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SCHOOL OF ART
College of Arts & Sciences
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In response to the 10-year Review Committee's report, the faculty and staff would first like to thank the members of the committee for their time, energy and assessment in reviewing the UW School of Art and the programs in the Divisions of Art, Art History and Design. We appreciate the committee's well-focused and perceptive assessments of the accomplishments, present needs and challenges for the School. This document is a compilation of responses summarized from the three divisions, and reflects the comments and concerns of the faculty and staff as a whole. Although the final committee report addresses a full range of issues and offers many suggestions, it would be important to restate items of paramount importance to the well being and future of the School of Art. The review committee clearly identified four main issues of great concern: space + facilities, positions, salaries, and financial support.

Space + Facilities

The School of Art is comprised of three separate facilities located on and off campus, each with its own set of specialized equipment, needs and upkeep. In their report the review committee writes, "The need for space is supremely evident for all programs: art, art history, and design." The School is aware that our success depends on maintaining our facilities and providing students with the necessary resources so that they can realize their fullest potential. Studio spaces are over crowded, teaching assistants have limited space in which to meet students, and new majors will create a greater need for workspace. As in recent years, the School of Art Council will re-visit space needs and concerns, and make necessary adjustments when possible.

Although the review committee commended the School for its forward thinking in terms of facilities, it also recognized that space for research and communal gathering is a critical need. The School has addressed these needs to the best of its ability by strategically acquiring more studio space for our Painting + Drawing graduate students and faculty off campus at our Sand Point facility, redesigning classroom spaces within the Art building to accommodate multiple needs across the divisions, and carving out space for undergraduate

Division of Art
Ceramics
Fibers
Metals
Painting and Drawing
Photography
Printmaking
Sculpture

Division of Art History
Art History

Division of Design
Industrial Design
Visual Communication Design

Interdisciplinary Visual Arts

and graduate studios in the Art building and Ceramic and Metal Arts facility (CMA). However, with an increase in the number of studio art and design majors, which is driven by demand, we unfortunately have a lack of dedicated, individual workspace for students. Art History teaching assistants have very limited space in which to meet with students and have expressed a desire for a communal space in which they can meet informally with faculty. Some of these concerns could be alleviated by the return of several unused office spaces in the area acquired by the College of Arts & Sciences on the third floor of the Art building. A lack of adequate space, however, impacts the research capabilities of our undergraduate and graduate students across the divisions, and also has potential repercussions on the safety of our students, faculty and staff.

An additional concern for the School as it moves forward is the cost of maintaining our three facilities with a perennially underfunded operating budget. Similar to other disciplines such as chemistry, studio art and design require specialized equipment requiring periodic updating and maintenance. Art, Art History and Design all rely heavily on computing equipment, as well, which also requires administering, upgrading and service. The School could greatly benefit from a cost-sharing plan to help with the upkeep of our equipment so that we can continue to be competitive, as well as insure the safety of our students, faculty and staff. Additionally, with the need for 24-hour access for both students and faculty, it is imperative that our facilities be safe and secure environments after hours and on the weekends; therefore, a top priority for the School is the immediate installation of a card swipe system for all three facilities.

Positions

The School of Art has great need for both faculty and staff positions to maintain the quality of our programs and to advance our mission, which the review committee clearly notes in its report. The committee writes, “Faculty hires have not kept pace... with needs – sometimes acute needs – in the school.” New faculty positions are vital for the School’s continued quality and success in teaching, research and service, and are needed in all three divisions. The review committee specifically recommended faculty hires in those areas with the largest growth: Industrial Design and Interaction Design; Photography, Painting + Drawing, and 3D4M; and Medieval art history, which was characterized by the review committee as creating a “glaring gap in the division’s coverage of Western art.” The School recognizes the need to hire studio art faculty whose approach is interdisciplinary in nature, reflecting current trends in the studio arts, and who can forge new alignments across the division. The Division of Design would clearly benefit by the hire of faculty to flush out their offerings in Industrial Design and Interaction Design, two of our fastest growing majors. And Art History, while very strong in Asian art, could be well served by the addition of a medievalist, which would round out their Western offerings. It is evident, however, that in the current economic climate, that faculty hires will need to be strategic, thoughtful and prioritized.

