

August 2012

To: Marilyn Levine, Provost
Tracy Pellett, Associate Provost

From: Marji Morgan, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities

Re: 2011-2012 Program Review, Art

c: Gregg Schlanger, Chair, Department of Art

I write to provide commendations and recommendations as part of the program review process for the Department of Art. These remarks are based on the Program's Self-Study and the external reviewer's evaluation, and take into account college mission and resources. I have not yet had time to meet with the Art department faculty about the review. I will do so early in Fall quarter. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in this review process, especially Gregg Schlanger, Art faculty and staff, and Professor Catherine Murray, as I know how very time consuming the review process is for everyone involved. The Department Self-Study was very helpful, and I want to commend Chair Schlanger and other Art faculty for their careful attention to this important document.

COMMENDATIONS

Professor Murray characterizes the Art Department as one experiencing a "renaissance of sorts," and one that is key to the cultural life of the CWU campus and the larger community. She offers a long list of richly deserved commendations, starting with the faculty for their excellent teaching and well respected creative work and academic research. In particular, Murray notes how the faculty provide "an inspiring range of learning opportunities for students," by using both innovative and traditional methods of instruction. It is good to see that the students experience a capstone course, which can be used for assessment of their success in a given program. And as Murray points out, the many student accomplishments identified in the review speak well of the department and its teaching effectiveness.

The department should be commended for significant improvements in the area of governance. Chair Schlanger has brought fresh leadership that is helping the department to move forward in pursuit of common goals. Faculty are actively involved in important department committees and decisions, which is good to see.

Although there are facility and technology issues that need to be addressed, the Randall Hall facility itself is a huge asset to the department. It provides spacious and adequate studio space, and also offers excellent exhibition space for the benefit of students, faculty and the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taken together, the external review and self study suggest recommendations in 6 major areas.

Advising - In my experience, advising generates more student complaints on campuses than any other single thing. It's also true that rising tuition cost has made good advising more important

than ever before, so that students can graduate in a timely manner. The university as a whole is in the process of creating an advising task force, with the goal of improving advising both of pre majors and majors. My own experience tells me that several things are essential in order to have effective advising: only those faculty who enjoy doing advising do it in any formal sense, faculty advisors do advising regularly enough to be very knowledgeable about departmental/university rules and regulations, faculty advisors spend enough time doing advising to be accessible to students, and faculty advisors are given reassigned time to do advising, if they are dedicated advisors with more than the normal number of advisees. I also think that some collective meetings about advising and career information can cut down on the time faculty advisors need to spend with individual students. I would encourage the department to have such collective advising meetings once each quarter, if it is not doing this already. I also agree with Professor Murray that required advising each quarter is important, especially in a credit intensive program such as the BFA.

Another thing that can be *very* helpful to students, faculty advisors and CWU's professional advisors are sample four-year plans for each program that make clear an ideal track for progressing through each program. I have asked each department to create such plans, to have them on the web, and to make them available to faculty and professional advisors. If the department has not developed and distributed such plans, I recommend that it do so as soon as possible.

Assessment – This is a key area that needs to be addressed, and the new university strategic plan will require all departments and colleges to revise their department assessment plans by the end of fall quarter. In the coming years it will be important for the department to have department and student learning goals that are *assessed in ways that are meaningful to faculty and students*. The data and other information generated by the assessment process should be discussed by all faculty each year *and used to make improvements in programs*. Two things that clearly must be discussed this coming year is the possibility of a mid-program portfolio review and the possibility of a final exhibition for BFA students. I agree with Professor Murray that both ideas are good, and they apparently have been suggested by students and some faculty.

