



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Academic Program Review  
Art + Architecture**

*(Architecture and Community Design, Fine Arts, Arts History/Arts Management, and Design)*

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Alison Hilton, *Wright Family Distinguished Professor of Art History and Chair,  
Department of Art, Music and Theater, Georgetown University*

Kelly Detweiler, *Professor of Painting, Drawing and Mixed Media and Chair,  
Department of Art and Art History, Santa Clara University*

Howard Davis, *Professor of Architecture, Department of Architecture and  
Center for Housing Innovation, University of Oregon*

Karen Cheng, *Associate Professor and Chair, Visual Communication Design Program,  
University of Washington*

**CAMPUS VISIT:** March 11-13, 2009

The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Dean and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the department's self-study and other university materials.

**1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.**

- Overall, the reviewers rated the department as good to adequate and noted that while Art History/Art Management and Architecture and Community Design were good, there were some curricular problems to be resolved in Fine Arts and Design.

**2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

1. **SPACE:** The review team emphasized at numerous points in their report that a "serious lack of appropriate facilities" has "compromised the quality of learning" and that "spatial constraints will limit enrollment even if demand increases". Indeed, the most unequivocal finding emerging from their visit was that "space is the most urgent issue for the department as a whole and for each individual program" since it is beginning to affect student morale and attrition. The review team urged the University administration to formulate an "overall plan and commitment regarding space" that will "have resolution within an understood time frame." The situation has reached such a critical level that "pedagogy is often driven by space restraints instead of by a centralized vision of what the department wants to teach their majors". The space situation in each program is outlined below.
2. **CURRICULUM:** The review team noted that most units needed additional work to "refine specific courses and course sequences" and that curricular issues were most evident in units with new faculty. In addition, the reviews noted that there might be a potential conflict between "specific pre-professional or pre-graduate school orientation in the context of a broad liberal arts education".

3. **FACULTY AND STUDENTS:** The review team noted that the faculty had a large service and advising loads and they needed more explicit guidelines for promotion and tenure with regard to research/creative work. There were also some problems with adjunct faculty. They also stressed the need to develop “standard metrics for assessing undergraduate student success and, in some instances, of making course work more challenging.
4. **DEPARTMENT PLANNING:** The reviewers urged the department to refine and revise its vision, especially given the number of new faculty members. A new department long range plan should consider how to better promote the department’s programs, develop reasonable metrics for assessing student success, and, while pursuing the social justice mission, focus on the needs of majors and minors for advanced level learning and instruction. The plan should also include clear ideas on what will be done with additional space and might include provisional ideas for graduate programs in Arts Management and Museum Studies and Architecture and Community Design.

**3. What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

The review team made a number of specific recommendations for each program.

**Design**

*Curriculum*

- The current curricular structure of the BA program does not “adequately prepare the majority of graduates for positions in the field of design”. Design faculty will eventually have to decide whether to replace the current program with a BFA pre-professional program (with greater knowledge and skills in graphic design) or offer a BFA option to a select group of students.
- Students in the program need to be presented with “greater accuracy and realism” regarding potential career paths in the field upon graduation.
- The review team outlined a number of specific suggestions for courses in Design including adding a course on portfolio/professional preparation.

*Faculty*

- The reviewers noted that three full-time faculty members in Design is the minimum for “the most basic program in Design” and five full time faculty would more ideal.
- There needs to be more interaction between full-time and adjunct faculty.
- The design program faculty should meet in regularly scheduled meetings.

*Students and Student Learning*

- USF students seem surprisingly “disengaged from the greater San Francisco design sphere.”

*Space*

- Space is “inadequate in the extreme.”
- Ideally there should be one studio space for the junior class on one for the senior class. Alternate gallery space also needs to be developed.
- Off-campus classroom space should be seriously considered.
- Administration should implement a “standard policy regarding support for faculty studio space”.

**Fine Arts**

*Curriculum*

- Course offerings should be driven by department goals and not faculty preferences.
- Lower division courses need to be more uniform in implementation (a common syllabus for Studio Systems for example).

- Lower division offerings need to be expanded to attract new majors.
- Contemporary Art and Contemporary Theory need to be offered regularly and be taught by qualified Art History faculty.
- Prerequisites for upper division courses need to be established.
- Upper division courses need to be offered sequentially and less frequently to ensure a critical mass of majors in the class.

#### *Faculty*

- New faculty and faculty turnover has affected program continuity and faculty skills must be maximized without compromising the curriculum.
- Junior faculty have too many administrative duties.

#### *Students and Student Learning*

- Learning outcomes need to be agreed upon.
- There is an “imbalance” between what the department claims they are doing and what is actually happening (e.g. evidence that students were ready for graduate study).
- Students were concerned about class cancellations, lack of prerequisites and a lack of upper division courses for art majors.
- “None of the students interviewed expressed confidence with their preparation to continue their education in graduate school”.

