UCC Program Review Committee summary of review

Program – School of Media Arts and Studies

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- B.S.C. Media Arts and Studies - Media and Social Change
- B.S.C. Media Arts and Studies - Music Production and Recording Industry
- B.S.C. Media Arts and Studies - Screenwriting and Producing
- B.S.C. Media Arts and Studies - Games and Animation
- B.S.C. Media Arts and Studies - Integrated Media
- M.A. Media Arts & Studies
- M.A. in Communication and Development Studies (w/ International Studies)
- M.F.A. in Digital media (w/ Communication)
- Ph.D. in Mass Communication (w/ Journalism)

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable, see report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY 2007
Date of this review – AY 2014

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their responses are attached.

The Graduate Council has seen the review but has no comments to add.
School of Media Arts and Studies

February 19-20, 2016

External Reviewer: Patrick Burkart, Texas A&M University

Internal Reviewers: Pramod Kanwar, Terri Hood-Brown, John Cotton

Executive Summary:

The review committee met with faculty and students in the School of Media Arts and Studies on February 19, 2016. The school currently has 27 total faculty (18 Group I, 6 Group II/III/IV, 3 early retired). From 2007-2013, undergraduate headcount was an average of 655 students, and 35-43 graduate students. The school offers the following degrees:

- **BSC degrees 5 majors:**
  - Media Arts and Studies - Media and Social Change
  - Media Arts and Studies - Music Production and Recording Industry
  - Media Arts and Studies - Screenwriting and Producing
  - Media Arts and Studies - Games and Animation
  - Media Arts and Studies - Integrated Media

- **MA in Media Arts & Studies**
- **MA in Communication and Development Studies (w/ International Studies)**
- **PhD in Mass Communication (w/ Journalism)**
- **MFA in Digital media (w/ Communication)**

The department is an internationally recognized program, contributing innovative curricula with strong students. They are however struggling with challenges associated with an increased focus of resources on the undergraduate production/arts, at the expense of graduate programs in the media studies.

Although this review reflects substantial concerns and recommendations, the team stresses that this is a quality department with outstanding faculty and well-regarded leadership, which offers excellent undergraduate and graduate education. Many meetings were filled with concerns for the entire meeting time, but then at the end with no time left, participants said they wanted to talk about all the positive things the school was doing.

We find the program to be viable.

Commendations:

1. High student enrollment/demand in most areas, with both graduate and undergraduate students being satisfied with their career prospects.
2. International reputation in international communication and global media studies led by a high quality faculty, including recent hires.
3. Effective use of the quarter-to-semester transition to anticipate student needs and restructure programs accordingly; and program innovations such as a semester in Los Angeles and certificate in social media.

Concerns:

1. Several problems could reduce the graduate program’s scope and reputation including graduate advising hurt by substitution of Group II for Group I positions and declining Ph.D. enrollments. The lasting international reputation for research at the Ph.D. level may be unsustainable.
2. Taken separately from internationalization efforts, race and ethnicity as a field of study is lacking, despite previous strengths in this area
3. Research and travel funding may be insufficient for research intensive faculty to participate in conferences and field work. Travel bursaries available to faculty are low as compared to many at peer institutions.
4. Full time office staffing (at one FTE) is insufficient, given the demands of students and faculty, supervisory requirements of part-time faculty, and the addition of a new program.

Recommendations:

1. As may be expected with a school that has seen a change in focus and turnover in staff, many faculty expressed concern for the future, and more importantly, recognizing their ability to rectify these concerns. Several things said by faculty are beyond this review team’s ability to advise, but we have concerns that may require the school and college to
   a. utilize the ombudsman’s office, or other external resources, to resolve lasting faculty differences in general communication, and ability to make decisions as one faculty, as there seems to be a division between production and studies areas,
   b. ensure that any curricular changes and changes to hiring priorities be driven by departmental faculty, and work diligently to reduce DARS exceptions,
   c. ensure that committees for graduate and undergraduate affairs anticipate, monitor, and report staffing, equipment and other concerns about scarcity to the departmental director as frequently as needed,
   d. create extra opportunities for faculty to contribute concerns and suggestions about inequities, perhaps including consultations with more extra-departmental organizations, and
   e. clarify faculty grievance procedures and resources.
2. As retention issues become more pressing, especially for women and underrepresented minorities, a formal independent exit interview strategy should be implemented. Results should be compared with campus/school climate study results and reported to the Director.
3. Solicit faculty ideas and implement a solution to address heavy undergraduate advising loads and increase efficiency in handling them.
4. Solicit an ADA evaluation for facilities, as some are inaccessible.
Narrative review

