

**REPORT OF THE  
ART/ART HISTORY PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**July, 1998**

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## SUMMARY OF PROCESS

The Art/Art History Program Review Committee was formed by official notification in a letter of March 16, 1998 from Marsha Landolt, Dean of the Graduate School. Its internal members are Professor Jonathan Bernard, School of Music (Chair), Professor Robert Dahlstrom, School of Drama, and Associate Professor Christine Di Stefano, Department of Political Science; external members are Professor Meredith J. Davis (Department of Graphic Design, North Carolina State University), Professor Arthur H. Okazaki (Department of Art, Tulane University), and Professor Anne Wagner (Department of Art History, University of California at Berkeley).

In her letter, Dean Landolt charged the Committee with the responsibility for reviewing the five degree programs in the School of Art: the Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts, offered by the Division of Art and the Division of Design; and the Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy, offered by the Division of Art History.<sup>1</sup> On April 9, the internal members of the Committee met with deans from the Graduate School and the College of Arts and Sciences to clarify and focus this general charge and to lay the groundwork for the upcoming site visit. In his letter of April 15 to the Committee, John T. Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, summarized the sense of that meeting and asked that the Committee, beyond making its recommendations as to the continuance of the School of Art's degree programs, attend with particular interest to the following questions:

(1) What does the School see as its mission, and how is it acting to further that mission?

(2) How does the School of Art order its priorities, in light of the impression given by its Self-Study that the School's three divisions operate in essentially autonomous fashion? How would additional support, if made available, be allocated among the three divisions in response to space and resource problems that they have separately raised?

(3) How are access problems for undergraduate non-majors being addressed? Would it make sense to consider revising the format of certain non-major courses so that more students could take them?

(4) Are there access problems within the School as well--for example, for art majors who need to take courses in divisions other than the one in which their own program is located?

(5) Seemingly out of keeping with its demonstrated strengths, why does the Art

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<sup>1</sup>There is actually also a BA option within the Division of Art alone; for further details, see Section III ("Programs") under FINDINGS.

History Division occupy a relatively low position in the National Research Council rankings?

(6) How is the program in Industrial Design faring, three years after it underwent a 100% turnover in its faculty?

During the ensuing several weeks, preliminary to the site visit, the internal members of the Committee divided among themselves the responsibilities of meeting individually with the Chairs of the three divisions (Art, Design, Art History) within the School of Art, and with the Director. They met briefly on May 8 to compare notes. The Committee as a whole, completed by its external membership, met for the first time on the evening of May 10; the site visit itself took place on May 11 and 12 and consisted of a series of some 31 interviews, mostly lasting 15 to 20 minutes but occasionally as long as an hour, with various individuals and groups drawn from among the various constituencies of the School's administration, faculty, students, and staff. The Committee also toured the main Art Building on the North Campus and the Fire Arts site on Mary Gates Boulevard. The visit concluded with exit interviews led by the Committee and attended by representatives of the Graduate School and the College administrations, and of the School of Art. By the end of May, the Chair of the Committee had received separate reports from the three external members, all of which have been incorporated substantially into the report that follows.

We should add at this point that in making its report, the Committee has attempted to address at least briefly all of the various issues that arose during the preliminary interviews and the site visit. These naturally include (but are not limited to) those identified by Dean Slattery in his letter of April 15.

## FINDINGS

### I. General

As a Committee, we were impressed with everyone we encountered among the faculty, students, and staff of the School of Art during the review process. The dedication to the School as an institution, and to all its various programs and subprograms,<sup>2</sup> was obvious on every level. If it was harder to detect, at all times, a clear sense of overall mission for the School at large, this difficulty can be attributed to two principal factors. One is systemic: schools of art in general tend to function in a markedly heterogeneous manner, with each program dedicated principally to its specialized processes of skills acquisition and its own stores of knowledge, only secondarily to matters affecting the operation of that program together with other programs in the larger academic unit. The School of Art at the University of Washington is no exception in this respect. In fact, this heterogeneous profile is if anything intensified, compared to those of many other schools, by the presence of a Division of Art History, since art history at many other institutions constitutes an entirely separate department. (Further remarks about the School's divisional structure appear below, under II. Administration.)

