Undergraduate Art Programs Review Report

Oregon State University
School of Arts and Communication
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Programs and/or degrees for which review was conducted:

Bachelor of Arts: Art History
Bachelor of Arts: Fine Arts
Bachelor of Arts: Photography
Bachelor of Science: Fine Arts
Bachelor of Science: Photography
Bachelor of Fine Arts: Fine Arts
Bachelor of Fine Arts: Photography
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I. Overall Recommendation

☐ Expand
☐ Maintain
☒ Restructure
☐ Reduce
☐ Suspend
☐ Discontinue
☒ Other

The review team recommends that the Arts and Applied Arts degree programs restructure in five major directions: (1) Reassessment and restructuring of the three current degrees (BFA, BA/BS, BA in Art History) under a singularly titled major (such as Fine Arts) with areas of concentration (such as photography, art history, etc.) featured under degrees as required. (2) A revised 100-200 level foundational art and design core curriculum that (a) revisits present course content to make it more suitable and attractive to first year majors and baccalaureate core students and (b) integrates new courses that draw on the interdisciplinary nature of the fields of fine arts, photography, graphic design, new media and communication arts, interior design, and apparel design. (3) An effort to reconsider the interests of the Graphic Design degree program and a new Arts degree program toward the goal of reintegrating the former into the latter as an important concentration within the overall major. (4) A concerted effort to grow the level of recruitment and retention of majors through outreach programs such as JumpstArt, early contact with incoming OSU Freshmen who have declared art as an intended major, a sustained sense of community within the major through the student group Montage and its active faculty advisor, and renewed mentoring of the entire cohort of majors by faculty of all ranks. (5) The immediate hiring of a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Sculpture and/or Three-Dimensional Arts.

II. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A. Primary Finding: The review team offers one compelling and overarching finding: The current program review is based upon materials and data that appear to be wanting in the breadth, depth, and context necessary to produce truly meaningful findings and recommendations. The review team believes a considerably more detailed three-year study of the art programs, incorporating all other art and design areas and enhanced by a much richer data set, is absolutely essential and long overdue.

Toward this end the review team suggests that OSU take advantage of key data sources available to U.S. art and design programs to support program review, planning, and projection. Employing these inputs would permit a more effective and useful assessment of current activities and future opportunities:

1. Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) data through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD);
2. Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) data compiled by Indiana University;
3. benchmarking data from Oregon State University (OSU) peer institutions;
4. a consultant report exploring NASAD accreditation; and, ideally,
5. a NASAD Self-Study and application for institutional accreditation.

The HEADS reports are useful tools for measuring national norms among peer institutions with respect to enrollments, enrollment trends, degrees earned, graduation rates, learning resources, student-faculty ratios, revenue sources, operational expenditures, capital improvement budgets, etc.; SNAAP data provide essential insights about student satisfaction and alumni employment; benchmarking would position OSU to project priorities and investments in the context of its marketplace of competitors; and, perhaps most
importantly, a NASAD consultant report followed by a NASAD Self-Study and accreditation review would result in a fully detailed study of all art and design programs at OSU.

Initiating these steps—immediately—will provide a more fulsome representation of both current conditions and avenues for future success in all art/design programs at OSU. The review team strongly believes this pathway provides a more purposeful, meaningful, and lasting program review.

B. Secondary Observation: Numerous detailed observations about existing strengths, recommendations for short-term improvements, areas for long-term development, and future challenges appear below in Section III. Detailed Findings and Section IV. Conclusions and Recommendations for Improvement. These remarks, while not unimportant toward advancing the overall quality of art and design programs at OSU, remain secondary to the necessity of conducting a comprehensive review in accordance with national standards for art and design programs.