The restructuring of Telecommunications as Media Arts and Studies occurred roughly within the same time frame as the conversion from the quarter to the semester system, the departure of key leaders in the School, and the establishment of new accounting methods for the University. Yet, the school continues to graduate media-savvy undergraduate and graduate students, producing high quality theses and dissertations, cosmopolitan radio and television programs, music, animations and video games. The alumni of the Telecommunications -cum- Media Arts and Studies program include high profile academic leaders in the academic fields of international communication and global media studies (including Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University) and in high profile firms in global media industries. The program places undergraduates well in competitive graduate programs. Its activities have shaped public service broadcasting, community access, and music production since the early days of mass communication education in the US, and it continues to contribute significantly to the public life of the University and society at large.

Although reviewers enjoyed extraordinary access, a one day review process did not give reviewers an opportunity to explore the fuller range of concerns expressed by faculty and graduate students requiring attention. Therefore, our report’s judgments are more self-restricted than might otherwise be the case with more than a snapshot view of the programs covered here.

Notwithstanding the challenges facing the program, there is a clear sense of history, mission, and value of the program to the students, faculty, and staff we surveyed.

1. The program as a whole:

a. Is the current number and distribution of faculty sufficient to carry out the broad overall mission of the Department (Teaching; Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity; Service).

The distribution of faculty has changed since the last review. In 2007, the school had 30 faculty members, 26 of whom were group I, 2 early retirees and 2 group II/III/IV. In 2016, the department reports 27 faculty, with 18 group I, 3 early retirees, and 6 group II/III/IV, in addition to a search being held for an additional group I and group II faculty member. This 30% reduction of group I faculty reflects an increased focus on undergraduate education, which while outstanding, has large implications on graduate education (especially at the Ph.D. level), research productivity, external funding, and in the long term, reputation.

The self-study also reports a 40% turnover of group I faculty (10 individuals) from 2007-2014, out of which 3 were women and 3 from underrepresented groups.

Probationary faculty expressed contentment with tenure expectations. Mentoring was informal and available. They reported happiness with strong graduate students.

b. Is the level of the Department’s RSCA appropriate for the program given the size of the faculty and the resources available to the Department? Is the Department’s level of external funding at an appropriate level?
The level of the Department’s RSCA is appropriate for the program given the size of the faculty and the resources available to the Department. However, RSCA has declined with available resources for hiring and supporting Group I faculty. The Department’s level of external funding is at an appropriate level for plant and facilities, based on interviews with faculty and graduate students. RSCA would probably improve with greater access to resources for conference travel, international research, etc. Individual faculty bring in targeted funding for sponsored projects with some consistency, and although support for plant and facilities is evident in recent years, there is not much evidence showing effective, targeted fundraising by the School outside the university for RSCA.

c. Is the level of service, outside of teaching, appropriate for the program given its size and the role that it plays in the University and broader communities it interacts with? Is the Department able to fulfill its service mission?

Media Arts and Studies faculty, in general, contribute to university service, professional service, and are also engaged in the community. Service in the form of undergraduate advising is expected of all faculty in the school. Faculty serve on school as well as university-wide committees and play key roles in professional organizations including leadership roles, editorships, and consultancy.

It appears that the undergraduate advising load is very heavy but this is understandable in the light of the student numbers and growth the school has witnessed in recent years. The school would be advised to look for more efficient and effective ways to reduce this load and still meet the needs of students.

Some faculty members feel that there is a need to review the current service model within the school where, in the case of some critical committees such as the curriculum committee, most of the decision making is in the hands of a few without proper input from the faculty.

d. Does the Department have an appropriate level of financial resources, staff, physical facilities, library resources, and technology to fulfill its mission?

Faculty expressed concerns about the effect of RCM (or, more generally, any funding model focused on student headcount) in reallocating resources towards undergraduate production. Faculty felt the use of headcount instead of weighted student credit hours may distort allocative efficiencies to the detriment of the more research-intensive graduate programs. The reviewers share the concern that the funding system puts the well-regarded graduate programs at risk, even in the short run. A debilitated Ph.D. program could, in turn, reduce competitiveness for top Ph.D. faculty and graduate students.

Financial resources related to faculty abilities for research and travel funding were discussed in detail throughout the day. The tenure track faculty had positive comments related to their current financial resources.

