

REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

**Committee: Anna Joy Springer (chair), Department of Literature, UC San Diego;
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Introduction

The Department of Visual Arts Undergraduate Program at UCSD has achieved international renown for its strong faculty and rigorous curriculum. Emphasizing the interdependence of critical, historical and studio practices, the undergraduate program produces highly trained artist-scholars graduating with majors, double-majors, and minors in Visual Arts. The department also fulfills a crucial role in maintaining UCSD's mission to provide an outstanding undergraduate liberal arts general education to students across all disciplines within all six of UCSD's colleges.

In the past eleven years many formerly urgent concerns have been resolved. The past program review report's focus was on rapid growth of the department, especially concerning ICAM and a need for balance between the 4 Areas of the department. This Report's focus is quite different, contextualized by a recent period of significant budgetary contraction within the UC system, which is producing concern amongst faculty regarding the department's ability to maintain both its reputations for excellence in faculty research and its well-established undergraduate teaching mission. In light of this circumstance, Visual Arts is responding with a thorough review of the original vision of the department and is reimagining the possibilities for a sustainable, intellectually robust undergraduate program that pays especially close attention to shifting student needs in an era of limited campus resources.

Method

The members of the UPRC were selected by, and followed methodological guidelines and a rigorous schedule set by Undergraduate Council, Chaired by Michael Todd and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Barbara A. Sawrey. During the review, which took place on Wednesday May 22, 2012 and Thursday May 23, 2013, the UPRC conducted face-to-face interviews/discussions with a variety of campus administrators, representatives, and program directors, the department chair, department staff, ladder-rank faculty and non-senate faculty, undergraduate majors, and graduate teaching assistants responsible for instructing undergraduates. The guidelines asked that this UPRC Report address specific questions falling under the three following categories: A.) Description of Strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the program; B.) Analysis of Strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum; and C.) Analysis of Strengths and weaknesses of the program in the context of campus and UC policies. The guidelines further direct this UPRC to D.) Make recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the above description and analyses.

Description Of Strengths And Weaknesses Of The Operation Of The Program

Strengths

The Visual Arts Department's administrative structure is clear and robust, and is supported by an energetic, largely new administrative staff. The faculty workload, distribution of graduate/undergraduate activity, and lower-division teaching, with a 4/5 teaching load, is respectful of faculty research obligations. The committee was impressed by both the faculty's lack of complaint about workload distribution and its willingness to take on extra teaching duties such as independent and directed group studies and academic internships. The committee was also impressed by the Department's academic leadership, which appears to be swift in identifying aspects of its program that need attention (e.g. disjunction between faculty and student research interests), and apt in its formulation of appropriate responses (see discussion of curriculum below). On another positive note, the Department does not appear to be unduly constrained from implementing its initiatives by financial or budgetary contraction, which

the committee infers to be the product of long-term history of wise stewardship at the MSO level. In addition, the department's undergraduate advising component is well-staffed and responsive.

Enrollment of student majors is declining slightly, compared to 2008, but for the most part this decline is in line with national declines in arts and humanities majors over the past few years. Joint programs offered with other programs/departments and/or colleges ICAM is a program shared jointly between Music Dept and Vis Arts, and to include Theater/Dance.

Weaknesses

While the issue of shrinking full time faculty & lost FTEs overshadows the analysis of departmental weaknesses in all three categories (operations, curriculum and status within campus context), the effects of this tendency impact departmental operations only indirectly. For example, as the pool of experienced full-time faculty diminishes, departmental service obligations are spread across fewer professors.

Faculty, staff and students are united in their identification of the decrepit state of undergraduate teaching and research facilities, particularly at the Mandeville complex, as a major departmental weakness. To the committee, this indicates a long-term weakness in oversight of the physical resources that undergird the department's undergraduate curriculum. (It is also symptom of a broader campus-wide problem with regard to a gross imbalance of funds for building maintenance as compared to new building construction.) Improving this state of affairs can only have a positive effect on major, minor and at-large undergraduate enrollments.

