25 March 2015

TO: Gene Phillips, Chair, Art History

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean

RE: Completion of L&S Review of Art History Programs:

- BA/BS Art History
- Material Cultures Certificate Program (Undergraduate)
- MA-Art History
- Material Cultures Certificate Program (Graduate)
- Ph.D. Art History (including Option: Architectural History)

On February 3 and on March 3, 2015, the L&S Academic Planning Council considered the materials submitted in fulfillment of the mandated review of the academic programs offered in the Department of Art History. These materials included the self-study prepared by the department and the faculty involved in the sub-programs in Material Cultures and in Architectural History, the review committee report, and comments the department offered to correct errors of fact in that report.

Before I summarize the council’s discussion, I would like to thank you and everyone else who participated in the review. Though we have streamlined the L&S approach to program review, we know that it still requires considerable effort and attention to prepare the self-study and to work with the review committee. That work keeps the process of peer evaluation transparent and useful, and it’s essential to maintaining the quality of the university.

The APC noted that Art History is nationally well-regarded and has great strengths. The faculty has been creative, and has developed programs that span departments and disciplines – and, notably, UW institutions. Council members appreciated the department’s efforts to address issues identified in the last review, and saw that you have expanded the global curriculum and created more entry points into the undergraduate major. Unfortunately, despite this attention, and like arts and humanities programs nationally, enrollments are still declining, and the council discussed extensively recommendations concerning the need to update course titles and descriptions, and to address what appears to be systemic problems with planning the course schedule so courses are offered when students can take them. Council members reported that many departments (including their own) have planning processes to fairly distribute popular
teaching time slots among faculty; to avoid scheduling conflicts among required undergraduate
courses, and between undergraduate courses and graduate courses taken by TAs; and to avoid
scheduling long class sessions that span multiple class periods and conflict with other courses
students are taking. These practical matters affect Art History enrollments, and seem particularly
to affect enrollments for non-majors, who are most likely to “vote with their feet.” Council
members strongly recommend that Art History think carefully about course scheduling from
students’ perspectives, and not only work to lower hurdles that prevent them from seeking your
courses, but also to create courses that invite them.

At the graduate level, different issues were identified. The challenge of inadequate graduate
funding is common to all UW-Madison programs, and though it can affect time to degree, it is
not usually the only factor. The APC expressed concern about the average time to degree in the
graduate program. It encourages you and your colleagues to identify, as best you can, the
various issues that may be slowing your students’ pace through the program.

Assessment of Student Learning

Members noted that the 2013 assessment report indicated the intention to update the
department’s plan for assessing student learning, but that an assessment plan was not included
among materials. It appears, nevertheless, that the department has identified core skills that will
provide the foundation for undergraduate learning outcomes, and had adopted a strategy to
survey students about their perceptions of learning relative to these outcomes. We encourage you
to pull together information on assessment in a format that will make these efforts more clear
both within and external to the department. The Provost’s Office has developed a template for a
“Basic Assessment Plan,” and offers guidance on describing learning outcomes
(http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/). You will see that the university expects that every
program will have learning outcomes articulated, and that assessment strategies should include
both indirect measures (like the surveys Art History proposes to field) as well as direct measures
(such as examination of student projects). Monitoring student awards and placement can also
play a role in assessment, assuming that these achievements relate to the learning outcomes you
have identified. Graduate programs should articulate learning outcomes that align with the set of
general outcomes developed by the Graduate Faculty Executive committee, and we encourage
departments to discuss the strategies they use to evaluate graduate students’ attainment of those
outcomes (often, at major milestones, through comprehensive exams, review of dissertation
proposals, and defense).

Certificates in Material Culture

The scholarly program in Material Culture has achieved notable recognition, though the
department is right to be concerned about the extent to which a small faculty can field two
programs in this area. The review committee noted that the program, though small, makes a
“vibrant” contribution to undergraduate education, and offered no comment on the graduate
program. With no awards in the past three years, and very limited resources, we would suggest
that the faculty consider carefully whether to continue to offer this program. Also, like the
programs discussed above, both certificates require that attention be paid to formalizing the
assessment of student learning; they should be included in the assessment plan you develop for the department’s programs.

Option in Architectural History (Buildings-Landscape-Culture)

The Ph.D. “named option” in Architectural History, known colloquially as the “BLC” program, is unique among L&S programs due to the extent to which the program is truly shared by faculty at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee. The program is small, but has been able to produce its first graduates only four years after being established. The self-study and review committee report note the challenges presented by the need to share courses across campuses, and the desire that students might sample courses beyond the narrow constraints of the well-defined, carefully managed curriculum. This review affords us an opportunity to ask the institutions to revisit the MOU that sets these limits. Finally, we noted that here, too, the distinct educational goals of the BLC option should likely be reflected in the department’s assessment plan and reporting.