During our conversations we learned that the department employs one full-time Administrative Coordinator and student workers. Faculty and students openly discussed the positive nature and professionalism of the full-time Administrative Coordinator. There was general agreement about to the need to employ additional staff to assist the Administrative Coordinator in all of her duties.
The physical facilities for the department are much improved from past reviews. Both faculty and students were proud of the improvements and upcoming changes in the facility. One main concern relates to disability access to certain areas of the program. This concern was discussed with the Dean and Directors.

The review team learned that the video based curriculum lacks faculty and some important equipment. There were no weaknesses discussed related to library resources.

2. Undergraduate Program:

a. Is the Department fulfilling its service role, adequately preparing nonmajors for future coursework and/or satisfying the needs for general education?

Undergraduate students confidently provided information related to the service role of the faculty giving them directions for course work throughout the program. Faculty reported an increase in non-majors taking many of their undergraduate courses.

b. Is the program attracting majors likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of majors appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?

The program is attracting majors likely to succeed in the program. The retention and graduation rates are high and average graduation time is 4.2 years. Most students in the program are able to find jobs in their field within a couple of months after graduation. Considering the program faculty and staff resources, the number of majors in the program appears to be high and in some cases the school has to resort to measures that may not be pedagogically effective. For example, to meet the high demand of some courses, the number of students in a section of the course was increased by over 50 percent, which according to faculty, has the potential of hurting the learning process.

It is not clear to what degree the undergraduate program is attracting a diverse group of students, as a statistical profile was not included in the self study.

c. Does the undergraduate curriculum provide majors with an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work following graduation?

The undergraduate curriculum provides majors with a superior background to pursue discipline-related careers following graduation. Just as importantly, Media Arts and Studies integrates foundational liberal arts knowledge and skills crucial for success in global markets for knowledge workers, and across a wide spectrum of knowledge based industries, including law and business.

The department has created innovative alternative study opportunities for undergraduates including LA and Orlando programs, study abroad, animation and video games, and theme park franchising. The new certificate in social media is also creative and has been well received by students.

d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the undergraduate program?
The undergraduate enrollment is quite large averaging about 122-146 incoming students from 2007-2013, and after a brief downturn in 2013, now appears to be averaging over 150 incoming students per year. Transfer students are significant in number and reflect the most effective means for the school to control student numbers, administratively. (This appeared to be more by administrative “loophole” between the school and admissions, than an intended mechanism.)

Undergraduate students seemed very content with resources. Faculty reported that student enrollment in lab sections has grown from 18 to now pushing 30. This reduces the time an instructor in class has to offer personal attention and critique students’ work. Some faculty expressed serious concerns that the increase in enrollment was not being adequately planned, and that the ability to deliver instruction at the current level could suffer.

Advising loads are distributed across the faculty, and are growing quite large. Advising is valued by the department leadership, with the recent addition of student surveys for advising assessment and results factored into merit review process. Faculty communicated enjoyment in this activity, but were concerned with the numbers and time commitment it entails, especially for trivial tasks such as relating information that can be found directly in the handbook. Some faculty felt many tasks in the advising process could be handled better through another mechanism, such as staff, upper-class peers, or reallocated teaching responsibilities. Despite these concerns and ideas, there seemed be no plans for reaching a remedy to the problem.

e. Are pedagogical practices appropriate? Is teaching adequately assessed?

Pedagogical practices seem appropriate. Assessment is mostly instructor-based within their own classrooms. This is supported by student course evaluations, which have been moved back to hard-copy to increase participation. While it is not clear if teaching is adequately assessed to the level of increased, current expectations, the department leadership recognized this and spoke of a assessment committee that will be taking a broader view in coming months.

f. Are students able to move into to discipline-related careers and/or pursue further academic work?

Students seem able to move into discipline-related careers and also to pursue further academic work. During the lunch meeting with the undergraduate students, discussions related to graduation, portfolios, and careers were extremely positive. Students were excited to be graduating with portfolios generated within course work and to move directly into discipline-related careers. Discussions provided reviewers with a clear sense that student across various “tracks” are happy with the prospects of Ohio University’s Media Arts & Studies has given them. Students expressed confidence in their abilities to develop their careers and/or pursue further academic work.

3. Graduate Program:

a. Is the program attracting students likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of students appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?
Faculty spoke highly of the graduate students, and our meeting with mostly doctoral students confirmed that this was a mature, engaged, and diverse group. The program is competitive, attracting students likely to succeed in the program. The number of students seems appropriate for the program generally.

