



## Art

A department in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts offering the B.F.A. in Design, the B.A. in Art History, the B.A. and B.F.A. in Studio Art, the M.Arch., and the M.A., M.S., and M.F.A. in Art.

### ■ The Review Process

This was a standard AQAD review. Reviewers were:

W. Mike Martin (University of California, Berkeley)

Bruce Robertson (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Mac Adams (State University of New York, College at Old Westbury)

### ■ Main Issues

The visiting team framed its review within the context of the University's decision to build a new visual arts building to replace the fragmented and deteriorating facilities currently occupied by many components of the department. The team observed that this commitment signals, "in a most tangible fashion, ...the idea that the visual arts have a major role to play" in the future of the campus. But the team also noted that "it is now the responsibility of the department to respond with a similar seriousness of purpose and creativity." The team suggested two forms such a response might take.

First, although the combination of the department's three major components of studio art, art history, and architecture in one unit is unusual for research universities, and each could in theory be its own department, the team found that "the presence of the new building makes this undesirable and unlikely." The department was urged to view the new building as an opportunity to pursue useful integration of its three components. At one level this might take the form of more integration in the undergraduate curriculum and sharing of some staff resources (but the team cautioned against integration that does respect "the distinctive professional and disciplinary character of each division," such as, for example, consolidating graduate advising for all areas). Managing digital images might be another such area. Second, however, is the opportunity to seek integrations "not about achieving greater efficiency but greater harmony and understanding." In this view, faculty in each area would have meaningful involvement in the others. A "more radical" possibility would have the faculty "consider what it would mean to produce undergraduates who have a visual fluency in the making of art, the understanding of its history, and its place in the shaping of the human environment." Such an approach, the team suggested, might "produce students with a visual sophistication unlike any other in the country."

The team offered specific comments on each of the three divisions:

- Art History was found to have an excellent faculty, most with "national or international reputations," who are "extraordinarily devoted to teaching." Undergraduates were found to "appreciate the quality of teaching," and graduate students praised the comprehensiveness of their education and their "intensive mentoring." However, the team found "the state of the curriculum is an issue," with a "certain rigidity" that calls for "significant elements [to] be retooled." Fundamentally, this requires a "major shift from a notion of 'comprehensiveness' to other values," given the impossibility of delivering on the promise given the size and

composition of the faculty. The team acknowledged that the program could continue to focus on the traditional core of western art, but that this should be a conscious choice. The team recommended that new faculty come in areas beyond the traditional core, and that current faculty develop more interdisciplinary connections. The possibility of a small, Five College Ph.D. in Art History was also suggested.

- Architecture was found to be an exciting new program that “represents a new model in architectural education.” The program’s strength has been confirmed by the recent NAAB accrediting visit, but “clear metrics” should be put in place to ensure goals are being achieved. With respect to the faculty, the team found that “the only issues are numbers.” Launching the program has drained much energy, and teaching consumes the majority of faculty time. The team also stressed the importance of the program’s identity, including representation in the department’s name, appointment of an administrative leader, and creation of appropriate administrative structure and staff support.
- Studio Arts gives students a “solid grounding” through the foundations program, although there was “some disagreement within the faculty on what the mission of the program is.” The faculty were found to be “very accomplished, working professionals ... committed to their students.” The curriculum is “on the cusp,” with the new facility and faculty turnover presenting a choice as to how to “proceed into the 21st Century.” Greater interdisciplinarity, building on the successful foundations program, might create “an important national model for arts education—producing a different kind of art student, a problem solver and community-based thinker.” New faculty should come in the foundations area and in the “fast growing key area” of Computer Arts/Photography/Design.

Overall, the team saw a “successful program that could be extraordinary once it defines its mission and solves the problem of how to be truly interdisciplinary and use its great resources, namely the faculty, in this collective endeavor.” To do so, the department must address two major conditions: 1) conducting a national search for a leader of the department “who has the vision of a new direction and is not encumbered by the history of the program;” and 2) improving the long-standing lack of diversity in both the faculty and the student body.

## ■ Results of the Review

The Dean reported that the review team and the department are ‘substantially aligned’ regarding findings and recommendations. She expressed “some sympathy” with the team’s call for review of the Art History curriculum, and reported that the current for a Modernist has been “redefined somewhat and redescribed so as to make it more likely that this year’s search will ‘generate a larger pool of qualified candidates who [will] help provide added diversity to [the] curriculum.’” She also reported plans to search for a new faculty member to lead the Architecture program. With respect to Studio Art, the Dean was “hopeful” that the move to the new facility will promote more interdisciplinarity and “more fruitful collaborative working relationships.” Neither the department nor the Dean shared the team’s view that an outside search should be conducted for a department chair.