Possibly related to the concern expressed above is a lack of "sense of community" expressed by undergraduates. While not unusual in undergraduate arts programs in large research universities, given the lower-than-average satisfaction scores of graduating majors, and the recent decline of major numbers, this should be viewed as an area of organizational concern by the department.

The department does not have enough non-academic instructional staff to help students with hands on technical training in labs and studios. Such staff would help meet the needs of students who repeatedly mention that they would like to receive more thorough technical training, without diluting the praxis-based pedagogical approach to instruction in the classroom.

Recent declines in undergraduate majors and difficulties in renewing faculty lines may both be indirect products of an unmet need to raise the visibility of the department's programs on the campus – to do the necessary advocacy work to make students, other departmental faculty, administration, and other groups on campus aware of the department's programs and the important contribution they make to UCSD's research and teaching missions.

Regarding department staff, there's a need for clearer job titles and division of duties among administrative staff, so students and faculty can understand positions and find help much more easily. Student surveys show complaints about accessibility of staff for help with administrative procedures. The fact that much of the staff is new to the department may be a contributing factor here. It seems the department may lack sufficient faculty support staff to help translate between needs of students and faculty needs, including instructional support. An assistant to the chair, who remains as the chairs rotate in and out of service, would be an especially important staff position to consider.

Recommendations

Faculty leadership and departmental staff must work closely to reallocate administrative resources towards addressing the issues identified above, and to properly educate new staff regarding departmental needs. As the renovation of facilities and increasing the visibility of the Department's programs on campus may require extra-departmental resources, fostering a close working relationship with the Dean and divisional-level staff on these initiatives will be important as well.

Staff roles should be clarified and efforts should be made to keep staff on board and happy in order to preserve continuity, organization, and institutional memory.

Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Curriculum

Strengths

The overall academic quality of Visual Arts' faculty and curriculum, as compared with other institutions, is very strong. The faculty's impressively broad range of research interests in relevant contemporary practices has maintained the program's forward-looking, experimental reputation that was solidified in the mid-1970's. The faculty's ambitious research agenda is reflected in the level of accomplishment expected of undergraduates. Testimony from highly-motivated undergraduates indicates that the rich mixture of critical thinking and skills-based learning dictated by the curriculum can achieve impressive results: a significant number of majors are accepted into the most advanced graduate MFA programs in the country (Yale, Art Center College of Design, UCLA, RISD) and as alumni are included in exhibitions at prestigious venues (Whitney Biennial, UCLA Hammer Made in LA Biennial). The department's well-established openness to interdisciplinary approaches to arts education (ICAM's relationship with Music and Professor Adler's Experimental Drawing Lab, for instance) is another indication of how innovation at the curricular level has become institutionalized.

In addition to educating majors effectively, Visual Arts' undergraduate curriculum serves liberal arts educational needs across the campus. Having art history as a primary component of the department allows the department to serve many more students and a broader range of students than other University of California art departments. Strong demand from minors and at-large undergraduates has been well-matched with historically deep teaching resources (full-time faculty and a deep temporary lecturer pool); the ratio of Visual Arts majors and double majors to minors is unusually high compared with other campus departments. Visual Arts faculty and lecturers teach a mixture of classes whose capacities are well balanced, which is an indication that the department's curriculum has been adjusted over time to achieve maximal efficiencies and breadth of reach. Evidence of these tendencies are seen in the high number of Studio faculty teaching very large (over 200 student) classes for an art program, and in the organization of introductory studio and media classes into large classes in which teaching assistants handle skills instruction in smaller sections. The numbers realized by these strategies are then balanced by the smaller class sizes of the upper-division practicum courses necessary for the proper training of student-artists. Even the enrollment caps of practicum courses appear to be at the high end of the advisable range. Given all these factors, it is difficult to imagine how Visual Arts can significantly increase the average student credit hours of its faculty and lecturers; it has already implemented structural changes usually recommended by administrations.