The other factor, which unfortunately may be pushing the School in some respects beyond the normal effects of heterogeneity into actual fragmentation of purpose, is budgetary. After years of heroic measures from faculty, students, and staff, who have had to make do with cramped quarters and outmoded and/or ill-maintained equipment (in some cases seriously and dangerously so), the School of Art is, in the words of one external committee member, "hitting the wall," beginning to have trouble seeing beyond the severe problems caused by chronic underfunding. As became abundantly evident to us during the site visit, this situation has led to a barely acknowledged yet clearly unhealthy competition between (and sometimes even within) divisions for scarce resources which no one can really win and which, ironically, has tended to divert precious energies from the task of articulating the School's needs and goals to the upper administration.

Throughout the site visit, four main issues were consistently identified by faculty as primary contributors to their discontent: salaries, space, equipment, and operating budget. Students tended to notice problems with space and equipment and to experience the others indirectly (such as the incapacity of the operating budget to provide adequate

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<sup>2</sup>These "subprograms," such as the BFA in Ceramics or the MFA in Visual Communications, should technically be referred to as options. However, since the School of Art really does think of them as separate programs (even if they bear the same degree names as, say, the BFA in Industrial Design or the MFA in Printmaking) and refers to them as such in its Self-Study, we too have called them programs in this report.

technical staffing in some areas), although some graduate students did note a perceived dearth of teaching assistantships, a circumstance which will continue to mean extended time to degree in many cases.

We will not dwell on the salaries issue. Salary inequities, as measured both within the University of Washington (between the arts and other departments; as a function of compression at the middle and upper ranks) and between the UW and its peer institutions, are well enough recognized to require no further commentary from us. Suffice it to say that salaries were the occasion for some of the bitterest remarks we heard, and that even at the junior level problems may be developing, both in retention and in hiring (entry-level salaries, even if they are still basically comparable with those of peer institutions, have not kept pace in recent years with the skyrocketing cost of housing in Seattle).

Although salaries undoubtedly have played a major role in fomenting the generally low morale we observed among faculty in the School, equally significant is a lack of understanding of funding systems in the College and how they work. There seems to have been little communication with or engagement of faculty in strategic planning; consequently, School administration and faculty have no idea, really, of where they stand, confused as they are about the goals, objectives, standards of performance, and measures of success that determine the allocation of resources, priorities in making curricular decisions, and faculty rewards. This makes it difficult for the School to plan and to make tough decisions among competing demands.

While it would seem reasonable to ask the School to declare what it values most among activities that compete for too few resources, it is also clear that a climate of suspicion affects the manner in which such requests are entertained. We do not know the history of this School in great detail, but we did get the impression that to some extent this climate is the product of promises made in the past (by the College and/or the University) that went unfulfilled. Under the circumstances, one likely assumption by School administration and faculty is that "wrong decisions" about the relative importance of their activities could result in an even worse resource position than their current one. Or the opposite effect could arise: asking the School to engage in such an exercise might encourage unrealistic expectations as to the amount of support that prized activities, once identified, would receive. To be effective, requests for this kind of "prioritization" ought to be accompanied by full disclosure of available resources and College/University intentions, as well as dependable assurances that a basic, viable level of funding will remain regardless of the choices the School makes.

A further, serious problem is posed by the operating budget and the fact that it has not increased in at least six biennia--meaning, of course, that its actual buying power has steadily declined during that period. This effective shrinkage has had repercussions throughout the School, notably in the areas of pedagogical and technical support, and in conservation and maintenance. As demand for their services has increased, pressure has

also increased to upgrade all of the technicians' positions to 100%--but, unfortunately, the Director is constrained in his efforts to do this by the fact that any such upgrades would have to be funded out of a static operating budget, depriving other areas of urgently needed support. This is not just a matter of access; it engages basic issues of health and safety as well. The Committee notes that over the past ten years the School has undergone a comprehensive safety review and two rounds of fire and life safety upgrades, which have resulted in many improvements. While these developments are encouraging, it must be recognized that another crucial link in the chain of safety is the adequate supervision of students who use hazardous equipment. Without the safeguards provided by such supervision, the danger of a serious accident is considerable; we hope that technicians' upgrades will not be deferred until such an accident occurs.

