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MY FIRST FIVE YEARS
Silver Linings and Lemonade

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PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFT







In 2023, Penland collaborated with Better Together, a program of Crafting the Future, to create a two-week summer residency for black and brown artists working in the glass and clay studios. The previous year, a similar residency involved six members of Black Women of Print, who worked together in the printmaking and papermaking studios.



MY FIRST FIVE YEARS

Silver Linings and Lemonade

This year I passed the milestone of my first five years as the director of Penland, and what better way to mark that passage than sharing a reflection on what we have accomplished together? As you can imagine, it was an unusual start for anyone's tenure in a position like this. Six years ago, as I deliberated whether I should accept the position as Penland's seventh director, I asked myself: "What is the worst disaster I could be asked to steer the organization through?" What came to mind was a long period of complete loss of income, but the odds of that happening felt impossibly low. Now I wonder if I jinxed us.

Early on someone asked me what I hoped to achieve during my time at Penland and what I wanted my focus to be, and it didn't take me long to formulate an answer. Lucy Morgan founded Penland ninety-four years ago and established the deep immersion teaching *pedagogy* we abide by to this day. Bill Brown built the framework of the *programs* we still offer. And Jean McLaughlin developed the *place* as she made so many splendid improvements to the infrastructure. So I knew that my focus needed to be on the *people*: the remarkable, talented, and resilient people who study, teach, work, and create at Penland.

Stepping into the role of director after a transformational leader like Jean required some careful attention getting to know the organization. At that time we were coming off fifteen years of intense fundraising work, near constant construction, and a fair amount of growth in our programs. I felt strongly that we, especially I, needed time to think, plan, reflect, and to let the campus rest and breathe for a minute. I needed time to get to know Penland as an organization and especially the staff who work here. I got to experience two wonderful years of pre-COVID Penland before we were forced to shut down the school for fifteen months: the unlikely disaster I had imagined. Although it was far from an ideal situation, the silver lining was that we got that planning time we so desperately needed. We chose to focus on the sweet lemonade instead of the sour lemons we were handed by the global pandemic.

Thanks to the economic foresight of previous leadership and our dedicated board members, Penland had healthy reserves, and we realized rather quickly that we could weather this pandemic without letting the staff

go and without reducing their income in a time of need. Instead, we reassigned almost everyone and set out to deep clean, service equipment, re-imagine our supply store (our studio coordinators did most of the work on the fantastic new supply store), create online classes, beef up our online offerings in the gallery, and put on a couple of virtual auctions. When news of the federal PPP program broke, we knew that we would be fine.

Thanks to a remarkable anonymous gift, we were also able to pay the instructors who had been scheduled to teach at Penland in 2020. This was an ingenious method for Penland to support our amazing instructors and for the donor to directly help dozens of qualified artists without having to set up a cumbersome application process.

Before COVID hit, we had embarked on four important projects that continued during our shutdown:

- Construction had begun on architect Louis Cherry's stunning new Core House.
- Working with Stitch Design Shop Architects, we were devising a plan to update and upgrade clay, metals, and textiles, the last of our older and least accessible studios.
- Ben Monette from MUD had started working with a staff and trustee committee to reimagine the core campus master plan.
- Through a large gift from the Windgate Foundation, we were able to hire Virant Studio to start planning the renovation of a house that will serve as a residence for the Penland director into the future and add capacity to gather groups for social and cultivation events.



Irvin Casten, Heron Bassett, and Lindsay Jones of Penland's facilities crew taking advantage of the shutdown to add a climate control unit to the books studio.



This was the most immersive educational experience in my fifty-seven years of being an artist. Centered in one of the most picturesque, remote, safe locations in North Carolina, I felt the peace and solitude gave me the uninterrupted freedom to develop as an artist. Surrounded by a community of many other artists developing their skills in a multitude of art disciplines allowed for a mutual understanding, support, motivation, that fostered productive working environments and hopefully lifelong friendships.

Leigh Ann Cross,
scholarship student in wood

Last year we opened the new Core House, and today we have designs for a new metals building (with an administrative suite above the studios) and expanded clay and textiles studios. We also have a beautiful plan for a more easily traversable campus that will provide easier access to what we offer. The Copley House, which will be the director's residence and gathering place, is slated for completion in March of 2024.

