10 April 2008

David W. Pershing  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
205 Park  
Campus

Dear Vice President Pershing,

Enclosed is the Graduate Council’s review of the Division of Film Studies. Included in this review packet are the report prepared by the Graduate Council, The Department Review Sheet and the Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the review wrap-up meeting.

Please forward this review to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next meeting of the Senate.

Sincerely,

David S. Chapman  
Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies  
Dean, The Graduate School
Graduate Council Review
Division of Film Studies

The Graduate Council has completed its review of the Division of Film Studies.

The external reviewers were:
  Michael Renov, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs,
  USC School of Cinematic Arts
  Mary Beth Haralovich, Professor, Department of Media Arts,
  University of Arizona
  Gorham “Hap” Kindem, Professor, Department of Communication Studies,
  The University of North Carolina

The Internal Review committee of the University of Utah included:
  Robert K. Avery, Communication
  Amanda Barusch, Social Work
  Esther Rashkin, Languages and Literature

This report by the Graduate Council’s ad hoc review committee is based on the Department’s self-study, the report of the internal review committee, the report of the external review committee, and the responses from the current and past Chairs of the Division of Film Studies, and the Dean of Fine Arts.

I. DEPARTMENT PROFILE

Program Overview

The Division of Film Studies offers study toward the BA and MFA degrees. It evolved from the Film Studies Program under the aegis of the Departments of Art and Theatre. It began offering the MFA degree in 1981 and the BA in 1983. It then separated from the Department of Theatre in 1998, became a freestanding unit in the College of Fine Arts, and was granted division status in 1999. Film Studies is one of seven academic units within the College of Fine Arts – Departments of Art and Art History, Ballet, Modern Dance, Music and Theatre, the Division of Film Studies and an inter-disciplinary Arts Technology program. This is its first Graduate Council Program Review. The Division sees itself as a “film school situated in the inter-mountain west with a small graduate program that serves both as a training ground and a production center for work in documentary about social issues specific to the American West but national in interest” (2006 Program Self Study).

Faculty

The division has four tenure-track faculty members: two specialists in film and video production and two history and criticism specialists. Three are senior faculty, one is an assistant professor. All regular faculty members are white males, each of whom spoke of being committed to adding gender and ethnic diversity. Internal reviewers noted that the four regular faculty members have joined forces to forge a highly respectable academic unit. Yet external reviewers also describe faculty as stretched to the limits to cover the curriculum, especially in the area of video and film production. Reviewers praise the academic and creative credentials, teaching records, and the impressive service contributions of all regular faculty members.
Seven adjunct faculty members with impressive professional credentials also contribute greatly to the departmental teaching mission. The internal reviewers describe them as the backbone of the academic unit. They also maintain connections with the Sundance Institute, Utah Film Commission, and other film production venues. The Chair raises issue of salary, benefits, and workload equity that are being addressed, but not well enough. Staff members also receive extensive praise from reviewers, the internal reviewers noting that the Division is most fortunate to have them, especially in light of perceptions of low compensation.

Students
The number of film studies majors grew dramatically from 60 in 1991 to more then 300 by 1998. The division currently serves 10 active graduate students, 29 pre majors, 265 majors, and at least 40 undeclared students who appear to be taking classes toward a major. Undergraduates were very excited about their courses and appreciate faculty dedication to their learning. Demand for courses, in production especially, far exceeds the available slots.

About 3 new graduate students, primarily from out of state, are selected each year from a pool of 30-35 applicants. The Division of Film Studies’ own undergraduates are encouraged to apply elsewhere and are rarely admitted to the graduate program. Graduate students have grave concerns about the quality of the graduate program, in large part because they are essentially enrolled in the same classes as undergrads. Those who plan professional rather than academic careers (about ½ of graduate students) are especially concerned about their preparation for those careers. Few graduate students have TA-ships, and graduate students are concerned that they often learn little from their TA experiences.

Curriculum
The undergraduate curriculum has four flexible tracks: production, history and criticism, screenwriting, and animation. The external reviewers note that demand is much greater for the more time- and resource-intensive production courses than it is for history and criticism courses, though demand is also strong for the latter. The department offers a wide-ranging curriculum, though external reviewers note that “serious consideration should be given to what the program can comfortably teach and the excellence the program can achieve with available resources.”

