November 22, 2016

Response to College of Letters and Sciences Review of Low-Award Producing Academic Program: Graduate Certificate in Material Culture

To whom it may concern:

As chair of the Design Studies Department I'd like to help explain the reasons for low enrollments in the Graduate Certificate in Material Cultures and also how we are poised to make that situation change, starting next academic year. The program in question has indeed been a low-award producing program recently, with no awards granted between 2011 and 2015, and two awards granted in Spring 2016.

The Value of Material Culture:

With the proliferation of technology and the increased ability to fabricate all kinds of physical goods and objects all over the globe it has become increasingly important to have young scholars devote some energy to the understanding of the complex subject of objects in their physical, cultural, and historical contexts. The questions in this field are many and deal with topics ranging from production methods, to production motives, to issues of quality and authenticity, ethics, and many more. Material culture studies are only going to become increasingly important in a world of limitless and conspicuous production of objects. The ability to analyze physical objects as culturally meaningful as well as practical, the knowledge of processes used in the making, distributing, and use of these objects are important learning outcomes during our times.

The reason why number of awards decreased:

The period during which the low number of awards granted occurred coincided with a transition period in the Design Studies during which the two faculty most closely associated with the Material Culture Certificate retired. Beverly Gordon and Virginia Boyd were among a small group of UW-Madison faculty who created the Material Culture certificate and both retired prior to 2012. Not only did they personally advise many of the graduate students who participated in the Material Culture certificate but they also taught several of the key courses in the certificate. As would be expected, they also stopped accepting new graduate students as their retirement time approached, so even prior to that time numbers had decreased.

Both of these retirements occurred during a time when our department (and many others across campus) was not allowed to replace retiring faculty. We were lucky to eventually get permission to replace Professor Boyd and in 2013 hired Monica Penick, a great addition to both the Design Studies Department and the Material Culture
Certificate. However, a maternal leave and an extended leave of absence kept Professor Penick away from campus during the period in question.

During this time, we could say, the Material Culture Certificate lay dormant. Around this time the faculty involved with the certificate were also thinking of ways to re-structure the certificate to make it more accessible.

Although the feasibility of continuing the Material Culture Certificate was at risk during these times, the desire to keep it going and the belief in its importance has always been overwhelmingly favorable. The Material Culture Certificate continues to enjoy the full support of both its sponsoring departments (Design Studies and Art History). It is something we want to see continue.

The Place of Material Culture at UW-Madison::
The Material Culture Certificate fills an important niche at UW-Madison, producing a small but vital group of scholars capable of engaging in the important debate of objects and their meanings, more necessary now than ever before. Present curricula emphasize science and technology but UW still sees the value in the arts and humanities. It is often those coming from the humanities that have the best ability to the sifting and winnowing we so proudly believe in. Students who earn the Material Culture Program learn to examine human experiences as they relate to the material world.

The certificate serves students in the College of Letters and Science, the School for Human Ecology, and the College of Engineering. It allows students from majors such as Art History and Design Studies the opportunity to delve deep into the human experience vis-a-vis the material world by looking at objects in a wide range of contexts. It asks important questions about the objects and their contexts and the processes that produce them, getting into issues of production, consumption, use, global markets, and waste.

Learning Outcomes:
I like to think of programs like the Material Culture Certificate as the type that gives students the opportunity to take their ability to synthesize knowledge and global/cultural relevance to a very high level. The program touches favorably on all four of UW’s essential learning outcomes.

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
The engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring related to humans and their physical environment has never been as important.

Intellectual and Practical Skills
Students get opportunities to engage in inquiry, analysis, critical thinking, and creative thinking at advanced levels. They also become adept at writing and speaking clearly and persuasively.
Personal and Social Responsibility
At the core of the Material Culture Certificate is the critical understanding and appreciation of all kinds of global contexts as well as the critical examination of ethical reasoning and action, giving students thinking skills that will be useful for lifelong learning.

Integrative Learning
Synthesized knowledge is at the crux of material culture studies and students learn to apply knowledge coming from diverse sources, and also to apply this knowledge and skills in interchangeable settings.

