."

However, when asked in Mission 3, Challenge 5 whether they feel prepared to enter a global marketplace thanks to their training / experience at Emerson, most players aren't sure, have limited skills, or don't think they are ready at all (Figure 9). In response to that challenge question, current undergraduate, Arman A., tied the global readiness of Emerson graduates, or lack thereof, to an overall need for more training in cultural diversity, even at the curriculum level, "Being an international student, one of my take-aways from Emerson was being a better collaborator and I gained valuable skills in group works. However, in the global scheme of things, I think Emerson students still lack a lot of skills. Even though they are open to different cultures, they still communicate in the same way as they would to their own culture. What I'm getting at is that I don't think there is much emphasis on Emerson's curriculum in being global."

Figure 9: Response to Challenge 5 - Mission 3

That said, players are hungry for the experience to go abroad and learn from engaging with a wider world. When asked in Challenge 8 of Mission 3 where in the world they would most like to study or engage professionally beyond their Emerson base, answers were diverse (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Points on the map represent places where players would most like to study or engage professionally, when away from the Emerson hub

The following is a list of places marked on the map. (Items marked with an asterisk were mentioned more than once.)

Australia*	France, Paris*	New Zealand*
Australia, Sydney	Germany*	Ohio, Cleveland
Bombay, India	Germany, Berlin	Palo Alto
Brazil, Rio de Janeiro	Greece	Pennsylvania
Canada, Toronto	Haiti	Russia, Moscow
China*	Iceland*	San Francisco*
China, Shanghai	Indiana	Sweden
Czech Republic, Prague	Ireland	Tennessee, Nashville
Denmark, Copenhagen	Japan	Texas, Austin
Denmark, Copenhagen	Japan, Tokyo	Virginia
England*	Los Angeles*	Washington DC*
England, London*	Netherlands	
France	Netherlands	
France, Aix-en-Provence	Netherlands, Well*	
France, Lascaux	New York City*	

While not all of these are outside of the United States, many of them are global hubs of learning, culture, and media.

In addition to traveling abroad, game curators were curious to know how Emerson in Boston and Los Angeles could become hubs of international esteem in the area of arts, communication and liberal arts. Challenge 11 of Mission 12 addressed this directly with players, asking what the indicators might be of Emerson making a world-wide impact. The results are shown in Figure 11.
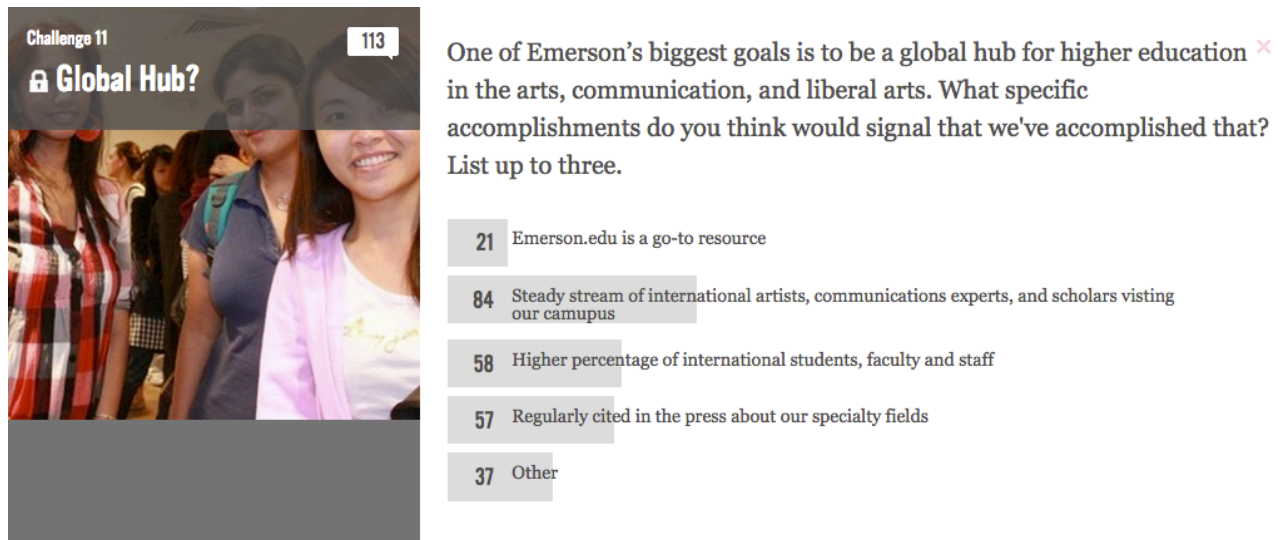