Curriculum – Many of Professor Murray's suggestions regarding curriculum use NASAD standards as a guideline. I think the department needs to decide if this is a valid standard for our programs. Certainly, if accreditation is something the department wants to seek in the future, then these standards seem appropriate as guidelines. Two of Murray's specific suggestions seem to be in line with departments across the country, accredited and not, and thus I would urge the department to give serious consideration to these: a basic Art and Technology course in the core, as well as a professional practices class. The latter is something that students in all disciplines are asking for more and more. At the same time that the department considers trends in departments across the country, it should also consider what it can do with curriculum to make the CWU Department of Art stand out in the state and region. In other words, the department should be able to answer the question: why should an art student come to Central as opposed to Western, Eastern, and so forth?

Recruitment and Retention – The department has as one of its own goals to be more active in recruiting and retaining students. This is an important goal, as CWU and other institutions now place more and more emphasis on enrollment management. We worked as a college last year on strategies for recruitment and retention, and I urge the department to pay close attention to those strategies. One of the strategies involved forging closer relations with community colleges strong

in the arts, and I plan to continue to work with arts Chairs on this goal. I have also requested additional tuition scholarship monies so that all departments in our college have some funds to use for recruitment of top students.

Staffing – I have been working with the department to fill faculty vacancies as soon as possible. This has been difficult these past few years with the budget cuts that put a hold on many replacement hires. We will have an art historian in place as of spring quarter 2013, and we will be conducting searches this year to fill two positions that only came vacant this past year: photography and graphic design. These seem to be the two most urgent hires at the moment. With the addition of Gregg Schlanger to the faculty, we can now take graduate students in the area of sculpture, so that area does not seem as pressing a need as graphic design and photography. Nevertheless, we should seek to fill that position as soon as resources allow. With the filling of positions, I agree with Professor Murray that “the faculty vacancies might be filled to reflect new curricular directions.” In other words, staffing decisions should be made with curricular reform and revision in mind as much as possible.

Technology and Facilities – I strongly agree with Professor Murray that this is an area of critical need for the department. Without updated technology for faculty and students, we cannot deliver a credible basic art program in this digital age, let alone an excellent program that prepares students adequately for the work and professional worlds they will enter. As Professor Murray notes, “Digital technology is increasingly being utilized as an essential “tool” in the tool box of artists in all realms of the visual arts, including such “traditional” areas as sculpture, ceramics, painting, and metals.” Three things in particular need to be addressed as soon as possible, it seems to me.

First, predictable access to Wi-Fi is essential if students and faculty are to be able to do their work effectively. This access will become even more critical, should the university support a mobile MacBook Learning Lab. A **second** computer lab is another thing that should be provided for the department as soon as possible. The one computer lab the department currently has is one of the most frequently used labs on campus. It is used so heavily by graphic design and photography classes that other students have hardly any access at all. We once proposed to transform Randall 215 into a second lab, and facilities estimated such a change would cost at least \$300,000. No such funding was ever approved, but should be as soon as possible. Alternatively, the department might consider a mobile learning lab, which would likely cost no more than \$50,000. In the future, such less expensive options might be submitted to facilities in case the ideal, more expensive proposals do not get funded. Another example might be seating in Randall 117, which could be submitted as a proposal separate from the \$5 million renovation which gets no funding year after year.

Finally, the university as a whole should have a predictable upgrade plan for essential instructional software. This is not something departments and colleges are in a position to fund, nor should they be responsible for such funding. For example, the basic Randall lab software Adobe Creative Suite that is essential for art and other students has not been replaced in 3 or 4 years, with the result that we are now two or three versions behind. Our version 4 must be

upgraded to version 6 immediately, if our faculty are going to be able to prepare our students for work and school after Central.

SUMMARY

As we move forward, it will be important for the department, college and university to work together on

the issues highlighted in this review. I agree that the college and university need to make a commitment to resolving technology issues, and to funding tenure track positions. Departmental improvements in advising, assessment and curriculum should work also to improve recruitment and retention. I look forward to working with the department on implementing Professor Murray's recommendations and on helping it meet its own very worthy goals. I am committed to supporting Art department faculty, staff and students in every way I can. It is a pleasure to support such a productive and creative department.