

## UNH to stop offering BFA degrees at Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts



BUY PHOTO

9/11/12 :: TIMES :: HOWARD :: Teagan McLarnan works on an assignment in Nancy Gladwell's Painting I class at the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts Tuesday, September 11, 2012. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day)

Published August 13, 2018 8:52PM | Updated August 14, 2018 7:41PM

By **Erica Moser** (/apps/pbcs.dll/personalia?ID=e.moser) Day staff writer

✉ [e.moser@theday.com](mailto:e.moser@theday.com) (mailto:e.moser@theday.com) [Twitter Erica\\_Faith13](https://twitter.com/Erica_Faith13)  
([http://www.twitter.com/Erica\\_Faith13](http://www.twitter.com/Erica_Faith13))

Old Lyme — The University of New Haven will no longer offer degree-granting programs at the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts after the 2018-19 school year, the university's Board of Governors announced Monday afternoon.

Students, alumni and faculty are still processing the decision, one that has left them with feelings of shock, sadness and anger.



**According to an FAQ section (<https://www.newhaven.edu/lyme/>)** on the university website, "The Lyme Board of Trustees will retain ownership of the campus facilities and may attempt to develop plans to reconstitute the academy as a non-degree community arts program in the future."

Beginning in the fall of 2019, the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration program will be relocated to the main campus in West Haven, as part of the College of Arts & Sciences.

UNH is launching a Lyme Transition Task Force — including faculty, staff and students — to look at options for students majoring in drawing, painting and sculpture, according to a press release from the university. It also has established a transition office.

One option would be for students to switch to a different art and design major offered at the West Haven campus. The university is also in the process of establishing an articulation agreement with the University of Hartford, meaning a second option might be for Lyme Academy students to continue in their disciplines there.

"We will do everything in our power to make the transition at the end of this academic year in May 2019 as positive and productive as possible, and we stand ready to work with you in any way that would be helpful," UNH President Steven Kaplan and Lyme Academy Campus Dean Todd Jokl wrote in a letter. "We offer our deepest regret for this obviously upsetting but equally necessary decision."

Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts was founded in 1976 and began offering BFA degrees in 1996. The school **became a part of UNH in 2014**

(<https://www.theday.com/article/20140428/NWS01/140429679/0/search>), with a goal of increasing enrollment from 73 students at that time to 120 to 125 in three years.

Lyme Academy graduated 23 students in the class of 2018. In the previous academic year, the number of graduates had been 16.

Kaplan said that prior to the partnership, Lyme was falling short of enrollment targets and having financial difficulties.

"Candidly, with the benefit of hindsight, that decision was made more with our hearts than our heads," Kaplan said in the letter. "We worried more about supporting important educational needs and not enough about the market demand for a very small, rural art college."

Looking at market demand, UNH is shifting its focusing from classical arts programs to creative arts ones, like animation, digital art and game development.

The university said it is keeping illustration because it aligns with the goal of increasing digital arts curriculum on the main campus. In West Haven, the BFA program in illustration will join BFA programs in digital art and design, graphic design and interior design/pre-architecture.

