

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
INTERDISCIPLINARY MUSEOLOGY PROGRAM**

TEN-YEAR REVIEW REPORT

**SITE VISIT DATES: OCTOBER 27-28, 2016
INITIAL REPORT SUBMITTED: NOVEMBER 18, 2016**

Museology Graduate Program Review Committee

Kevin Crowley	Professor, School of Education; Director, University of Pittsburgh Center for learning in Out-of-School Environments (UPCLOSE), University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Paula Nurius	Professor & Associate Dean, School of Social Work, UW Seattle (Committee Chair)
David Ucko	President, Museums+More LLC, Washington, DC
Linda Watts	Professor, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, UW Bothell

Introduction

The following report has been prepared in accordance with the charge to the Review Committee from The Graduate School of the University of Washington. The recommendations outlined in this report should be considered the unanimous findings of the four members of the committee. Our report is divided into four sections: program strengths, challenges, opportunities, and committee recommendations to the Museology Program, the Graduate School, and the University.

As a committee, we would like to express our gratitude to those who facilitated the task of undertaking this review. The self-study materials provided by the Museology Program, the support and guidance of colleagues in the Graduate School, and the time and input offered by Museology faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partner affiliates helped ensure broad coverage and good use of the site visit.

The two-year interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree program in Museology was established in 1972 in the University of Washington's College of Arts and Sciences. The Museology Graduate Program (hereafter referred to as the Program) was originally administered through the Department of Anthropology, where its founder and then-director was a faculty member. In 1994, the Program became an interdisciplinary program within the Graduate School. In 2004, the Program was restructured as a fee-based program. It continues to be located under the UW Graduate School Interdisciplinary Programs and is administered through the University of Washington Educational Outreach.

Strengths of the Program

The UW Museology Program is among one of the first degree-granting programs in museum studies in the US and is seen as pioneering and inventive in the field. There has been considerable progress since last review. The program has grown from 2 faculty and staff to 7 (4 faculty, 3 full time staff) and from 43 students to 70. On average 57% of applicants are accepted, with an average of 48% of those accepted enrolling in the Program. Enrollment from 2012 to 2016 has ranged from 32 to 38 with 98% of students in that time period graduating from the Program. They have consolidated faculty and staff in a single location within the UW Tower, improved reporting lines, increased graduation rates, developed robust curriculum and advising system, and developed a substantial network of local internship opportunities. The addition of an optional specialization in museum evaluation has been an important extension, considerably valued by students.

There has been some externally funded research (7 federal grants collectively awarded to Kris Morrissey and Jessica Luke) and a record of scholarly publications and presentations. This is an arena in which growth is desired and the committee concurs; program leadership needs sufficient reprieve from a heavy administrative load to have the bandwidth to more fully engage.

Program data suggest that 78% of graduates from 2011 and 2015 are employed with museums or in related positions. That outcome reflects the strength of the academic

coursework supplemented by an average of 289 internship hours. Alumni have been active in professional activities such as conference presentations and constitute a dedicated and engaged network that the Program draws upon. The Committee was struck by the extent to which an alumni network is sustained with many of the internship positions being supervised by Program graduates as well as being active as affiliate faculty. Although an impressive area of strength, the Committee notes that this can lead to insularity; to the Program essentially “talking to itself” across the course and internship linkages. Although this can be beneficial in supporting coherence, the Program may not be receiving as much external influences that can stimulate growth beyond the familiar.

A positive Program culture also emerged as an area of strength. Students and alumni reporting valuing the extent of support they received, feelings of inclusion and being valued. Examples were provided of effective problem-solving and support of students to meet the challenges of working through problems. Student reports of strong dedication of faculty to students was echoed by the faculty themselves. This culture of support is a trademark of the Program. Although valuable, this level of individual student support and personalized programming comes at a cost. Faculty and staff are already stretched and are unlikely to be positioned to take on Program growth or enhancement aims and also maintain this level of individually focused student responsiveness.

