

External Review for the Art Program
at California State University Channel Islands

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Reviewers: Professor Jody Baral, Mount Saint Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA
Professor Michael Aurbach, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Site Visit: Review Process

Professors Baral and Aurbach were provided with the CSUCI Art Program Self-Study several weeks before their arrival on campus.

On the first day of the visit, the review team met with Provost Neuman, Vice-President Lefevre, and Dean Vaidya. Provost Neuman expressed her desire to have the review team identify ways in which CSUCI could be more effective in terms of their course offerings and more efficient in terms of how the Art Program operates. Neuman was aware of the program's need of additional faculty. There was a brief discussion about maintaining a healthy scholarly life for faculty and providing appropriate classroom spaces for the Art Program. The meeting ended following a brief discussion of the tenure process and University expectations in the areas of research, teaching, and service.

After this initial meeting the review team toured the Art Program facilities and other important areas of the campus, in particular, the library. The reviewers were introduced to faculty, staff, and students throughout the visit, and the entire faculty had lunch with the review team at the student center. The highlight of the first day was an extremely constructive meeting with the entire faculty and staff of the Art Program, including a brief meeting with the technician. Faculty, staff, and the review team gathered in the gallery at the new library for a special dinner.

The second day of the visit included additional time with faculty, a chance to tour more of the facilities, and the opportunity to ask questions of the students and to observe some of the classes in session. After lunch the reviewers met with the Associate Dean, where they learned extensively about the CSU system and future challenges and were presented some square footage data in regard to the discussion about the future art building.

An exit interview was held at the end of the second day. Those attending were held Provost Newman, Vice President Lefevre, Dean Vaidya, Art Program Chair Jack Reilly, and the review team.

The key charge of the reviewers is to address the 'four elements' of the self-study:

Element One: Defining Program Purposes and Ensuring Educational Outcomes

Element Two: Achieving Educational Outcomes

Element Three: Developing and Applying Resources to Ensure Sustainability

Element Four: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Element One: Defining Program Purpose and Ensuring Educational Outcomes

The Art Program has clearly articulated its mission, operating practices, and educational purpose, but we encourage greater clarity in the program's course listings as they relate to the completion of the four areas of study. Students interested in attending CSUCI for graphic design were on their own to flesh out which courses were needed in that portion of the major. It currently is somewhat challenging to determine what is required and what is elective, and it appears that within the areas of digital media and graphic design a student must self-select various courses. Clarification of "area" requirements and electives would decrease what seems like a significant challenge for prospective and enrolled students.

When one does search on the Internet for art courses at CSUCI, everything is listed under the heading of "Art." It might be useful to have an area designation next to course listings as to which areas of study are recommended for individual courses. If courses are acceptable for more than one area, it should be clearly stated.

When one clicks on the word "Art" on the Art Program web site, one moves to a page that lists all the various disciplines and courses under that heading. The phrase used is "specialized study is available in the following areas." The specific studio disciplines that are listed create the impression, graphically speaking, that they are of equal weight with such headings as "Graphic Design" or "Interdisciplinary Studies." We suggest a reexamination of this layout strategy.

It is commendable that such a young department is already collecting data as to assessment, including student exit surveys. As part of this process, better understanding of outcomes within individual "areas" of study and of incoming students, whether freshman or transfer, could be achieved if students are also given an entry survey. This survey could measure goals, understanding of program(s), interest in particular programs, skill levels, preparation, etc.

The evaluators believe that the certificate in Digital Arts enhances the traditional programs by way of adding serious, well-prepared professional or other interested individuals to upper division courses. This increases the greater likelihood that these classes will have enough students to run. If this is indeed true, then consideration of a certificate program in such areas as Graphic Design should be seriously considered if the outcome would indeed enable the running of upper division, honors, or specialized courses that otherwise would have difficulty meeting enrollment requirements.