Reasons why the modest extra effort is worthwhile:
In the Material Culture Certificate we see the opportunity to give a number of our students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that will make a real difference as they engage as global citizens. The beauty is that we can accomplish this utilizing existing areas of knowledge already present at UW-Madison, linking material culture to design studies, visual culture, and textile practice. The courses associated with the certificate are courses that exist and would be taught anyway, even without the certificate. The addition of moderate efforts by our existing faculty (all willing to supply it) becomes the glue and extra ingredient that makes the big difference.

Feasibility:
Recent times have not been the greatest for the Material Culture Certificate due to the loss of key personnel as described above and there were times when we were not sure if we would recover the faculty resources necessary to run the program. Thankfully, all that has changed, and it has changed for the better.

In 2012 Dean Soyeon Shim became the new dean at the School of Human Ecology. Like the other deans she had to assess the state of her school and determine strategic ways to allocate the ever-decreasing resources of the University and the School. Soon the new dean saw the value of investing in the area of Material Culture and provided resources and enthusiastic support as described below.

A. The creation of the Center for Textiles and Design, a multidisciplinary center focused on material culture. As part of this effort Sherry Harlacher was hired as Director and Natasha Thoreson as Collections Manager/Curator. Both of them were hired with the intent that they would work extensively with students and promote material culture. Sherry Harlacher has a Ph.D. and Natasha is finishing her dissertation this year.

B. The revitalization of the Design Gallery, housed in the School of Human Ecology, as a laboratory for students and scholars involved in material culture. This includes the recent hiring of David Newell as gallery director.

C. The securing of funding to hire a senior level textile historian as endowed chair. A search is under way and we hope to have this new faculty member start during
the 2017/2018 academic year. We see this person as a major player in the Material Culture Certificate.

The premise, and expectation, related to the addition of all these resources was that with the new team in place we would make the areas of design and material culture thrive again and with the new energy they have generated we are poised to do just that. Furthermore, we are expecting Monica Penick, another key player from Design Studies, back from her leave of absence next academic year.

Next Steps:
We feel very confident that with the complete team in place next academic year we will see a quick increase in program participation which will be eventually followed by much healthier award rates. Building the proper graduate student body in Design Studies will not be instantaneous but by the 2018/2019 academic years the new and returning faculty in DS will have a new crop of graduate students most of which, I believe, will be interested in pursuing the graduate certificate in Material Culture. Their presence should also help recruitment by the Art History faculty as they are key team members in graduate committees and other endeavors on which we rely on each other.

My suggestion would be to monitor the progress and if things have not changed favorably conduct another assessment in five years. However if at that point it appears that good progress is being made then the program could go to the regular 10-year review cycle

Should you need additional information or if you desire to meet in person please don’t hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

Roberto J Rengel

Roberto J Rengel, Chair
Design Studies
November 21, 2016

Response to College of Letters and Sciences Review of Low-Award Producing Academic Program: Graduate Certificate in Material Culture

To: John Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters and Sciences  
Soyeon Shim, Dean, School of Human Ecology

From: Ann Smart Martin, Professor of Art History, Director, Material Culture Program  
Gene Phillips, Professor and Chair, Art History

As the graduate certificate program is housed in differing departments in different colleges, two responses are forthcoming to your requested review. Below comes as response from the Department of Art History with the coordination of Professor Martin and Department Chair Phillips. Chair of Design Studies Roberto Rengel is sending a separate letter. Together they demonstrate strong support for the graduate certificate and offer compelling testimony to an ending period of transition.

Discuss demonstrated student need, even at a low level, for graduates with this specific credential.

I ended up being able to use what I learned in material culture for my research in human computer interaction and design. I think having a background in material culture strengthened my skills as a user experience designer (which is what I will be doing at Intel after graduation).

E-mail, Erica Lewis  
Undergraduate certificate student, Engineering School  
10-24-2016

As you can see from the unsolicited comment above, significant engagement with material culture can have a noteworthy positive effect on students from a wide range of majors in their preparation for future careers. Understanding principles of design, skill in analyzing physical objects as culturally meaningful as well as practical, and knowledge of varied systems of making, distributing, and using things are all broadly applicable learning outcomes. The curricula of the 21st century place extra value on science and technology, often to the detriment of the study of the arts and humanities. The Material Culture Program helps lead to the reintegration of these two and other fractured spheres in a university education. To earn the graduate certificate, students must critically examine human experiences and practices in relation to the very physicality of things and the material world. It does so in a unique way by studying objects, buildings, and landscapes through time and across space.