III. Detailed Findings

A. Introduction

1. The Review Process: The primary purpose of this review is to assess and offer conclusions about the present and future state of the Fine Arts and Applied Arts Program at OSU-Corvallis and OSU-Cascades as an iteration of the ten-year review cycle for all undergraduate programs at both institutions. As a secondary purpose—one invited and encouraged throughout the interviews and site visits—the report advances a conversation about applying for accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

The report is largely informed by (1) the Corvallis and Cascades Art Programs Self-Study Report; (2) data reports including but not limited to a facilities report, student metrics, faculty information, curriculum, and syllabi; (3) site visits to all art facilities on March 9-10, 2015; (4) interviews at Corvallis with Dean Larry Rogers, School Director Lee Ann Garrison, the Art Program Curriculum and Assessment Committee, art and art history faculty, art instructors, and undergraduate art students; and (5) interviews at Cascades with OSU-Cascades Vice President Becky Johnson, Academic Dean Marla Hacker, Associate Dean Natalie Dollar, Advisor Dianna McGinnis, Facilities and Operations Manager John Condon, art faculty, art adjunct faculty, Central Oregon Community College art faculty, and undergraduate art students.

2. A Brief History: OSU-Corvallis art programs date back to the early twentieth century as a part of the original land grant Corvallis Agricultural College. Fairbanks Hall, the home of the art programs for many decades, was constructed in 1892 and later named after Professor Leo Fairbanks, Chair of the Art Department from 1923-46. Drawing classes were offered as early as 1889 with the 1890-91 OSU catalogue referring to a program in Modern Language, History, Drawing, and Music with Drawing becoming its own discipline by 1900-01. The Art Department began in 1901; later merged with Architecture and Art as part of the Liberal Arts and Sciences; and eventually became its own degree program in the mid 1900s. Naturally, the art programs hold a rich and storied history within Oregon State University.

3. The Recent Context: In 2011-2012 two major events impacted the art programs and loom large over this review: (a) The College of Liberal Arts reorganized into six schools with art programs joining music, new media communications, speech communication, and theatre in a School of Arts and Communication. This new configuration necessitates the reimagining and reorganization of some structures and functions formerly served by a department; and (b) The graphic design degree programs,
former part of the Art Department, joined the College of Business. This displacement of faculty and students largely accounts for recent dramatic decreases in the numbers of majors, minors, and student credit hours recorded for the art programs. The merits of this nearly inexplicable separation among art and design programs and degrees—entities that typically coexist and thrive at other universities—were unclear to the review team.

B. Inputs

1. The mission of the program, and its relationship and alignment with the mission of the academic college(s), and that of the University:

   The mission and purposes of the art programs are present in the self-study and appear to be appropriate. The site visit did not reveal any discrepancies between the stated purposes of the programs, those of the college and/or the institution, and the activities observed on site. The reviewers note that mission and purposes appear to be broadly understood and embraced by faculty and administrators.

2. Recruitment and enrollment trends of students:

   The art programs experienced significant downturn in these areas during the ten-year period. The reorganization wherein art and design programs reside in separate colleges appears to be the largest single factor driving this downward trend. In addition, the reorganization of departments into schools may be a contributing factor. Over the ten-year period, and apparently prior to this during the years of the Art Department, the only recruitment tool in place was JumpstArt, an outreach initiative in the local high schools. This program has not functioned optimally over the last few years and recruitment has suffered. Having only this one avenue of recruitment appears to be limiting the potential for increasing the numbers of majors, and thus new and different recruitment tools are in order for the future of the program. The art faculty may want to consider establishing closer working relationships with the OSU Admissions and Financial Aid offices, especially using prospective student lists as a recruitment tool.

3. Admissions selectivity and other indications of selecting high quality students:

   Student GPAs appear to be solid yet the small number of current applicants appears to preclude increasing selectivity anytime in the near future.