#### *Space*

- For Fine Arts, “the facilities are inadequate for the size of the program”.
- The department is losing students because of the lack of facilities. The reviewers felt the program was larger than the available space and this “limits pedagogical growth as well as the ability of the students to maximize their experience within the major”.
- There is a need for storage space (faculty and students) as well as additional gallery space.

### **Art History/Art Management**

#### *Curriculum*

- The reviewers felt the program needed more upper division research courses and that the absence of any “regularly scheduled courses in pre-modern art is especially striking.” Students need advanced courses (classical, medieval, Renaissance art, etc) that provide a “deeper understanding of the relationships between subjects and forms of art in their historical, social and philosophical contexts”.
- Allow some class substitutions to accommodate the academic needs of the students.
- Build up the range of upper division Art History courses and offer at least one course per semester that “requires an academic research paper and emphasizes the methodologies of the discipline”.
- Develop a senior capstone course where students produce a thesis or other substantial work.

#### *Faculty*

- The program is clearly understaffed in terms of full-time faculty and this means they “under strength in traditional areas of art history” though the pre-professional components are “unusually strong compared with other programs nationally”.
- Faculty should begin to consider whether Architecture should be a stand-alone department/program separate from the other units.

#### *Students and Student Learning*

- In terms of graduate study or curatorial work, students should have a “solid foundation in ‘content areas’ (period or style specific art history courses).”
- Students wanted more upper-division courses with research papers.
- The program should consider more survey courses designed only for potential majors rather than general appreciation courses.

### *Graduate Program*

- The department should consider over the next few years developing a masters program in Art Management and Museum Studies for which there would be real interest.

## **Architecture and Community Design**

### *Curriculum*

- Introduce more lecture/seminar courses on architectural thought, especially an “Introduction to Architecture” course.
- Consider more courses “concerned with the human factors of architecture” as well as courses on environmental systems, landscape architecture and urban design. There should be regular electives in urban design and urban issues.
- More attention to skill building “in hand drafting in studios or in a separate media course”.
- Consider developing more explicit standards for studio work at each level but particularly at the intermediate level.
- Increase the amount of studio time students have each week from 5-1/2 hours to 8 hours.
- Consider developing an architectural technology minor with science departments.
- Develop more visiting lectures and occasional seminars and explore collaborations with other programs inside and outside the department.
- Develop support system for community outreach activities particularly those overseas.
- Consider the possibility of offering a graduate program sometime in the future.

### *Faculty*

- The program needs two new faculty members, all with the capability of teaching architectural design and a specialty in technical/structural aspects of architecture, landscape design, digital media in architecture, sustainability, and architectural history/theory.
- Ensure standards for promotion and tenure reflect and include the “unique situation of architecture faculty members in the academy”.
- Involve adjunct faculty in the life of the program and give them adequate office space.

### *Students and Student Learning*

- Increase the size of the program by 50% to 140-150 students with commensurate increases in faculty, facilities and staff support.
- Examine the advising system and ensure students receive appropriate information on requirements and opportunities.
- In a young program, encourage and institutionalize student feedback about the program.

### *Space*

- The review team felt that “the physical facilities as they now exist are totally inadequate” and that “the lack of appropriate physical facilities is a severe problem that can only damage the program as it attempts to develop and grow”.
- Each architecture student needs a dedicated drafting table in a studio equipped with data access as well as access to a plotter and other computer equipment during extended hours.
- Each studio needs layout and pin-up space for student work, adequate light and ventilation and full time access for students.
- The program needs storage space for tools, equipment and supplies, archive space for student models and drawings, a shop and testing facility (with outdoor work space), critique spaces with space for three simultaneous reviews, additional computer lab and common social space.

**4. In the opinion of the external review committee is the program following the University's strategic initiative in that it is;**

- a. Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.
  - The review team was impressed by the “concern shared by faculty and administrators for the quality of education and by their awareness of the need to move the programs forward.”
- b. Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.
  - The “USF A+A students are “self selected and dedicated” and they want to be in these programs.
  - Many students had chosen the program “because of its strong community and service learning emphasis and on its balance of academic courses and applied or pre-professional study.”
- c. Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.
  - The reviewers noted that the department “nurtures and encourages students in their creative work and in their involvement with community outreach and service learning.”

**5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?**

- The reviewers felt that the “faculty of this multi-disciplinary department has collaborated to create an environment that directly reflects the vision and mission of the University of San Francisco”.
- They went on to say that “the department and its programs have great potential and are poised to be central in the mission of the University and in the life of the city of San Francisco.”
- The review team noted, “Each unit has found ways to connect with underserved communities both locally and internationally in spite of space, faculty and facility constraints.”

**6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the AVP's office do to appropriately respond to the review?**

- Provide a timetable for addressing and solving the serious space problem that is beginning to impact academic quality and programmatic development.
- Hire more full time tenure track faculty members.

**7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?**

- Without question, the most pressing issue for the department and its future development is space.