As far as conservation and maintenance are concerned, we have had it pointed out to us that the School has no maintenance budget per se, which means that any equipment that is too complicated to be repaired on site by technical support personnel who lack the specialized expertise required for such tasks (and there is more and more such equipment these days) often sits idle for long periods of time before it can be attended to. The deleterious effects of such delays on the educational process hardly need be harped upon. The technicians also report a constant struggle with University custodial services to secure regular and reliable attention to cleanup chores and the like--of obvious importance in any environment where art is being made--which forces the technical staff (as well as the students and faculty) to perform many of these chores themselves: clearly not the best use of their time. The Slide Library has maxed out its available space and has insufficient budget to undertake any innovative technical initiatives, such as the digitizing of its collection. In general, the Slide Library compares poorly, in terms of support, with corresponding facilities at peer institutions: with an annual circulation of 100,000 slides, it scrapes by on 3.5 FTE staffing and an annual budget of less than \$10,000, while (for example) the University of California at Berkeley's slide library, serving primarily the Art History Department and circulating just 34,000 slides annually, receives 5.75 FTE and a budget of over \$42,000.

Almost everyone we interviewed mentioned shortage of space as a problem--and after our tour of the facilities, we could certainly see why. The opening of the Fire Arts site on Mary Gates Boulevard has helped to some extent, but not enough: just about every studio art activity we witnessed is compromised in some way by inadequate space in which to carry it out. Lack of space has also, predictably, become a source of friction between divisions and programs. We heard many wistful remarks about the possibility of opening a facility for art at Sand Point; unfortunately, no one seems to have any plausible plan for covering the considerable cost of bringing the space there up to code. There has also been some concern expressed about the potentially negative effects of locating any of the School's activities so far away from the main campus, driving some programs, perhaps, into further isolation from the others. On the other hand, given the realities of heterogeneous organization, and given the functional separation of most of the programs (even within divisions), such a relocation could have several substantial

benefits. "Island life" could infuse some programs with new energy directed towards constructive goals (i.e. fruitful programmatic development) by removing the distractions caused by overcrowding. Provision of adequate studio space would also be a welcome compensation for younger faculty members, who because of the rising cost of real estate are finding it ever more difficult to afford private studios on their own. Funding for the renovation of this site would be worth seeking in the form of a major gift to the School, if fund-raising can ever be done in a more concerted and intense way than simply by attaching it to the Administrator's already very heavy load (see Section II below). In the meantime, the School needs to draw up a new, comprehensive space-use plan; according to what we were told, none has been accomplished for at least nine years.

The Committee was surprised to discover that the School of Art has no technology plan in place or in the works. Several of its disciplines must work with computer-assisted technology; the national positions of the Visual Communication, Industrial Design, and Photography programs in particular will soon be jeopardized by the lack of an aggressive plan for ongoing technological development. Many departments with which these programs compete nationally for graduate students, high-end employment, sponsored projects, and faculty research support are well ahead in wiring permanent studio spaces for individual student access to on-line services, requiring student purchase of computers that then take up "residence" in school studios,<sup>3</sup> and providing high-end peripherals that extend the capabilities of privately owned machines. Such development cannot be fostered by allocating meager portions of an inadequate operating budget to centralized labs that quickly go out of date. The value of an aggressive plan that links technology acquisition to new outcomes (especially those connected to research agendas in other colleges and with industry) is that it makes a compelling argument for funding beyond normal lines. In many cases, schools have "leapfrogged," planning for next-generation technology rather than trying to play catch-up. The UW School of Art might consider adopting such a strategy.