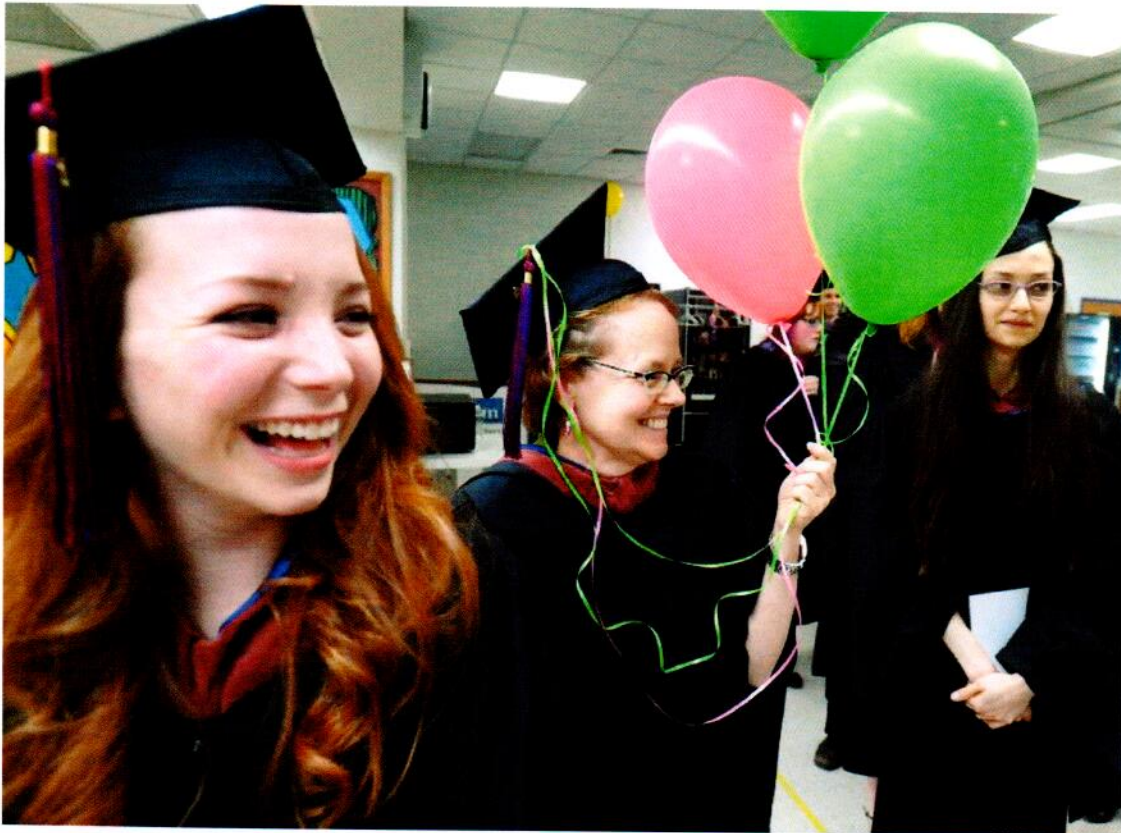
To Lyme Academy students, faculty and alumni, creative arts are antithetical to the mission of the school, one steeped in tradition.

"They're one of few that really focus on the tradition of painting and figure painting, and that in itself is being lost over time," said alumna Katie Fogg. She said that upon starting graduate school at the New York Academy of Art, she had a foundation that many other students lacked.

Similarly, Sharma Piersall said the appeal of Lyme Academy "is that it was strictly in the academic tradition, strictly learning from direct observation, learning from anatomy, learning from the ground up." Piersall was director of public relations for the school and went on to write about its programs for the Lyme Times.

Susan Stephenson, who taught at Lyme Academy from 1995 until last year, said she was shocked and dismayed by the decision but "not entirely surprised."





5/19/12 :: REGION :: POTTER :: Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts graduates Justine Buckley, left, and Elizabeth Cook share one more laugh with the class as they receive their final instructions before marching in for the college's Commencement exercises at the Lyme/Old Lyme Middle School auditorium in Old Lyme Saturday May 19, 2012. (Tim Cook/The Day)

She views the cessation of degree programs as the realization of her "deepest fear" born of the 2014 merger. But she didn't think this would happen so soon.

Stephenson is downbeat about what will happen to the facilities, saying, "I doubt that anything that Lyme stood for will continue on that campus."

Gregory Stroud, executive director of the nonprofit SECoast that gets involved in local preservation, development and environmental issues, said in a statement that the future of the campus will be a top priority for the organization.

To stay updated on the transition, students and families can reach the Lyme Transition Office at (860) 598-5067 or [lymetransition@newhaven.edu](mailto:lymetransition@newhaven.edu).

**[e.moser@theday.com](mailto:e.moser@theday.com)** (<mailto:e.moser@theday.com>)