



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW MEXICO

COLLEGE of EDUCATION

Educational Specialties  
MSC05 3040  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001  
Tel. (505) 277-1499  
Fax (505) 277-6929

March 15, 2012

Dean Richard Howell  
College of Education

Dear Dean Howell,

We have put our best efforts into the Art Education Program. We love what we do. As a faculty, as a group, we work together even though individually we come from disparate positions. Each one of us is completely passionate about our work. Our teaching and our research distinguish us as Art Education faculty in areas of aesthetic empathy and therapeutic aspects of art education, the inclusion of LGBTQ artists in the curriculum, and diverse representation using visual culture theories.

The arts are what make us human. The arts keep kids in school and help kids see the relevance in, and make sense of, their lives. We know that for many, making art is making meaning. The arts can save lives. We try to help our art education students understand art to unleash their creativity, to imagine, to think about and make art through a hands-on approach. We promote inclusion and diversity in our classes.

Art contributes extraordinarily to learning. The arts in education promote unique ways of knowing and communicating, ways of constructing self and knowledge, ways of exploring feelings, cultures, and identities. The Harvard psychologist, Jessica Hoffman Davis's (2008) research shows that the arts provide students with exceptional experiences not offered by other disciplines. When engaged in the arts, students focus on emotion, whether expressing their own feelings or empathizing with others. Students invent their own visual challenges that are relevant to their lives then envision and persevere to arrive at a conclusion all their own. They produce tangible products that reflect back to them their own imaginative thoughts and agency. Art connects children with others whose art they can appreciate. Rather than one right answer, students learn to search for ambiguity when interpreting art works, realizing their thoughts and the ideas may differ yet all are worthy of respect.

Art teaches creativity, collaboration, and interdisciplinary learning that lead to independence and interdependence. We help our students to be the 'creative creators' that Friedman and Mandelbaum call for in their book *That Used To Be Us: How America*

*Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back* (2011). We help our students to do 'non-routine work in a distinctively non-routine way,' (p. 78). We help our students to be the best art teachers. This is what we do and will continue to do. It is our life work.

The APR reviewers recognized our passions, work, and accomplishments. But we have to wonder if the College of Education considers the Art Education Program as an asset to educational efforts in New Mexico.

We have met with the chair of our department to discuss each of the action items raised by the Academic Program Reviewers. We remain committed to improving our program by addressing each action item they identified. First, there was one inaccurate statement on page 7. Regarding ARTE 310, the reviewers noted that the UNM students "observe the students in several sessions at the public school." It should read they "teach the students in seven sessions."

Regarding the first and second action items, we have agreed to more clearly define the options offered in the MA degree (without licensure coursework) to provide students with more flexibility to take coursework outside the program in community art education and museum art education. No additional input would be needed from the college to accomplish these two action items.

We are currently exploring the idea of a degree in Digital Media Education leading to a new 6-12 Digital Media Licensure. This is the third action item the reviewers recommended. We have received very positive and encouraging comments from digital media teachers who are members of the APS Film Advisory Board for this new degree program. We are aware that Governor Susanna Martinez has recognized the need to promote digital media in the state of New Mexico.

We take issue with the fourth action item since we already incorporate digital technologies in our classes in the Art Education Program. We utilize WebCT for two online, two hybrid courses, and a web-enhanced course. We teach a Studio Art in the Schools – Digital Arts class. We actively include technology in our classes through the use of the Internet, PowerPoint, and Prezi. We have an active website where we not only address current students but also highlight the accomplishments of our alumni and make the website user-friendly for prospective students. Each semester we learn that prospective graduate students have utilized our website to download our MA Procedures Manual, application information, and access our course descriptions. We have been able to do this with technology that we've acquired through internal university grants including the Teaching Allocations Subcommittee (TAS) grants since the department was not able to fund the equipment that was needed. However, we are only able to apply for those grants every other year. We would like support from the college so that we can have the necessary digital equipment to stay abreast of rapidly changing technology each year. This is our second highest priority.

The fifth action item the reviewers noted addresses the collaboration with the College of Fine Arts to provide for the BFA/MFA degrees leading to Visual Art K-12 Licensure. We cannot go forward on this item since this was taken out of our hands two years ago. We have not been informed of any deliberations or progress about this item but we hope the college will move forward with these efforts.

The reviewers' sixth action item reads, "Extend the use of studio and gallery facilities." In reference to studio spaces, the reviewers commented that "students interviewed indicated they would benefit from increased access to these spaces. Due to liability and maintaining the spaces, a system is needed to use them more fully in off-semesters and non-daytime hours." The faculty propose adding weekend studio hours that could be provided by a work-study student (as the College of Fine Arts does). For example, we suggest offering six hours on a Saturday. This is our third priority.

Item seven recommends to "increase GA and/or TA positions" stating "the very low level of support for MA students in comparison with programs at other institutions as well as in the Department of Educational Specialties."

In the area identified as "Appropriateness of Short- and Long-term Goals" the team recommends: "hiring a lecturer or creating two TA positions to supervise student teaching, annually freeing up two faculty-taught courses. Although an earlier request for a Lecturer III was passed over, the faculty will submit a proposal again this year. This is an important component to freeing up faculty time that can be better used to teach community and/or museum education in the MA, Media (Visual Culture) Literacy and/or a grades 6-12 Digital Media Licensure, and to remain vibrant as researchers. Most Art Education programs do not rely heavily on faculty supervision of student teaching, as it is not regarded as a productive use of faculty time on a continuing basis. Faculty supervision of the Lecturer or TA will remain important to connecting this crucial field experience to the goals of the program's coursework; the supervision might be a rotating commitment."

The reviewers repeat similar sentiments again in their final suggestions concerning ways we can strengthen the teacher licensure coursework. They suggest to "hire a Lecturer III or two qualified TAs to take over student teaching placements, observations and other supervisory duties." We are aware that it would not be possible to utilize our graduate students as TAs in student teaching since they are pursuing the same degree as some of the other students who would be completing student teaching. Perhaps the external reviewers were basing their suggestions for the use of TAs from their perspectives since both the University of Arizona and Pennsylvania State University offer the PhD degree in Art Education and utilize doctoral students as TAs. That is why we have continually requested a Lecturer III position to oversee the student teaching component of our program. This item is by far our highest priority.

We are committed in our quest for a Lecturer III position for which we have submitted requests four times. We believe this position is needed in order for the art education faculty to further and expand their research, as also noted by the reviewers. We are

confident that our program will rise to the top of the Dean's list of the 38 programs in the College of Education deserving of additional resources.

Elliot Eisner ends his 2004 article, "What can education learn from the arts?" with the following words: "Imagination is no mere ornament, nor is art. Together they can liberate us from our indurated habits. They might help us restore decent purpose to our efforts and help us create the kind of schools our children deserve and our culture needs" (p. 11). As artists and educators, we work every day to support New Mexico's restoration of schools replete with art and imagination, schools "our children deserve and our culture needs." We hope you will choose to support our efforts to strengthen our program and further our goals.

Sincerely,



Dr. Laurel Lampela  
Professor  
Art Education



Dr. Linney Wix  
Professor  
Art Education



Dr. Nancy Pauly  
Associate Professor  
Art Education