## II. Administration

The present Director, Christopher Ozubko, stepped in to replace his predecessor (Jerome Silbergeld) in Spring 1996 and has, to all accounts, done an excellent job under

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<sup>3</sup>It would appear that some students are halfway there already, at least in some programs: Visual Communications reports that owing to inadequate computer facilities at the School, their students must do their work at home, on their own machines. This development, however, can be regarded only as a stopgap solution with a pronounced down side. If the School and/or the College do(es) not meet the students at that halfway point, providing a support environment (security, peripherals, output) to encourage them to remain part of the academic design community, the studio concept will simply dissolve as the students retreat to their homes to work.



somewhat trying circumstances. He has won the respect and cooperation of faculty, students, and staff alike, and gets high marks for his efforts to address all constituencies in the School and strike a fair balance among their various needs and desires. Ozubko's performance is all the more remarkable for having been achieved with practically no preparation: he had to take over quite unexpectedly, in the middle of an academic year. In any case, however, there is no formal mechanism of transition to bring a new Director gradually into this position of great responsibility. Some of the School's recent difficulties (see above, Section I) in dealing with the upper administration could perhaps have been alleviated if such a mechanism had been in place, enabling the Director-designate to gain a familiarity with (in this instance) his predecessor's navigational methods in these areas before actually taking the helm himself.

Other aspects of this precipitous succession have evidently caused problems as well. Although Ozubko's appointment as Director has worked out well for the School as a whole, it has left his home program, Visual Communications (formerly Graphic Design), in straitened circumstances. His colleagues in this program are understandably unhappy at losing him to administration, for he represented 20-25% of their total instructional capacity, almost none of which, as we understand it, has been compensated by the College. We do not propose to inquire further into the sequence of events that brought about this arrangement, but we do question how it can any longer be justified, when a unit of this size whose Director or Chair is appointed internally can normally expect to retrieve at least 50% of the instructional time thereby diverted to administration.

The present Director also deserves credit for having straightened out certain nettlesome matters affecting the School at large. Student advising is now reportedly much better organized than formerly, although the Committee must admit to a certain astonishment that just two advisors, even if working full time, can see to the needs of 1100 undergraduate majors as well as oversee career planning, art on loan, applications for internships, grants, scholarships, study abroad, etc. etc. (In fact, what we learned from talking to some of the BFA students would suggest that the advisors are greatly overworked.) Of course, any augmentation of advising staff would impose further demands upon the operating budget, already severely constrained (see Section I). The Director has also made a key appointment to the position of Administrator, vacated by resignation shortly after he himself took office. In less than two years the new Administrator (Simon Martin) has out of necessity rebuilt from scratch many of the School's operating procedures, including those pertaining to relations with the College. It was clear to us that, as his job is currently defined, the Administrator has too much to do, and that something will have to give in the years ahead. In light of the fact that managing the staff of a unit like the School of Art is already a large and complex task, perhaps he should be relieved of his responsibilities in fund-raising (see RECOMMENDATIONS).

The current three-division structure, implemented by the previous Director and now well established, is generally regarded by School faculty as a success, and an immense

improvement over the structure it has replaced. Judging from what we have read, in documents flowing from previous reviews of the School, of the problems that the old four-division structure caused, we would tend to agree. Even faculty in the one program that lost an appreciable amount of autonomy and "clout" under this reorganization now seem at least resigned to the new arrangement, and at most genuinely to feel that it is better for the School. It is some measure of the vast diversity of programs that coexist under the one roof of the School--reaching, figuratively speaking, all the way to the Fire Arts site--that a structure of divisions granting a great deal of autonomy to each, extending even to personnel and budgetary matters, is the most effective way, perhaps the only way, to keep things running smoothly. (We are assured by our external members that structures of this sort are quite the rule, not the exception, in schools of art nationwide; in fact, as noted above, Art History is usually a completely separate department.)

Nevertheless, the formation of divisions that do act in most ways like separate departments, effectively constituting a college of art with the Director playing the role of dean, is an administrative strategy not without risks. One, alluded to in Section I above, is a further fragmentation of common purpose, as one becomes accustomed to a day-to-day routine in which it is usually not necessary to think about any part of the School other than one's own sphere of activity. Undoubtedly, the existence of the School of Art Council (see Administrative Code, Article VI) is of some help in counteracting these isolating forces. However, it must be borne in mind that the Council's function is strictly advisory; it cannot govern. This leaves some of the most difficult and politically sensitive issues of all in the hands of the Director alone: for example, whether to give priority to the restoration of 0.5 FTE to Painting (bringing their total strength to 10) or to the augmentation of Industrial Design by 1 FTE (bringing them to 3) in line with an earlier task-force recommendation made when that program needed to be rebuilt during the early 1990s. There is no effective way that the faculty of the School, lacking any true interdivisional mechanisms of governance, can reach a consensus on such issues; the Director must simply make the call and hope that his decision is not too poorly received.

