A newly energized commitment to robust collaboration is taking place between MSU’s College of Arts & Letters, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, and College of Music. It’s called the Media Arts Collaborative (MAC).

Dedicated to creative endeavors in integrated media arts, the MAC is a coordinated effort to promote collaborative projects that cut across disciplines to enrich the undergraduate learning experience.
“The Media Arts Collaborative is a joint effort to facilitate student projects by providing our faculty with resources to support transformative student activities in the media arts at Michigan State,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “The MAC is designed to model the capacity for collaboration that is a hallmark of integrative media arts projects. Their ability to work effectively together gives our students a competitive advantage.”

The MAC serves as a platform for students and faculty from the three colleges to experiment with synergistic media arts, to foster innovative collaborations, and to offer experiential learning opportunities for students.

“Go talk to our alumni, they say the most important thing is a range of skills and a variety of techniques and media. This collaboration is a perfect platform to provide that breadth – a broad sweep of experiences across different platforms,” said Prabu David, Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. “It’s true experiential learning at its best.”

The Media Arts Collaborative works to create a more coherent arts and culture experience for students at Michigan State University.

“We have pockets of expertise across campus,” David said. “The Media Arts Collaborative consolidates these areas to create a richer experience for our students as well as our faculty.”

Embracing the notion that together the three colleges can offer students more than by working in silos, Jim Forger, Dean of the College of Music, said “The College of Music is delighted to participate with this interdisciplinary approach where faculty interaction across colleges will lead to new learning, creative, and research outcomes.”

One Media Arts Collaborative initiative that shows how the three colleges can work together to enhance learning opportunities for students is the Theatre 2 Film project. A collaboration between the Department of Theatre, Media Sandbox, and College of Music, Theatre 2 Film has students write and develop an original play that is adapted for the big screen. What results is a full-length feature film, created entirely by students, that is shown at the Traverse City Film Festival.

“It’s a great example of how all three colleges can combine to create a transformative experience for our students,” Long said.

Theatre 2 Film teaches students all kinds of skills, including project design, project management, technical production, acting, storytelling, and writing. In addition, students learn how to work across disciplines, how to compromise, and how to create innovative work – skills they will need to transition to successful careers.

“The opportunity for six graduate composers to work on a film project together with student directors and producers in a compressed and real-time scenario provides a true professional experience,” Forger said.

Drawing on the success of the Theatre 2 Film project, the three colleges continue to explore ways to work together to create more opportunities for students to participate in the full range of the media arts creative process, from theory to practice and from planning to implementation.

Other areas of collaboration that currently exist between the College of Arts & Letters and College of Communication Arts and Sciences include two filmmaking minors in Fiction Filmmaking and Documentary Production and the Artist in Residence program, which this year brings Emmy award-winning actor Timothy Busfield to campus to co-teach courses that emphasize acting and fiction film production.

Another emerging dimension of the Media Arts Collaborative is a shared goal to build a tighter network of alumni from the three colleges in film and media arts industries to support students as they transition from MSU to careers in film, acting, performance, music, and the media arts.

“It’s really important for our students to integrate into a network of relationships with our alums from all three colleges,” Long said, “so they graduate into a community of supportive people who know the businesses they’re entering and who can put them in touch with other people who might give them access to a competitive position or further their development as professionals.”

Significant investment for the Media Arts Collaborative initiative also has been made by way of cluster hires in digital arts, film, and production. Together, the three colleges recently have hired more than 15 faculty in the media arts, many with joint appointments across colleges.

“The Media Arts Collaborative,” Long said, “is transforming how we educate students here at Michigan State University.”