

Recommendations Regarding the Visual Arts at NYU

I. PREAMBLE

After a thorough discussion and evaluation of the options and opportunities expressed in the reports of the faculty-led Steinhardt Strategic Assessment Committee and the Task Force on the Visual Arts as well as advice from many members of the faculty and the deans, and driven principally by academic considerations, the Senior Administration of the University recommends leaving the existing programs in the visual arts in the schools in which they presently reside. Major structural changes within the University require faculty consensus and ownership; thus, a key factor in this decision was a lack of uniform support among the faculty of the four primary schools with programs in the visual arts (the Tisch School of the Arts, the Steinhardt School of Education, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Institute of Fine Arts) for a major shift in structure or organization at this time.

The Administration makes a number of recommendations that are designed to enhance the studio arts program within the Steinhardt School of Education and the visual arts programs throughout the University. These recommendations seek to provide mechanisms to increase the ability of the faculty in the individual schools to collaborate across schools thereby achieving creative and intellectual synergies. We emphasize the importance of synergy -- both within the School and throughout the University -- in enabling us to achieve our common goals for the visual arts at NYU.

An important context for these recommendations is the University's recognition of the unique position NYU occupies in New York City -- a place where art is created, widely exhibited, passionately studied, and deeply experienced. NYU's location within New York City enables the University to tap into a rich and deep talent pool of faculty, visitors, and part-time teachers, as well as exhibitors, curators, and mentors for our students and faculty and their work. These exceptional human resources, which are not available to many other universities, will enable NYU to build a first-rate program in the studio arts, the core vision of which is a talented faculty of excellence that can draw heavily, continually, and organically on the extraordinary talent available in our city.

As a step toward enhancing the arts and music at NYU, we are creating a new position of associate provost for the arts. This action signifies an enhanced university-wide focus on the arts aimed at increasing the visibility of NYU's programs in the arts. This associate provost will provide guidance and leadership on those matters in the arts which transcend individual schools within NYU. The responsibilities of the associate provost will include the coordination of activities and the initiation of new cross-school initiatives in both the visual arts and in music. (This is the same position called for in "Recommendations Regarding Music at NYU").

We are pleased to announce that Dean Mary Schmidt Campbell has agreed to become NYU's first associate provost for the arts, in addition to her current responsibilities as Dean of Tisch. Beginning in the Spring 2005 semester, her new title will be Dean of the Tisch School of the Arts and Associate Provost for the Arts.

Below are listed the specific recommendations for the visual arts at NYU, followed by a narrative elaboration on these recommendations, and a conclusion.

II. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To realize fully the great opportunities for the visual arts throughout NYU, the Senior Administration of the University recommends the following actions:

- In order to acknowledge and support the rich plurality of programs in the visual arts at NYU, all of the existing academic departments in the visual arts should remain in the schools in which they are currently housed.
- Each program in the visual arts at NYU should articulate the ways in which it is making distinct contributions to the rich array of offerings in the visual arts at NYU. Each program's courses, names, and degrees should be reflective of these distinct missions.
- The University, together with the Steinhardt School of Education, will provide support for a new, additional faculty line for a senior leader in the studio arts. We believe that this senior level faculty leadership position will enable the Steinhardt Department of Arts and Art Professions to seize the opportunity to rise dramatically in quality and to attain special distinction, both locally in New York City and nationally.
- The faculty of the visual arts program within Steinhardt should continue to examine and identify ways in which they interface with, and contribute to, art education within their School, thus becoming an integral part of the new holistic mission of the School of Education.
- The Administration encourages increased interactions between the Institute of Fine Arts and the Department of Fine Art through their respective graduate and undergraduate programs. One good example of such collaboration is the current digitization project.
- The Administration encourages the faculty in the visual arts throughout the University to work with the leadership of the Grey Art Gallery to identify more effective and proactive methods to integrate the activities of the Grey Art Gallery with the educational, research and creative programs of the University. The Coordinating Council for the Visual Arts (described below) might provide one mechanism to engage the faculty in this process.

- While a plurality of programs in the visual arts at NYU is viewed as appropriate, more coordination is needed and would be beneficial. The deans, the associate provost for the arts, and, most importantly, the faculty of the programs in the visual arts across the University are being asked to identify areas in which cross-school collaborations and joint programs are possible. We note for example the potential for such joint activities between the photography programs in Tisch and Steinhardt; however, many other possibilities and opportunities for collaboration in the studio arts likely exist. Once these areas have been identified, the faculty, in collaboration with the deans and associate provost, shall devise plans and timetables for developing such joint activities and units. The Coordinating Council for the Visual Arts (described below) will provide an appropriate mechanism to focus this process, and to assure faculty engagement in it. We emphasize that the faculty, with the deans, is the proper group to identify, design, and implement such joint activities.

- The provost, in conjunction with the relevant deans, will appoint a university-wide *Coordinating Council for the Visual Arts*. Co-chaired by two members of the faculty, this Coordinating Council will be comprised primarily of faculty members, with the associate provost for the arts and several deans serving as ex-officio members. The Coordinating Council for Visual Arts will (i) encourage faculty engagement in, and commitment to, coordination of NYU's programs in the visual arts and (ii) encourage joint activities and projects between the programs. Faculty engagement and joint activities will provide synergy amongst these programs which will then strengthen their quality, and that of their students, faculty, research, and exhibits. A possible menu of activities of the Coordinating Council might include:
 - Review and suggest re-designs and enhancements of course offerings in the visual arts, and thus:
 - Reduce duplication of courses and construct the curriculum to provide the widest possible array of course offerings, more advanced classes, and more challenging curricula in all units.
 - Improve access to the courses that will enhance preparation of students in departments throughout the University.
 - Enhance communication among the departments and programs at NYU involved in production, education, administration, and exhibition of art. Possible tools to facilitate communication and coordination include listservs, joint exhibitions, scholarly projects, team teaching, joint courses, and joint programs.

