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May 17, 2018

To: Robert Stacey, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Catherine Cole, Divisional Dean of Arts

From: Rebecca Aanerud, Interim Dean
Kima Cargill, Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning

RE: Review of the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS) (2017-2018)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the DXARTS academic program review. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (October 10, 2017)
- Self-Study (January 3, 2018)
- Site visit (February 1-2, 2018)
- Review committee report (March 9, 2018)
- Unit response to the report (May 7, 2018)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 17, 2018)

The review committee consisted of:

John Sahr, Professor, UW Department of Electrical Engineering (Committee Chair)

Thaisa Way, Professor, UW Department of Landscape Architecture

Elainie Lillios, Professor of Composition, College of Musical Arts, Bowling Green State University

Erik Brunvand, Associate Professor, School of Computing, University of Utah

DXARTS offers a Doctor of Philosophy degree and an undergraduate minor.

Members of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on May 17, 2018. A summary of this report, composed by Graduate School Council Members, is attached to this document.

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS) on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. In addition, the last two academic program review committees have recommended that the Center become a department, and the Graduate School Council supports that recommendation.

The Council recommends the next review be conducted in ten years (2027-2028) with an interim report to be submitted in five years (2022-2023). When preparing the interim report, DXARTS leadership should collaborate with the Dean and Divisional Dean of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences to:

1. Provide a status update on the prospect of becoming a department.
2. Create and present a strategic plan.
3. Create and present a financial plan.

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Mark Richards, Provost and Executive Vice President
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Michaelann Jundt, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Juan Pampin, Chair, Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media
Becky Corriell, Director, Academic Program Review and Strategy, the Graduate School
Review Committee Members
Members of the Graduate School Council
GPSS President

Attachment

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Key points:

- A strong, innovative program at the leading edge of integrating arts, technology, sciences, and humanities.
- Stand-alone program created by UIF, should become a department in A&S
- State-of-art physical facilities that are located off campus and impose heavy financial burden
- Four faculty, two with major administrative duties. At least two new FTEs should be added.
- Program should partner with College to better exploit local advancement opportunities
- Disagreement between review committee and program faculty/students on what constitutes their research mission.
- Review committee thinks program needs to improve interactions with other units.

Program Strengths:

- Four 100% FTE faculty are passionate, devoted to program, all have strong research and performance programs. Good use of adjunct faculty appointments, research associates, and research scientists to add strength. Eight of ten adjuncts participated in program review, showing strong commitment.
- DXARTS is at leading edge in fusing the arts, technology, sciences, and humanities. Research projects often result in performances, gallery exhibits, published recordings, and other deliverables.
- Good collaborative relationships with eScience Institute and Human Centered Design and Engineering program.
- Outstanding state-of-the-art physical facilities that support interdisciplinary, collaborative activities. Studio/work spaces, hands-on laboratories, fabrication lab, and soft lab provide faculty, associates, and students with leading edge audio, video, computing, and physical fabrication facilities. Excellent staff assists faculty and students in using facilities for projects.
- PhD program innovative, first of its kind. Students feel challenged and have freedom to explore and experiment.
- Undergraduate minor is growing rapidly, attracts students from all over campus. High visibility.

Challenges and Risks:

- Created as part of the University Initiative Fund tax. Exists as an independent program housed in A&S. Faculty lines reside in different departments, not in DXARTS. Complicates reviews for tenure, promotion, merit; faculty may be evaluated on department specific criteria that may not coincide with DXARTS priorities. But housing FTEs in departments fosters interactions with other units.
- Wishes to become a department in A&S, and this was recommended in both preceding and current 10 year reviews. College has not acted on recommendation yet. If DXARTS becomes a dept, there is a risk of it becoming isolated from other units. Important to discuss how to maintain relationships with adjunct depts and programs