Another risk, a kind of side effect of the first, is fragmentation of the curriculum. While content expertise certainly resides within the disciplines, in the long run it will prove difficult to build a shared vision for the School when curricular proposals move from individual faculty of programs to the Director (and then to the College), bypassing any School-wide faculty discussion. We noted a basic lack of understanding or concern on the part of School faculty as to the ways in which new courses and programs are added to the curriculum, despite the obvious implications for resource and space competition, and for duplication of instructional effort. In fact, given that at most schools of art curricular issues are among the most hotly contested, the apparent complacency of the UW faculty on this subject is quite strange. Because there is no School-level curriculum committee, no discussion ever takes place of the costs of adding courses, or of what School-wide priorities ought to apply when one type of curricular addition or another is proposed. (See RECOMMENDATIONS, below.)

### III. Degree Programs

#### Undergraduate (BFA, BA)

Since the last ten-year review, the Foundation courses for the BFA have been extensively revised, with a substantial net reduction in the number of required courses at the lower levels of instruction. The rationale for doing this, spelled out in the Self-Study, seemed eminently sound to us. Aside from the fact that everyone is still getting accustomed to the changes (which were made only three years ago), there are no particular problems to report.

The BA option within the Division of Art--formerly called General Art, now known as Interdisciplinary Visual Arts (IVA)--is another matter. Opinion about it among the faculty is evidently divided: its detractors criticize it for providing no training in anything in particular (but seem to accept its popularity as a compelling reason for retaining it); its supporters see it as basically a good idea that needs some further work. Actually, it has been worked on, as recently as 1994; but to what effect was not quite clear to us. To quote the Self-Study, "It provides a means by which undergraduate students can, through planning with the Art Advising office and individual faculty, create a sequence of courses which provide a solid base of study incorporating multiple studio disciplines, or concentrations within two related programs." To "create a sequence of courses" would seem to place this option within the realm of the rather special, requiring unusual effort on the part of student and advisor; yet the IVA option accounts for a very large percentage of majors graduated by the Art Division, sometimes half or more. Anecdotal evidence suggests that its numbers have always been large because of the "open-door" policy admitting all who wish to become Art majors. Faculty in the division are reluctant to revise this policy, making admission more selective, for they assert that many who end up developing into their most talented BFA students would probably be excluded by a more selective admission standard imposed in the early undergraduate years, before any of this development had had a chance to occur. But it also appears that among the IVA students there are many who never quite "find themselves" as artists and who for this reason will not attempt to continue with professional study of art, opting instead for some other career path after college. Clearly, their very large numbers are one big reason for the large total of undergraduate art majors, a condition that in turn has created difficulties for graduate education (see below).

The BA in Art History, second only to the IVA in number of majors (counting each of the eight programs in Art and the two in Design separately), seems solid and well designed to us. We believe that it should stand as presently constituted.

### Graduate (MFA, MA, PhD)

The size of the undergraduate programs in the School dwarfs that of the graduate programs, by a factor of nearly 10 to 1. Unlike most academic units in the UW, the School of Art has no provision in its assigned teaching load for graduate courses, which means that most graduate courses are taught as overloads, effectively "piggybacked" upon the undergraduate programs. This is an undesirable (not to say exploitative) situation, but unless large numbers of new faculty are hired, or the undergraduate programs drastically cut back, or non-major access greatly reduced, there is nothing much that can be done about it. The faculty are greatly devoted to their graduate students, but in general have insufficient time or energy--just as the School has insufficient financial resources--fully to meet their needs. Undergraduate demands always seem on the verge of swamping graduate education entirely; the graduate students are well aware of this and are understandably anxious about it. Under the circumstances, the fact that the School manages to keep graduate programs of respectable quality afloat, including several at the top or near the top of national rankings in their respective specialties, is nothing short of remarkable.