The most important work completed during COVID was a new Penland Strategic Plan. I vividly remember the day when our consultant and facilitator, Carlo Cuesta, told us that we had gone from an evolutionary plan to a revolutionary one. What he meant was that our trustees and staff had committed to meaningful change.

This Strategic Plan for Penland School of Craft advances these goals: to create new pathways to embracing a full spectrum of makers, to build a business model that supports this inclusion, and to invest in our greatest asset: our people. When we succeed in reaching these goals, we will have realized our mission: to truly make lives meaningful through making.

Our first step in achieving these goals was to conduct a comprehensive salary study that unsurprisingly showed that our staff and instructor compensation had slipped below that of our competitors. To correct this, our board committed Penland to a three-year plan to reach competitive compensation levels, with a minimum wage commensurate with the living wage of Asheville: \$17.70 per hour. Since 2021, Penland has increased salaries across the board by 14.6%, which satisfied the goal for the first year of the plan.

Another important step was to reduce the number of core fellows from nine to eight and use the savings to increase their monthly stipends from \$200 to \$1,050. With this change we are hoping to remove some of the stress and anxiety of financial insecurity, so that core fellows can focus on creativity and studio work rather than financial survival. In 2021, the Windgate Foundation partnered with Penland to offer individual artist grants allowing us to supply each of the core fellows and three-year resident artists with an additional \$10,000 grant as they transition out of these programs. We have heard that these grants have often been the thing that made the next step possible for these artists.

I believe that--in this moment--Penland is stronger than ever. We have weathered an unthinkable storm and during that time we have seen unconscionable hostility directed against some of the most vulnerable people in our society, causing us to wake up and pay attention to the ways we have participated in unfair systems that have kept people from access to Penland and the craft world at large. One of our responses has been to restructure the application process for scholarships and other programs to remove barriers and make them more inclusive. We are thrilled to find that our scholarship application pool has doubled in five years to over 1,200 for our summer 2023 workshops.

We have used grant funding to create a summer residency that has now brought two groups of primarily black artists to work together in Penland studios and also provided each artist with an unrestricted \$10,000 award. We created winter residency fellowships that we are using to promote a diverse cohort of residents.

And we have continued a program we started before the pandemic that brings students and faculty from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to visit the Penland campus and funds full scholarships for people who have participated in that program.

Over the last five years, we have also seen our endowment nearly triple, from \$17 million in 2017 to today's \$50 million. Much of that growth was thanks to a transformational \$23 million endowment gift from the Windgate Foundation in 2018, which was joined by many other generous gifts establishing endowed scholarships and coupled by some robust stock market growth. We have established further endowment growth of \$10 million to support scholarships as a top fundraising goal.

Penland School of Craft is deeply indebted to individuals like each of you—our long-term partners in the work we do here at Penland. I do not take your support for granted, and I am always deeply appreciative of your generosity and the many gestures of encouragement you have given me and the staff during these first five years of my time at Penland.

In her book *Gift from the Hills*, our founder Lucy Morgan wrote, "We live on change, on excitement, development and growth." Constantly making this place better has always been part of who we are. Together we will make sure that Penland School of Craft will create strong and enduring community and transform lives for years to come.



Mia Hall, director



This rendering shows a planned reconfiguration of the area at the southeast corner of the historic Craft House. The new core campus master plan envisions this area as a welcoming entry point, with the lower level of the building serving as an information center for arriving students.

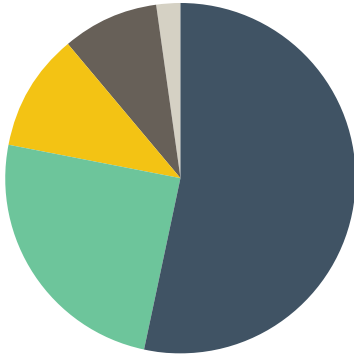




With careful planning and a high level of cooperation from instructors and students, Penland was able to re-open the workshop program in 2021 with minimal disruption from COVID infections. Shown here are instructor Sarah Parkinson and studio assistant Jesse Lucas in the textiles studio.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

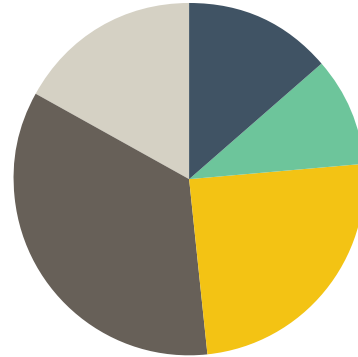
Total Revenues: FY 2018 (\$8,182,000)



