

Saturday Program: Administration Narrative, Counter-Narratives

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Abstract

A first draft summary of the December 2, 2019, explanation of the “restructuring” of the Saturday Program. These narratives are not the opinion of the author but are brief summaries of the statements and opinions of the attendees.

Administration Narrative: The Cooper Union has decided to consolidate the Saturday Program and the Art Outreach Program in order to improve their effectiveness. The Saturday Program was “operationally broken.” It wasn’t free because students still had to pay for materials. Employees weren’t properly compensated for the time they actually spent on the Saturday Program. The Saturday Program was intended for low-income students who didn’t have art classes in their high schools. It was student-generated and student-instructor-led. It didn’t address college readiness. Registration will be handled by the Cooper Union Continuing Education Department. The Cooper Union has “realigned” the two programs into one. The Saturday Program exceeded its budgets and needed to become sustainable. A corporate donor and individual donor required these changes. The restructuring brings the Saturday Program into compliance with state requirements.

Counter-Narrative #1: The Saturday Program and the Art Outreach Program are intended for different students. The former is for students who may have no prior exposure to art education and may not even have strong talent – it believes in providing free art education to all. The Art Outreach Program is explicitly for students who already have experience in art and need an intensive program to prepare portfolios that will appeal to art colleges. The former is primarily for minorities from low-income households; the latter has never had the diversity of the former.

Counter-Narrative #2: If four out of five of the employees in the Saturday Program were offered new jobs with new job descriptions and chose to resign, take severance packages, and sign non-disclosure agreements, there must be something seriously wrong with the restructuring.

Counter-Narrative #3: Why was this implemented with such haste? Why wasn’t there a transition period? Why was there no real opportunity for community feedback prior to implementation?

Counter-Narrative #4: Whatever is being created is not the Saturday Program and not the Art Outreach Program. The cultures of both have been destroyed and something else has been created that shouldn’t be called the Saturday Program.

Counter-Narrative #5: The Art School has always fought against the Saturday Program. The Art Outreach Program was formed against the Saturday Program. The restructuring hands the Saturday Program over to the Art School.

The current version of this document can be found at <<http://www.notnicemusic.com/saturdayprogram/satpro-counter-narratives.pdf>>. Corrections to this document are appreciated and, if based on substantiated facts from legitimate sources, will be implemented by the author. The original version was completed on December 3, 2019