

R-401 Information Calendar Item

Proposal: Name Change of the Division of Film Studies to the Department of Film and Media Arts

Section I - The Action

This document proposes a change in name and status to the existing Division of Film Studies, an academic unit in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Utah. The division requests that the name be changed to the Department of Film and Media Arts.

Section II - Need

There are two overriding reasons for this change. The name change to the Department of Film and Media Arts more closely describes the mission and long-term goals of both the academic unit and the College of Fine Arts and it more accurately reflects the actual size and nature of the academic unit.

At the time of its creation as a separate division in 1998 the Division of Film Studies served fewer than 100 majors annually. The Division employed only three full-time tenured and tenure track faculty with a handful of auxiliary faculty.

Last year the division served approximately 300 declared majors as well as numerous 'pre-Film' majors who eventually finished (or will finish) a BA in Film Studies. The division graduated 66 of the college's 275 bachelor's candidates awarding roughly one quarter of the college's bachelor's degrees. The division typically awards between 5-7 graduate degrees each year. All other academic units in the College of Fine Arts are either departments or schools.

The Division of Film Studies currently has six full time tenured and tenure track faculty. Additionally, we have just hired a seventh tenure track faculty member who will serve both as part of our teaching faculty and our first USTAR Research Professor in the Digital Media cluster shared by the Division of Film Studies and the School of Computing. In addition, we have two full time lecturers, one in gaming and one in tradition animation and sound technologies, and, a three-quarter-time lecturer in screenwriting. In addition to these faculty members, the Division employs several other adjuncts as course offerings demand. For purposes of comparison, the nearest autonomous film department at a state university is the Film Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. At UNLV there are six tenure and tenure track professors and two lecturers.

Initially, the Film Studies Division's academic focus was primarily critical and historical studies. Undergraduates were allowed to take a production course after their sophomore year. There was a basic film production class designed for undergraduates and those undergraduates who did well in that course could take courses primarily designed for our graduate students. While we still believe that a strong background in critical studies and film history is an important foundation to the study and practice of film and entertainment media, we no longer believe we should limit the scope of our students' experiences in the field. In short we are now able to provide a much

broader view of what constitutes the film industry and we have revamped our curriculum, our mission, and our long-range goals to reflect that change in philosophy. Freshmen in Film Studies have half a dozen production classes open to them in a variety of areas including film and video production, animation, and gaming. We have embraced new digital entertainment media in much the way the industry has in recent years and we have developed interdisciplinary programs devoted to teaching those media. Again, by way of comparison, the west coast's premier film school at the University of Southern California now has a "Division of Animation and Digital Arts," and an "Interactive Media" program.

Film Studies Mission

We believe our students deserve a holistic understanding of the cinematic arts to prepare them to fulfill their aspirations as artists, academics, and citizens. Our curriculum combines strong grounding in history and criticism with a solid base in film production, animation, and new media.

The Division of Film Studies is committed to diversity, the creative and professional development of our students and faculty and the interdisciplinary nature of the artistic enterprise. Building on our current strengths, we seek to create an environment that provokes change, inspires innovation and welcomes inquiry. We are dedicated to service to the greater university community and to making a difference in the global neighborhood we all share.

Further

The Division of Film Studies combines a thorough grounding in the history, theory, and criticism of film and entertainment media with rigorous professional training in state of the art production technique. The Division recognizes the importance of storytelling and compelling writing for film and media. Our intent is to be flexible and forward-looking, but still maintain a strong emphasis in all the film crafts, using both traditional and new digital media including, but not limited to, animation and gaming. Our goal is to encourage scholarship and research that combines technology and the traditional film arts to create new processes, tools, and vision for storytelling and entertainment.

Section III - Institutional Impact

Changing the name to the Department of Film and Media Arts will more accurately describe the current size and scope of our work and will offer additional prestige to the College of Fine Arts and the University of Utah. We have an emerging track in animation with courses in traditional and digital animation and history of animation. We administer an interdisciplinary minor in animation studies with our partners in Communication. We have developed an emphasis in gaming and interactive media, the Entertainment Arts and Engineering program (EAE), with our partners in the School of Computing. About forty of our undergraduates participate in the EAE program. Many of these students were hoping to study exactly these subjects when they began their university careers, yet had some trouble identifying the Division of Film Studies as the academic unit where they could pursue their goals. Those who found a home with us report both their pleasure at finally identifying the unit that served their goals and frustration with the

difficulty they had finding our unit. A *Department of Film and Media Arts* would certainly be a more obvious destination for these students.

As a *Department of Film and Media Arts* it will be easier to share academic oversight of interdisciplinary program with our peer departments on campus. Our peers do not easily understand the status of a division and it tends to imply that our unit is not ready to share the responsibilities of interdisciplinary adventures as a true peer to other academic units across the campus.

Additionally as a *Department of Film and Media Arts* our unit will be able to take on responsibility for supervision of shared resources in the College of Fine Arts. A primary goal of the Capital Campaign for the College of Fine Arts is building a new college-wide facility, which will provide a new expanded home for the *Department of Film and Media Arts*. The facility will include additional multimedia classrooms and digitally enhanced performance spaces. The current Division of Film Studies has taken the lead in the creation of professionally produced media within the College. We are consistently the first unit to master new standards and production values as they emerge with the entertainment industry. As a Department we will be more easily perceived as able to fulfill a role we have clearly already assumed.

Section IV - Finances

There are no anticipated addition costs associated with the proposed change in name and status. That is not to say that the division has adequate resources at present or that a *Department of Film and Media Arts* will have fewer needs than a Division of Film Studies. It is simply the case that changing the name of the unit will not materially change our present fiscal situation and our plans to grow our budget. It may, however, be somewhat easier to draw attention to the inadequacies in the present film budget if, as our new name and mission suggest, the scope of our ambitions and plans are more immediately identifiable. The Department of Film and Media Arts will also have the opportunity to compete for extramural funding in the same national arena with other *departments* from across the country.

Section V – Degree Name

Effective at the time of the change of the name Division of Film Studies to the Department of Film and Media Arts, degrees awarded will change to read BA in Film and Media Arts and MFA in Film and Media Arts.