

ADVANCEMENT COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

Debra Ann Taeschler

Debra Ann Taeschler was certain she would end up a starving artist—that is, until she realized she didn't like starving.

Shortly after graduation, Taeschler, a Rutgers Newark Fine Arts alumna, decided that she would not be able to make a living as an artist; instead, she accepted a job in advertising.



"I gained experience and developed a strong vision of what the business should be — operationally, creatively and strategically," Taeschler says.

In 1986, Taeschler decided to take a risk: leave her job to establish a start-up advertising agency in her basement. The Chester-based GraficaGroup has gone on to become an award-winning, full-service advertising agency. Clients have included high-profile companies such as AT&T, PSE&G, and Morgan Stanley.

It is no surprise that Taeschler's passion for the arts led her back to where it all began. She describes her years at Rutgers as "a great time to be in the arts. The hippie generation was coming to an end, Newark was full of diversity, and SoHo was not yet commercialized."

In 2008, Taeschler joined the Mason Gross Advancement Council, a voluntary advisory board whose mission is to assist with the improvement of the school and the enhancement of its educational resources.

Taeschler serves as chair of the Recruitment Committee, which at the moment is reviewing the student-recruitment process for each of the four departments. The committee plans to share its findings with the Dean and provide recommendations for improvement.

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Taeschler says she is awed by the depth and sophistication of the artistry at Mason Gross.

"It really knocked me off my feet!" she says.

Ultimately, Taeschler says she was also impressed by the talent that has emerged from the school and wanted to spread the word on the importance of the arts.

"The arts are a great equalizer across cultures, race, ethnicity, age," she says. "We all can relate to the arts on a human level."