Element Two: Achieving Educational Outcomes

In the self-assessment report under Element Two, item 1, the first paragraph, the phrase "a clear path for students" may not be true. We previously discussed this as a concern with regard to the layout of the catalog. We also believe that with the aid of an area adviser, individual students will be better served. This is particularly true since there are numerous courses from which students in the same area of study may choose to complete

the total unit requirements. Additionally in Element Two, item 4, there is a statement about preparing students for professional careers. The applied arts have a depth of course offerings and a student track record to indicate the success of this goal. At the same time it seems that this can not be said of the area of Art History. The absence of major foreign language offerings (German, Italian, etc.) is a serious matter. We would encourage CSUCI to maintain a liberal policy of accepting foreign language credits from other institutions. Given the growth of digital technologies in the field of art history, we think your program is especially prepared to help art history majors develop expertise in this area. Students should be advised clearly through the catalog and individually on the requirements of graduate and postgraduate programs and given strategies for that outcome.

Element Three: Developing and Applying Resources to Ensure Sustainability

Given the astronomical growth of the Art Program and the increasing interest in the visual arts, we agree with the six items recommended in the Executive Summary. We believe the technical support for studios and labs could be placed higher on the list of priorities given the large amount of students and multiple buildings with multiple types of technical needs.

The Art Program by nature is facility-oriented. Two important givens are in place that demand proper technical support staff. The first is the pervasiveness over the past dozen years of digital equipment in the field of art---cameras, scanners, or even safety systems attached to traditional equipment. Technical support must be able not only to attend to the new digital equipment but also maintain and repair traditional equipment. The second given for the University at this point is the use of part-time faculty. Although part-time art faculty are accustomed to putting in time to keep facilities running, it is unusual that part-time instructors maintain whole areas, including the processing of student work where needed. The department should be careful not to set up a dynamic for the future that is unintended and problematic. It seems that technical support staff knowledgeable in certain areas, particularly where only part-time faculty are present, could help in averting future, unintended expectations.

We commend the great effort, planning, and progress made toward securing badly needed studio and gallery space. Meeting both of these needs will enhance proper learning outcomes. After we examined the square footage document for the new facility, shared with us by the Associate Dean, some concerns arose. Understanding that the state has a formula for the footprint of new facilities, we still would encourage the University to contact other schools with large studio programs and new facilities as to the adequacy of those facilities. A few of these we suggest are Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Herron School of Art in Indianapolis, and the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. Additionally, Vanderbilt University just completed a comparable space to the one CSUCI is planning, a 46,000 square-foot facility. Vanderbilt has eight full-time faculty and approximately 35 majors. Each semester about 200 students take studio courses, and the new building is already being cannibalized for space. We encourage you to always have in mind an existing building on your campus as reserve space.

With the planning of a new facility, the department will have many new issues. For example, what relationship will exist between the gallery in the library and the art programs and new exhibition space. We strongly recommend that the current library exhibition space remain under the curatorial purview of the Art Program. This is important for a number of reasons. First, it can be a fantastic teaching tool for students in the Art History track. Students can assist the Art History faculty in curating, organizing, hanging, and creating related publications for long-term exhibitions. These exhibitions can be of a more historical bent or directly related to the mission of the University rather than what may be the mission of the new gallery. This cannot be overlooked as a vital learning and professional tool for both students and faculty. Secondly, if the library exhibition space is not the responsibility of the Art Program, the probable result is confusion for the general public and the University community. If the University has scholars on hand in a certain field of expertise, does it not follow that these experts should be charged with areas that directly relate to their expertise? Would it not be the assumption, and correctly so, that the Art Department is responsible for the exhibition? Not to have the Art Department ultimately responsible for exhibitions in the library would be an organizational error and a missed educational and scholarly opportunity.

Element Four: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

It is commendable that the Art Program is familiar with and supportive of the College Art Association professional standards. It would also be prudent to consult at least a second source for guidelines such as the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. As art programs change due to natural growth, economic conditions, and faculty life cycles, understanding national guidelines becomes increasingly important. For example, the dedicated gallery space listed under the Executive Summary is a requirement for NASAD accreditation.

Professor and Chair Jack Reilly has done a masterful job of putting together a meaningful and dynamic program. This was not an easy task, but he has clearly succeeded in creating a first-rate curriculum. Through his stewardship the program has assembled an excellent faculty. Professor Reilly is fully aware that as the department matures, his role will change. To this end, we encourage a more concerted effort to regularize faculty meetings for both full-time and part-time faculty. This will ensure the continuation of a unified faculty, vetting concerns and sharing goals as well as successes. Meetings of full-time faculty as well as separate meetings of full-time with adjunct faculty should be considered.