- Contributions & Grants
- Tuition, Room/Board & Fees
- Other Earned Revenue/Income
- Investment Earnings Drawdown
- Trusts Income

FY 2018 NET ASSETS ON APRIL 30: \$43,175,000

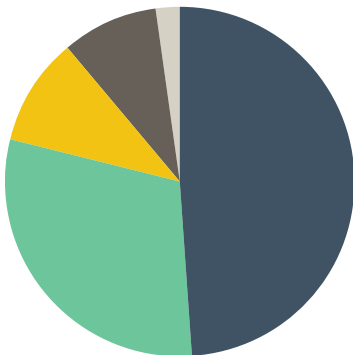
Total Expenses: FY 2018 (\$6,762,000)



- Administration
- Development
- Facilities
- Programs
- Services

FY 2018 NET INCOME: \$1,420,000

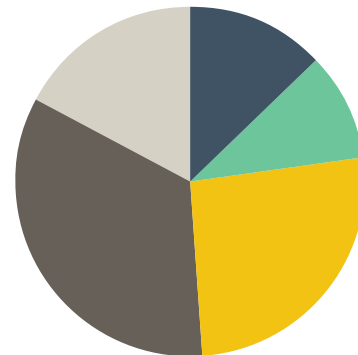
Total Revenues: FY 2019 (\$8,124,000)



- Contributions & Grants (excluding \$25M gift from Windgate Foundation to endowment and restricted funds)
- Tuition, Room/Board & Fees
- Other Earned Revenue/Income
- Investment Earnings Drawdown
- Trusts Income

FY 2019 NET ASSETS ON APRIL 30: \$69,608,000

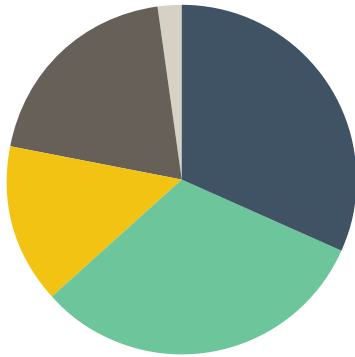
Total Expenses: FY 2019 (\$7,399,000)



- Administration
- Development
- Facilities
- Programs
- Services

FY 2019 NET INCOME: \$725,000 (EXCLUDING WINDGATE GIFT)

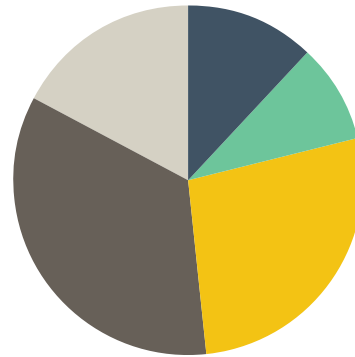
Total Revenues: FY 2020 (\$6,826,000)



- Contributions & Grants
- Tuition, Room/Board & Fees
- Other Earned Revenue/Income
- Investment Earnings Drawdown
- Trusts Income

FY 2020 NET ASSETS ON APRIL 30: \$66,481,000

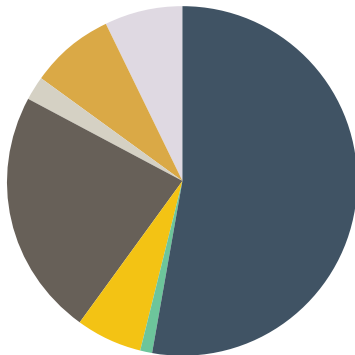
Total Expenses: FY 2020 (\$7,736,000)



- Administration
- Development
- Facilities
- Programs
- Services

FY 2020 NET INCOME: -\$910,000

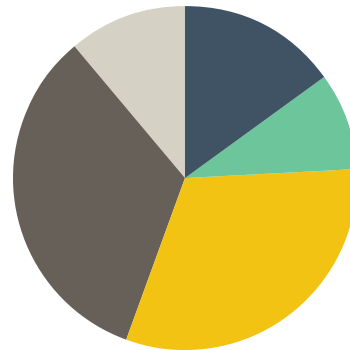
Total Revenues: FY 2021 (\$7,477,000)



- Contributions & Grants
- Tuition, Room/Board & Fees
- Other Earned Revenue/Income
- Investment Earnings Drawdown
- Trusts Income
- Government (PPP 2021)
- Government (PPP 2020)