This, however, is not a situation that can be allowed to continue indefinitely. We recognize that the upper administration is caught between the proverbial rock and hard place on this issue: If graduate education in art is important, it should be acknowledged as part of the faculty's teaching loads; but if to do so would mean reducing access for undergraduates to the School of Art, this may well represent an unacceptable option. It may not be possible to fix this problem right away; but now would be a good time to try to devise a long-range plan that would eventually resolve this issue one way or the other.

In response to criticism of the MFA degree program in the previous ten-year review, which stated that "there is no MFA degree program as such, but rather a series of theoretically parallel mini programs of uneven quality and diverse objectives," the School formed the MFA Graduate Board, chaired by the Graduate Program Coordinator for the divisions of Art and Design and comprising the graduate advisors from all nine programs in these two divisions as well as a student drawn from the ranks of the TAs. Over a period of several years, this Board has succeeded in standardizing certain features of the MFA degree and has improved interprogram relations to some extent. The programs in question, however, remain much more clearly defined by their separateness than by the degree designation they hold in common. Again, as stated earlier, this situation is to be expected in any environment of such considerable heterogeneity; but at the UW some of its ramifications are not so pleasant. Students in any given program experience great difficulty enrolling in courses outside that program, mainly because graduate instructional time in general is in such short supply and most programs are too busy already with their own students to have time for anyone else's. In cases where some unusual degree of accommodation has been established, as with the service that Metals provides to Sculpture and Industrial Design, the resulting stresses and strains are painfully obvious.

Like the BA in Art History, the MA and PhD drew no particular comment from the Committee. It seems to us that the coursework required for the degree is appropriate and adequate. The fact that many graduate students in Art History take a long time to complete their degrees, as noted earlier, seems to stem not from any irregularities in timely offering of required courses but from the limited amount of support available in the form of Teaching and Research Assistantships: even at the Master's level, students typically exhaust their eligibility for this support well before the degree is earned, which forces them to seek employment outside the University while continuing to work on their degrees part time.

#### IV. Some More Specific Remarks about Selected Divisions/Programs

##### Art History

Established originally in the School of Art as a service division, without degree programs of its own, Art History has developed over the years into a distinctive entity in its own right, one that could easily stand as an independent department (the fate of Art History at many other research universities) but which for various reasons has not seceded. Some members of its faculty are dissatisfied with the status quo in this respect, although this is definitely a minority view. It would appear that two main factors, apart from the probable difficulty of finding separate quarters for such a department in this space-starved university, have been responsible for keeping Art History in the School: one, a long-standing tradition of dedication to service to studio art programs; two, the orientation of the division, in which Asian and tribal specialties (four faculty) are balanced more evenly with Western studies (six faculty) than is usually the case in an art history department, and in which pre-modern Western studies are no more heavily emphasized than are twentieth-century Western.

It is our guess that both factors play a role in explaining the relatively low ranking that the UW's Art History programs received in the recent National Research Council survey. Art history as a discipline is east-coast oriented, and quite insular in this regard; non-Western specializations are beginning to gain some attention and respect but are still not viewed as quite as "legitimate" as work in Western art; the field as a whole is also theory-driven, an orientation which cannot be said strongly to characterize the UW's program. It also strikes us as plausible that the very location of the Art History Division within a School of Art may have made its programs less visible to the discipline and encouraged (quite unfairly) a tendency not to take them as seriously as they might be if installed in an independent department.

Issues of this sort (in particular the last) understandably trouble the faculty of the Art History Division, who have made it clear in their portion of the Self-Study that one of their goals in this review is to establish their distinctive identity, not simply existing in the shadow of Art and Design, and their right to respect from the Graduate School and the