With regard to the overall program review, the APC and I make the following specific requests:

- Given the strong decline in Art History enrollments, the APC has requested that the department respond to concerns about course and curricular planning processes. Please send me a report, by April 24, 2015, describing your department’s process for scheduling courses to serve the interests of students (including, but not limited to, majors). It would also be useful to know the department’s plans, if any, to develop or expand “general” courses designed to serve students who are not pursuing any of the Art History programs.
- Throughout the documentation provided, reference was made to “the Asian Option.” According to the Registrar’s list of approved programs, there is no such option; if you and your colleagues wish to advertise this as a formal program, please consult Assistant Dean Elaine Klein about the process for seeking formal approval.
- The review committee and APC both noted the long time to degree for completion of the doctoral program. We will defer to the authority of the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee to require that you identify potential causes and develop a plan to address this issue, but if they do not, I ask that you submit a report on this topic to your Associate Dean.
- Finally, as noted above, the department has work to do on the assessment of student learning. At a minimum, we will expect the department to respond to the Provost’s recent call for learning outcomes (to be submitted by June 1 in the form of a survey); you may anticipate that complete assessment plans for each program will be required next year, and that reports on your assessment activities will follow.

The L&S Academic Planning Council considers this review complete, though there is other work deriving from the process still to be done. Thank you for your continued attention to the effort to consider your department’s priorities and to candidly evaluate its programs.

xc:
Marty Gustafson, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning and Assessment, Graduate School
Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, L&S
Daniel Kleinman, Associate Dean, Graduate School
Jocelyn Milner, Director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research
Susan Zaeske, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, L&S
The Art History Department review committee was composed of (in alphabetical order) Lester Hunt (Philosophy), Christa Olson (English) and Kirsten Wolf (Scandinavian Studies). The committee met on nine separate occasions for a total of approximately eight hours. We interviewed the following people: department chair Gene Phillips, Thomas Dale (recent department chair and co-author of the department’s self-study report submitted last semester), director of the Buildings-Lands-Communities Ph. D. Companion Program Anna Andrzejewski, Ann Smart-Martin of the Material Culture Certificate Programs, Student Services Associate Teddy Kaul, and Director Russell Panczenko of the Chazen Museum. We also met with two undergraduate majors and, on a separate occasion, four graduate students. In addition, we studied and discussed the self-study report and documents detailing course offerings, course descriptions and titles, and requirements for the major and other programs.

The Department of Art History, though much smaller than some departments at this university, has a distinguished faculty that continues to bring respect to the university in its field. In addition, we are very impressed by the changes that the department has made in response to the previous review (in 2005-2006). The requirements for the undergraduate major have changed dramatically, from requiring one course in the Asian/African category to requiring courses from at least three of five different geographically-defined categories. The “history” in the art history major is now much more a matter of world history, with a significantly less narrow focus on Western traditions and cultures. New faculty positions been added to support this broadening of emphasis. They have hired a specialist in Islamic art and another faculty member, whose focus is Indian architecture and urban design (part of a visual cultures cluster) has transferred from Languages and Cultures of Asia. The department has also replaced its recently departed specialist in Chinese art. They also hired a specialist in Native American art as part of the American Indian Studies Cluster. Unfortunately, she has recently left the university, but the department is developing plans to replace her.

Adding a full-time staff position has made undergraduate advising more consistent and clear than it was. The student reactions to this change that we observed were very positive.

During that same period the department has, like other humanities disciplines, suffered a significant decline in enrollments and in the number of majors. As noted in the self-study, majors in the past eight years went from a peak of around 130 to a low of between 50 and 75 during the period of 2011 through 2013, to over 90 at the time of that report. We find that now, one semester later, the number is just below 80, a difference that can probably be accounted for by the fact that over 20 majors graduated at the end of last semester. We also find that the numbers for undergraduate enrollments follow a trajectory that to some extent is similar to those for the major, falling from a peak of around 1200 to a low in the lower 800s. The decline in enrollments ended earlier than that in majors (as one would expect). Since then, it has been more difficult to discern a consistent trend, partly no doubt due to an artificial dip in enrollments last semester, caused by complications due to curriculum restructuring. Currently enrollments are in the lower 800s. The department is making important changes aimed at enhancing enrollments and plans to make more. Discussion of these changes, with our suggestions, can be found below.
Undergraduate Education

Structure and administration
The department offers the B.A. in Art History through a standard track, an honors track, an Asian option, and a certificate in Material Culture. It is embarking on a Curatorial Studies certificate.