- Two of four faculty (Juan Pampin and Richard Karpen) hold administrative positions. Places extra burden on other two faculty to serve as mentors, guide evaluations and assessments, and teach classes. Administrative duties reduce performance time.
- Senior faculty, and some students, were frustrated when committee asked them to define what research in arts practice/performance actually means, and they became defensive. The committee noted that such defensiveness could lead to missed opportunities in the future.
- The Review Committee noted that faculty could increase their focus on exploring external funding sources and/or reach out to local tech companies.
- The Review Committee was left with the impression that Core faculty don't value connections to other depts like dance as much as adjuncts value their connections to DXARTS; and as such, recommends that program faculty and students increase their efforts to reach out to the UW community.
- DXARTS rents large performance and research facility in Ballard. Too far from campus, wasted travel time. Rent and maintenance costs increasing significantly and quickly. The cost of off-campus facilities is about 10% of GOF budget (around \$100K a year). Beside the rental costs, DXARTS also has to pay for all the utilities, internet, and security costs. Program views this as an indirect budget cut, as DXARTS is the only art unit that rents space for its operations. Funds for off-campus facilities come from a Visiting Artist position that was part of DXARTS UIF budget; those funds cover only about 50% of the current costs.
- Cost of graduate student funding (including tuition and stipends) has increased without an increase in the Center's budgetary allocation from College.

Review Committee Recommendations:

1. Unanimous agreement that DXARTS be granted departmental status.
2. Add two new faculty FTEs. The Review Committee recommends that the DXARTS faculty consider that one FTE might be in visual arts, and the other might be in history/theory of this field.
3. Facilities should be moved closer to campus to facilitate access and better integration. Some of the facilities funded by student technology fee, and students should have easier access. West campus expansion provides opportunity for relocation of Ballard facility.
4. Maintain graduate student studio space when facilities are moved closer to campus. Essential component of PhD program.
5. Take better advantage of College staff resources including advancement, grant support, media/communications, and other services. Share new FTE in advancement with College.
6. Better consolidate program equipment with shared equipment on campus. Could piggy-back on to Office of Research's initiative to coordinate shared research facilities across campus.
7. Build on existing relationships with DXARTS alumni network to connect better with Seattle arts and tech communities.
8. Explore alternative funding streams. Tap into local tech companies for endowed FTEs, student support, new initiatives, etc.
9. Encourage more outreach. Seek more venues off campus to present their work and increase visibility.
10. Support staff in the areas of grant writing, marketing/communications and/or advancement be leveraged more effectively with College resources.
11. Interim report by divisional Dean and DXARTS in five years to assess post-review activities. Full review in ten years.

Areas of concurrence and disagreement:

The Program and Review Committee agree on the program's strengths and challenges, with the exceptions noted below. The program director noted that the following committee statements are inaccurate and asked that they be corrected. The first point in particular merits attention.

"During conversations with DXARTS faculty about the nature of their research, productivity, and the dissemination of their work, the Committee sometimes encountered defensiveness that appears to stem from years of being asked to defend the program. We heard a similar defensiveness from some students that appeared to echo that of the faculty."

DXARTS response: "During the site visit some of the DXARTS faculty and students reported an adversarial attitude from one of the committee members. The DXARTS faculty and students are really proud of their PhD program and are fervent proponents of it, it is important they are not taxed as defensive when they were actually responding to highly aggressive questioning by this committee member in several different meetings."

"While no department can serve all needs, it is notable that DXARTS does not have any current faculty with a departmental connection to visual arts nor any faculty who specialize in theoretical/critical discourse."

DXARTS response: "This statement is inaccurate, both Professors James Coupe and Afroditi Psarra have a visual arts background and their work is fully related to the visual arts."

"The number of DXARTS alumni hired by the program is also concerning. The self-study remarks on the successful employment of PhD alumni. While this is true, 25% of the Center's PhD alumni are employed by DXARTS itself, including one of the faculty and two staff members."

DXARTS response: "This statement is inaccurate. The Self Study refers to PhD students, and only one of our current staff members... is a PhD alumna. DXARTS is a young program and only has granted 13 PhD's, using percentages is really not the best way to look at this issue. And even so, only 2 out of 13 alumni are currently working at DXARTS. Of the rest of DXARTS' alumni, 90% of them have jobs in academia."

"Finally, while DXARTS adjunct faculty expressed enthusiasm about their relationship and partnerships with the program, the faculty within DXARTS was not always as strongly spirited when describing its adjuncts and partnerships."

DXARTS response: "It is hard to understand what the concern is here. The DXARTS faculty work hard to establish connections across campus and to bring collaborators as adjunct faculty into the program."