The Art History program makes a strong effort to match the diversity of the student population with the cultural breadth of its courses. Introduction to Asian art and modern Chinese art draw large enrollments, with the most popular elective courses being in Western art in ancient, medieval, Renaissance, 18th-19th c. The department currently has the budget to hire lecturers and other temporary employees to meet short-term curricular needs, though the percentage of part time faculty has gone down since 2008.

Learning objectives are clearly stated, and are monitored by individual TA's and faculty within the course. The Honors Program, open by invitation to all students whose GPA meets the program's criteria, provides specialized resources for the most advanced students and appears to be an exemplary model of such a program, with a seemingly high level of satisfaction among students who have had the opportunity to participate. Students show artwork in the undergraduate gallery, and appear to have reasonable access to opportunities to showcase their research in other venues. Undergraduate advisors and course instructors explain learning objectives of individual classes and overall programs to students.

Most importantly, the department is taking a pro-active stance towards making sure its curriculum aligns with student interests and needs (see recommendations below).

Weaknesses

There remains a marked gap between student requests for technical training and the program's praxis-based approach to arts education. This may be a communication problem, or it may be that the program lacks the resources to meet student demand for courses focusing entirely upon artistic technique. It could also be that the existing curriculum of one educational track for both Visual Arts majors and non-majors seeking general education units doesn't serve the needs of both these groups. Students across disciplines and within the major continue to request more access to technical/craft instruction as part of their educational experience. Some majors and graduate student TAs mentioned that majors and minors would benefit from better communication about the nature of the program. Honors students said a more formal orientation, or even a mandatory course about the special pedagogical approaches and theoretical/conceptual underpinnings of UCSD's visual arts courses, would have helped them adapt more quickly. Certainly the pedagogical approaches should be addressed frequently in classes with high numbers of non-majors expecting to learn only technical skills.

Teaching assistants are especially vocal about this issue of a "disconnect" between students' knowledge base and expectations and the contents of many courses. This may be attributable in large part to the fact that only about a quarter of students in the departments' courses are majors following a traditional 4-year track through the program. Approximately half the students in departmental course offerings are majors, and approximately half of these students transfer in from community colleges. Managing and addressing the needs of these students will be necessary to maintain the department's vitality.

Transfer Students are working against an extremely difficult system that doesn't offer courses at the right times or in sufficient number for them to get degrees in timely manner or in sensible chronology. They are universally frustrated to be taking introductory courses long after they have taken advanced courses in the same subject area. They feel that they must "learn backwards" only because the introductory required courses are offered at the same time as their required advanced courses and because the introductory course sequences are offered too few times per year.

While the demand for Visual Arts offerings across the campus remains strong (for at-large undergraduates and minors), numbers of majors in the department's four areas have been at best flat, and some have experienced serious declines in recent years. This weakness in major numbers is reflected in the lower-than-average major satisfaction scores in student surveys. While it is difficult to link these symptoms to specific causes (the weak economy has had a negative impact on arts and humanities enrollments nationwide), this trend should recommend that the department pay attention to concerns regarding the program's effectiveness voiced by its undergraduate members.

The department's self-review makes particular note of the negative impact of the recent tendency towards non-renewal of full-time faculty lines. While the ratio of students taught by full-time faculty to those taught by non-senate instructors remains slightly higher than the campus average, the committee concurs with the department's assessment that this is an area of deep concern. One primary curricular weakness identified by current undergraduates is the less-than-satisfactory access to full-time faculty in upper-division courses. If this trend is exacerbated by continued non-replacement of full-time faculty, the department's demonstrated ability to place its undergraduates in appropriately productive post-graduation positions or in prestigious graduate schools will be significantly hampered. This issue will be examined in greater depth in the "Campus and University Policies" section of this report. It will suffice to say here that continued non-renewal of faculty lines will very likely have a deeply negative impact on the department's ability to deliver its curriculum to its undergraduates, especially in the Art History and Media areas.