Facilities and Resources
The operating budget is very limited. Film production courses are over-enrolled. Both production and film studies are stretched. The program suffers from inadequate building space. It occupies a portion of the second floor of the Arts and Architecture Classroom Building, which the internal reviewers describe as “dark and drab” and which a student referred to as “the dungeon.” The internal reviewers regard the production operations areas as “marginally adequate,” the housing for support staff, adjunct faculty and forthcoming new faculty hires as “wholly inadequate,” and graduate students have no office space at all. There is no conference room. The external reviewers noted that the Division may be able to manage with the current facilities, but if further expansion is planned, the facilities will become completely inadequate. A plan exists for the Division to renovate and utilize the former Museum of Fine Arts, but this has not yet occurred.
Program Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment
The basic research, teaching, and service missions are accomplished amazingly well given limited resources. Both internal and external review committees, however, note that the Division could benefit by articulating its goals for students more clearly and by working toward a more clearly structured curriculum. Opportunities for moving the Division forward are offered in Recommendations.

ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE THE REVIEWS
1. The Division has a new Chair, Kevin Hanson, and a new Director of Graduate Studies, Chris Lippard.
2. The Division now offers full teaching assistantships to all 2nd-yr. graduate students.
3. The Division has received an additional tenure track line and is searching for an additional faculty member specializing in animation.
4. A graduate pro-seminar has been created granting one credit hour per semester.
5. The Division is joining with the Department of Theatre to pursue donations and state funding for new building space.

II. COMMENDATIONS
1. The Division is to be commended, in the Dean’s words, “for building a noteworthy program with extremely limited resources.”
2. Faculty members, including both regular and adjunct faculty, are to be highly commended for their hard work, dedication, scholarly and creative accomplishments. The collaborative relationship between production and film studies faculty and the strong spirit of collegiality throughout the department is admirable.
3. The adjunct faculty is invaluable to the Film Studies program. They do the bulk of teaching and provide connections with program opportunities in the community.
4. Staff members are also outstanding and are appreciated for the truly impressive work they accomplish in multiple roles and with limited resources.
5. Undergraduates are excited about program, both production and history/criticism, and it is attracting increasing numbers of students. In addition, the quality of student work at both undergraduate and graduate levels is excellent, as indicated by exemplary student projects, especially MFA film projects, and outstanding alumni achievements.
6. The faculty, staff and students make highly effective use of the space and facilities provided to them. The Division has acquired an endowment that generates $25,000 annually to support equipment replacement, maintenance and new capital expenditures.
III. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Division should formalize its mission, articulate a holistic vision, and compose a strategic plan. They will guide the department, especially in light of potential opportunities to expand the faculty, increase resources, and broaden course offerings.

2. All available avenues should be pursued to increase resources. Effort should be taken to increase and upgrade space in the immediate future. The Division should explore ways to increase the number of tenure track and full-time faculty, making every effort to diversify in terms of gender and race. Additional support should be sought for the large group of adjunct faculty, along with a more formalized mechanism for integrating them into the program. Additional support staff should be hired to help manage the daily operations of the Division.

3. The Division should review the undergraduate and graduate curricula to provide explicit structure and progression through sequences. A system that guarantees transparent and equitable access to undergraduate courses would also be helpful. Reviewers argue for a senior capstone course, yet the Chair indicates that one is already in place, so this discrepancy should be reconciled and appropriate adjustments made, if necessary.

4. Special attention should given to the graduate curriculum to develop advanced formal coursework available only to graduate students and to consider graduate students’ preparation for their professional careers, especially in production. An orientation course on “graduate survival and skills” and an exit course exclusively for graduate students should be considered, but at least one graduate-only course is imperative.

5. The current use of TA-ships should be reviewed with an eye toward providing them with more in-depth professional experience, developing pedagogical skills, and freeing up regular faculty members to teach graduate-only courses. See internal review recommendation #8 for one possibility and #9 (f) suggesting graduate student representation on management and curriculum committees.

6. The Division should pursue opportunities to help students move into the profession by developing an internship program and by tracking alumni for fund- raising and networking purposes. The external reviewers note that stronger ties to alumni and to the Sundance Festival and Institute for tie-ins and more internships for students are leveraging opportunities “not to be missed.” In particular, visitors might be invited to teach professional skills to graduate students.

7. The Division is enthusiastic about pursuing interdisciplinary opportunities, including joint appointments, at the University of Utah. We encourage such efforts while also recognizing the risk of weakening the existing program if too much energy is devoted to such efforts (see Self Study, 1.1).

Submitted by the Ad Hoc Review Committee of the Graduate Council

Sally Planalp, Communication (Chair)
Bill Hesterly, Management
Mary Jane Taylor, Social Work
Memorandum of Understanding  
Division of Film Studies  
Graduate Council Review 2006 – 2007

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on 7 June 2007, concluding the Graduate Council Review of the Division of Film Studies. David W. Pershing, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Raymond Tyms-Jones, Dean of the College of Fine Arts; Kevin Hansen, Chair of the Division of Film Studies; David S. Chapman, Dean of the Graduate School; and Frederick Rhodewalt, Associate Dean of the Graduate School were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the recommendations contained in the Graduate Council review completed on 30 April 2007, which addressed the following issues:

At the wrap-up meeting, the working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

**Recommendation 1:** The Division should formalize its mission, articulate a holistic vision, and compose a strategic plan. They will guide the department, especially in light of potential opportunities to expand the faculty, increase resources, and broaden course offerings.