Curriculum and enrollments
Over the past six years, the Art History department has made significant changes in its curriculum and its approach to undergraduate education. Those changes came largely in response to the previous program review, but also to a sudden decline in majors and enrollments mentioned above. The effects of those changes are just beginning to be visible, but they show promise both in terms of the intellectual breadth they provide and the student populations they engage. There is likely still work to be done to return enrollments to near 2007-2008 levels. The department’s self-study offers a thorough overview of that revision process and of the department’s learning goals and expected outcomes for undergraduate majors.

We heard a great deal from students and faculty about the recent curricular revision that allows Art History majors to enter the program through any two of a selection of 200-level gateway courses that represent a spectrum of regions, time periods, and methodological orientations for Art History. Reactions to the revision were consistently positive, highlighting students’ ability to specialize and their increased opportunity to look beyond European traditions. Because these new 200-level courses were introduced this year, the department has not had time to evaluate the long-term impact of this curricular change on student learning or interest in the major.

The undergraduate students who met with the committee admitted to some confusion with juggling the geographic, temporal, and level requirements of the revised major and mentioned that it was sometimes unclear how new courses would count toward those requirements. However, they saw the new major as an overall net gain because of how it pushed them to engage with a wider array of materials and regions than they might otherwise have considered (Professor Pruitt’s course on Islamic Art received special mention here).

Starting with Art History 202, the survey of Renaissance to Modern Art and one of the entry points to the major, Art History has committed to revising the content and format of some of its core courses. The revised version of 202 is being offered for the first time this semester. With the help of an Educational Innovations grant, Professor Anna Andrzejewski has added online discussion sessions to Art History 202 and is preparing an entirely online version of the course for Summer 2015. In addition, the EI grant offered Professor Andrzejewski the opportunity to work with a teaching and learning consultant to revise the content and delivery of the course. She reports that the adjustments she has made to lecture have resulted in significantly increased student engagement and seem to have positive effects on their learning. Professor Andrzejewski and others also mentioned the vital role that the Visual Recourses Collection headed by curator Jacob Esselstrom has and will continue to play in the department’s educational innovations.

Program climate
The undergraduate students who met with the committee were enthusiastic about the major and the faculty. They appreciate the one-on-one mentorship that faculty provide and felt that faculty were attentive to their particular needs and interests—guiding them toward appropriate courses and career opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on what we heard from faculty, staff, and students, we offer the following recommendations in service of both current undergraduate majors and the need to increase enrollments in undergraduate courses:

1) Update course titles and descriptions to communicate content in clearer and more engaging ways for undergraduate students
2) Make course information (including clear descriptions of the specific version of the class that will be taught) more readily available to students online through the Art History website and UW-Madison course guide. Ideally, these descriptions would include information for students about which major requirements each course fulfills. Also, be sure that course information is up to date in DARS.
3) Offer a greater variety of 2x per week and 3x per week classes to make more class times available to students.
4) As appropriate, consider adding 100 and 200-level courses that are organized around themes that are of interest to non-majors.
5) Review requirements (reading load, assignments, expectations, etc.) in the 200-level gateway courses to ensure consistency across course numbers and semesters so that even as students take different routes into the major, they can assume equality of rigor and depth of learning opportunities.

Graduate Education

Structure and administration

The department offers M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in six tracts: a standard M.A. degree, the Asian Option M.A., a double M.A. in Art History and Library and Information Science, a standard Ph.D. degree, an Architectural Option in the Ph.D., and a certificate in Material Culture. Recently, the department has modified the standard M.A. program to create a terminal M.A. degree open to self-funded students. A Director of Graduate Studies oversees graduate education.

Admissions and enrollment

Admission to the graduate programs is highly selective. The admitted students are invited to visit campus during a designated recruiting event in February/March. There is a welcoming reception where prospective graduate students have the opportunity to meet current graduate students, Art History faculty and staff, and Chazen Museum staff as well as to familiarize themselves with department resources, the Chazen Museum, and the Kohler Art Library. The annual enrollment is healthy with approximately 40 students consistently enrolled.
Funding

Graduate students are funded with the exception of the students in the terminal M.A. degree. Faculty who met with the committee noted that there were problems with funding and time to degree, and that even the best funding packages fall short of what the best art history departments in the country are able to offer. Graduate students who met with the committee called for more transparency in terms of awards. They voiced concerns that the standards for fellowships differed among the various tracks, and that some advisors were better advocates for their students than others. Graduate students felt that fast progression was rewarded and would like steady progression to be rewarded instead. The graduate chair interviewed by a member of the committee argued that the complaint about awards and fellowships was not pertinent, and mentioned that recently two awards were given to medievalists (not exactly an example of rewarding fast progression). Nonetheless, the committee feels that these issues should be addressed and, at the very least, discussed in a manner that will alleviate student frustration.

