

# **University of New Mexico**

## **Department of Art**

### **Academic Program Review**

#### **Review Panel Report**

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## Introduction to the Report

This report is based on the academic program review of the University of New Mexico Art department by the review panel: Samuel Truett (internal member), Laurie Gatlin (California State University, Long Beach), Julie Johnson (University of Texas, San Antonio), and Ed Osborn (Brown University). The site visit for this review took place during October 21-22, 2019. This report follows the format provided by the Office of Academic Affairs for the onsite report. The contents of the report are organized according to the following sections:

- Teaching and Learning: Curriculum
- Teaching and Learning: Assessment
- Students (undergraduate and graduate)
- Faculty
- Research, Scholarship, & Service
- Peer Comparisons
- Resources & Planning
- Facilities
- Strategic Planning
- Overall Recommendations

Within each section, bullet points are taken from the end-of-visit report powerpoint. Narrative below expands on those bullet points and may also include items overlooked in that immediate time frame, but added upon through a more reflective review of notes and materials.

## Teaching & Learning: Curriculum

### Strengths:

- Very flexible in curriculum, encourages interdisciplinarity and collaboration
- Rigorous course offerings despite budget cuts
- Support for low-enrolled courses allows students to progress towards graduation (dept)
- Art and Ecology and Land Arts programs are first rate and distinctive and distinguishing areas for the department, with links to over sixteen organizations
- Arts of the Americas program in Art History is exemplary and a model for other such nascent programs across the US

The curriculum is excellent. The department chair has fostered a cooperative and equitable system in which low enrollment courses can be cancelled and replaced by another course, either in that or the next semester. In this way, students are given a rich variety of topics from which to choose and build their programs of study. The course offerings are published in a bulletin ahead of time, allowing students to plan. The students are very satisfied with the number of courses and have no trouble completing their degree plans with that regard. Professors are offering up-to-date courses that meet standards for undergraduate and two terminal degrees (MFA and PhD in studio and art history, respectively). This approach is very beneficial for UNM students, many of whom are receiving an elite education for an affordable price (outstanding research faculty teaching relatively small classes). Where other universities dealing with budget issues have cancelled such classes, or tried to change student numbers to increase FTEs, UNM continues to offer an outstanding learning experience for students. The programs that cancel rich offerings eventually dwindle and die out. UNM's Art History course offerings are outstanding in many areas and best known for their breadth in the Arts of the Americas. They are an established pioneer in the US in this field, so that the PhD program continues to attract students despite the low funding available for them. In Art Education, the curriculum is being modernized with the strengths of new faculty taken into consideration.

The Art and Ecology Program is an innovative, forward-thinking program that attracts strong students and provides the Art Department with a high-profile area of research and practice. It has strong connections to other areas of the department and to other departments in the university. It is an excellent example of combining practice, research, and pedagogy to explore environmental issues via a rigorous form of creative inquiry. Similarly the Land Arts of the American West program has a distinct and distinguished profile, and is a long-running example of the kind of innovative and fully engaged curriculum that makes impressive use of site, scholarly expertise, and community interaction as an integral part of creative practice and research.

The core for the undergraduate curriculum is a pair of introductory courses, Art Practice I & II, followed by some area-specific foundation courses. The balance of conceptual and practical skills amongst the classes was a point of debate among faculty and students, and seemed to vary by area of practice and perceived aim of the foundation part of the curriculum. The conceptual skills covered in Art Practice I & II do provide a basis for the foundation studies in the various areas of the program, and the implementation of this model of introductory studies parallels ones used successfully at other institutions.

The main ceramics curriculum that includes Pueblo Pottery and related practices is innovative, engaged with the local communities and landscapes, and has an open, cross-disciplinary approach. It was impressive to see this successfully implemented even working within the constraints imposed by the available spaces and budget. The curriculum here shows a healthy vision for future growth and serves as a model for site-based creative practice - something that will be of increasing importance to the profile and aims of the department.

The Experimental Art and Technology program is doing excellent work with limited means and has built an impressive program from its start nearly twenty years ago. The curricular connections between this area and others in the program are both strong and serve as a necessary grounding for training in contemporary arts practice. The kinds of creative work and practices found in the area of electronic arts have both a wide range of forms and tend to change quickly in tandem with technological developments and cultural response to them. The area has done a good job in keeping up with this and the planned new faculty hire will help to grow the program and maintain its strength and flexibility.