Figure 11: Responses to Challenge 11 - Mission 3

Three-quarters (74%) of players indicated that a steady stream of international artists, communications experts, and scholars visiting our campus was the best sign that Emerson is on the right path for this priority issue. After that, about half (51%) selected "higher percentage of international students, faculty, and staff" would be a good indicator, while another indicator that garnered 50% of players' support was for being "regularly cited in the press about our specialty fields." That said, in response to Challenge 12 in Mission 3, asking whether they thought Emerson is perceived by the rest of the world, about 5% said they "weren't sure" or that Emerson "wasn't well-known" outside of the US.

> You cannot underestimate the power of networking and establishing relationships with the great artistic community outside of Emerson. Whether they are teaching, lecturing, or visiting - that is the goal we should keep striving for. The same goes for getting a higher percentage of international students, faculty, and staff.
>
> And finally the other is related to the fact that Emerson has invested a lot of time and effort into improving the wireless on campus. So the guys behind that in Networking deserve a big shout out. You can't really network without a network. (ba-dum-psh)
>
> http://press.emerson.edu/it/2014/04/22/it-interviewed-by-jr-103-student/

In their comments to this question a number of students called for more foreign language classes to be offered. This correlated with some responses to a more whimsical question – but which most players took quite seriously – in Mission 3, Challenge 4 "Evolving Ed," which asked players to imagine the kinds of courses that might or should be offered at a future Emerson College 20 years from now. Three people out of 156 respondents independently came up with the notion of an international relations focused

major:
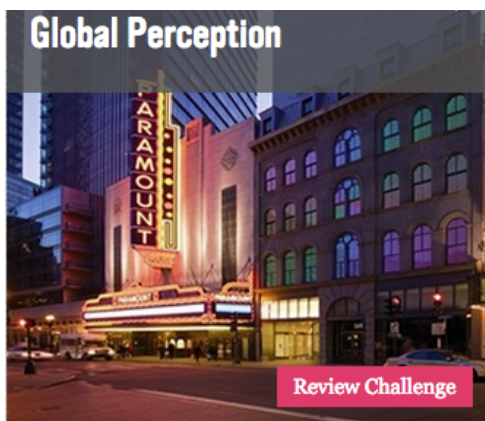
"I think the communications department will expand to a more global reach to create an Intercultural communications major that includes international relations, language studies, and public relations for politics?? That would be cool." – Alicia C., Current Undergraduate

"International Relations or Global Political Communication" – Margaret P., Current Undergraduate

"In 20 years I imagine Emerson College offering a major in Global communication. I envision this major as expanding on our current focus on communication and further focusing on how to communicate in a global world with constantly dissolving barriers." – Jake H.

Also in response to the "Future Ed" challenge, another player, staff member Christina H., wanted to see, "a foreign language program where students can learn multiple languages in order to compete in international business, arts, and communications arenas."

Even if some players weren't sure how well Emerson's reputation was understood outside of the US (or even the northeast, excepting Los Angeles), nearly all players had high aspirations for how they hoped Emerson would be perceived in the future as an institution, as evinced by the responses gathered in Table 8 to the question, "How do you want Emerson to be perceived by the world?"