If the claim that at least four additional faculty expect to retire by 2016 is lent credence (there is a cluster of faculty at or near retirement age), and if a recent trend of departures of younger full professors continues, without the replacement of these faculty lines, the department's ability to deliver its curriculum to its students will be difficult to salvage. Indeed, the department's ability to continue its teaching mission in a way consistent with its historic impact will be virtually impossible without the replacement of departing faculty. The reputations of departments are difficult to build and easy to destroy, and there is no clearer indication of a department's vitality than its ability to maintain and/or increase its complement of prestigious full-time faculty members.

Recommendations

Visual Arts has taken on the enormous task of making an inventory of its strengths and weaknesses and has undertaken a complete curriculum review – first in a weeklong retreat (the first of its kind in the history of the department), and then in several follow-up meetings. This would be a recommendation of this committee had the department not already taken this initiative. Areas the committee believes worth exploring (both within and outside the scope of this study) include:

1. Putting systems in place for more effective management of student expectations (e.g. more continuity in relationship between student affairs and its faculty advisor).
2. Developing courses whose content is geared specifically towards non-majors.
3. Considering the possibility of merging Media and Studio areas to reflect increasing interdisciplinarity of arts practitioners.
4. Introducing skills-based workshops coordinated between TA's and staff on a quarterly basis, and ensuring the availability of monitored lab hours for completion of student work outside of class time.
5. Since students across disciplines and in the VA major continue demanding more hands on technical courses and support, we recommend hiring non-academic dedicated instructional support staff in labs and studio spaces. The department could require or recommend labs in technical skills alongside regular courses. A funding stream for Instructional Lab Support seems crucial to meeting needs of students for hands-on learning without draining diminishing FTE resources.
6. The department should recommend that faculty make use of teaching support that the Department has already set up including a new formal mentoring system and a policy for asking faculty with 3 or more student satisfaction scores below 70% to the Center for Teaching. Faculty should also be creative in coming up with ways to get more of their students to evaluate courses, since courses with more evaluations usually receive higher approval ratings.

Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program in the Context of Campus and University Policies

Strengths

Visual Arts at UCSD follows the general campus devotion to disciplinary and cross-disciplinary innovation. The department's curriculum places emphasis on research, experimentation, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. The pedagogical underpinnings of the undergraduate curriculum emphasizes the interweaving of theory, practical investigation and speculation, which distinguishes this program as truly reflective of the research mission of the UC and distinguishes it from other local collegiate arts education programs that focus primarily on technical education. Despite this special research emphasis, the program is nonexclusive: any student who wishes to can enter the major. In Spring 2012, 40.3% of majors were transfer students, which provides an excitingly diverse student population, as well as

presenting some special challenges to instructors. There is also a remarkably high major to minor ratio (437 majors to 250 minors in Spring 2012), which means that a large number of students from other majors choose Visual Arts as a secondary learning emphasis. Importantly, the department seems to have at this moment sufficient budget to cover its immediate curricular needs and is not in financial crisis and can afford to hire part time faculty to address gaps in curricular needs.

In the context of recent UC and campus policies that seem to encourage a drastic reduction in full time ladder rank faculty positions (and therefore require more teaching and administrative labor of extant faculty), the undergraduate program has taken it upon itself to creatively revamp and streamline the entire undergraduate curriculum to address shifting student needs and the strengths of the remaining faculty, along with the changing status of the public research university in California. This is a laudibly proactive approach to what has become a virtually existential conundrum; apparently inflexible campus-wide teaching efficiency standards that, either purposefully or inadvertently, are mandating drastic reductions in departmental FTE allocations.

