Graduate Program Review – Response Form
Texas Tech University

Program Reviewed: MFA and Ph.D. in Fine Arts

Onsite Review Dates: 4/21-22/16

Name of Reviewers:

Internal: (Please include Name, Title and Department)

External: (Please include Name, Title, Department, and Institution)
Rebecca P. Brienen, Director, School of Visual and Performing Arts
Head, Department of Art, Graphic Design and Art History
Oklahoma State University

I. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan
Please evaluate the following departmental factors by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

Vision, Mission and Goals: Good
Strategic Plan: Good

Please comment on the positive components and suggested areas of improvement.

The 2013-4 strategic plan largely mirrors TTU's strategic plan. Discussions with the faculty and the director have indicated that the strategic plan is going to be revised; this represents an important opportunity to clearly lay out the goals and expectations for the School. Greater faculty buy-in and involvement in this process is strongly recommended.

II. Program Curriculum
Please evaluate the following program curriculum factors for the masters and doctoral programs by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

Alignment of the program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes:
Masters degree: Very Good
Doctoral degree: Very Good

Curriculum development coordination and delivery:
Masters degree: Very Good
Doctoral degree: Very Good
Program learning outcomes assessment:
Masters degree: Good
Doctoral degree: Good

Program curriculum compared to peer programs:
Masters degree: Very Good
Doctoral degree: Very Good

Please comment on the positive components and suggested areas of improvement.

The MFA handbook (last updated in 2013), lays out the curricular expectations and the requirements of the program. Faculty in the MFA program clearly take their teaching and mentoring responsibilities seriously. In the last three years the Fine Arts Doctoral Program program has undergone a curricular overhaul, which is delivering positive results. The faculty in the Ph.D. program may want to consider the addition of a language requirement. The revised handbook for the Ph.D. program is also available online and appropriately lays out of the curriculum and the program, which has enhanced its interdisciplinarity in the last few years. Ph.D. students are teaching within the School; as such they should be required to take a pedagogy class. Conflict between art history faculty and Ph.D. students and faculty, especially on committees, is a cause for some concern and may be having a negative impact on student progress and productivity. A clearer discussion of the assessment process and rubrics would have been helpful; assessment should include the review of the final thesis work for both the MFA and the Ph.D. by an external assessor. The University should make funds available to support this. While many of the syllabi included in the report were up-to-date and set out appropriate goals and expectations for graduate-level education, a number were quite old and as such gave this reviewer the impression that a handful of faculty in the School are not updating their curriculum on a regular basis. The "leveling" policy should be reviewed and made less punitive. Students should not be expected to spend an additional year taking pre-reqs.

III. Faculty Productivity
Please evaluate the following faculty productivity factors by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

Qualifications: Excellent
Publications/Creative Works: Very Good
Teaching Load: Good
External Grants: Needs Improvement
Teaching Evaluations: Very Good
Professional Service: Very Good
Community Service: Very Good
Please comment on the positive components and suggested areas of improvement.

The core MFA and Ph.D. faculty have the appropriate professional degrees and certifications in their fields. The faculty as a group achieve a very good level of productivity, as measured by conference participation, published papers and exhibition participation. Very few faculty are applying for and receiving external grants. No teaching evaluations were made available to the reviewers, although many of the students who participated in the survey wrote in very positive terms about the studio art faculty. Students in both the Ph.D. and MFA programs also met with the reviewers; many expressed their appreciation of the faculty. While a 3/2 teaching load appears to be the standard at TTU, a teaching load of 2/2 would be more appropriate for both the MFA and Ph.D. faculty; a 2/2 load is also more typical of other large research intensive institutions across the country. The University should consider making funds available for additional hires to support this reduction, which will have a positive impact on faculty productivity and morale.

IV. Students and Graduates

Please evaluate the following student- and graduate-related factors by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

_Time to degree:_
- Masters degree: Good
- Doctoral degree: Good

_Retention:_
- Masters degree: Good
- Doctoral degree: Good

_Graduate Rates:_
- Masters degree: Good
- Doctoral degree: Good

_Enrollment:_
- Masters degree: Very Good
- Doctoral degree: Very Good

_Demographics:_
- Masters degree: Needs Improvement
- Doctoral degree: Needs Improvement

_Number of Degrees Conferred Annually:_
- Masters degree: Good
- Doctoral degree: Needs Improvement
Support Services:
Masters degree: Very Good
Doctoral degree: Good

Job Placement:
Masters degree: Good
Doctoral degree: Needs Improvement

Student/Faculty Ratio:
Masters degree: Very Good
Doctoral degree: Very Good

Please comment on the positive components and suggested areas of improvement.