The characteristics which the unit sees itself as distinct from the other 60 full-time, museum studies graduate programs in the US include the following:

- 1) Embracing an interdisciplinary approach.
- 2) Offering a personalized and flexible curriculum.
- 3) Integrating research and practice in skill-based teaching.
- 4) Sustaining a commitment to museums as forces for social good.

Operationally, an interdisciplinary approach takes form in cross-task or cross-domain preparation in museum studies (e.g., curation, evaluation, development). This yields a high level of practical job-readiness that is greatly valued by graduates and the museum community that hires many of the graduates. Interdisciplinarity includes inclusion of courses in other disciplines (e.g., humanities, learning sciences, nonprofit management). However, this is mixed in that access is not infrequently denied.

Moreover, there does not appear to be explicit inclusion of interdisciplinary pedagogy or structures in the programming (contrasted to cross-task preparation described above). The Committee sees the Program as ready to engage in more deeply collaborative interdisciplinary training with other units. But, this will take commitment on the part of administration of the Graduate School and, likely, other administrative units to clear obstacles and to help scaffold negotiations.

Jessica Luke is an exceptionally productive and dynamic leader. In her relatively short time as Director, she already has made significant contributions. One illustration is having successfully negotiated academic appointments for all Museology faculty in multiple units of the University. She has achieved a strong consensus of support and respect as a leader both within the Program and across allied entities such as the Burke Museum, the I School, affiliate faculty and area organizations. She contracted an

external evaluation firm to provide reflective feedback for the Program and faculty, demonstrating openness to re-examination and constructive change. Dr. Luke is bringing visionary momentum accompanied by careful attention to organizational details within the larger context that Museology is, and will continue to be, embedded. Her leadership skills are likely to become visible in the field, making her vulnerable to recruitment by other universities or museum-related organizations. As part of a sustainability plan, the Graduate School will need to support Museology, as positions open up, in enhancing capacity to address the evolving needs of the Program.

Program Challenges

Although the Museology program is currently strong, it faces a variety of challenges in the near- and longer-term.

Sustainability

The extremely dedicated core faculty are facing burn-out. The number of students has grown and the workload is heavy. This situation is most extreme in the supervision of theses, where one faculty member is expected to serve as advisor for as many as 15. Not surprisingly, we heard concerns about the quality of many student theses. The number of faculty is not adequate to service the current program and enrollment; enrollment could be decreased or the number of faculty increased to address this issue.

Furthermore, two of the core faculty may be approaching retirement or part time status. As a result, the current situation may become even more untenable due to an impending transition that will require additional time commitments for recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and orienting new faculty.

Relationship of the Program to the Interdisciplinary Faculty Group appears to currently function on a relatively informal level, with the IFG invited to events and meeting annually with faculty for updates and input. Some IFG members are more involved than others, teaching in the curriculum or serving on thesis committees as well as providing periodic input. Participation in the IFG takes form as service which understandably constrains the amount of time that members can commit. Although the impression is that Museology makes efficient use of resources and people in other units, different structures may need to be developed to obtain a sustainable engagement with interdisciplinary and stakeholder representatives to help inform Program development and decision making.

Research and Evaluation Focus

Educational research, in contrast to curatorial research, is not sufficiently supported for a program whose stated “signature” is research. Only two of the four core faculty are actively engaged in such research (and one of them may be retiring). These two faculty members are in Lectureship lines rather than seemingly more appropriate Professorial lines. Research opportunities are currently limited for students and do not include such possibilities as research assistantships.

Evaluation training and practice does not appear to place sufficient emphasis on rigorous methods and quantitative design.

Insularity

The Museology alumni community working in institutions around Seattle actively mentor student interns. That strength also carries the limitation of reinforcing the particular perspectives embodied by the program, rather than providing different points of view regarding museum practice that may be beneficial to the students.

Diversity

Although the program's emphasis on social justice and equality are commendable, lack of diversity was raised repeatedly as a concern, with a sense of limited pathways to address it.

UW Restrictions

The Museology program has been characterized as an "orphan" in the University. Because it is both fee-based and interdisciplinary, its students face unfair difficulties in meeting program requirements. They must take courses in other departments across UW, but are the last to be allowed to register and as a result, the classes are often filled. As a consequence, they must struggle to place themselves and must "go begging" for permission. It does not help that the Museology program does not appear to be widely recognized on campus by faculty in other areas, despite its national reputation.