The Photography area has long been noted as first rate and has a significant national profile. The curriculum and facilities here are impressive, especially the latter where limited space has been put to extremely efficient use.

Both Printmaking and Art History make good use of the Tamarind Institute, which is located on campus and serves as an outstanding resource for the department's educational efforts.

### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- May be possible for students to not take a course in European Art history and still graduate; such courses are particularly important in the age of globalization, where artists are crossing borders and working within and against various idioms developed in Europe as well as in Latin America
- Foundation courses (Art Practice I and II and area-specific courses) are required before advanced courses in studio art, but in practice are taken later in the program by some students.
- Ceramics area has two very separate tracks, one of which appears isolated from the other curricular areas in the program.
- Limited budgets affect every area of the department's curriculum

Outstanding courses in European art are also offered, but students are not required to take any of them, which should be remedied. This oversight might be corrected through advising or implementing a requirement. Being more fully informed about a variety of fields, including this foundational one for the field, would benefit students in their future lives as critics, teachers, curators and artists.

There is a clear pathway of courses through the studio program that is spelled out on paper, but students appeared to be able to take upper-division courses without necessarily taking the area foundation courses first. In part this appeared to be related to the timing and number of courses offered, the necessity of students to try to finish their course requirements within four years, and some students having skills in one or more areas before arriving in the program. Students skipping introductory courses or taking them out of order is not uncommon in many university art programs (even if not an optimal practice), so the department may want to formulate a policy that can apply to majors and non-majors alike about more effectively managing the course pathways.

The ceramics area has two very distinct tracks, something that is quite unusual for an art department. The Pueblo Pottery track mentioned above functions effectively as a core part of the Art Department's program. However the track that focuses on Arita Porcelain appears isolated from the rest of the ceramics area, has little cross-disciplinary engagement with the department's curriculum as a whole, and is driven by a single faculty member. It is hard to see how this narrow area of pedagogy serves the larger curricular goals of the department or helps to build a future in which arts practice and research intersects with many different fields. The department would be well served by reviewing the overall value of this part of the curriculum in light of current and future needs of the program and assess its effectiveness in preparing students for contemporary art practice.

Budgetary constraints significantly limit the ability of the department to provide the curricular offerings to the extent that they would like. Restrictions on space, equipment, and personnel due to budget issues came up in nearly every conversation. While the curriculum has many strengths, it needs better monetary support to stay strong in the long run.

## Teaching & Learning: Assessment

### Strengths:

- Compliant with required assessment protocols, using varied assessment tools, including reviews and symposia (which capture a range of accomplishments)
- Analysis of strengths and weakness of the assessment tools used, and they adjust their processes as indicated

The department is compliant with university protocols for assessment, and in addition to that reporting, has devised its own assessments that are meaningful for the professional development of artists and art historians. For artists in the MFA program,

five faculty members, made up of a diverse team from art history and other media (and that does not include the major professor), conduct studio reviews on a regular, formalized basis. For art historians in the MA and PhD programs, a symposium is held in which they present their work. All faculty attend, listen and provide feedback. Students attend each other's studio reviews and symposium presentations, and learn from this while experiencing a community of learners. There is a staff member, rather than a faculty member, who serves as graduate advisor of record for all graduate students, whether they are MFA, MA or PhD-bound. She plans the studio reviews, helps students with their teaching assistantships, and pays close attention to what the graduate students need. She received accolades from everyone. The students in particular singled her out for her guidance and help in navigating their careers at UNM. This unusual model deserves some praise and perhaps emulation by other large art and art history departments.

### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- Hard to track enrollment by program area, which it makes it difficult to provide a clear picture of which parts of the program are seeing the heaviest demands from students
- No way to track post-graduate activities beyond anecdotal reports

The interdisciplinary nature of the work that students pursue in their studies has made it difficult to track the number of undergraduate students in each specific area. Even if enrollments can be quantified, students can sometimes make use of studio resources in areas different from areas in which they are currently enrolled. While this is a statistical data challenge, it points to one of the great strengths of the department, that of an integrated program. If the department can come up with a way of tracking this it may help to make a clear picture of resource usage and serve as an effective model for other programs across the university in which students work in many areas. The data on students who have graduated from the program (both undergraduate and graduate) is incomplete, and a mechanism is needed to track the careers of students once they have completed the program. (This issue is hardly unique to UNM.)