Table 8: Challenge 12 - Mission 3 "Global Perception"

Aspirational hopes for Emerson's image in the world (n=110)	Percent of Responses
As global hub of innovation and excellence in arts and communications that produces desired professionals in their field	25
Would like it to be more of a well-known institution in general for what Emerson already excels in doing	19
A school with a strong liberal arts ethos; a place of open possibilities for students and faculty to explore and succeed in their specialty fields; focus on students and faculty thriving	14
A place where members creates positive change in the world; an institution that reaches out to welcome in	7
As a multi-culturally diverse and inclusive learning community	6
As a center for creative arts excellence with opportunities for hands-on experience (internships / apprenticeships	3
As a center for excellence in communication, embracing the arts, journalism, media, performance, speech disorder studies, marketing, etc.	3

An Ethos of Innovation

From the responses to Challenge 12 in Mission 3, it's striking how many people used language that corresponded to the notion of innovation, either by using the term explicitly or other words that, over the course of the game, players came to associate with it. Players said things like, "I would love to see Emerson develop more programs to put us on the **cutting edge** vs catching up" (Brandon C., Current Undergraduate); and, more fully expressed, "an institution on the **bleeding edge of innovation**, both in terms of the **technology** we use in and outside of the classroom and what our students are **learning**. I want the community at large to see us as **dynamic** and **willing to take risks**" (Nate M., Staff); "**doers**, storytellers, **agents of change…**I would want Emerson to be known for its **innovation**" (Sharon D., Staff); "staff and faculty who really know their stuff, providing **new**, **fun**, and **useful** opportunities to students" (Rosalie G., Staff); "a place where students, faculty, and staff are **making** unique, interesting projects that **help define** the worlds of communication and **innovation**" (Cyle G., Staff); "**inclusive**, not just because of skin color **diversity** - which is a wonderful thing - but inclusive of all the sensible, reachable, **new ideas** to be discovered in **the future** by the people working towards that future" (Gloria F., Staff); "**moving forward** and **adapting** to societal and media changes" (Marissa Z.); "What I would like to hear people say is 'That's a really impressive school with some **unique innovative programs**!'" (Eugenia K., Staff); "valuable degree program **so I can someday get a job**" (Edward H., Undergraduate); "**ground breakers, social changers**, and artists of all backgrounds" (Kelly B., Staff); and, quoting President Pelton, player Amy A. would like Emerson to be known as "MIT for the other side of the brain!"
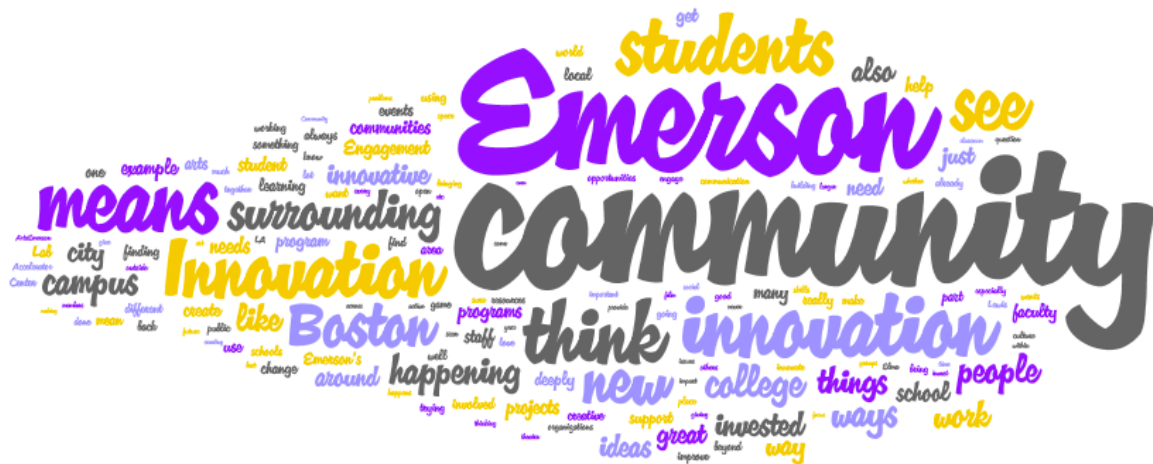
According to players, innovation has to do with openness, adaptability, diversity, moving forward toward the new, technology, and being "at the edge" – or another way to conceive of that image is willing to take risks. Doers, makers, and agents of change are innovative. The breathlessness and enthusiasm of the responses to "Global Perceptions" that fall in this 25% is noteworthy. You can practically feel a desire to lead the pack and get there first among them. But where is there and why so fast? Innovation is a catchy buzzword these days; indeed, one of the players quoted above banks getting a job on Emerson's reputation as "innovative." But, innovation is not a stand-alone concept without a predicate: innovate *on what?* And also, why? Is change good in and of itself, or merely trendy, or inevitable? The creators of the content for the game found ways to get at some of these deeper questions, to go beyond the buzzy "innovation," toward motivation and clear-sighted goals. They asked the community to weigh in on some key areas where the College sees the need to shake things up, take risks to break new ground, getting right up to the edge, without falling off. That's what roots are for.