Discuss the specific academic niche filled by the program, with an emphasis on how the program may be unique to UW-Madison, necessary for the University’s identity, or vital to the fulfillment of program, school/college, or university purposes.
This program serves students in both the College of Letters and Science and the School for Human Ecology as well as pre-professional schools such as Engineering. It offers a richer understanding of the human experience in the material world in ways that majors such as Art History and Design studies do not because it considers objects in a wider range of contexts, such as consumerism, industrial production, heritage, science, status competition, workmanship, museum practice, and craft to name but a few. It uses objects, buildings, and environments to ask fresh questions about those contexts and the processes that produce and sustain them. It also offers critical analysis of historical and contemporary institutions. It particularly ties an interest in making, consuming, and using objects and hence the processes of industrialization, trade, and waste in historic and contemporary times.

List of Learning Goals

- Acquisition of skills to describe and analyze objects of multiple types, scales and media that constitute the material world across time and space
- Understanding of the complex and multiple ways that objects and people relate in the past and in the present using trans-disciplinary perspectives
- Ability to interpret and otherwise make meaning from objects using methods and theories from multiple disciplines including but not limited to art history, archaeology, anthropology, design, folklore/folk life studies, geography, history, literary studies, and landscape history and science studies
- Discernment of the importance of materiality and making in the production and shaping of culture
- Fluency in using research resources and tools appropriate for specific kinds of objects
- Gaining skills in producing online and in-person exhibitions using objects and collections to prepare students for careers in museums, archives, and other professional contexts
- Coherent presentation of ideas in multiple media (oral, visual, digital, and written).

Why is this certificate in material culture needed for graduate study? In a large university such as this one, it is difficult for students to easily create and navigate cross-departmental paths of learning. This certificate is broadly based and requires some core understandings, but can be tailored within a flexible system that enables creative thinking, teaching, and writing in every endeavor. Such training is ever more necessary for young academics who hope to secure a teaching or public humanities position. Interdisciplinary training in material culture separates him or her from “the crowd” of so many other applicants.

Our certificate program is nationally distinctive for several reasons. The University of Wisconsin is unique because it has so many possible synergies linking programs, centers, departments and degree programs across the campus. It does not duplicate; it links and draws them together. We are the only national program that directly connects the academic ideal and practice of material culture to design studies, visual culture, and textile practice. In the School of Human Ecology alone, it draws interest from three separate, nationally-known programs—textiles, design studies, and retail—tying the humanities to specific job degrees.

In the L & S review of the Art History Department in 2012, the reviewers noted that “the scholarly program in Material Culture has achieved notable recognition.” We feel that the same
holds true for the graduate certificate program, even with its less than robust enrollment.” With that assertion by the program reviewers, the goal is finding ways to maintain and enhance that singularity.

That goal led to discussing the revision of the material culture curriculum beginning in 2013. In a number of material culture faculty discussions, we studied and evaluated impediments to certificate completion. We discerned that despite their enthusiastic interest, too many graduate students found it difficult to fit requirements into their coursework. The current revision plan calls for dropping the number of course credits while asking students to reflect more largely on the connections between material culture analysis and their degree.

Finally, the material culture certificate is one way to highlight and bring together graduate students in joined interests. The UW Material Culture Focus Group is one of a handful of graduate student organizations in the nation dedicated to interdisciplinary material culture scholarship. This registered student group brings together students and faculty from a variety of disciplines on campus for programming and events related to the study of artifacts and cultural landscapes. The Focus Group has held reading groups, organized the annual Midwest American Studies conference in Madison, and invited award-winning filmmakers and artistic production designers for major American artists to speak. Perhaps most telling, they held a symposium and workshop with Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates—a sculptor whose work explores the intersections of race, American cultural history, and contemporary American ceramics, and who was later (2012) named "Innovator of the Year" by the Wall Street Journal. This year they are hosting a Craft Symposium to further critique and understand processes of “making.”

In all these ways, the graduate student certificate program has harnessed the more modern university climate that seeks to examine issues and solve problems in creative ways. As we continue to improve graduate student access through program revision and our partners in Design Studies continue to build their faculty, our enrollment should only increase.

**Estimate (generally) the cost to offer the program**

Prof. Martin’s contract already includes a permanent course release (one per year) to cover administrative responsibilities. In addition, the program is administered by the Art History Department, which has the staffing to easily handle the needs of a small certificate programs. For these reasons, the costs are negligible.