## **Students**

### **Strengths:**

- Department is attracting high quality students
- Recruitment efforts include outreach to local schools as well as on campus, as well as local communities (leading to increased enrollments)
- Graduate students complete their programs with a depth of teaching experience, which prepares them for future employment; they also learn as they teach the surveys or entry-level studio courses.

The university has attracted outstanding students despite very low funding, as well as the very surprising fact that the department is unable to provide financial or teaching promises in letters of acceptance. Students are struggling with finances, but because of their teaching assignments, are learning and are getting substantial on-the-job experience that will help them get employment. Graduate students are an excellent resource for teaching, and are mentored closely by faculty. The Art History graduate students are enthusiastic survey teachers, although their pay is so low that they often take second jobs. Some of the MA students come in with teaching experience and getting these positions is competitive. They have two assistants per 100 students to help with the grading, which allows for a great undergraduate learning experience. MFA students are closely mentored by faculty when they begin teaching and feel secure and satisfied with the experience. Recently, MFA students in the New Media program have benefited from immersive technology internships in Santa Fe, and these have resulted in permanent jobs.

The department offers outstanding recruitment materials in the form of brochures and graphics that indicate potential careers in the arts; they also visit high schools to recruit. The department has visibility through the museum and rotating gallery exhibitions, and the innovative Art and Ecology program that has high profile exhibitions such as “Species in Peril Along the Rio Grande.” Art History boasts a peer-reviewed graduate student journal, *Hemisphere*, which raises the profile of the department across the nation and beyond. There is even a PhD program at Florida State University named after the journal. The dean has promised future funding for a faculty member to attend the area SPE (Society for Photographic Education), which is the major recruitment tool for photography, and UNM’s program is ranked #5 in the US. The Art Education program has recently introduced a high school art juried show that has drawn state-wide interest, and is an excellent recruitment tool. As the only public university in the state that offers a licensure program, the Art Education program is poised for growth in order to supply art educators to fill a state-wide need.

#### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- Lack of funding may erode student recruitment and retention
- Grad student financial obligations and instability of funding may affect completion time, and may affect their quality of teaching (which affects undergraduate learning), and negatively impacts their ability to function as a cohort
- Clearer job descriptions and guidelines for teaching and graduate assistants

The department does lose prospective applicants to other universities that provide substantial funding, and, in a recent development, has not been able to offer teaching assistantships to all students. Some MA students requested more teaching observations by faculty. The PhD students in particular note that completion time is delayed for financial reasons; as they are teaching and taking second jobs, inevitably



the dissertation phase takes longer. MFA students report the same thing, which slows academic progress, negatively impacts their teaching, and has a negative impact on the ability to maintain cohesion as a cohort and community. Innovative approaches to help subsidize graduate students are needed.

## Faculty

### Strengths:

- International reputations that draw students (at graduate level in both studio and art history)
- Sense of collegiality and collaboration
- Art Education approach is savvy and professional
- Faculty is deeply engaged with professional organization in discipline
- Appropriate teaching load for research faculty in place (2/2)

The faculty is outstanding, with international reputations. The faculty received praise from the graduate students, who expressed that they are very attentive and caring and provide excellent coursework and advising. Although there is very little research support, the Art History faculty in particular are succeeding within the same, elite world as other researchers who have big budgets for research and conference attendance. The studio faculty are interdisciplinary and extremely cooperative, which benefits the students, especially the MFAs who are entering an artworld in which art practices regularly combine disciplines and use advanced conceptual approaches. A number of them serve as a model of artist activist and artist citizen, and provide great inspiration to their students in this way.