A question posed early on in the game, Challenge 2 - Mission 1, "What Makes Emerson," asked players to fill in the blank to one or both of the following sentences:

"I am most excited about being a part of the Emerson community when _____"

and / or

"My 'most Emerson' experience was the time when _____"

Players responded to this question with deeply personal, idiosyncratic responses, and yet there is a connective tissue between them: they all resonate with a deep sense of connection to place and with experiences that speak to a lively culture of makers and doers who thrive in community and relish the "quirkiness" and "collaboration" that have defined Emerson's energy since the Back Bay and Beacon Street days. (N.B, a complete collection of all the responses to this Challenge is made available in Appendix C of this report.)

And in Challenge 1 of Mission 2, "Center Yourself," when players were asked to drop a pin on a map where they consider the "heart of Emerson" to dwell, pins cluster stronger around the Boston Common, which many see as their refuge from stress and a place to gather with friends to talk, write, shoot movies, or play Quidditch.
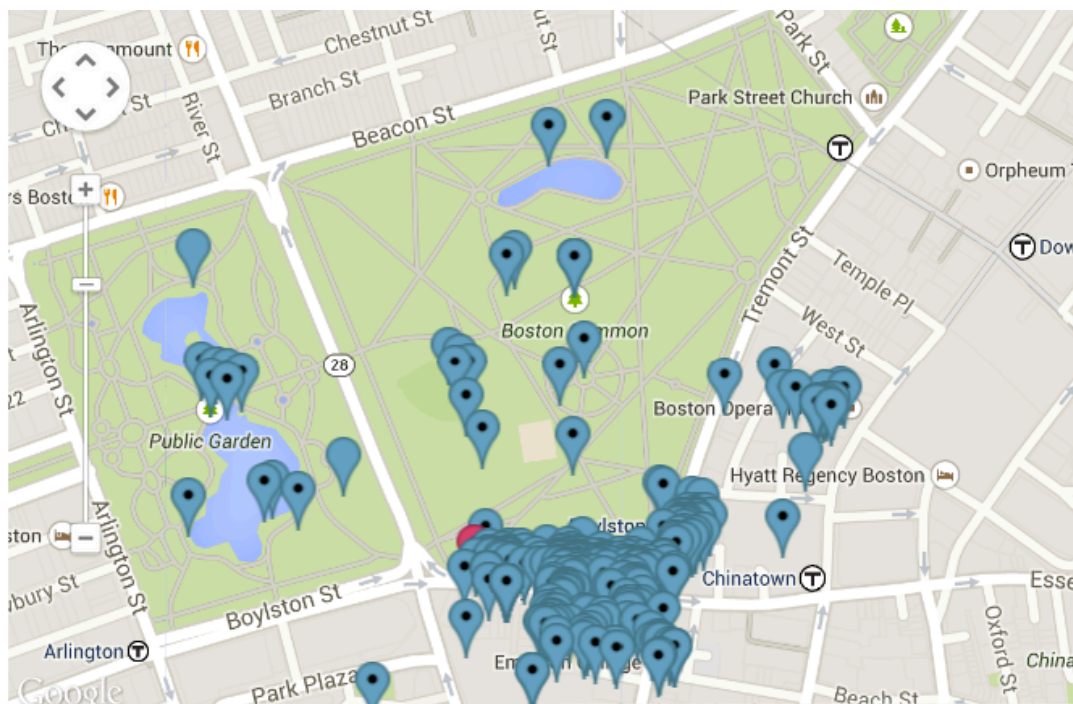

Figure 13: Space / Place, Mission 1

So when Challenge 8 in Mission 3 comes along asking players anywhere in the world they'd like to explore, Alayne H. can say, "Call me what you will, but I wouldn't pick any place other than Boston. From my perspective as a writer, I have never been more inspired than by living in and commuting to/from Emerson, Boston, and the rest of the beautiful state we live in," and she's not alone. And in Mission 1, Challenge 12, when players are asked to "Meet Ken" and advise this bright, driven prospective film student from upstate New York about coming to Emerson over another institution closer to home, overwhelmingly they give him enthusiastic reasons to join the Emerson family.