The Dean of the College of Fine Arts is developing a plan to restructure several departments and divisions within the college in a “department of visual arts.” At present, the plan is to have Film Studies remain a division within this new department. The Division will provide a new mission statement that will include a clear description of student opportunities in the areas of narrative and documentary film making. The Division is completing a planning document that will accommodate future faculty additions and resource allocation. Of course, the plan will be coordinated with the Dean’s restructuring plans. The Division will provide copies of its new mission and planning statements to the Graduate School by the end of Fall semester, 2007.

**Recommendation 2:** All available avenues should be pursued to increase resources. Effort should be taken to increase and upgrade space in the immediate future. The Division should explore ways to increase the number of tenure track and full-time faculty, making every effort to diversify in terms of gender and race. Additional support should be sought for the large group of adjunct faculty, along with a more formalized mechanism for integrating them into the program. Additional support staff should be hired to help manage the daily operations of the Division.

The Division plans to expand faculty in the area of animation. Accordingly, the Division has been allocated one new FTE and will recruit a faculty member in this area. It also plans to convert productivity funds to an additional .5 FTE in animation. The Chair is negotiating with adjuncts to have contracts in which clear expectations for workload are stipulated. In addition, the Chair is restructuring the adjunct stipend scale in order to provide greater equity.
Memorandum of Understanding
Division of Film Studies

Recommendation 3: The Division should review the undergraduate and graduate curricula to provide explicit structure and progression through sequences. A system that guarantees transparent and equitable access to undergraduate courses would also be helpful. Reviewers argue for a senior capstone course, yet the Chair indicates that one is already in place, so this discrepancy should be reconciled and appropriate adjustments made, if necessary.

The Division is addressing this recommendation at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The undergraduate curriculum is being evaluated and reorganized in order to provide greater structure and sequencing. The Division is increasing staffing for graduate core courses to serve better graduate demands; at least one graduate seminar will be offered each year. The Division has also discontinued offering 6000 level courses as part of its effort to dedicate teaching resource exclusively to the graduate program. Finally, the Division plans a full evaluation of its graduate curriculum this academic year.

Recommendation 4: Special attention should given to the graduate curriculum to develop advanced formal coursework available only to graduate students and to consider graduate students’ preparation for their professional careers, especially in production. An orientation course on “graduate survival and skills” and an exit course exclusively for graduate students should be considered, but at least one graduate-only course is imperative.

This recommendation has been addressed in the Division’s response to Recommendation #3. The Division is also exploring collaborations with the other departments/colleges to offer interdisciplinary courses of interest to Film Studies graduate students. For example, they are negotiating with the College of Law to offer a graduate course in entertainment law.

Recommendation 5: The current use of TA-ships should be reviewed with an eye toward providing them with more in-depth professional experience, developing pedagogical skills, and freeing up regular faculty members to teach graduate-only courses.

The Division reports that all graduate students are currently supported. They intend to fund 3 Teaching Assistants and increase the number of undergraduate course offerings taught by TAs.

Recommendation 6: The Division should pursue opportunities to help students move into the profession by developing an internship program and by tracking alumni for fund- raising and networking purposes. The external reviewers note that stronger ties to alumni and to the Sundance Festival and Institute for tie-ins and more internships for students are leveraging opportunities “not to be missed.” In particular, visitors might be invited to teach professional skills to graduate students.

Memorandum of Understanding
The incoming Chair is attempting to reestablish a relationship between the Division and the Sundance Festival and Institute with the goal of establishing an internship position with the SFI. The Chair is also working with Division alumni to establish internships in the profession.

Recommendation 7: The Division is enthusiastic about pursuing interdisciplinary opportunities, including joint appointments, at the University of Utah. We encourage such efforts while also recognizing the risk of weakening the existing program if too much energy is devoted to such efforts (see Self Study, 1.1).

The Division will pursue these opportunities to the extent that they enhance the emerging graduate curriculum. For example, the Division has an ongoing relationship with the College of Humanities in the area of animation studies. They are also attempting to develop an interdisciplinary relationship with the School of Computing in the area of computer animation.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by annual letters of progress from the Chair of the Department to the Dean of the Graduate School. Letters will be submitted each year until all of the actions in the preceding paragraphs have been completed.

David W. Pershing
Raymond Tymas-Jones
Kevin Hansen
Fred Rhodewalt

David S. Chapman
Associate VP for Graduate Studies
Dean, Graduate School