### Areas Requiring Improvements:

- Classicist/Mediterranean specialist, Native American specialist, Chicana/Latina specialist are needed for art history to fill missing expertise, as this is a nationally recognized PhD program/large undergraduate studio and art history program.
- More research support for faculty (discussed below)
- Many areas could use more regular (and less adjunct) faculty

## Research, Scholarship, & Service

### Strengths:

- Outstanding quality of research, scholarly activity and creative output across all three areas
- Satisfy and exceed expectations for graduate mentorship (tutorials, committees)
- Service to maintaining department infrastructure is remarkable

- Outreach to community for recruitment, and internships, increases visibility of department while also leading to permanent employment for students

To join this department, one must be an excellent and promising researcher or artist. The department has created a window display of faculty books or posters for talks at prestigious venues, which demonstrates the impressive accomplishments and engagement of its faculty. They have international reputations in their respective fields, and are well situated to be guiding future artists, educators, and art historians on paths to careers in their respective fields. The faculty provides quality, outstanding peer-review publications and exhibition records. Faculty are eligible to receive sabbatical support every seven years, at 2/3 pay for one year or full pay for half a year.

#### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- RAC (Research Allocations Committee) has been reluctant to accept creative output as viable research for funding.
- General lack of research funding for conferences, exhibition, research

This active research is being conducted without much funding from the department, which has suffered budget cuts. For scholars in the arts of the Americas or Europe, research and travel can be expensive. For art historians, image rights can be costly, and for artists, sending art works to exhibitions is also a financial burden.

The production of new creative work is costly in both time and materials, just as in many other fields. It is surprising to find that the RAC has found difficulty in considering this to be legitimate research, especially since the cross-disciplinary nature of the work is self evident. Many universities have addressed this issue and now regularly consider creative practice to be worthy of standard research funding. This shortcoming needs to be addressed immediately for UNM to keep up with other research-based institutions.

Creative ways to fund research should be explored. For just one example, some institutions are experimenting with grant incentives provided by the provost. This might entail providing grant writing consultants (professional editors from inside or outside the university) and financial incentives for NRUF grants (i.e. one-time \$5000 payments for successful grants). An NRUF grant list might include NEH, Getty, and other national granting agencies. When a faculty member is awarded an NRUF grant, their salary is covered for a year, and the department gets that money to replace their teaching load for a year. Because such humanities grants typically provide \$60-65,000 replacement salary, the incentive program investment can pay off for the university. Everybody wins. Some faculty may already be writing grants on a regular basis, but these are incredibly time-consuming for an unguaranteed outcome; hence, the incentive to encourage more of this activity.

## Peer Comparisons

The Department of Art has chosen the following peer institutions from the UNM list of peer institutions:

- University of Arizona, Tucson
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Nebraska, Lincoln

While the University of Arizona's enrollment is double the size of UNM's, the undergraduate enrollment in the School of Art is comparable to UNM's department. However, UA's graduate program is smaller than UNM's despite offering an additional terminal degree, the PhD in Art & Visual Culture Education and a Museums Studies Certificate. Art Education is a division within the School of Art that offers various tracks in the undergraduate and graduate degree program, Art & Visual Culture Education, Community & Museums, and Teaching. The Studio Art program has several areas, some of which are combined (e.g., 3D & Extended Media), but a designated interdisciplinary area only exists for the MFA program. The undergraduate program has a required First Year Experience, which appears to have some curricular similarities to the Art Practice I & II courses at UNM. There is no program in the Art Department at UA that compares with the Art & Ecology program at UNM either in area focus or degree of outreach.

The University of Colorado (CU), Boulder was selected as a comparative peer institution for its similarities in their Art and Art History department. While CU Boulder focuses on Art History and Art Studio, without offering degrees in Art Education, the department emphasizes an interdisciplinary education. Also, CU Boulder offers a PhD in Arts of the Americas, which is one of the two emphases in the UNM art history program. CU Boulder has a small graduate program (only 30 students in art and art history combined), yet the undergraduate program is large. Nevertheless, their Department of Art and Art History is also experiencing a slow decline in undergraduate students following the national trend of downward enrollments in Arts and Humanities majors. The Art Studio program features two areas - Interdisciplinary Media Arts Practices and Sculpture & Post-Studio Practice - that mirror some of the curriculum found at UNM. These areas reflect strategies and methods to build cross-disciplinary practices and social engagement into the core of their pedagogy and research.