> *"You really have to go to a college where you love the community. At the end of the day, you are surrounded by your peers and they have the power to inspire you or do the opposite. You have to want to collaborate with your community and learn from them. At Emerson, we emphasize having an accepting community. We want to be enthusiastic about what we are engaged in. I think the Emerson community has the power to inspire."* – Angela C., Current Undergraduate

Many others, 22 players (10%), responded more cautiously, but without diminishing the merits of Emerson; they mostly encouraged Ken to visit campus and see whether he got a good feeling about the place. But, 170 others responded in much the same way as the player quoted above, with pride and an abundance of enthusiasm – that's 80% of all players who answered the Challenge Question. So, again, why change something that so many seem very pleased about? Players suggest there are places for improvement, to make Emerson even an even better place to study, create, work, research, and teach. Innovation is tied to a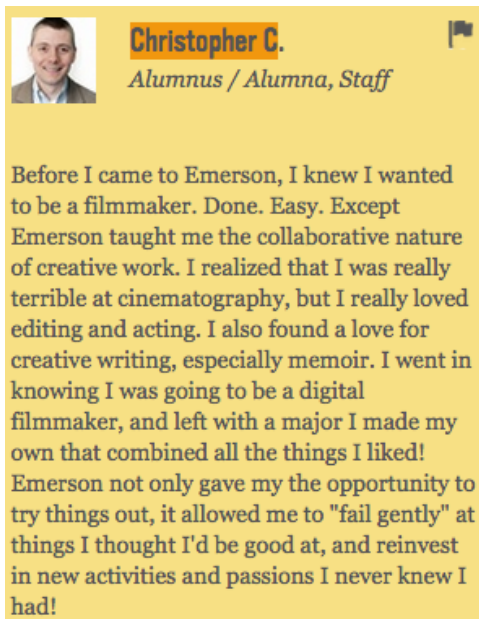ll of the other strategic priority areas: civic engagement, diversity and inclusion, internationalization and global engagement, and academic excellence. Let's look at some of the ways players suggested Emerson College take to the edge, lead the way, put our minds together and adapt to the coming future, reinvent what's no longer working optimally - in a word, innovate.

Christopher C.
Alumnus / Alumna, Staff

Before I came to Emerson, I knew I wanted to be a filmmaker. Done. Easy. Except Emerson taught me the collaborative nature of creative work. I realized that I was really terrible at cinematography, but I really loved editing and acting. I also found a love for creative writing, especially memoir. I went in knowing I was going to be a digital filmmaker, and left with a major I made my own that combined all the things I liked! Emerson not only gave my the opportunity to try things out, it allowed me to "fail gently" at things I thought I'd be good at, and reinvest in new activities and passions I never knew I had!

Figure 12: Response to Challenge 12-Mission 1 "Then/Now"

When players encountered the fictional character Joanne (Challenge 8, Mission 1), they recognized some potentially unhappy experiences in store for the WLP sophomore who wants to switch to Visual Media Arts (VMA) for screenwriting. Many players (35%) sensibly advise her that this change *should be no problem at all*, given the early stage of studies at Emerson and that other than filling out some paperwork, writing a 2-page essay of intent, and speaking with her academic advisor to make sure of her decision, it really should not be causing her undue stress. Another 15% of respondents, many who had first-hand experience with this kind of switch, caution her that it is "notoriously difficult." They suggest she consider keeping her major and switching her minor, or moving toward putting together her own degree program through the Individually Designed Interdisciplinary Program (IDIP). When moving toward more indisciplinarity in majors that are already offered is one of the top suggestions (12 out of 156) to a question asking what majors not currently offered do players imagine might be in 20 years and a player opines, "I don't think that VMA will exist in the same capacity. I think the school will probably split it up by the concentrations into new major, allowing

more choices than just 'Visual and Media Arts' major" (Martha S.), there is likely a need for innovation to the process of declaring and switching majors – especially for those still only in their first two years of college.