4. Curriculum and assessment strength:

   The unit does not appear to have a curriculum committee meeting regularly to review and assess programs. Within the parameters of the reorganization into a school, the new director of the school appears to be making progress in this area. Progress also appears to be imminent on assessment of courses across the programs. A central focus of the Art Program’s future revised curriculum needs to be the reassessment, revision, and reinvigoration of the 100-200 level foundational courses for both majors and baccalaureate core students. Within this restructuring, there may be reason to offer an exemption of mandatory credits at this level for majors who can demonstrate proficiency with some of the subject matter. The entry-level course, ART 101, also appears in need of a change in both substance and delivery methods toward the goal of increasing its potential as a threshold course from which to recruit new majors. Finally, an integration of associated fields with the fine arts—such as graphic design, new media, apparel design, and interior design—into these lower division courses would support the foundations program in being more current in the disciplines and thus more
attractive to students. With renewed currency an integrated foundations program might provide OSU students with a clearer vision of all art- and design-related study fields available at the institution.

5. **Quality of personnel and adequacy to achieve mission and goals:**

Faculty members appear to be appropriately credentialed and have successful professional careers with evidence of scholarly and artistic production. A select few senior faculty members have both regional and national reputations based on their artwork and junior faculty members have already garnered national and international attention from their scholarship. The review team notes a lack of technical support in art studios, with faculty adding the responsibilities for managing and maintaining facilities onto their work assignments. This arrangement raises some questions about compromises in teaching—and safety—due to the predictable and considerable challenges of managing art teaching and learning technologies/environments. It also raises questions about overall workload expectations that appear to include teaching, scholarship and creative productivity, advising, technical support, and other duties. In addition, there appears to be a heavy reliance on instructors to deliver key portions of the curriculum; this is particularly true at the lower division where only two tenure track faculty members were found to be teaching on a regular basis. This warrants attention because, historically, recruitment and retention are increased by student contact with professors in entry-level courses. Benchmarking to collect data from peer institutions on the distribution of personnel (faculty, instructors, adjunct faculty, technical staff, support staff, etc.) seems appropriate.

6. **Level and quality of infrastructure:**

As the review team visited many but not all art facilities, and all visits were extremely brief. Thus, comments are offered with an understanding that many issues of note likely exist beyond the scope of this review.

**Overall:** Facilities are extremely modest by peer standards for Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (RU/VH: Research Universities) and public research institutions with NASAD accreditation. While many facilities and much equipment appears to be (a) appropriate for the programs offered in terms of floor space, lighting, temperature/humidity control, and technological currency; (b) sufficient to support curricular and associated activities, including lectures, laboratories, and studio instruction; and (c) safe and secure in most respects, some teaching/learning facilities require attention and improvement. A limited list of conditions appearing to most merit attention will be noted by area and/or in the general summary following.

**Fairbanks Hall:** The building appears to require some safety and accessibility upgrades to meet contemporary standards including but not limited to assuring ADA compliance with respect to full and safe access to all teaching/learning studios. Perhaps the most immediate concerns are the lack of an elevator and trip hazards at entrances. Teaching spaces throughout do not appear to have sufficient critique surfaces to support classroom reviews and the limited number of electrical outlets appears to be limiting instructional capabilities. In addition, ventilation and temperature/humidity control issues in certain areas, such as Rooms 4B, 104, 314, 315, and Fairbanks Gallery, appear to warrant a safety inspection and air quality evaluation by campus mechanical and/or health and safety professionals.

**Fairbanks Gallery:** The art exhibitions and art collections capacities appear to be severely limited by current facilities. The available space in Fairbanks Gallery does not appear large enough to host a regularized schedule of work by professional artists/designers and accommodate exhibition opportunities or art/design students, both essential components of educational competencies at accredited art schools. Perhaps most alarmingly, the gallery appears to lack sufficient security to
7. Quality of organizational support:

While the review team had limited access to financial data, it appears that financial support is available and generally sufficient to maintain art programs.
C. Productivity

1. 4- and 6-year graduation rates for students:

Rates appear to be low and in need of attention. That stated, the sample sizes each year are very small and may not be indicative of future trends under revised curricula within renovated facilities. In addition, it appears that a curricular restructuring would allow the art programs to reach what appears to be an academic affairs goal of graduating twenty students per year per program without compromising program integrity. The suggested curricular restructuring serves to combine all degree and concentration cohorts under one major assuming that institutional reporting is tied to the major and its corresponding CIP code; OSU-Cascades art programs appear to be organized under this model.