FY 2021 NET ASSETS ON APRIL 30: \$79,676,000

Total Expenses: FY 2021 (\$6,603,000)



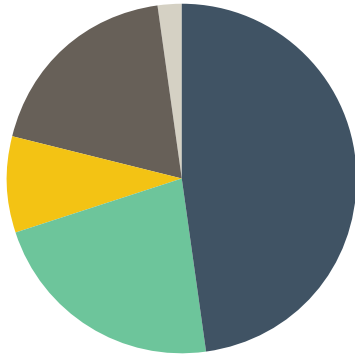
- Administration
- Development
- Facilities
- Programs
- Services

FY 2021 NET INCOME: \$874,000



This is core fellow Tony Santoyo in the clay studio. A recent change to the core program—reducing the size of the core group from nine to eight—has made possible a substantial increase to the monthly stipend provided to the fellows, making the program accessible to people who could not have afforded to participate in the past.

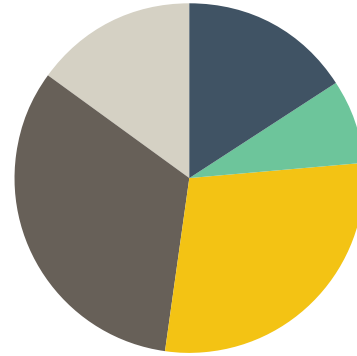
Total Revenues: FY 2022 (\$9,408,000)



- Contributions & Grants
- Tuition, Room/Board & Fees
- Other Earned Revenue/Income
- Investment Earnings Drawdown
- Trusts Income

FY 2022 NET ASSETS ON APRIL 30: \$72,963,000

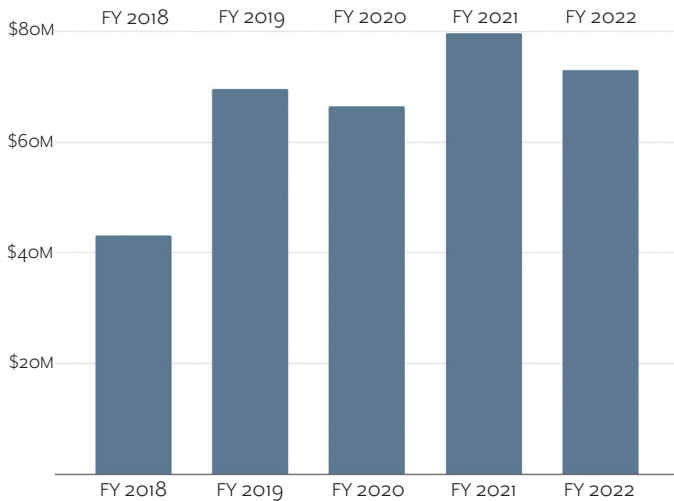
Total Expenses: FY 2022 (\$8,051,000)



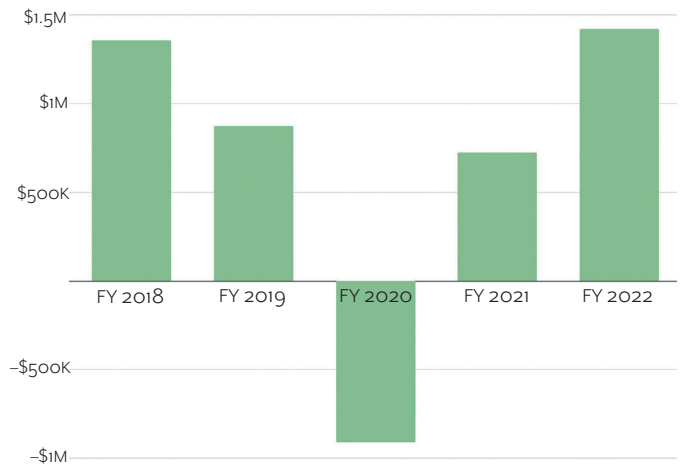
- Administration
- Development
- Facilities
- Programs
- Services

FY 2022 NET INCOME: \$1,357,000

Net Assets by Fiscal Year



Net Revenue by Fiscal Year





One of Penland's greatest assets is its dedicated and skilled staff. During the past five years, despite the challenges of the pandemic, there has been steady progress in bringing all staff up to a living wage and increasing compensation across the board. Shown here are Keith Moir and Day Dotson who are long-standing members of Penland's kitchen crew.

PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFT

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