 The other top contenders for new majors offered in 2034-35 according respondents of Challenge 4, Mission 3 include: anything related to "bleeding-edge" technology, including holography and cybernetics (13%); Civic Media (6%); Computer Science Engineering, including information technology and information systems (7%); Games and Interactive Media (5%). Perhaps this shouldn't be too surprising coming from users of a digital game *qua* community engagement platform. At the same time, there are a lot of calls from current people at Emerson to have more offerings in the technology and interactive space. Staff Member, Josh H., offered the critique that Emerson has a ways to go to be innovative at the internal systems level of the College: "We like to talk about innovation and being innovative, but so much of our infrastructure and procedures are dated. The College needs to invest in ways to make certain processes more efficient and empower people to take risks, even if it means failure at times, so that we can be more cutting edge and proactive. We shouldn't invest and maintain systems that don't meet the community's needs, or let thinks sit in committees for months before progress is made. I'm not saying that we shouldn't be strategic and make rash decisions, but we could stand to streamline and improve a lot of what we don't do well in order to provide more opportunities to innovate" (M2, CQ3). One, "old is new again" suggestion came from current undergraduate, Emily Y. who wrote, "I think a major in radio

will be offered. However, I think that it will cover more than just radio seeing as digital seems to be taking over." Maybe she means a major in podcasting? Three others were thinking along the same lines, two of these leaning more toward Production sound and Sound / Audio Mixing.

Another key area for innovative thinking and action is in the area of diversity and inclusion, discussed in depth above. Related to diversity at the College is the prohibitive cost of Emerson for many of its students and, by extension, prospective students. In more than one Challenge Question, players brought up the need for the College to think creatively about new ways to help students of limited means join the Emerson community.

From Martha S. who wrote, "I think that Emerson is perceived as an art school with a lot of rich kids. As someone who is neither, I want people to understand how hard it is for some to attend Emerson, and to see it as a professional school as well." (Challenge 12, Mission 3) to Kathryn R., whose volunteer work and activism demonstrates a commitment to the problem of access to higher education for those who are not from wealthy families: "I have served as a mentor for both the ICA fast forward youth filmmaking program and the RAW arts Real to Reel film students (Lynn based). I have volunteered in multiple ways with Boston public schools. I am a member of Workman's Circle - a progressive Jewish labor organization and frequently engage in community service and political actions with that organization. I am an active member of the ECCAAUP and while part of the governing council moved our accounts to a more socially conscious community bank. We also have engaged in community giving to local unions and the Emerson Scholarship fund" (Mission 2, Challenge 8). This is an issue on the minds of several members of the Emerson

community – a concern that emerged in multiple venues in the game.

Many are willing to pay the price, though, like alumna Ashley T. who said, "Emerson definitely has a vibrant community. If he knows he wants to do film, and wants a diverse, robust, city environment, then Emerson is the way to go! The people of Boston and Emerson and the location of the campus are the reasons I chose Emerson over a closer, less-expensive school" in response to Challenge 12, Mission 1, "Meet Ken." On the other hand, even someone who considers service learning important, perceives a potential burden on students struggling with paying for tuition, "I think that given the cost of tuition service opportunities should be frequently presented to students through classes and student orgs but out of respect for those who must work extensively to support themselves. It shouldn't be made mandatory to take classes that may not provide for students' futures at a cost that will certainly impose a future burden on students. Non tuition service learning classes would probably be a great option" (Edward H., Mission 2, Challenge 5). Another player felt somewhat affronted by the call for Emerson to address society's problems at large when he wrote, "52,446 dollars. Per year. Per student. Addressing society's problems? Start at home and do something about that" (Netanel G., Staff). Likewise, Elena O. implores,

> "We do service days and other volunteer work. We work with schools to provide opportunities to younger students. We craft lots of public service announcements and host programs to provide information about local politics. We've got the office for Sustainability, the Elma Lewis Center, the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, the Engagement Lab, and the Face Lab. We have our rep, which I think is reasonably well-earned, for LGBTI friendliness. And we shape public attitudes through the entertainment industry (sometimes for the better). We educate.
>
> I think we should keep on with those things, but I think one good focus for us would be too really tackle the issue of the rising cost of higher ed in a meaningful way in our own backyard. We need to increase financial aid for our students. Really, really, really" (Challenge 9, Mission 3).