**Candidly evaluate whether faculty time and effort are best invested in the program, rather than in pursuit of other activities.**

Any courses required by the certificate would be taught anyway, and, as noted above, administrative functions are integrated with Art History.

**Evaluate the program’s administrative structure**
Art History fully supports the current structure of the certificate program. The co-sponsorship of the graduate certificate program in two administrative entities, while complex, helps faculty cooperate and informs students. While there was a period when faculty retirements created problems, new hires have more than made up for those. Indeed, as Roberto Rengel writes in the attached letter, enthusiastic support of the new dean, new hires and faculty returning from leave in the school of Human Ecology will do much to reinvigorate the faculty support needed to support this program. New studies of the Design Gallery and the Textile Center have pointed to the need for greater cross-campus connections. Material culture was considered a natural conduit in those plans.

In sum, we feel that the Material Culture Certificate graduate program has much to recommend for students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and that steps have been made to solve past problems of university transition. If results are forthcoming as planned in the next five years, we ask that the Graduate Certificate program be returned to its regular cycle of evaluation.
12 September 2016

TO: Ann Smart Martin, Professor of Art History, Director, Material Cultures Program
   Tom Dale, Professor and Chair, Art History
   Roberto Rengel, Professor and Chair, Design Studies

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean, L&S
   Soyeon Shim, Dean, School of Human Ecology

RE: Focused Review of Low-Award Producing Academic Program: Graduate Certificate in Material Culture

CC: Constance Flanagan, Associate Dean, School of Human Ecology
    Marty Gustafson, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
    Elaine M. Klein, Associate Dean for Academic Planning, L&S
    Daniel Kleinman, Associate Dean, Graduate School
    Sarah Kuba, Academic Planner, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
    Jocelyn Milner, Associate Provost and Director, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
    Susan Zaeske, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, L&S

We are reaching out to you today because new campus academic policy requires your action. The University Academic Planning Council’s revised policy on low award producing programs holds that certificate programs are considered to be in low award status if they produce fewer than ten awards in five years. Programs in this status must engage in focused review, the goal of which is to evaluate whether or not the program should be reformulated or discontinued. Programs in which no awards are granted in a five year period may be discontinued automatically. The UAPC policy is attached.

As you will see from the attached document, the Graduate Certificate in Material Cultures is a low-award producing program, with no awards granted between 2011 and 2015, and two awards granted in Spring 2016. Because it is a low award program, the Provost has requested a focused report on it. We would like you to send us a brief document (no more than 10 pages), by November 1, 2016, to help us understand the importance of and resources available to support retaining the program. Your rationale should address the following topics:

- Discuss demonstrated student need, even at a low level, for graduates with this specific credential.
• Discuss the specific academic niche filled by the program, with an emphasis on how the program may be unique to UW-Madison, necessary for the University’s identity, or vital to the fulfillment of program, school/college, or university purposes.

• Estimate (generally) the cost to offer the program, bearing in mind that programs incur costs beyond seats offered in courses that are regularly taught. Cost estimates might include faculty time to advise students and oversee programs and maintain program records, as well as the work of others responsible for monitoring activities conducted for and by the school/college, Registrar's Office, Graduate School, Office of the Provost, etc.

• Candidly evaluate whether faculty time and effort are best invested in the program, rather than in pursuit of other activities. Effective program administration involves learning outcomes assessment, review of the program, recruitment of students, curriculum development, advising, catalog and website maintenance, course scheduling, and similar activities. Programs with few or no students must still engage in these activities and offer a full curriculum should students seek to enroll in it.

• Evaluate the program’s administrative structure. Is the program sustainable? Is there a sufficient number of faculty to offer courses and provide advising? Is the sponsoring department committed to supporting it? How effectively does the location in the department function? What, if anything, could be improved to increase awards?

• Candidly consider alternatives to offering a low award program. Could the program be revised to be more attractive to students, merged with another program, discontinued, etc.?

It would be useful if you could include your own recommendation about next actions to be taken concerning the future of the program. Since the program was discussed in the self-study and review committee report for the recently completed review of programs administered by the Department of Art History, and the L&S APC and GFEC mentioned it in their responses to that review, you should feel free to draw upon those materials, too. If you have questions about the data provided in the attachment, please contact Associate Dean Elaine Klein.