Weaknesses: FTE allocations

The following detailed discussion of this issue properly belongs in this "Context of Campus and University Policies" section of this report, as the question of replacing FTEs of departing faculty appears to be hinging on a misalignment between stated Campus policy positions and the department's pedagogical requirements given its essential disciplinary characteristics.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the department's self-review positions this issue as the department's primary area of concern, an assessment with which the committee concurs. The current and potential impacts of non-renewal of FTEs have already been discussed. The committee has independently researched the numbers mentioned in the self-review and finds that they are not exaggerating the severity of the situation – if anything, it is being underplayed.

Working from a review of faculty rosters published in UCSD's General Course Catalogues, it appears that Visual Arts was on a growth track during the mid-2000's; 25 full-time faculty in 2003-4 expanding to 33 in 2006-7, a number that includes 6 assistant professors. Immediately after this point, a series of high-profile departures and a retirement brought the number of FTEs down to 29, a number that remains more or less consistent until the current academic year, which has witnessed a sudden further reduction in full-time faculty numbers to 26, by our count, and not 28 as stated in the self-study. In the past 5 years there have been only two years in which an assistant professor appears on faculty rosters, which attests to a lack of willingness (presumably at the Divisional or Campus levels) to restore the department's losses of the mid-2000's. While this historical perspective is absent in the self-study, it is clear that Visual Arts faculty are keenly aware that their level of concern is well founded, as it has precedent in recent history. In further research, the committee has found evidence that the tendency for departing faculty FTEs to return to upper administration- a major stumbling block in the process of renewal- is deeply embedded in the institutional culture at UCSD; the LA Times reported on a cluster of Visual Arts faculty retirements in 1992, noting the return of the FTEs to the campus level for redistribution. Given this background, the stated intention of 4 faculty to retire by 2016, and the likely continuing departure of high-profile faculty for other programs quite understandably create a climate of deep concern and skepticism regarding the department's ability to extricate itself from a self-perpetuating cycle of rapid contraction of both its size and its reputation.

While the Media and Art History areas are the two most immediately affected by this trend, Studio and ICAM are also impacted. According to its self statement and faculty interviews, approximately 40% of Art History faculty retiring in 3-4 years, including entire faculty in ancient medieval and Renaissance art. It is hard to imagine how the needs of the Art History Majors and, very importantly, the needs of the overall student population for general education requirement and elective options, will be met. Media is the largest major in the department (215 students). Since 2011 its permanent faculty, according to its self-

review, has declined from 9 to 5, and anticipates a further decline to 3 by 2014. These trends are so steep that, even with the replacement of some faculty lines, the current initiative towards a complete overhaul of the department curriculum seems prescient and wise.

Two instances of campus policy have been cited as explanations for the lack of replacement of departing faculty lines. The conclusion of the department's self-study notes that a University guideline (the "Penner number", a department average of 32 students/4 unit class) "is used as a baseline for the allocation of funds in support of undergraduate education", and further states that the "the guide-line be lowered for the production programs, because of the high number of small courses they must repeatedly offer- a request that thus far has been denied". The committee finds it strange that this number would be applied differentially across the department's areas; it is customary on other UC campuses to use the data derived from official academic entities such as departments, schools and divisions to make judgments concerning the allocation of academic resources. It would be a departmental prerogative to identify and address its instructional labor issues according to its own expert opinion, as long it maintains its obligation to be a "good campus citizen" in the eyes of upper administration. Seen from this perspective, while Visual Arts' average all-ranks enrollment per course in 2011-12 of 33.79 students is below the University average of 52.20 students/course, not only is this average very impressive for an arts program, it is in fact above the Penner number of 32 students/course (this, despite the fact that the Department's many studio arts courses must be capped at 22 students, the maximum manageable for the required level of hands-on instruction in those courses, which are in high demand). For this reason the committee is inclined to discount a negative relationship to the "Penner Number" (which is no longer the name of the student-faculty ratio allocation model, but has remained in colloquial use as the term) as a sufficient policy-based explanation for the lack of renewal of FTEs.