Staff hires are of equal import. Recent retirements have severely impacted the ability of administrative staff to effectively serve faculty, staff and students, and technician hires in 3D4M and the Woodshop would help alleviate safety concerns. As the largest unit in the Arts, and one of the largest in the College, the School of Art is extremely complex, which makes management challenging. The administrative office is currently staffed by an administrator, an assistant to the director, and a fiscal specialist who work together to enforce the policies and procedures of the School alongside the Director. These three individuals are responsible for maintaining 140 budgets, serving 42 faculty and 20 staff, including payroll, and overseeing and maintaining three large and diverse facilities comprised of over 100,000 square feet. Further, the safety of our faculty, staff and students are of utmost importance. We need to ensure that we have enough knowledgeable staff in place in our woodshops, workshops, and studios to ensure this. Our technical staff are invaluable to our programs but are often stretched thin with the inception of larger course enrollments and the demands of acting as instructor, technician and repair person. Our very successful computer lab, to which every student on campus has access and which is heavily used by students in engineering, computer science and architecture, is in desperate need of an additional staff member. As programs rely more and more heavily on digital and computing equipment, staff will become increasingly burdened and less able to effectively serve the needs in the School of Art.

The School supports the review committee's recommendation that both faculty and staff hires be ranked across the School and that individuals to support courses in exceptional demand and who can work to further new alignments across divisions, programs, and other UW units such as DXARTS and the Henry Art Gallery, be particularly sought out.

Salaries

For years the School of Art has suffered from inequity in salaries. Attempts by the administration to address the disparities in salary across the university has alleviated some compression but by no means all. The review committee notes that faculty salaries are "low and increasingly uncompetitive; while starting salaries for assistant professors are on par with those at peer institutions, there is clearly compression at the associate and full professor ranks." The committee further write that this compression "should be reviewed and addressed according to appropriate university metrics." This inequity, as one might expect, has caused us to lose some of our most stellar faculty. This has been further compounded by the reduction in faculty research and travel costs. As the committee notes, "external funds in the arts... are generally not available, and [those] expenses can represent a substantial part of earned income." With some of the lowest salaries on campus, this is a significant issue that impacts nearly all of our faculty.

Financial Support

As the review committee report states, the School of Art is “perennially underfunded.” Our operating budget has been cut in half since our last review. In light of the current economic downturn, this comes as no surprise and the faculty and staff of the School of Art have been very proactive in creating other revenue sources and sharing resources as much as possible. This collaborative attitude of our faculty and staff bodes well for our future as we work harder to do more with less. As mentioned above, however, the loss of research and travel funds has negatively impacted the ability of our faculty to conduct their research to the best of their ability. This is especially true of our junior faculty, who need financial support to aid their research and creative endeavors.

Graduate student funding is another major source of concern with both the faculty and students in the School of Art. The School of Art is falling further behind our peers in our funding for graduate students, affecting our ability to attract and retain top graduate students. Expanding financial support for graduate students is among the School’s highest priorities: recruitment packages have been multiplied and enriched in the past three years, but the School has not been able to compete with funding packages offered by comparable programs. Our competitive disadvantage is becoming the norm in many programs in the arts and humanities at the University of Washington, and we look forward to developing constructive strategies with our peers to ameliorate this funding crisis.

The review committee brought up several additional issues, which we would like to take the opportunity to address. The first of these is a perceived lack of diversity within the faculty and student body. Consistent with the university’s overall enrollment, the School serves a large population of Asian and Asian American students, many drawn by the range of coursework in Asian art history and a number of well-known Asian artists and designers on the faculty. An enrollment profile for individual classes in which one-third of the students are Asian and Asian American is a typical configuration. Historically, Asian students have been well represented among the School’s graduate students. Native American students may be difficult to identify among the “white faces,” but Professor Robin Wright (Art History) serves a wide community of Native American and Hispanic students. Additionally, the School frequently brings artists of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities to campus for lectures, critiques and workshops. The faculty of the School includes one African American, four Asians, one Indian, and a Native American adjunct professor. We will continue to work with university programs such as GO-MAP and have our faculty involved with the Faculty Council on Minority Affairs, as well as attempt to recruit minority faculty in any future position searches we may have.