Museology faculty now have their appointments in different academic departments, in response to new UW requirements. That has created a situation, however, in which they face divergent ways in which performance reviews and other processes are carried out, leading to potential inequities.

Much to our surprise, Museology is not permitted to be part of the campus-wide UW capital campaign. It also does not appear to have development support for pursuing foundation grants that would be beneficial to the program and University.

The program also lacks a dedicated space for students that would encourage greater knowledge sharing and community building among students and faculty.

Museum Field

Since the last ten-year review, museums have changed considerably and increasingly diverge from the "traditional" model, as they continue to shift focus from collections and curatorial research to public education. With respect to the field overall, academic research in the learning sciences has greatly expanded its focus on informal learning environments such as museums. Technology and media play ever-increasing roles in learning both within and outside the museum setting. Museum partnerships with community groups and other institutions, such as libraries, schools, and universities, play increasingly prominent roles as part of the learning ecosystems in which museums are situated. Although the program has responded in part, such as its intent to foster

strong communities through museums, it must continue to strive to reflect these ongoing changes as well as anticipate others.

Program Opportunities and Potential

Although the Graduate School has been the home for the Program during its expansion and success over the last 10 years, it is unclear whether the current Program structure and size is sustainable. We understand the Program is exploring options in terms of moving to other academic homes at UW. The right move would address a number of the structural issues we raised in the prior challenges section. Being part of a larger academic community would allow the program to avail itself of existing courses that address some program gaps (e.g., quantitative methods), it would make the Program students equal status in terms of enrollment priorities and other issues, and it would allow the Program to make use of shared departmental infrastructure.

Importantly, such a move might also address issues related to faculty research and future faculty recruitment. We have noted that the research focus of the program is a strength that distinguishes it from other museology programs. Some faculty members are successful raising external funding, publishing, and have international reputations in the museology, informal learning, and visitor studies fields. A new academic home that includes a focus on faculty research would provide the Program faculty better support for these activities, direct access to research-engaged colleagues and potential for collaboration, and perhaps even access to Ph.D. student researchers to involve in the work. Future recruitment of top-level program faculty might be more successful as well, as being part of a larger vibrant research community could appeal to top-flight prospective faculty.

Of course the potential downsides of such a move should also be noted, including a potential change in Program identity or Program autonomy, a different budgeting process, and different procedures related to faculty and staff hiring and promotion. Any change in academic home should be carefully considered and planned, as it is clear that the program is currently successful and strong, even if there are concerns about sustainability in its current configuration.

The Program has good working partnerships with local museums, and is working on further partnerships now. The opportunity with partnerships is to think about them as more than just locations to place student interns. These are also opportunities for Program impact on the region. The strongest partnerships might include dedicated prototyping space that could be used by the program, ongoing programs for student curators and/or exhibition developers, opportunities for evaluation and research collaboration. Indeed, some of this is already underway, and we encourage more growth in this direction. Given that the Program faculty are expert and acknowledged as national leaders, the Program could be a vector for bringing fresh and forward looking thinking into the Northwest's museums.

We also think there is an opportunity to consider partnerships and student internships that transcend traditional definitions of museums. We noted earlier how the field of

museums is rapidly evolving, and that there is now great potential to connect with libraries, technologists, university-based researchers, K-12 schools, community organizations, youth development organizations, environmental centers, etc. Along these lines, we also note that many of the program graduates are employed outside of museums per se and that much of what Museology teaches is of value in other kinds of settings where people learn, collect, and interpret. As the program develops new partnerships, we encourage them to think creatively about where museums are going in the 21st century and how an academic training program can prepare the right kinds of professionals. The program has a strong national reputation now, but needs to continue to push the envelope to maintain that going forward.

Program Recommendations

The following recommendations are organized into five (interrelated) categories: conceptual, structural, relational, instructional, and navigational.

Conceptual matters—

What are the program's signatures?