As a working example, the federal list of CIP or major codes is typically listed on state boards of higher education websites; majors and CIP codes are one and the same thing. Further, BANNER software currently used by OSU allows multiple major and program codes to be created for each unique program or concentration offered under a degree while listing all by the same major or CIP code. Alternatively, in the instance that the ability to list multiple concentrations under a single code exists in the institutional application process, additional concentration codes on screen STVMAJR (or its numerical equivalent) may be created, then these codes may be associated with the main program code on screen SOACURR (or its numerical equivalent). Should the school elect to list multiple types of degrees under one major or CIP code the possibility of establishing concentration codes in BANNER or similar software allows concentrations (fine arts, photography, etc.) to be printed on transcripts.

Allowing prospective students to indicate an intended program of interest, from the point of application, might strengthen future recruitment and retention efforts. It is anticipated that students, families, and faculty alike will find value in this curricular restructuring.

2. Publications or evidence of other scholarly work by students and faculty:

Faculty members appear to have successful professional careers with evidence of scholarly and artistic production. Students also appear to be active in exhibitions, community, and extracurricular programs. Art faculties are encouraged to collect this information for recruitment purposes, and regularly report this activity through all available institutional channels of communication such as the College of Liberal Arts Specialist for Research and Fellowships.

3. Student satisfaction with their education and mentoring experience:

Limited data suggests overall student satisfaction with the art programs and advising. Students commented very favorably about the quality of the faculty with special mention of the time and personal attention devoted to student learning and achievement; the positive rapport between students and faculty; the excellent mentoring; the collegiality and intimacy of the programs; and the enduring attachments of students to these faculty. Concerns were noted about the first-year courses in both the self-study an in on-site interviews with students.

4. Viability of scholarly community within which students can interact:

The current student group, Montage, appears to have a small core of participants and to have had a history of uninspiring and poorly attended events; growing this group’s numbers and formalizing its leadership and activities could play a key role in solidifying a scholarly community among students. Peer groups such as this one have proven effective in retention and overall satisfaction with the major
in other programs on campus, but work best with a dedicated faculty member as designated advisor to the group. Perhaps more importantly, *students indicate a strong desire to have advanced level studios—perhaps junior and senior BFA spaces—to support the synthesis of senior project work*. These project spaces are often the center of scholarship and learning within art programs at peer institutions. Toward this end students also unanimously desire twenty-four hour access to such spaces to work on projects at times befitting their individual schedules and course loads.

D. Outcomes and Impacts

1. **Student learning and outcomes and assessment of learning:**

   The first Art Program Assessment, reported in September 2014, revealed the art program outcomes for the degree programs as assessed in the senior Art 411 professional development course, was effective. The assessment will expand to other courses in 2015.

2. **Placement and success of graduates:**

   Limited data suggests overall student satisfaction. Employing data from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) would assist toward enhancing overall data collection and contextualizing results in this area.

3. **Satisfaction of students and graduates with their education and their post-graduation employment success:**

   Limited data suggests overall student satisfaction. As previously mentioned, employing data from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) would assist toward enhancing overall data collection and contextualizing results in this area.

4. **Professional or national rankings/ratings: N/A**

5. **Community engagement activities:**

   Art faculty, instructors, and students take part in a variety of on- and off-campus engagement opportunities and appear to be active in this area. Art faculties are encouraged to collect this information for recruitment purposes, and regularly report this activity through all available institutional channels of communication such as *OSU Today* and the College of Liberal Arts *Weekly Digest*.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations for Improvement

While the following observations about strengths, short-term improvements, long-term development, and future challenges suggest specific actions it is absolutely essential to communicate that many—*perhaps even most*—of the measures by which the art programs do not currently appear strong (admissions, recruitment, retention, and graduation) show promise for immediate reversal with a few key improvements such as curricular restructuring and facilities upgrades.

Conclusions and recommendations within the limitations of this brief review process include:

A. **Strengths**
1. Students commented favorably about the quality of the faculty and the time and attention devoted by faculty to student learning and achievement in the advanced courses.