The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, is of similar size as UNM. The School of Art at the University of Nebraska has three branches, Art Studio, Art History, and Graphic Design (SAAHD). Once again, Art Education is not located within the School. The curricular areas of the Art Studio program are more traditional than are found at UNM, with much less evidence of interdisciplinary practice. It should be noted that the College of Fine and Performing Arts, in which the SAAHD is housed, has an entirely separate area for Emerging Media Arts outside the Art Studio program and a cross-area Digital Arts initiative within the College.

**Strengths:**

- Art History leads in the field of Arts in the Americas
- Photo program is ranked #5 nationwide (#2 in public schools)
- Art and Ecology is an innovative program that is attracting interdisciplinary cohort of faculty and graduate students
- The Pueblo pottery program is culturally grounded, unique in the landscape of ceramics programs in the US, and situated in an assets rich community
- Lower tuition costs than peers

Tuition costs at UNM compare favorably with two of the comparison schools; ASU has a comparable tuition rate. UNM excels in graduate education in both studio and doctoral programs. The Pueblo Pottery program in particular provides a unique and culturally based program that is grounded in regional resources.

**Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- Only one of the three comparison schools offered an Art Education program, which makes it difficult to compare in that regard.
- No single area within the Art Departments at the other schools showed the same kind of pedagogical split that is evident between the two ceramics tracks at UNM.

ASU has better funding for studio areas, though it does not have as many employment opportunities locally for students or graduates.

**Resources & Planning**

Any large-scale change in departmental resources and planning depends on decisions and budgeting priorities at the dean's level or at central administration. At the dean's level, we recommend that future decisions about hiring new faculty be made in close discussion with the priorities of the department.

**Strengths:**

- Excited about possibility of new building
- Excellent stewardship of existing equipment and facilities
- Rich collaborative environment
- Strong staff support

The dean typically requests five-year plans from the chair, which is an outstanding idea. The chair plans for future hires to fill gaps in programs, queuing the departmental needs in a paced, reasonable way. The dean is working hard to acquire funds through outstanding development skills, and has clearly heard some of the issues related to resources. For example, she is sending faculty and students to SPE, which is the major recruiting place for photography, and is very concerned about security next to

the sculpture and studio spaces. The dean is also interested in interdisciplinarity and finding creative ways to make it happen, although the department is in itself an interdisciplinary center.

### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- Some operational expenses are dependent on lab fees and course fees, which may be a disincentive for some students to enroll
- Lack of coordination with teaching faculty with regard to room furnishings
- Surprising lack of financial support, especially with regard to the centrality of arts to the institution and the New Mexico economy
- Steady sources of long term funding for both the Art and Ecology and Land Arts programs are needed
- The department has experienced budget cuts, both permanent and one-time, which creates some pressure

It would be easier for faculty to plan conference presentations and research trips if they had a regular influx of funds. College Art Association and other conferences important to art historians are expensive to self-fund. NCECA, the major conference for ceramics, would benefit the ceramics faculty, who might be encouraged to participate if there were regular funds available.

## **Facilities**

### **Strengths:**

- Plan for new building
- Facilities are well-maintained, although many of the buildings are very old, with old infrastructures
- Safety and security is of prime importance to UNM

First, the department has done an outstanding job of creating spaces for studio disciplines out of found spaces, or repurposing spaces to meet the new needs of electronic arts. The former slide room now functions as a meeting space for the Art and Ecology program; the former projection closet has also been repurposed and other rooms have been retrofitted for electronic arts, one of the special strengths of the department. The department benefits from the outstanding library, art museum and Tamarind Institute, where classes can meet or students have internships. Galleries downtown and on campus as well as the new ARTS lab offer more exhibition facilities. A significant factor in the useability of the spaces is due to an outstanding staff, which provides oversight of the facilities and keeps them well-maintained.

### **Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- The department is spread out across multiple buildings, making collaboration difficult
- HVAC noises, fluorescent lighting is not conducive to high quality art production, especially in the repurposed room where sound art students are presenting their projects
- Multiple rooms need renovation (struggling to keep up to code)
- Graduate studios need independently controlled lighting and sound insulation
- Infrastructure of older buildings needs updating
- Crowded; not enough studios for all faculty
- Classrooms are not designed for interdisciplinary, collaborative work

While the department has repurposed spaces with some ingenuity, they have watched a museum-like building with empty spaces erected next door. The department is spread over several buildings across campus. The noise in one of these classrooms has interfered with student learning, especially for any projects that include sound. The lab assistants and faculty in charge of 3-D facilities have expressed concerns about safety with regard to lighting and the potential desire for students to ‘daisy chain’ their own electrical solutions, and last but not least, security. A former school building has attracted local homeless people, and this is next to one of the 3-D buildings on the edge of campus. Some key equipment needs replacement and the faculty suggested that the foundry should not be in the Mattox Sculpture Center.