College as a solid academic (sub)unit. With their ten faculty, they are a definite minority in the School at large; yet their BA program is the second largest (after the IVA) among the eleven undergraduate programs, accounting in 1996-97 for about a fifth of the total graduating population; they have more graduate students than do all the MFA programs combined--and these students, with their traditionally very long times to degree, remain a part of the School community for much longer than do those in the two-year MFA programs. Further, the large introductory-level survey courses in Art History are important contributors to the composite student-credit-hour profile of the School and help offset the effect of the many smaller, more labor-intensive studio courses in Art and Design. There does seem to be a feeling abroad, at least among some of the Art History faculty, that these contributions are not sufficiently acknowledged by the School as a whole, that their share of the budget is not in keeping with their contribution; the reported 25% cut suffered by Visual Services this year (more evidence of operating-budget woes), with its very direct impact upon pedagogy and scholarship in Art History in particular, was especially demoralizing. It is our feeling that the School as a whole (not just its administration) must do more to make Art History feel that it is an integral part of the enterprise, and that it is valued as much for its independent contributions as for its service role.

For its part, Art History should be encouraged to continue in its distinctive orientation to the field as nationally defined. There is something to be said for such "niche marketing" --even if the balance of specialties in this division wasn't arrived at with the intent of generating this sort of appeal, some students probably do come to the UW because of its strengths in certain unusual areas not found elsewhere--and it certainly seems to us worth betting on the likelihood that the national orientation of Art History will eventually shift to a wider recognition of a west-coast presence and the value of non-Western studies. Also, however, while we recognize the difficulties posed by lack of adequate graduate-student support, Art History needs to do everything possible to get its students through their degree programs at a faster pace. Rates of "productivity," though they may seem a rather crass measure of quality, do play a role too in the regard in which an institution's degree programs are held.

#### Cross-Disciplinary Studies

The Self-Study notes that this area--not yet a program--was established in 1994 with the hire of Assistant Professor Shawn Brixey, and that its existence has made faculty "increasingly aware of the necessity to create cross-program and cross-divisional experiences in their curricula." Whether or not Brixey was actually hired to raise everyone's consciousness about such matters, it seems clear to us that his work for the School, so far, has been involved not so much with "cross-disciplinary" activity as with opening up a whole new area of study, using media and techniques not employed in any of the traditional studio art programs. This fact raises the interesting question of what, exactly, the School's intentions would be in encouraging the further growth of this area of study. Was its desired function ever really defined? The natural tendency of the

typical art-school environment to allow the increasing isolation of divisions and programs from one another, as noted, does suggest that cross-disciplinary activity could serve as a useful antidote--if it were incorporated properly into an existing structure. By contrast, the present course of study seems to be growing up around one individual's particular strengths and interests, without any necessary reference to the context in which it was (originally?) meant to function. Eventually, if the path of least resistance is followed, it is all too easy to predict that Cross-Disciplinary Studies (really a misnomer, we repeat, as it stands now) will simply become yet another program, competing for resources with all the others. As a Committee, we take no position one way or the other as to the suitability of such an outcome; we only point out that the School would be better off not simply allowing it to happen, but rather making an active decision to bring it about (or not), in full awareness of resource issues and with the full participation of all School faculty in the decision.

## RECOMMENDATIONS (in no particular order)

- (1) All undergraduate degree programs should be retained in their present form. However, the IVA program should be carefully scrutinized and rethought, with an eye possibly to reducing the number of students that eventually opt for it.
- (2) All the graduate degree programs are worthwhile and should be retained, at least provisionally. Some, clearly, are in better shape than others in terms of their ability to attract and retain students; such differentials must of course affect decisions about allocation of resources, and in the longer run as retirements and departures of faculty occur. (See also no. 16, below.)
- (3) The place of Cross-Disciplinary Studies (Shawn Brixey) in the School at large needs more careful consideration than it has received to date. This review should also cover mentoring issues for Brixey, since he is not at this time associated with any particular program.
- (4) The Industrial Design faculty should be discouraged from mounting a graduate program for the time being, until imminent tenure decisions are made for the two current junior faculty and until the question of whether there will be a third faculty member in this program is resolved.
- (5) The Committee has a mixed response to the feeling expressed by studio faculty of the School that it would be an ill-advised move to revise the non-major introductory courses that provide some hands-on experience with the making of art, in such a way as to eliminate this experience. While we sympathize with their feelings on this issue, we do not think that these courses should be automatically preserved in their present form, without any evaluation of the cost of this service to major programs. The College should engage in discussion with the School of how much it values this instruction and whether it is really prepared to pay for it.
- (6) The School needs a full-time fund raiser who understands the needs of the School (and its likely donors) better than can be expected of the College Development Office. Nothing short of real professional expertise in this area is likely to be able to land the kind of major gift that would fund such initiatives as establishment of a Sand Point facility.
- (7) The School needs a comprehensive technology plan.
- (8) The School needs an interdivisional curriculum committee.
- (9) The School needs a comprehensive space-use plan.