The second explanation based on citation of campus policy regarding the rationale for non-renewal of FTEs was voiced by Dean Lehrer during the review's Exit Interview; the division is allocated one entitled FTE per four retirements, in addition to any other allocated hires. The committee finds this assertion troubling, since application of this rule without frequent exception across the campus would result in a rapidly shrinking pool of full-time faculty in all departments of long-term standing. In addition, given that UCSD has the highest student/faculty ratio in the UC system, insistence on such a rule would be highly counterproductive to such a long-term campus goal as maintaining its status as a tier-one liberal arts research university.

The committee finds that the lack of a clear rationale for FTE renewal derived from verifiable campus policy statements has resulted in a departmental climate in which an inordinate degree of confusion, anxiety and ungrounded speculation have become the norm amongst department faculty and staff. Faculty have stated in the self-review that they have made multiple attempts to have a rationale for renewing departmental FTEs approved without success. There is thus an urgent need for a blueprint to be developed that will renew the integrity of the department's most important asset, its full-time faculty.

Weaknesses: other

An official assessment process to best determine how student artwork exemplifies achieved learning objectives is not yet in place. It appears the Department and possibly the Division may lag behind other Campus entities in this regard.

There are significant problems with undergraduate physical facilities, including problems with Mandeville, especially. Across the board students and faculty feel unsafe in Mandeville because of poor lighting, poor security, structural problems, mold, and general disrepair. Further, undergraduates argued that a dedicated central studio, where they could leave their works-in-progress and supplies, would not only help with their art making practice, but would also allow them to develop community and to work in collaboration. They all expressed a strong desire for an expanded sense of community similar to that which the Honors Program fosters and believe this need could be met by a central shared studio facility,

ideally overseen by instructional staff, and perhaps with lockers for their materials. These multiple facilities concerns are too large to be addressed at the departmental level, and are symptomatic of a need for closer coordination with campus-wide systems for distribution of design and building resources for such improvements to be planned for and implemented.

The Visual Arts undergraduate program offers diverse courses taught by faculty from a wide range of research areas and practices, including many that speak to the interests of the current student population at UCSD. However, it does not yet offer enough courses that address the specific concerns of many populations historically made targets of individual and institutionalized inequity in the United States. These students, led by the Black Student Union and supported by diverse staff, faculty, and interested external groups, organized in 2010 to force administration to address their particularly vulnerable position on the UCSD campus and to provide better education about the unique social histories and research areas of underrepresented, historically marginalized US populations. The student demands were formalized in a new undergraduate course requirement. To graduate, all students now must take a course that emphasizes the diversity, equity, and inclusion of certain vulnerable US populations, including African American, Chicano, Latino, and Native American populations. As yet, the area of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy focus does not extend to many other disenfranchised US populations, such as transgendered people, formerly incarcerated people, or people living in poverty, but the policy may expand to include incentives to teach courses focusing on the work and histories of other targeted national and global populations. In addition to offering relatively few courses that meet DEI requirements, the Visual Arts Department has very few faculty of color, and at this moment, no ladder-rank black faculty at all, which may contribute to undergraduate misperception that people of color in America do not contribute significantly to the visual arts as scholars and practitioners.

Recommendations For Addressing Challenges Suggested By Above Description And Analyses

FTE allocations

Visual Arts should be given more FTEs to staunch loss of retiring faculty, before a crisis develops, with Media and Art History being the areas of greatest need in this regard. The Department should continue to weigh students' educational needs against specific departmental research interests. Further, hiring more faculty of color and women, especially artists and arts historians from historically underrepresented populations, could significantly strengthen undergraduate education at UCSD. In order to facilitate this process, the committee strongly recommends that Visual Arts follow the suggestions provided by Dean Lehrer in the Exit Interview to consult with the chairs of other departments within the division to develop a comprehensive rationale for why the campus has an interest in maintaining permanent faculty numbers in the arts and humanities at their current levels, at the very least. This appeal should be addressed to the Divisional Dean so that the Dean may petition the upper administration to pay special attention to the disciplinary specificity of its pedagogy. This proposal needs to specify how such reallocation is good for the entire campus, especially for those departments and divisions with growing majors, especially as it supports campus-wide emphasis on a strong liberal arts education. Impending faculty retirements and departures underscore the urgency of this issue.