Prior to forwarding our response to the Provost, we will review your rationale and discuss it with the Academic Planning Councils of the School of Human Ecology and the College of Letters & Science (both of which are formally recognized as academic homes for the program). Following that discussion, we will forward the materials and a recommendation to the Provost. The director of APIR, the Provost, and the UAPC will review these documents and make a determination. If a low award producing program is continued, and remains in low-award status, it will be reviewed again in five years. If student participation increases and the program is no longer in low-award status, it will go into the regular 10-year review cycle (in alignment, if possible, with the other programs offered by its departmental home).

ATTACHMENTS:
• Policy on Low Award Producing Academic Programs (Degree/Majors and Certificates)
• UW-Madison Trends in Certificates, Awarded to Graduate and Professional Students, 2006-2015 (Head Count)
Policy on Low Award Producing Academic Programs (Degree/Majors and Certificates)

http://apir.wisc.edu/programreview.htm
Revisions adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 16, 2016
Adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 21, 2010 Revised from May 1995 Program Review Guidelines

Definition of low award producing:

- The standard for triggering low award producing status in a degree/major is fewer than five (5) degrees have been awarded in five (5) years. This standard applies to UW-Madison’s graduate and professional degree/majors (master’s degrees that are associated with a PhD may not be identified as low award producing). It also applies to all UW-Madison undergraduate degree/majors that have counterparts at fewer than half of other UW institutions.

- For undergraduate degree/majors that have counterpart offerings at more than half of all UW institutions, the degree productivity standard is no less than 25 degrees are awarded in a five (5) year period, excluding all world language programs and individually designed programs1. UW-Madison degree/majors that have counterparts at more than half of other UWs typically have strong enrollments and would rarely drop below this higher threshold.

- The standard for triggering low award producing status in a certificate is fewer than ten (10) certificates have been awarded in five (5) years. Certificates that have zero (0) awards over a five (5) year period will be automatically discontinued without review. This applies to all UW-Madison undergraduate, graduate/professional, and capstone certificates.

A low award producing program will be scheduled for review in the academic year following the program’s identification as low award producing. The provost will request a focused review from the dean, and specify a schedule for a status report. The schedule may be adjusted by mutual agreement.

In general, the expectation is that either a compelling case will be made for continuation, or the low award producing programs will be discontinued or reorganized. For some programs, they may award few degrees because they serve a specialized audience. For other programs, when few degrees are awarded it may be a signal that the commitment of program faculty has waned or that the program does not serve student or societal needs.

The following possibilities for handling low award producing programs should be considered:
- Discontinue the program.
- Merge smaller programs into an appropriate larger program with a more inclusive scope.

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1 Definition aligns with UW System Policy ACIS 1, “Monitoring Low-Degree-Producing Academic Degree Programs”, July 1, 2016.
• Merge several low-enrollment programs into one more inclusive title.

If a low award producing program is important to the program faculty, they should develop a written rationale based on the following criteria and other criteria that may emerge:

• What is the demonstrated student need, even at a low level, for graduates with this specific credential?
• Does the program fill a specific academic niche unique to UW-Madison or in some way necessary for the University’s identity, or for the fulfillment of the mission of the program, school/college, or university?
• What is the cost of the program? No program is without cost so a clear recognition of all costs is important. All programs incur costs in terms of record keeping and a range of monitoring activities for the school/college, the Registrar's Office, the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, and others.
• Is faculty time and effort best invested in such a program? Time must be devoted to learning outcomes assessment, review of the program, recruitment of students, curriculum development, advising, catalog and website maintenance, course scheduling, and similar activities. Programs with few or no students that are formally offered still need to have a full curriculum available to a student who seeks to enroll in the program.
• What are the compelling reasons why none of the options outlined above (discontinuing the program or merging this major into a larger major) are viable alternatives?
• Does the program have a stable academic home, usually a department?

The director of APIR, the provost, and the UAPC will review reports on the status of low award producing programs. If a low award producing program is continued, and remains in low-award status it will be reviewed again after five years. If student participation increases and the program is no longer low-award status, it will go into the 10-year review cycle.
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**Annual Total**: 35  28  27  54  80  90  106  110  98  61  93.0  68.9

**Notes:**
Source: Retention Awards Dataviews, Counts effective as of October 1, 2015.
Zeroes indicate years where no certificates were awarded for a program; blank cells indicate years where program was not offered.