The issue of access to higher education for an underprivileged segment of the population rang a chord with staff member Susannah M., as well, who has some ideas for solutions: "I'd like to see Emerson innovate to open up access and opportunities to a broader range of students, especially those with limited resources. This means more funding of course, though. A couple of ideas off the top of my head: 1. scholarships for studying abroad, or allowing College financial aid to travel with students who do study abroad programs through other schools 2. Scholarships for innovative international students lacking in funds 3. Scholarships earmarked for students in the Boston public schools system" (Mission 2, Challenge 3, "Innovation, Inside-Out").

Responses to "The View from Chinatown" (Challenge 6, Mission 2), suggest another place Emerson may need to do some innovating to their engagement approach. A striking number of respondents registered a basic apathy toward residents and workers in the neighborhood just adjacent to the Emerson campus in Downtown Boston, one that resonated almost as a kind of pride in insularity. When asked to imagine how Chinatown residents think of Emerson students, a typical response went: "The students are rich

kids who are always looking at their cell phones. The college is buying up property in and around Chinatown which drive values up and residents out" (Ben C., Current Undergraduate). Another player, faculty member Tulasi S., put herself in the shoes of a Chinatown resident and imagined these thoughts, "'I know nothing about it. I think it's a bunch of rich kids. No, it does not benefit my community.'" And then, as if to corroborate the fiction with reality, undergraduate, Alexander M., reinforced this assumption when he wrote of his own attitude with gross honesty, "I don't think too much about the Chinatown residents, so I don't really care what they think of Emerson." Many of the responses are self-recriminating, characterizing Emerson as various versions of "weird" and "loud" and "self-absorbed." Still, there were many respondents, about 35%, who longed to find ways to connect and create a stronger sense of partnership with our neighbors. Another faculty member, Sarah Z., thought back on a time of promise, hearkening back to a project done by the Engagement Lab in May 2010 called Participatory Chinatown, "A huge part of Emerson's presence from the outside is its theaters and banners that proclaim ownership of several buildings, many are in the Chinatown area or on its fringes. If I had been a resident at the time of Participatory Chinatown, or heard about it from a friend or relative, I would have thought Emerson was involved with and cared about my community."

These represent just some of the ways that players suggested Emerson has room to collaborate, pivot strategy, and make some positive change, right in its own backyard. Many players acknowledge Emerson's investment in innovative centers for learning, experimentation, and civic engagement on campus like the Engagement Lab, the Elma Lewis Center, and the Accelerator Program. It is the tangible results of such *loci* that inspire the Emerson community and beget more creativity and competition to do better and be better for each other. This game has been one way that Emerson has demonstrated its commitment to inclusiveness, as some players noted in responses to questions and on the SoapBox forum. Judging by the response of participants in this process, so far, they are eager for more chances to have their voices heard and to be a part of shaping Emerson's future.

Donna H.
Staff

Innovation means doing new things and re-imagining familiar ones, finding ways to do things differently, and it's everywhere at Emerson. I see it in boldness of vision that helped shape things that are new on campus: the Emerson Accelerator, the Elma Lewis Center, ArtsEmerson (not so entirely new anymore). I also see it in the history of what the college has done: in moving from Back Bay to the Theater District, for example. And in things like the President's Fund for Curricular Innovation and the work it produces, also in the work of individual staff, faculty and students. --When I think about innovation in terms of Emerson's relationship to our surrounding community, I think of ways in which we contribute to and benefit from the city's entrepreneurial energy, and of ways in which we can engage as partners with individuals and organizations for the benefit of all. As education comes to be more and more about what some have described as the co-creation of knowledge, I think about how Emerson can co-create--knowledge, art, community, more--with the city of Boston.

Polly C.
Staff

I'm biased here, as I see innovation in the work of HowlRound, a global communications hub for the theater, where I happen to be the director. I wish more people on the campus knew about this extremely innovative resource that exists on our campus. I also see innovation in the engagement lab and love that we're using that innovation in the form of playing this game together as a community!