The committee expressed a concern that the IVA (Interdisciplinary Visual Arts) degree “seems to lack focus.” The Division of Art has worked diligently over the past three years to improve

the IVA experience for students, making it more rigorous and inclusive. The loss of a faculty member who taught IVA courses exclusively has impacted the course offerings in IVA. The Division of Art agrees with the committee's suggestion that a review of degree and course requirements for the IVA program be undertaken to reassess how courses fit into the overall curriculum of the division.

Regarding the concern expressed by the committee about the service commitments of our junior faculty, we have reduced the number of committees in the School of Art significantly but recognize that junior faculty need to focus their energy towards teaching and research; therefore, we will appoint more senior faculty to School committees in the future. University committee work is taken on by junior faculty at their own discretion and is not mandated by the School of Art Director.

Another topic of concern was the quality of advising for our undergraduate students. We agree that the issue of double majors/degrees has been confusing for students. The university's use of advisers to enforce the 210 credit rule and the seemingly inconsistent granting of double majors/degrees across colleges has created frustration for students and advisers alike. Recently, the Faculty Senate and President Emmert approved changes to the University Handbook to clarify these issues and help advisers deliver this policy message to students with more clarity and definition. The comments about lack of information concerning the honors program and language proficiency in art history are somewhat puzzling, however. There are five to seven students per year in Art History Honors who meet with advisers and faculty on a regular basis to insure satisfactory progress toward degree. With this kind of one-on-one advising it seems unlikely that confusion could develop. Possibly these concerns were voiced more generally. Art Advising has noticed that students have developed a heightened interest in having more honors programs. In addition, the new foreign language proficiency requirement introduced by the College of Arts & Sciences in Autumn Quarter 2009 has created some confusion for students.

The review committee's suggestion that the university assist us with finding and funding an exhibition space on- or off-campus for our students is most welcome. Exhibiting one's work is a major component of a creative professional's career; having a university-supported exhibition space with greater visibility would enhance our students' professional experience, as well as send a clear signal to the community that, in the words of the review committee, "would inspire the idea that a leading public institution does not only respond to but also is deeply engaged in shaping culture in the public realm."

In their assessment, the review committee members suggested that the School start discussions about pursuing NASAD (National Association of Schools of Art and Design) accreditation, to include a review of the consequences of accreditation for the divisions. Over the past several years, the Division of Design has been strategically preparing itself to pursue accreditation; although the Division of Art is interested in researching the benefits of NASAD accreditation, it is clear from the committee's report that increased credit hours for some degrees would be necessary, as would additional faculty and facility resources. The Division of Art History falls outside the realm of NASAD.

The review committee's suggestion that the School opens access to the soaMDID collection is well meant, but problematic on several fronts: firstly, the UW Libraries has a subscription to ARTstor which provides a huge collection of digital images for all faculty, staff and students at the university. This fulfills the vast majority of image user needs and allows us to build soaMDID to support the very specific teaching needs of the School of Art. Further, the development and maintenance of soaMDID has been fully supported by a fee on all art history and cross-listed courses since Autumn Quarter 2008. While ABB budgeting may change the way soaMDID is supported, we would need to be sure that other departments whose faculty and students have access are contributing to support the collection. Finally, expanding the user base would expand support expectations; unfortunately, the School does not have the staff resources to provide round-the-clock support for soaMDID users, nor to maintain hundreds of user accounts.

Finally, the School will continue to pursue, at the committee's urging, a name change of the School to more accurately reflect our programs of studies to the community, our peers, and our prospective students. The same is true in the Division of Design, where we wish to change degree names to distinguish design from the studio arts by awarding a Bachelor of Design (BDes) and Master of Design (MDes). As these degrees become more prevalent, they will also aid our students in job searches.

Once again, the School of Art is grateful to the committee for taking considerable time and effort to review and assess our unit. As noted in the report, the School has made considerable advances since our last 10-year review, for which we are grateful to the faculty and staff for their collaboration and hard work to move the School forward in a positive manner, even through difficult and challenging budgetary years. Although we feel we have addressed a number of issues, it is quite apparent that we are in a period of constant reassessment and change. We acknowledge the positive and encouraging statements made by the committee and take their suggestions seriously. Further, we will seek concurrence and support from the College to address the committee's suggestions so as to enhance the learning environment of our students, and to support our faculty and staff in their duties. To reflect upon our closing statement of ten years ago, we will continue our goal of improving the quality of education in the School to become a leader in research and scholarship. We look forward to meeting these accomplishments along our way before our next review.



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