It is to great advantage that the current University system of having the library staff responsible for preparation of requested materials for classroom use works so well. We are concerned that the library administration keep this responsibility as a priority and that the staff requirement to keep current and on time be maintained. This is of concern as changes in library administration occur and as needs of departments grow and expand with the maturity of departments and the future growth of the University.

General Constructive Comments

CSUCI currently offers a 57-hour B.A. degree. At some institutions that would be equivalent to a B.F.A. The faculty agreed that examining the possibility of offering a B.A. and B.F.A. would be of interest. Offering the B.A. degree with fewer required hours might be attractive to students interested in double majoring between art and art history or art and another discipline. For those seeking the B.F.A., it might be worth establishing a portfolio review.

Professor Reilly expressed concern about the preparation of transfer students relative to those who begin at CSUCI. Students acknowledged and confirmed this difference in the levels of preparation. Some transfer students bristled at the idea of doing any kind of remedial work. One might consider reviewing the work of transfer students to identify concerns. Although it would be difficult to require the transfers to do work, there are some who might respond positively to recommendations by the faculty to some additional summer work at neighboring institutions prior to attendance.

The proposal of a graduate program was discussed with the faculty and the associate dean. Given the unique situation of the desired program (self-sustaining) and the current economic climate, we believe that CSUCI is quite a few years away from giving that idea serious attention. If there were a chance that such a program would become a reality, we would encourage CSUCI to bring in faculty from area programs that offer the M.F.A. and do some type of feasibility study. This study should include a clear understanding of ways the M.F.A. program would impact and enhance the undergraduate program.

In an effort to give the better students an even more impressive profile, the faculty expressed interest in establishing some type of “honors” program. The nature of such a program was not discussed in detail, but the general notion of establishing something extra for the more advanced students was appealing to the faculty. This idea may be satisfied through further development of the certificate programs previously addressed.

During the faculty meeting the art historians expressed their desire for a dedicated classroom with large screens and multiple projectors. Additionally, art history students could use greater exposure to new technologies as the future of art historical training will be reliant upon an understanding of the digital world. This would encourage some of the art history majors to move into such important areas such as library work, art conservation, etc. The Winterthur Museum in Delaware now includes an area in their art conservation department that deals with the restoration of digital art forms. A relatively new program on the cusp of building a new facility should have state-of-the-art facilities. This is true for the art history arm of the program, where a dedicated classroom with a large screen and multiple projectors is clearly in order to accommodate a variety of pedagogical approaches by faculty.

General Observations

Students are clearly enthusiastic about the courses being taught and enjoy working with their teachers. When we entered the various classrooms, students were on task and working hard. This level of hard work and enthusiasm is not universal. At many institutions where there is a large commuter population, art making can suffer. It is difficult for many people with work and family obligations to devote their full energy to their artwork. The energy level was high and the work was excellent. The exit interviews provide additional evidence of the enthusiasm the students have for the faculty and program.

It was great to see and hear students articulate the importance of art history students taking studio courses and vice versa. This is not always the case. Studio majors recognized the importance of learning how to articulate their thoughts and arrive at an understanding of how their work fits into the vast universe of art making.

Several faculty spoke highly of the mini-grant system, and the art historians praised the library personnel. That relationship must remain strong.

The faculty seems to get along well, and the excitement in the faculty meeting was palpable. As the department matures, it might be important to have more meetings on a regular basis.

According to the faculty, tenure requirements are reasonable and fair. They generally believe that the weight of research in the promotion and tenure equation is a little higher than the 70 teaching, 20 research, and 10 service formula provided in our first meeting with the administration.

We commend the Art Program for its active involvement and course offerings in the interdisciplinary aspects of the University, which is beneficial to the education of the general student population, the University, and the Art Program.

Professor Reilly and the CSUCI administration are to be commended for taking advantage of the technical resources and highly skilled professionals in the Los Angeles area. This is critical in areas where start-of-the-art technologies are incorporated.

Our Visit

We were thrilled and honored to be invited to participate in this program review. We were treated well and people were anxious to answer our questions.