

## Departmental Summary

### Strengths:

Visual Arts aligns well with the UW-Superior campus mission, embodying our liberal arts spirit. HIPs participation is strong, especially in URSCA, SYE, FYS, and Global Awareness. Community engagement is also strong: e.g., art exhibitions both on and off campus. This level of involvement reflects the department's strong commitment to the mission and vision of the university.

The department exhibits camaraderie and values collegiality. One manifestation is engagement in active mentorship for new faculty. The department is likewise a model for cross-disciplinary outreach, reflected by the recommendation that new faculty have secondary mentors outside of the VA Department.

Curricular efficiencies are to be commended. An example is the "stacking" of courses: i.e., combining several course numbers at different levels into one classroom, which increases efficiency of classroom and instructor usage. Productivity is high relative to peer institutions. For example, compared to UM-Morris, the UW-Superior Visual Arts faculty are serving almost twice as many students per faculty/staff FTE, while maintaining a high quality of instruction and mentoring. Integrative learning, as demonstrated in stacked classrooms, is also a form of inclusiveness: novice and advanced students share classroom experiences and provide peer review.

APRC also recognizes the continuous monitoring and revision of articulation agreements (e.g., with LSC) for improvement. This eases the transition for transfer students and demonstrates maintenance of disciplinary standards.

### Weaknesses:

Instructional staffing is an issue; four faculty have recently been lost. APRC has concerns about the department's historical reliance on teaching overloads (e.g., Loonsk) in light of the lack of support for overload contracts in the current fiscal situation. It may be that this is no longer an issue, as Loonsk was the standout example and has retired.

Planning for continuous improvement was put on hold (APR section III, p.4). Given the current resource uncertainty, we understand that planning is difficult, but it seems likely that programs may have to adapt to a new normal of perpetual crisis. The department indicated (ibid.) that this section of the APR would be completed by October 2015, but APRC has not received an update as of December 16, 2015.

The programs outside of Art Therapy seem to be relatively neglected in the report received by APRC. APRC does not see evidence of intentionality in the planning and promotion of programming in the areas of Studio Art, Art History, and Art Education. APRC would have liked to see more attention given to the careful review of these non-Art Therapy programs.

The department suffers from a lack of opportunity for faculty development due to funding shortages; this is a campus-wide problem.

### Recommendations:

If the department is not already doing so, APRC recommends applying for Global Awareness recognition status for appropriate courses.

Two VA concentrations (Art History and Art Education) have low graduation numbers, less than the System guideline of 5 graduates per year. Nevertheless, enrollment in individual courses is strong. APRC recommends that the Visual Arts Department determine whether any unnecessary curricular burden results from continuing to offer these concentrations. If additional courses or sections are required to serve this concentration, APRC believes it would be prudent to consider redirecting program resources into areas of higher student demand. On the other hand, if no financial burden is present, VA would do well to make this fact clear, in view of administrative concerns about graduation numbers and curricular bloat. APRC recognizes that the programmatic integration within the VA Department creates a synergy by which each program reinforces every other; this could be made more clear.

The previous APR report (2007) recommended that the department work on improving its retention rates. The present review did not describe what specific actions were taken to address this recommendation. In future reports, APRC recommends the department explicitly explain how prior recommendations were addressed.

APRC urges UW-Superior administration to consider the equipment needs of the VA Department. VA has done a great job of inventorying and assessing equipment status, prioritizing replacement, and even refurbishing and maintaining equipment in-house, but with little outside support. Differential tuition may provide a partial solution.

Claims such as being “the Art School of the North” (VA-ART THERAPY-MAJOR CONCENTRATION.pdf, p.23) are intriguing, but no support is provided in the form of citations. If there is, in fact, demonstrably high demand for VA’s programs, such demand should be substantiated and could be used to justify resource requests. Research supporting the above claim would enable VA to make a strong case for obtaining resources for its programs, such as Art Therapy, and for general equipment (kilns, furnaces, paint, digital photography stations, etc.).

Vacancies provide opportunities for program innovation. As the department rebuilds from recent staff losses, we recommend that it take a strong look at the historical evolution of student demand in planning the direction of specialization of future faculty and instructional staff.

## **Program-by-Program Summaries**

### **Art Education**

Art Education graduates are said to be highly regarded in the region's K-12 schools. Evidence for this claim was not given. The APRC recommends that such evidence be collected as part of a general assessment of community impact of the program, as well as providing a support base for future resource requests.

Art Education is hampered by insufficient technology available on the UW-Superior campus, as are other education programs across campus. Technology available in the local schools has outpaced that available on campus. Education students are expected to know and be able to teach with technologies not available on our campus.

Art Ed instructors' 3-3 load is justified in the program review by appealing to the time needed to supervise equipment and labs. However, a fuller explanation of how it is justified could benefit the program in the future against possible administrative requests for higher teaching loads. Possibly, VA could change the credit numbers to accurately reflect the workload of the instructor.

Because Superior Public Schools has withdrawn its support for placing Art Education students, we recommend exploring the establishment of relationships with alternative nearby school districts such as Northwestern, Esko, Cloquet, etc. This phenomenon seems not to be exclusive to Art Education but to be common across UW-Superior education programs.

### **Studio Art**

Two programs are offered as studio art concentrations:

- A 36-credit non-comprehensive visual arts concentration program
- A 60-credit comprehensive visual arts BFA concentration program

According to PPP data, over the last 10 years, the non-comprehensive program averaged 2.4 graduates per year and the comprehensive BFA program averaged 7.5 graduates per year. During the same period, the number of declared majors was similar in both programs, ranging from 17 to 31 students per year. Given a similar annual enrollment in the majors but a vastly different number of degrees conferred, it is worthwhile examining why the non-comprehensive program does not lead to more conferred degrees. Further, a review of each program's curriculum illustrates that the non-comprehensive program uses a subset of the comprehensive

program courses, so additional instructional resources may not be necessary. However, annual and other reporting for each program may create an additional unnecessary workload for the department, which is why APRC recommends the department reflect on the non-comprehensive program enrollment, graduation, and feasibility.

## **Art Therapy**

The Art Therapy concentration demonstrates several strengths, including especially strong integration with the UWS mission as well as continual review of relationships with internship sites. Art Therapy is strong and growing. UWS is the only Wisconsin school to offer both the BA and MA in Art Therapy. Seeking accreditation for Art Therapy is a commendable plan.

Since the last review, enrollment in the Art Therapy program has steadily grown. As the department indicates, this has occurred without meaningful investment in recruitment of new students into the major. There may be room for additional growth (given the expected growth predicted by the College Board, SAT, and PSAT indicators), and APRC would encourage the Visual Arts Department to work with the Admissions Office and the University Marketing and Communications Office to pursue additional recruitment efforts.

## **Visual Arts - Minors**

VA offers two minor programs: Art and Photography. Enrollment in both minors has been fairly steady for the past seven years (the review period). The challenges of staying current with technology, with little institutional support for additional resource acquisition, would seem to be especially important in photography in its current digital incarnation.

Both minors are well-integrated into the core VA curriculum, with all courses in the minor also occurring in the various majors. This integration streamlines the department's programming as well as allows for an easy transition of minors into a VA major; the PPP report indicates that this is a common path for students to follow.

The minors are not stand-alone, but we nevertheless recommend considering assessment of student learning within the minors as part of a comprehensive assessment plan for the department's programs.