

## Memorandum

Date: 16 January 2012

To: University Senate

From: Thomas A. Discenna, Chair  
Senate Planning & Review Committee

Re: Proposal for a BA in Graphic Design

The Senate Planning Review Committee (SPRC) reviewed the proposal from the Department of Art and Art History for a new degree program leading to a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. The SPRC read, reviewed and discussed the proposal on two separate occasions

### Summary

The Department of Art and Art History of the College of Arts and Sciences proposes a new program leading to a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. The program is “structured around interdisciplinary study” and focuses on the connections “between graphic design, fine art, and art history” while ultimately “preparing students with the knowledge and skills required for a career in the field of graphic design.” The program includes the study of the two primary areas of media: print and the digital world and will offer three levels of degree study: a minor in Graphic Design (currently active), a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design, and a Studio Art Bachelor of Arts with Art Education K-12 Certification with a concentration in Graphic Design.

The Department of Art and Art History intends to implement this program upon approval of this proposal. The BA-GD will begin with an enrollment of 20 new students per academic year with a ceiling of 80 majors as the program matures. These students will be drawn from both current OU students and the surrounding community.

The Department of Art and Art History rationalizes this program on the basis of serving the University’s 2020 Vision. The Department maintains that the BA-GD will contribute to making OU a “National University,” citing the growth of similar programs across the country. Similarly, the new program will contribute to OU’s goal of developing Professional Programs that meet marketplace demands as well as contributing to Community Engagement and Partnership through the BA-GD’s internship requirement. Finally, the BA-GD is intended to serve goal of providing a “Student-Centered Learning Experience” through the “course design, assignment structure and learning objectives” of the program which should facilitate the goal of “Future Growth” for the University. Indeed, the Department identifies strong student support for the new program as evidenced by both student input and the initial growth of the existing Minor in Graphic Design.

The Department has identified a number of peer institutions locally (e.g., Wayne State University, College for Creative Studies), statewide (e.g., University of Michigan, Western Michigan University, Ferris State University), and outside the state (Indiana State University, Wichita State University, University of Akron) that offer degree programs in Graphic Design. Many of these institutions offer the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Concentrations or Certificate Programs. The design of the program at OU is consistent with these institutions but differentiates itself on the basis of offering a BA-GD with an interdisciplinary approach.

The BA-GD will be staffed primarily by one full-time (non-tenure track) faculty member and three Special Lecturers. The Department has requested the conversion of an Adjunct Assistant Professor to the position of Special Lecturer. The Department foresees adding more Special Lecturers as the proposal moves forward as well as hiring more full-time faculty in years two and four of the implementation process. Additionally, the Department notes that considerable resources will be required for this new program including substantial additional classroom space with equipment adequate to the task of providing for the technology needs of Graphic Design including Mac computers, laser and ink jet printers, large format scanners, digital projection equipment and upgraded servers.

SPRC has identified the following items as strengths and weaknesses of this proposal.

#### Strengths

1. The committee finds that given the success of the major in Studio Art and the Minor in Graphic Design that there is significant student demand for a BA-GD. We expect that it will meet its enrollment goals without shifting a significant number of students from current programs.
2. In a related sense, the Department of Art and Art History has demonstrated the ability and has the necessary experience to successfully launch a new program of the kind described in the proposal.
3. The committee also finds that the BA-GD will be uniquely poised to work with other departments on campus to create a truly interdisciplinary study of Graphic Design.
4. The committee is eager to see a program of this kind lead to the creation of a BFA degree.
5. This proposal is consistent with OU's mission and the 2020 strategic initiative, and adds to the diversity of OU's program offerings in the arts.
6. The proposal furthers the University's goal of becoming a destination university.

#### Concerns

1. The committee is primarily concerned with the staffing plans submitted in the proposal. Currently, there are no tenure-line faculty teaching in the Graphic Design Minor and the proposal identifies only a projection to hire two "full-time" faculty members. The committee believes that it is unwise and inappropriate to staff a degree

program without the stability proffered by tenure and while we recognize that AAH has sought the conversion of the one full-time faculty member to a more permanent (though not tenure track) position we also note that this request has yet to be granted and that there is no guarantee that it will be. While we have no question as to the qualifications of the full-time instructor and Special Lecturers, we believe that operating a degree program without tenure is an invitation to instability that will have serious repercussions for the success of the program and the reputation of the University.

2. In a similar vein, we are concerned about the resource needs of the proposal including dedicated classroom space and computer equipment. The computing and space needs of Graphic Design are significant and must be constantly updated in order for the Department to fulfill its goal of providing professional training. Given the space limitations currently being experienced on campus an additional program of this size (even given the enrollment cap envisioned) may put considerable strain on an already overburdened system.

With these in mind, the SPRC by a vote of 6-0 does not support the Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. The committee would like to note that the sole issue that led to their negative assessment was the lack of tenure-track leadership and that should this issue be rectified we would unanimously recommend the proposal.