

Dean's Response to:
Department of Visual Arts Review,
Review Team Report, and Department's
Response to Review Team

October, 2010

The Department of Visual Arts (DOVA) came up for review during the same period it applied to the National Association of Schools of Arts and Design (NASAD) for accreditation. Happily, Associate Provost Ryan Thomas agreed to accept the department's NASAD report and review team assessment in lieu of the standard WSU review reports.

DOVA's report for NASAD provides a clear, honest portrait of the department. The reviewers from NASAD (Kristi Nelson, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning at the University of Cincinnati; and John DeMao, Interim Chair of Graphic Design at Virginia Commonwealth University) spent time in the department and wrote a report that is positive, thorough, and insightful.

DOVA has been granted accreditation from NASAD.

The reviewers expressed three reservations about DOVA's application:

1. Finances: the review team was concerned about DOVA's reliance upon Continuing Education to fund a great number of its courses and about DOVA's budget overruns of the past few years.
2. Health and Safety: reviewers commented that lighting and ventilation in the newly acquired annex house for BFA seniors were insufficient.
3. Planning: reviewers hoped for evidence of more long-term planning.

The department effectively responded to the review team's concerns, noting various steps that have been taken toward fiscal responsibility; toward improving safety and health issues in the annex; and explained that various long-term planning initiatives are underway.

As Dean, I am pleased that DOVA asked to be evaluated by NASAD. Opening themselves to the eyes of external reviewers indicates the department's ambition and desire to move forward. Meeting the standards of a national accrediting agency indicates the department's overall quality. This is a department that has benefited from strong leadership over the past three years, a department that is looking toward the future, and that makes use of every penny (and then some) in its budget.

From my perspective, budget issues in the department will require ongoing attention. Last year, Provost Michael Vaughan, Chair Jim Jacobs and I met two or three times to discuss ways we might bolster the number of tenure-track lines in DOVA and agreed to convert all of DOVA's Instructional Wage (IW) budget, plus funds from the Provost and

the Dean's office, into one tenure-track line. The tenure-track line is important. I am worried, however, about how DOVA will continue to offer needed classes without its former IW funds. The incoming chair will need to work creatively with Continuing Education to offer sections of GENED and major courses and to avoid running the department's budget into the red. It may be that DOVA will offer fewer GENED offerings in the Creative Arts area and students will rely more heavily on Performing Arts for these courses. As the Provost has observed, we will want to balance Creative Arts offerings so that courses fill *and* students are not shut out in great numbers. Perhaps Banner's Wait list option (available spring 2011) will help us do a better job in balancing these offerings.

Another major budgetary concern involves the Shaw Gallery. As part of the budget cuts experienced by the university in spring 2009, we eliminated the salary associated with the Gallery Director position. Since then, the Gallery has relied on the good will of faculty and on some part-time dollars for an hourly employee. As a university, we need to support the potential of the gallery by re-funding a director. Such funding is difficult to find, as it is not associated with the production of semester credit hours or of majors; but a functional, well-run gallery is a key ingredient in the education of art students *and* in the cultural education of larger Northern Utah community. As our college development officer and I discuss goals for WSU's Capital Campaign, refunding a gallery director and revitalizing gallery activities are high on our list.

I am less concerned about the other two items flagged by the NASAD review team; I believe the department has responded appropriately to those issues. I do, however, want to echo an observation in the external reviewers' report, an observation that I find worrisome: at present the 3-D area does not seem to attract student majors in numbers similar to other areas. I would like the department as a whole to consider how 3-D contributes to overall programs and how the area might generate more student interest.

I congratulate the department on its recent accreditation and applaud faculty, staff, and students for their creativity and energy. Major and non-major numbers are up; the department attracts and retains students. Its student groups are active; its webpages, lectures, and exhibits are top notch.

We live in a visual culture; DOVA educates students in that culture, setting high standards for visual work. Faculty and staff are engaged, energetic, and function as positive role models.