Other issues

Dangerous, inadequate, and embarrassing undergraduate facilities at Mandeville should be repaired or relocated as quickly as possible. Visual arts courses should also get some priority daytime access to large lecture halls. Undergraduates' request for a community studio workspace should be considered seriously. Protocols to facilitate this process should be established and maintained, including instituting channels of communication from the department, through the division and upward to such entities as the Campus Architect and relevant planning committees.

As the department is already re-envisioning curriculum, this is a perfect time to readdress the continued challenge of managing student expectations and formally educating them on how the department's balance between practice and theory is implemented in each Area. It's also a great time to reconsider the needs of two distinct kinds of student, majors vs. GE's who have different pedagogical needs, backgrounds and learning styles. As a model we recommend Visual Arts look at campus departments offering two tracks, one for majors and one for non-majors. We also strongly recommend considering the unique needs of transfer students in redeveloping curriculum. For instance, required courses need to be run at a time when there is not a conflict with other courses that most 3rd year majors take.

Visual Art should consider adding courses that address the current Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) requirements (perhaps expanding on current course listings that include "African and Afro-American Art," "Southwest American Indian Art," and "Pacific Coast American Indian Art"). Although each department's participation in recent DEI requirements is entirely voluntary, courses in African American, Latino, and/or Native American arts histories, movements, and practices might be developed to address UCSD's need for more education around specific issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion of particularly vulnerable students on campus and historically marginalized artists in the country.

July 1, 2014

PROFESSOR Jordan Crandall, Chair
Department of Visual Arts

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Department of Visual Arts

Dear Professor Crandall,

The Undergraduate Council has discussed the Department of Visual Art's 2013 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the response from the Department. The Council's comments centered on the following:

- **Curriculum:** It was evident to the Council that students are requesting additional practice-based coursework, whether it is expanded studio offerings or the creation of coursework which teaches the craft. The Council noted the complaints about the dearth of highly theoretical courses. The Council is pleased that the department plans to review their curriculum and suggests the incorporation of coursework that is accessible to students interested in all facets of visual arts. Another reason to revisit the curriculum is the students' difficulty in getting required courses. The Council requests that if not already a current practice, the department review its frequency of course offerings, including how they are placed in the academic year in relation to other VIS offerings and if there are "bottleneck" areas which may be improved through curriculum redesign. This will need to be approached in multiple ways, perhaps, and will be discussed below in the Faculty Resources section.
- **Faculty Resources:** The Council recognizes that rethinking the curriculum cannot be achieved without additional instructors. The Council strongly urges the Dean of Arts and Humanities to fill the vacated FTEs. It is clear that the student experience and faculty morale is suffering due to these unfilled positions. In addition, should new practice-based courses be developed, instructional staff hires would need to be proposed. The Council opined that some of the negative comments expressed about the curriculum may be related to a lack of faculty resources.
- **State of the Mandeville Facilities:** The Council was pleased to hear that the Mandeville facilities are undergoing renovations to improve their safety and would like an update on the progress at the one-year follow up in Spring 2015.

The Council would like to recognize the dedication of the Visual Arts faculty despite the aforementioned difficulties. The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Spring Quarter 2015. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for its engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,



James Nieh, Chair
Undergraduate Council

cc: G. Boss L. Carver S. Lerer K. Pogliano R. Rodriguez B. Sawrey M. Sidney