(10) The School needs to incorporate a mechanism for Directorial transition/succession into its administrative code.

(11) To counter feelings of isolation, interaction of students from all the different programs should be encouraged and fostered. (Symptomatic of a lack of communication was the extremely low rate of response of Art History students to the GPSS Survey; apparently those in charge of its distribution were students in one of the other divisions.<sup>4</sup>) We are encouraged to hear that informal interprogram crit groups have sprung up lately. But interprogram contact could and should take place on a wider scale: for example, the School administration could address students' evident desire for guest lectures and contact with artists outside the School by encouraging the formation of a School-wide student association to take the initiative in organizing studio visits for distinguished campus visitors.

(12) If the Henry Gallery is to interact with the School of Art as its constituency (and we believe it should do so), it must be charged with this responsibility by the upper administration. Despite some recent, hopeful signs, the School of Art cannot effect such an interaction on a permanent, institutionalized basis by itself.

(13) In the interests both of safety and of educational access, all technical staff positions should be upgraded to 100%.

(14) At least 50% of the instructional time lost to Visual Communication when Christopher Ozubko became Director should be restored as soon as possible.

(15) Course fees ("lab fees"), by standards that prevail elsewhere, are extremely low at the UW School of Art. If in fact state regulations normally prohibit the imposition of any higher rates, the possibility of obtaining some sort of variance should be looked into.

(16) In general, and perhaps most crucially, the School of Art needs to engage in realistic strategic planning that considers options among competing priorities. In an era of (at best) flat and (at worst) diminishing resources, one would expect that at least some of the following options might be considered: more selective admissions; decreasing instructional support for non-majors; scaling back graduate study to the really successful programs; combining programs for greater instructional and resource efficiency; reallocating faculty resources among programs; dropping programs that are less critical to the School's (as yet unstated) College mission than others. In the course of this

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<sup>4</sup>The rate of response overall was very low to begin with: only slightly above 10%. Two of the nine students who responded (out of 88 total) were from Art History. In a note (dated May 5) attached to the survey results, the GPSS President promised a re-polling of the Art History students and submission of a revised survey, but if this has been completed it has not reached the Review Committee as of July 1.

review, we encountered varying amounts of resistance to adopting any of these strategies --a stance which, if not budged from, will make a no-win situation for the School increasingly inescapable. For many years now, the School of Art has solved perceived problems, as they have arisen, by adding something rather than by rethinking what can be done with existing resources. This kind of growth is, in the long run, unsustainable; the process of making choices, some of which will undoubtedly be very difficult, must begin as soon as possible. To bring this about, we recommend that a strategic planning initiative be undertaken jointly by the School and the College, with broad representation from both.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The UW School of Art has much to recommend it: an impressive and hard-working faculty and staff, dedicated students, and an administration that is sincerely committed to beneficial change. It is also a place with serious problems, many of them rooted in inadequate funding--a situation that is not likely to change substantially in the near future, given the politics of higher education in the state of Washington at the present time. However, despite the difficult financial conditions that have prevailed throughout the 1980s and '90s, the School has managed to make many improvements in its curriculum, in the organization of its degree programs, in the areas of health, safety, and technical support, and in its administrative functions during the period since its last set of program reviews. One might say, given this recent history, that there seems no reason why this trend should not continue. Nevertheless, the generally low morale that currently prevails will undoubtedly fall further, with possibly quite serious consequences for the well-being of the School, if faculty, students, administration, and staff are not given at least some modest hope that their situation will materially improve. If this can happen, one could also hope that some of the recommendations itemized above--at least the ones that do not involve significant infusions of new financial support--will be acted upon and carried out.