*Interdisciplinarity in Museology appears to mean different things depending upon the context (non-departmental, integrative, multi-disciplinary). Consider ways to become ever more intentional in messaging interdisciplinarity as a signature feature of the program.

*Weigh the right mix between customization and optimization within the program's operations. For example, it might be helpful to deepen a few ongoing relationships with internship sites (such that students might have ready-made opportunities to participate in a full-cycle curatorial experiences—from design to assessment/redesign).

*Look at any benefits realized through providing curricular tracks (research, practice, evaluation) vs. integrated studies.

*Given Museology's interest in social justice, consider how the program can identify ongoing or emerging initiatives in the area, especially those involving newer museums and cultural sites (such as the Northwest African American Museum) and institutions beyond Seattle (Tacoma, Bellevue, and Bellingham).

*If the Program is to have a robust research focus, expand that aspect (see "Instructional matters" below).

Structural matters—

What is the program's optimal configuration and positioning within the UW?

*Conduct a consultative and considered process in which Museology arrives at a list of attributes that matter most in terms of the program's institutional location. Then engage in an exploration of what each potential administrative home (such as Arts and Sciences, Graduate School, or I School) would mean for Museology in terms of those needs.

Such issues might include:

(1) What is the level of alignment between the School's strategic plan and Museology's concept and vision of its future as a program?

(2) What are the prospects for necessary or desired forms of autonomy within the School?

(3) How will location within that School shift Museology's ability to exert control over its budget and other resources?

(4) How will location within that School provide useful/additional forms of support for Museology's operations?

(5) How will the interests of Museology faculty, staff, and students be reckoned within the School's governance structures (such as councils)?

(6) How will the relatively small core faculty/staff in Museology make its distinctive perspectives and needs heard within the context of a School in which they represent a numerically small constituency?

(7) What assurances might there be that vacancies resulting from resignations, retirements, and the like by Museology staff and faculty will remain with Museology?

(8) What are the expectations for School-level service, and how will these duties interact with current responsibilities for instructional staff in Museology?

(9) Are there options within the School for a substructure, such as a Museology division? If not, what are the implications for staffing and daily operations of being absorbed into a centralized School configuration?

(10) To what extent will the student experience in Museology shift depending upon its location within UW? (For instance, the website characterizes the degree program as "rigorous," "flexible," and "personal." Would those continue to be the signatures of Museology within a new setting?)

(11) What part will Museology play in determining the School's goals and objectives, and how closely will/must Museology's plans match those goals and objectives?

Based upon such a criteria-based analysis, pursue a participatory process for reaching a determination about the most appropriate institutional location for Museology.

*Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of Museology's current educational partnership with UW Continuum College, Has this arrangement outlived its usefulness, or are there compelling reasons to preserve it? In particular, the paper-based registration process seems problematic. If Continuum (or its precursor, EO) no longer provides accounting services, how will those be accomplished and by whom?

*If Museology is to remain a fee-based program, it seems wise to explore with fee-based counterpart programs at UW how they negotiate some of the attendant challenges (such as development activities). If fee-based status is a budgeting model and nothing more, make certain that it does not limit or compromise program experience or quality.

*Scrutinize any apparent institutional barriers for current/future students regarding access to such programs as GO-MAP. How can any structural hurdles of this kind be

met creatively, such that students gain the benefit of intellectual communities beyond the program/unit?

*Given the new efforts within the UW Graduate School to coordinate with/among the interdisciplinary programs, Museology might work with its interdisciplinary counterpart programs to determine what infrastructure might be most helpful in the flourishing of those programs. For example, are bylaws a way of codifying practices and maintaining identity within the program?

Relational matters—

What are ideal webs of connection, both within and beyond the UW—to support Museology's success and broaden its base?

*Given that title and appointment for Museology faculty now resides within their respective academic units, work to ensure that there is (faculty) code-level clarity regarding the need for consultation in RPT processes. In this way, a faculty member under review has the opportunity to have their full contributions reckoned in personnel processes.

*Broaden the base of support for the Museology Program by forging and fortifying relationships with other academic units (including, but not limited to, those in which the academic appointments of current instructional personnel reside).