2. The faculty members appear to be appropriately credentialed, have successful professional careers with evidence of scholarly and artistic production, and are highly committed to the success of their respective disciplinary areas.

3. The planned upgrades to Snell Hall appear to offer appropriate housing for the teaching and learning of painting, printmaking, sculpture/3D studies, 2D digital, and 3D digital. The renovations also offer an opportunity to enhance the recruitment and retention of art students.

4. The program has developed and sustained an excellent visiting artist series.

5. The program appears to have a healthy number of scholarships available to offer at the discretion of the school.

6. There is evidence of interest and engagement in study-abroad and experiential-learning opportunities and initiatives.

7. High levels of confidence and optimism were uniformly expressed in the new leadership of the school.

8. The art programs hold a storied history providing fertile ground for the growth and development of future programs.

B. Areas for Short-Term Improvements

1. A detailed three-year study of the art programs, including all other art and design areas and incorporating a much broader data set, is essential and overdue. Program review inputs would be greatly enhanced by utilizing the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) data through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), and benchmarking with peer institutions. Additionally, an immediate consultant visit about NASAD accreditation and a NASAD Self-Study with application for institutional accreditation are advised. (See Undergraduate Art Programs Review Report, Section II. A. Summary of Findings and Recommendations, p. 1)

2. Students were less than complimentary about early-level course offerings with significant discontent about the lack of purpose, coordination, and attention to the first-year art major courses. It appears that rethinking these foundation courses is necessary. The review team believes that exploring the merits of commonalities and/or integrated studies among all art and design students—including but perhaps not limited to programs in apparel design, fine arts, graphic design, interior design, new media communication, and photography—represents a responsible survey of available resources/talents and will be essential to a successful outcome.

3. In a perhaps related way, it appears that curricular investigations should not be limited to first-year studies but expand toward collaborations on advanced course work, undergraduate research, and degree boundaries. The merits of some nearly inexplicable separations among programs/degrees that typically coexist and thrive at other universities were unclear to the review team. This dialogue should be initiated immediately. While high confidence was stated about the new leadership of the school, legitimate questions exist about past departmental, college, and institutional leadership with respect to this issue.
4. It appears that a curricular restructuring would allow the art programs to reach what appears to be an academic affairs goal of graduating twenty students per year per program without compromising program integrity.

5. Students expressed some disappointment with the lack of community across the program. The current student group, Montage, appears to have a small core of participants without a great deal of faculty involvement. Pointed comments suggest that disparate locations of current studios might be a contributing factor, further expressing a strong preference for art studios within a single facility or an arts complex. It is important to note that the planned Snell Hall renovation is a step towards realizing this goal.

6. In keeping with the theme of community building and collaborative directions in contemporary art making, it might serve the art programs extremely well to convert the Fairbanks Sculpture Annex into an installation art/experimental projects studio or BFA studios for junior/senior level students.

7. Data and on-site interviews confirm that a strategic and coordinated plan for recruitment, advising mentoring, and retention of students appears to be an area for immediate attention. The programs appear to have a successful advisor who might be at the center of such a plan. It seems that initiatives, such as JumpstART, should be organized in a sustainable fashion and coordinated with OSU admissions to improve recruitment and retention outcomes.

8. Lack of clarity and articulation about shared governance responsibilities across the faculty are limiting progress on many fronts including but not limited to teaching, learning, recruitment, and retention. These should be addressed immediately. It appears that the art coordinator’s responsibilities require delineation and committee structures need to be implemented. Examples might include but not be limited to: recruitment and retention, curriculum, scholarships, exhibitions and visiting artist series, technology visioning, etc. The new director of the school appears to be making progress in this area.

9. Given the current reliance on non-tenure track faculty to teach key areas of the curriculum, especially as the core faculty for foundations courses, instructional development resources and opportunities for these employees seems an appropriate and important step toward enhancing teaching and learning. Such development should include funding for conferences and continuing education in the instructor’s area of expertise, and course load reduction or other kinds of compensation for new course development and restructuring of the curriculum.