 - Improve informal mechanisms for dialogue across schools and across departments that can lead to strategic hiring; enhance faculty appointments in each program/department through communication and collaboration in the search, recruitment, hiring, and mentoring processes; identify possible joint appointments and other potential hiring opportunities.

- Identify areas in which cross-school collaborations or joint programs are possible -- and develop plans and time tables for developing such joint activities and units.
- Establish focused affinity (or working) groups comprised of faculty and students for the purpose of enhancing collaboration among the units that engage in the visual arts at NYU. (For example, we imagine that there might be several affinity groups working at any one time on projects of varying duration. These projects, which would reflect the current interests of members of the faculty, are conceived to (i) promote cross-departmental and cross-school activities, (ii) improve the quality of university-wide programs in the visual arts for students, and (iii) raise the visibility of activities in the visual arts across NYU and the City. These working groups would have recognized outputs such as scholarly work and public exhibits.)
- Enhance communication to current students regarding various options for the visual arts at NYU. This may involve joint publications and web pages about course offerings, including descriptions of each unit and the unique perspective each provides to students.
- Enhance communication to the larger public about the various possibilities for the creation, study, and appreciation of visual art at NYU, and thus:
 - Develop and implement enhanced and linked web pages; joint publications and promotions announcing exhibits, museum educational offerings, jointly produced calendars of events, etc.
 - Expand the intellectual conversation about the arts in New York by involving artists and scholars in a variety of fields including art history, visual art, cinematic art, aesthetics, critical theory, visual culture, communication, and globalization -- all areas that intersect with the arts.
 - Create spaces for dialogue and discussion of the critical issues that face our society and involve the artists of New York in these discussions.
- Provide a central location for information on sources of funding (foundation, government, or corporate) in support of students and faculty engaged in the production and study of art.

This sample menu of activities of the Council listed above is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. It should be up to faculty, through the Coordinating Council, to lay out a set of explicit goals, design programs and activities that advance those goals, and develop a set of criteria against which success can be measured. The

Coordinating Council will be expected to issue a report along these lines to be submitted within nine months after the group has been charged. During this formative period, some of the activities outlined above are anticipated to be underway.

The provost, together with the associate provost for the arts, will provide oversight of the Council and will, with others in the University Administration, conduct periodic reviews with the faculty to discuss continuation, nature and amount of available resources, sunset provisions, and the like.

For their part, the University and the Schools shall make a modest initial investment of resources to encourage and support the activities of the Council.

III. ELABORATION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed actions listed above are advantageous for many reasons. First, these recommendations can be implemented promptly and they take advantage of the assets available within the Steinhardt School of Education. Maintaining the current configuration of the NYU visual arts programs and departments will enable the Steinhardt School (i) to pursue its new vision and mission, as articulated in the Final Report of the Steinhardt Strategic Assessment Committee, and (ii) to identify artistic and creative expression as an integral and major building block in the Steinhardt School of the future. The Administration supports closer integration of the School's visual arts programs with the broader Arts-in-Education vision of the Steinhardt School reflecting the dual strand of the studio arts as a profession, and arts as a part of a school of education with a broad-based vision and mission.

Second, an analysis of the status of local university arts programs indicates that NYU has a genuine opportunity to improve its quality and reputation in the studio arts in the New York City region. With a strategic and modest influx of financial resources to the Studio Art Program, this program could quickly become one of the premier programs in the city -- a worthy goal for the visual arts for Steinhardt and for the University.

Third, a new senior level faculty leader for studio arts can play an important role in setting new aspirations, recruiting faculty, bolstering fundraising, and raising the profile of the program.

Fourth, the creation of the position of associate provost for the arts sends a message to all of our community about the heightened importance of the arts and music at NYU. The aim is to offer effective University-wide leadership and to raise the visibility of all of NYU's arts programs, both internally and externally.

Fifth, the Coordinating Council for the Visual Arts, would bring together faculty in the visual arts from across the University. In part because the Task Force process revealed marked enthusiasm among the faculty in the affected schools to create such a University-

wide faculty mechanism for coordination, the Administration has confidence that the Council will meet a number of needs identified by faculty. Additionally, the Coordinating Council can and should exemplify the “culture of review” at NYU, insofar as it insists upon strong engagement and ownership by the faculty for any significant structural changes and by appropriate and informed review before further steps are undertaken.

IV. CONCLUSION

These recommendations -- retention of the current structure and location of the various programs in the visual arts, additional resources for studio art, creation of the university-wide position of associate provost for arts, establishment of the Coordinating Council for the Visual Arts, and increased opportunities for collaboration among units -- set out a clear pathway for the visual arts at NYU.

Given the importance of the visual arts throughout society and the academy today, and given our location in New York City, the visual arts presents NYU with a genuine opportunity that we must embrace. The proposed resources, and in particular the incremental senior faculty line, will enable the Studio Arts Program to become a leading program of its kind within the City while also promoting the arts as a fundamental component of the Steinhardt School of Education as a part of its new holistic vision and mission.