*Cultivate a wider group of faculty (including those beyond Museology) who might serve as chairs/advisors for students' culminating work; this may involve some initial coaching about timelines, standards, and the like.

*Identify ways in which leaders of interdisciplinary programs at UW—particularly those within Graduate School--can form coalitions to address common challenges and advance common goals.

*Given current constraints on access to centralized development efforts at UW, explore the possibilities for friend- and fund-raising through partnership with foundations.

*Continue developing working relationships with museums and cultural sites, such that students not only serve those institutions but also help shape and transform them.

Instructional matters—

What measures might enhance the program as a learning environment?

*Continue building coherence and collaboration, where possible, among all those who play a part in student learning (core faculty, affiliate faculty, on-site mentors).

*Promote dialogue and pedagogical exchange among all those delivering the core curriculum (continuous improvement); provide opportunities for instructional development and conduct regular collegial review of instruction.

*To ensure continual renewal of the research focus within Museology, consider identifying go-to elective courses that support students as emerging researchers. Explore possibilities for students to be hired on with UW grants or other research projects underway.

*Explore the possibilities for negotiating set-asides within the course enrollment caps for key electives, such that some seats remain available through Priority Phase 2 of registration. It may be that some reciprocal arrangements would work in this regard.

*Leverage Museology's strengths in evaluation to become ever more intentional about articulating success indicators at the program level. For example, if Museology students are engaged in becoming "change agents" in the field, how might communications among interns, faculty, and on-site hosts document that development?

*Consider additional ways in which Museology students may gain experience in activities central to the professions world of practice, such as team-building, staff management, and intern/volunteer coordination.

*Revisit Museology's approach to culminating work for the degree; since capstones may take several forms at the Master's level, which approach is best supported within the program and best aligned with its central commitments?

*Whatever the findings regarding capstone, consider ways that cycle of work may be further embedded within the program's core curriculum.

*Look closely at the possibilities for studio-style capstones, in which students conduct related work rather than strictly individual work.

*Devote additional attention to the options for assessing student placements in roles such as work-study and internships (as components in their overall courses of study). Likely, this assessment would directly involve their supervisors/sponsors at these locations, and so expansion of this partnership would need to be scaffolded carefully.

Navigational matters—

How might Museology best negotiate the next chapters of its story as a program?

*Commit to a limited number of firm program priorities for the next phase (5-7 years) in Museology, on the premise that when everything is treated as a priority, nothing receives the attention due to priorities.

*Reach a determination about the best size of the program as it anticipates the next decade; what does a sustainable program look like?

*Given the growth of UW Museology (both in size and reputation), it may be time to revisit the oversight of the program with corresponding changes to its advisory board.

*Consider ways not only for the Museology program to keep pace with rapid changes within the profession, but also to participate in shaping those changes

*Consider how judicious use of online learning modalities might be used to support current students and previous graduates in ongoing/continuing education

*As a way to inform these decisions, consider organizing a Museology Summit with invited outside experts from museums, museum studies, and informal learning, along with key UW participants. Ideally, the Graduate School will see value in funding this high-level discussion on the role of the university in preparing students for research and practice in a changing museum field.

Conclusion

The UW Museology Program is a recognized leader in its field, providing valuable training for museum professionals and skill sets that extend to work in allied arenas. The Review Committee notes multiple forms of growth and innovation since last program review. The Program benefits from a highly invested network of students, staff, faculty, and community partners, and is well poised to move forward in ways that strengthen program sustainability and that open up opportunities to deepen the Program's training impact.

The Review Committee unanimously recommends that the Program be authorized for another ten-year period. We do recommend an administrative "check-in" in five years. The intent of this recommendation is purely supportive. Given that the Program will be engaged in consideration and pursuit of changes such as those reflected in our recommendations, we believe that an active role by the Graduate School to work in partnership toward accomplishing these changes will be important. A check-in would provide structure for the Program to midstream reassess its progress and engage in negotiation as to subsequent shifts.

The Museology Program has made and continues to make valuable contributions to the university, community, and professional fields. We are enthusiastic about its potential to excel in the coming years.