According to one of the data tables created by the Graduate College and included in the School's report, the time to degree for the Ph.D. students is over 10 years; another table listed the time to degree as between 5-6 years. The FADP faculty assert that this shorter number is more accurate. One of the tables in the report similarly indicated that the average time to degree for the MFA students is 6-7 years; this was strongly challenged by the MFA faculty, who assert that most students complete the degree in 3-4 years. There were also problems with the enrollment data presented in the report. The report indicated that there were no new Ph.D. students after 2012, but during the onsite visit the faculty indicated that there had been at least 5 new students enroll in the program each year; this seems more likely. There is limited diversity among the students, both in terms of ethnicity and with respect to where they are coming from. The graduate programs in the School of Art primarily draw students from Texas. More nuanced job placement data would be helpful, as relatively few MFA or Ph.D. in visual arts students immediately land a tenure-track academic position, or something equivalent, upon graduation. The data included for the Ph.D. students indicated very low level job placement. The department should maintain records on recent graduates, especially monitoring job placement within the first 5 years following graduation. The current coordinator of the Ph.D. program has been making a concerted effort over the last few years to better track students and their placements. According to her, the enrollment in the Ph.D. program has increased significantly in the last three years. Her departure is cause for concern. A number of the MFA faculty indicated that they need additional support staff to help maintain their areas. Additional maintenance staff could support both the 2D and 3D areas, freeing up faculty to spend more time on research.

V. Facilities and Resources

Please evaluate the following facilities and resources factors by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

Facilities: Very Good

Facility Support Resources: Good

Financial Resources: Good

Staff Resources: Very Good
Please comment on the positive components and suggested areas of improvement.

The 3D Annex is a first-rate facility; the metals area must be singled out for its outstanding equipment, space, and layout. The 2D facilities are not as new and lack the spaciousness of the 3D areas, but they appear to be well equipped and adequate for the needs of the students and faculty. The new transmedia lab is an excellent, much needed addition to the facilities and will support the integration of technology into the curriculum. Studios are available for the MFA students but not for all of the Ph.D. students, which has caused some tension and may delay time to degree for those who need an assigned studio space to complete their thesis work. TA stipends are still too low (although the increase in place for fall 2016 is a very positive development); the School also has quite a few scholarships that are available for graduate students. As both the MFA and the Ph.D. are terminal degrees, TAs should have the same stipend. Interviews with students indicated that they did not have access to their studios in the summer, which this reviewer found puzzling and problematic.

VI. Overall Ranking

Please provide an overall rating of the masters and doctoral degree programs by clicking and selecting the appropriate rating descriptor:

Overall Rating:

- Masters degree: Very Good
- Doctoral degree: Very Good

Please provide summative conclusions based on the overall review.

The MFA program has very good enrollment and is supported by excellent faculty and facilities. Although their job placement after graduation is disappointing, current students are showing work regionally and are participating in conferences and making professional presentations. Recent curriculum adjustments to the Ph.D. program appear to be having a positive impact on student learning. Students interviewed spoke in positive terms about the program and indicated that they received many opportunities for professional development. It is one of the oldest fine arts doctoral programs in the country, and it has considerable growth potential, although student placement upon graduation is currently also unimpressive. Individual faculty in the School of Art are establishing or have established regional reputations and some have established or are establishing national reputations, but the School should work on elevating its overall national reputation.

Please proved summative recommendations based on the overall review.

- Hire at the associate or full professor level to replace the coordinator of the Ph.D. program, who is leaving at the end of the 2015-16 academic year.
- Encourage more faculty to apply for external grants.
- Encourage faculty to become more involved with recruitment, especially when they travel for conferences, workshops, exhibits, and for sponsored speaking engagements.
Create or assign additional studio space for the Ph.D. program; if this is not possible, then restrict the number of students accepted into the studio track until space becomes available.

Review and revise the assessment plans to include input from external reviewers on the capstone projects.

The Director of the School should work closely with the faculty to create a greater sense of community.

Increase TA stipends to a more competitive level.

Create a required pedagogy class for the Ph.D. students.

Review the "leveling" policy, which seems unnecessarily remedial.