The Art Department is probably the most interdisciplinary one on campus, comprising the history of art, art education, and studio art, which now includes all senses (sound being the most recent addition), as well as the sciences, through the innovative Art and Ecology program. They have expressed an interest in being together, as imagists (makers and theorists, historians and critics). As of now, the students must carry things (large art projects) everywhere they go, and often are running across campus to get to their studios or courses. The Bauhaus, a model for art schools and especially today’s interdisciplinarity, had at its core a unification of the various arts under one roof. That utopian dream might be further revived at UNM, which has already in place the faculty expertise and interdisciplinary communication at its core.

The Pueblo Pottery program has a specific need for an outdoor fire pit in order to complete the curriculum cycle for the course.

## Strategic Planning

### Strengths:

- Outstanding faculty, who are collegial and collaborative, and performing beyond expectation
- Innovative curriculum
- Collaborative and community-facing scholarship



**Areas Requiring Improvements:**

- Salaries are very low
- Funding for research, travel is low
- Clear need for additional Art History areas of expertise

The Art History area would benefit from new hires in areas such as ancient/Mediterranean and Native American. The Art Education area would also like another line. The Art Education area is well-positioned to develop a doctoral program in Art Education, but would need additional faculty to develop such a program.

**Overall Recommendations****Teaching & Learning: Curriculum:**

The curriculum is innovative and flexible and serves students well. It has many pieces in place that can build it into an engaged, outward-looking model of art practice, history, and education, one that is linked to the local cultures and ecologies of the southwest - efforts in this direction are recommended. The Art and Ecology program in particular is a strong example of this approach, and implementing a PhD program in this area would be a natural extension of this area of cross-disciplinary inquiry. It would also position the program near the top of the small but growing field of environmentally-themed creative research programs.

**Teaching & Learning: Assessment:**

Assessments are outstanding in most of the areas; not only are they compliant with university mandates, but they have implemented ways to assess students that are very meaningful for professional development.

**Students:**

More support for graduate students is recommended, both in direct funding and in guaranteeing teaching and assistantship places for them. The uncertainty around this has many intertwined negative effects on them and their work in the program.

**Faculty:**

There is a clear need for faculty in Art History in areas in which they have been designated. Additional faculty in Art Education will help support and grow the program, as recent hires have been very beneficial to implementing the new iteration of the program. Additional faculty are needed in Experimental Arts and Technology as well as Photography.

### **Research, Scholarship, & Service:**

All faculty have been doing well in these areas, and sometimes performing extra service beyond what would be normally recommended. More financial support for research is emphatically recommended: faculty salaries are low and they are often using them to fund their own research programs.

### **Peer Comparisons:**

The department fares very well overall with regard to peer comparisons. Some areas, such as art history, are faring well with regard to elite research institutions with regard to faculty and student research, despite the comparable lack of funding. Newer areas such as Experimental Art and Technology and Art and Ecology also excel; the latter in particular has no equivalent among the peer institutions. The department has more outreach and better community engagement than its peers.

### **Resources & Planning:**

There appears to be good communication between the dean and the department chair with regard to planning and resources. The dean also appears to be an outstanding fundraiser, and this is a winning combination.

### **Facilities:**

The recommendation is to house the department in a new building, so that they can be together. In the meantime, there are small things that can be done to improve safety and student learning.

### **Strategic Planning:**

Improve shortcomings:

- Salaries are low
- Funding for research, travel is low
- Clear need for additional Art History areas of expertise
- Improve facilities in the short term, especially where safety is a concern
- Plan for uniting department in one campus area/building

Continue to support departmental strengths:

- Outstanding faculty, who are collegial and collaborative, and performing beyond expectation
- Innovative curriculum
- Collaborative and community-facing scholarship