Advising and curriculum

Students are advised by their major professors and are referred to Director of Graduate Studies when questions arise. Graduate students who met with the committee voiced concerns about inconsistencies in requirements or expectations in terms of course work, especially basic course requirements and basic language requirements. Students claimed that the department was inconsistent in terms of expectations for prelims and would like more standardization. The committee recognizes that creating standardized expectations across the various tracks may be difficult, if not impossible. Students acknowledged that there was an on-line graduate student handbook, but claimed that the handbook was unclear, and that they were not kept informed about changes made in the handbook. The graduate chair agreed that the website was a little problematic, and that the department was moving toward a new one. Students also pointed out that sometime their advisors were unsure about the specific requirements.

Graduate students who met with the committee were dissatisfied with the scheduling of classes. They mentioned instances of not being able to take required language courses because of their teaching schedule. Students requested that they be able to register for classes before getting their teaching schedules, and that the Curriculum Committee consult with the prospective TAs before scheduling teaching assignments for graduate students.

Time-to-degree

Data provided from the Graduate School indicate that the time to degree is 10 or 12 years. That is a long time. The review committee identified three possible reasons for this: 1. the language requirements in some of the tracks; 2. lack of sufficient funding; 3. problems with scheduling as outlined above.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1) Schedule classes so that these don’t conflict with the TAs’ course requirements. Giving earlier notice of their TA section assignments might be helpful here.

2) Prepare a Graduate Handbook and update the web site to clearly reflect requirements for the various tracks in terms of course work and prelims.

3) Improve overall communication to graduate students regarding fellowships and awards.

4) Focus on ways to improve time-to-degree by exploring more opportunities for dissertator support.

**The BLC and Material Culture Programs**

Conversations with the coordinators of the Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures program and the Material Culture Certificate Programs made clear that both programs, though small, make vibrant contributions to graduate (BLC) and undergraduate (Material Culture) education. Both programs readily enroll students and meet demand not otherwise covered at UW-Madison. In each case, the primary challenges facing the programs are structural/administrative. The collaboration between UW-Milwaukee and UW-Madison at the heart of the Buildings, Landscape, and Design program has become more difficult to navigate since Milwaukee left the CIC, raising challenges for students at each campus who would like to take electives at the other campus. The Material Cultures certificate faces similar challenges in light of its changing and widely-dispersed faculty.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1) For Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures: Ideally, structural changes would make it possible for BLC students to easily take courses across both campuses. Failing that, it would be helpful to allow graduate students to enroll in one or two electives at the partner institution as part of their degree.

2) For Material Culture: A small amount of administrative support and/or course support to allow faculty from across the university to teach classes in the certificate would make a substantial difference in the viability of the program.

**Relations with the Chazen Museum**

This committee regards itself as obliged to comment on the relations between the Department of Art History and the Chazen Museum of Art, if only because it is discussed rather prominently in the department’s self-study report. These relations have at times been contentious ones. It might go without saying that we cannot comment on the specific actions or personalities of the individuals involved. Even if it were within the scope of the committee’s charge (which is
doubtful) we lack the intimate acquaintance with relevant circumstances that such comments would require. However, we did discuss these matters with the current department chair as well as the immediately preceding chair and the director of the Chazen, and we would like to offer some general comments on matters of institutional principle.

As a museum, the Chazen has a mission that is quite different from that of an academic department like the Department of Art History. Though one can think of a museum as essentially an educational institution, it nonetheless carries out its mission by quite different means from those of an academic department and it is natural for its personnel to think of it as serving a quite different sector of the public. We are told that the Chazen is the second largest art museum in the state. On the other hand, it is, like the art history department, part of the College of Letters and Science. In addition, it is natural for people in the department to think the museum as serving an art history mission. After all, no other department of the university has an academic program that involves the museum in the same direct sort of way that the department’s new Curatorial Studies certificate programs do. The current arrangement, in which the museum is both autonomous and yet also serves as an educational resource for other parts of the university, and even has a special such relationship with one other department, is fraught with the sort of ambiguity that can lead to conflict if there are also personality differences or even honest difference of “philosophy” in the right places. The remedy for such institutionally supported ambiguity is institutional clarity. In light of this, we regard the recent seven-point memorandum of agreement between the department and the museum as a large step in the right direction. It guarantees the department access to museum resources that are essential for the Curatorial Studies programs and includes details such as deadlines for requests the department makes for use of museum resources. A written document, representing arrangements to which the department and the museum agree, can certainly reduce possible areas of disagreement. Perhaps further use of such written agreements can bring additional clarity and stability to relations between these two important units of the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Ways of adding clarity to the relations between the department and the Chazen should be sought.

2) To this end, written agreements, and even constructive feedback from outside the department and the museum might be helpful.

Chair's Comment concerning MOA between Department of Art History and Chazen Museum:
This is not an signed MOA, although it has been agreed to by both sides and copied to Assoc. Dean Zaeske and Dean Scholz.