David Kelley Excerpts/STANFORD ARTS TIMELINE: EDITED BY DK/DS (12.6.12)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE LINKED TO CONCERN FOR STUDENTS’ FIT WITH STUDY/CAREER CHOICES

Kelley:[00:01:32] I ended up going to Carnegie Mellon. I don’t know why I picked electrical engineering. It was the wrong fit for me. I probably should have picked mechanical, but I picked electrical for some reason. I didn’t do very well in school because, again, it’s about fit. Now I mentor my students about finding the right fit for them.

MIX/DIVERSITY OF STUDENTS IN D.SCHOOL CLASSES and BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

[00:31:19] The students loved that the faculty were from cross disciplines and worked collaboratively. I got very excited about that and decided that we should do this in a more systematic and more university-wide way. That was the proposal for the d.school, which was to bring multiple professors and students from all over the university together and work on really interesting projects. I knew from my business experience before that magic would happen by having really diverse student teams and really diverse faculty, and that you’d get to new-to-the-world places using design methodology as the glue that holds it together. As soon as you have a psychology professor and a computer science professor, and a business professor in the same room, then by definition, if you could get them to work together, they would do new-to-the-world innovation, and the students would benefit from that.

[00:32:12] Today, the d.school has students from all seven schools at Stanford and professors from all [across the university] come and collaborate together on projects
of consequence. No required classes. Nobody gets a degree. People are there because they want to be there.

**COLLABORATIVE TEACHING**

00:45:19 Being from the School of Engineering, collaborating with somebody in the Humanities or the Arts just *never* would have occurred. You might think about collaborating with someone in the Business School so you could get something that’s viable in the world—like we’re talking about an international relations professor teaching with a computer science professor, teaching with an anthropologist.

**THE FUTURE OF THE D.SCHOOL/NEXT FOCUS**

**Kelley:**[00:53:49] The d. school’s issue is—do we do global outreach and try to make as many d. school-like entities in the world? Or, do we stay home at Stanford and just make this an incredible gem and expect that the students will leave and go out into the world? There are just lots of opportunities with all these universities asking us to help them create similar educational offerings. Is that the right thing for us to do? Or is it to do better and better teaching at Stanford and refine what design thinking is here? Whatever we are—these kind of ambitious, academic types—we will probably do both, instead of focusing.

[00:54:48] What do we mean by that? We want to do university-wide projects such as the university’s current commitment to online learning. What’s distance learning going to be? I’m really excited. My take on it is, while everybody’s working on online learning, the d. school ought to look at what’s the on-campus experience going to be like once online learning’s a big deal.
MATT KAHN’S INFLUENCE AND HOW STUDENTS TEACH TEACHERS

Kelley: [00:58:21] Matt Kahn, art professor with whom I collaborated over the years, taught me that we have a lot to learn from our students and that a ‘sage on stage’ approach to teaching is not as effective as a collaborative approach where the students take ownership for their own learning.

He also taught me to do everything with intent. I wrap Christmas presents or carve a pumpkin today about a 1,000 times better than I did before. I mean I would have carved a pumpkin and maybe it would have been a little more design-y than the average person. But now, when I carve a pumpkin, it’s to the hilt. Whatever you create, push yourself to create the best one. Matt taught his students that everything can be designed and is an opportunity to design with intent and do it to the hilt.

Humbug: What about teaching with him? What was that like?

Kelley: [01:05:55] We would always try to have productive arguments in front of our students. The students would then say, “Well, you just said the opposite from what Matt said.” And, I’d say, “It’s something you’re going to have to figure out for yourself. I want to know what YOU think.” I was very close to Matt. When Matt’s wife was alive, we would go on trips together and stuff. I’m good friends with his son, Ira. Every time you do something, you say, “How would Matt do it?” You have that in your mind, like how would Matt do it, especially something artistic. How would Matt do that?