C. Suggestions for Long-Term Development

1. While upgrades to Snell Hall appear to be a very significant development for the art programs, facilities overall are extremely modest and are an area for serious improvement. Perhaps benchmarking to collect data and site visits to peer programs could provide useful information for an overall upgrade of facilities. In addition, a consultant report exploring NASAD accreditation should support a review of overall facilities against accreditation standards. (See Undergraduate Art Programs Review Report, III.B.6., pp. 3-4)

2. The art exhibitions opportunities and art collections capacities appear to be severely limited by current facilities. OSU should plan accordingly for the various resources—physical, personnel, and financial—to ensure appropriate opportunities for students to display work and view work of professional artists/designers and for the display, handling, cataloguing, documentation, and storage of any permanent art holdings. Upgrades in accordance with Association of Art Museum Directors guidelines and standards might be advisable. (See NASAD Handbook 2014-15, VIII.B.1.d., p. 97)
3. The review team notes a lack of technical support in art studios, with faculty adding the responsibilities for managing and maintaining facilities onto their work assignments. The school might investigate prospects for hiring technical support especially as it relates to (a) three-dimensional instruction, (b) safety considerations; (c) exhibitions programming; and (d) digital technologies.

4. The art and design programs might work with the OSU Foundation and College of Liberal Arts officials to investigate prospects for donor funding to enhance program growth and articulation. Arts programs often provide attractive opportunities for building relationships and attracting resources.

5. Investigating prospects for art education and/or arts management curricula within the School of Arts and Communication might make sense. Many public institutions develop strong and lasting relationships with public schools and state art education associations through successes in these areas. These relationships naturally overlap with and advance many issues related to admissions, recruitment, and enrollment.

D. Primary Futures Issues

Perhaps the primary future issue for the art and design programs at OSU is the question of whether NASAD accreditation would enhance opportunities for the institution. As only three Oregon schools hold NASAD accreditation—University of Oregon, Oregon College of Art and Craft, and Pacific Northwest College of Art—it appears that OSU would position itself favorably in the marketplace through this process.

Issues identified in this section are intended to preview in a very preliminary way a few items that may require attention prior to an accreditation site visit. Observations employ NASAD standards and guidelines; are independent of any affiliation with NASAD; and are neither the findings nor the opinions of NASAD, an official NASAD accreditation site visit, and/or the NASAD Commission on Accreditation.

1. Exhibitions opportunities for art and design students may not be fully aligned with expectations and competencies for accreditation. (See Undergraduate Art Programs Review Report, Section III.B.6., pp. 3-4 and NASAD Handbook 2014-15, VIII.B.1.d., p. 97)

2. The air handling systems in numerous studios—particularly photography, printmaking, and sculpture—may warrant safety inspections and air quality evaluations by campus mechanical and/or health and safety professionals to assure compliance with standards for any period of accreditation. (See Undergraduate Art Programs Review Report, Section. III.B.6., p. 3; NASAD Handbook 2014-15, II.F.1-2, pp. 62-64)

3. Protocols for shared governance responsibilities, specifically those involving the roles of faculty, might need to be articulated and clarified. (See NASAD Handbook 2014-15, II.D., pp. 57-58)

4. While observations about the graphic design programs are not within the assigned scope of this review—and with clear deference to and respect for OSU faculty—it appears that no tenure track faculty members in graphic design hold the appropriate terminal degree, leaving an uncertainty about whether faculty qualifications are fully aligned with accreditation standards:

"NASAD recognizes the Master of Fine Arts as the appropriate terminal degree for studio faculty. At the same time, the Association recognizes that some highly qualified artist-teachers may hold other academic degrees; others may not hold any academic degrees. In such cases, the institution should base appointments on experience, training, and expertise at least equivalent to those required for the Master of Fine Arts degree in the appropriate field." (See NASAD Handbook 2014-15, II.E.1.b.3., p. 59)