CVU Introduces Unified Art Program

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New at CVU next semester is a class called "Unified Art," a sister program to our Unified Sports. There has been an advent of additional art blocks due to a decrease in Introduction to Art sections. As such, the Art department can now run two new classes, "Unified Art" and "Alternative Art." The art teachers have been attempting to get Unified Art off the ground for several years now, and it will be available to students come Spring.

The Wellness department and the Art department have collaborated on this new course, which will be taught by Visual Arts teacher **Emily McLean**. McLean stresses the alternate approach taken by this course, compared to classes like Intro to Art.

McLean shared, "[Unified Art is] not about everybody getting to the same standardized skill level but it is running through a very similar curriculum that we do in Intro where we tend to base it on the elements of art. … Learners can learn from each other about different ways to experience and work through the artistic process of 'we have an idea, how do we communicate [it], and then how do we reflect back?'"

The Wellness aspect of the course is being designed by Special Educator **Janelle Moynihan**. The model of the Unified Art class itself will teach many of the fundamental aspects of an introductory art course, along with learning communication skills and practicing mutual respect.

The curriculum is somewhat based on the Intro to Art curriculum, with analysis of shape, form, and color. Students will have a chance not only to explore their own interests, but also to collaborate with their fellow classmates on joint pieces.

According to Moynihan, the goal of the class' curriculum is "to be more process-oriented versus product oriented [by] learning about the artistic process and different elements of art." They aim to create "an environment that feels really supported and participatory, where [the students] can meet people who they wouldn't normally cross paths with."

As opposed to more traditionally structured classes, the Unified classes are "intentionally design[ed] for more universal access for all the learners that are in the classroom," as per McLean. Instead of "retrofitting" preexisting classes to accommodate diverse learning pathways, these Unified classes allow them to be built into the course from the beginning.



Courtesy of: Emily McLean
Janelle Moynihan (left) and Emily McLean, the teachers behind CVU's new Unified Art class.

The school already has several Unified Sports programs, including Unified PE, Unified LTS, and additional extracurriculars. Unified Sports is a national program whose goal, as Moynihan says, is "to promote inclusion so that a wide range of people can participate [within a course]." The art teachers, according to McLean, looked at the success of previous Unified LTS programs and thought they should create "something like that for art." This course would be the school's first Unified program in another discipline.