Statistical presentation of the diversity of graduate students was not presented in the self-study, however. Some faculty felt that the Communication and Development Studies MA program, which is highly international in enrollment, statistically hides a lack of diversity in race and ethnicity elsewhere.

b. Does the graduate curriculum provide an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers following graduation?

The graduate curriculum provides an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers following graduation, although as the self-study report notes, it is clear that the curriculum offerings are shrinking. While it may be the case that Media Arts and Studies and Communication and Development can provisionally “borrow” faculty from other programs in certain cases, this strategy will not be feasible for dissertation supervision.

The history of courses offered that are oriented towards Communication and Technology, Critical-Cultural Communication, and Mass Communication suggests that the school prepares Ph.D. students for full-time employment at Tier I and Tier II research universities, quality teaching colleges, and in research and analysis based professions.

Graduate course offerings are dwindling in the conversion to a semester based system. The graduate program, on the whole, is top-heavy in its MA offerings, leaving some PhD students with ad hoc solutions to missing course offerings.

Public broadcasting education resources at the graduate level need more support.

Future self-studies would benefit from a comparative, historical, and statistical presentation of graduate student expectations and outcomes.

c. Does the program provide adequate mentoring and advising to students to prepare them for discipline-related careers?

The program provides adequate mentoring and advising to students to prepare them for discipline-related careers, although there seem to be variations in quality and quantity of mentoring.

Discussion with the graduate students was positive related to faculty. While the students provided positive feedback, some expressed confusion about professed distinctions between mentoring versus advising, comprehensive exam procedures, and thesis/dissertation guidance. Discipline-related careers were greatly discussed. Most students expressed strong urges to become educators and providers of their learned content.

Another area of conversation was related to the reduction in Group I faculty. PhD students’ concerns were related to the trouble of finding required courses after the first year.
d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the graduate program?

The resources and the number of and distribution of faculty are nominally sufficient to support the graduate program, although a further decline in the number of Group I Ph.D. graduate faculty members could cause this to change in short order. Shrinking graduate course offerings may jeopardize student learning outcomes and programs’ high reputation.

e. Does the program offer appropriate financial support to graduate students?

The majority of students in the doctoral program are admitted with a stipend and tuition waiver that is awarded over three years, although the program takes nominally 4 years to complete. This is of concern to the students and faculty, however, the facts about the situation are clearly communicated to the students. Students spoke of peers able to find other funding, or leaving to teach elsewhere while finishing research (a prospect that may increase time to graduation.)

Students receiving stipends are expected to act as teaching assistants, instructors, or research assistants, generally speaking. The stipends were considered to be adequate for their ‘job’ requirements and duties.

An issue of concern was that students do not receive support or a tuition waiver in the summer, despite being required to take a class in the first summer of the program.

f. Is teaching adequately assessed?

It is not clear if teaching is adequately assessed. The program has used focus groups effectively to discover and address deficiencies and inconsistencies in graduate advising.

g. Are students able to move into to discipline-related careers?

Students seem to be able to move into to discipline-related careers, based on self-reporting and also on a survey of their curriculum in methodologies and theories.

h. For doctoral programs, questions related to D.III of

http://regents.ohio.gov/rgp/pdfs/RACGS%20Guidelines%20Approved%20102403.pdf

1. Program faculty: This has been reviewed above in section 3d.

2. Program graduates since the most recent review: Program graduates since the last review, the self study appendix reports anecdotal data of many impressive graduate placements in consistent fields. (A statistical presentation of all graduates would be helpful for future reviews.) Speaking with current graduate students, advising quality was good, class availability later in the program was a concern, but support services are regarded as being good. Current students and faculty conveyed the expected time to complete PhD as 4 years. Currently, PhD students are supported for only 3 years, so many students leave to find employment delaying graduation.

3. Program Vitality: A process to evaluate and update the existing program curriculum was not discussed or presented, and may be worthwhile to ensure students and faculty feel it meets
current needs. New expansions into Film partnered with the college of Fine Arts look promising. As mentioned elsewhere, travel resources are were reported as tight.

4. **Program Demand:** The program appeared to have a good demand from students.

5. **Program interactions:** Students, MDIA faculty, and collaborations with other schools, departments and centers seemed very positive. Recent increases in student presentations at conferences was reported. International research and teaching collaborations with other research universities is exceptional at the graduate level.

4. Areas of concern.

1. Several problems could reduce the graduate program’s scope and reputation including graduate advising hurt by substitution of Group II for Group I positions and declining Ph.D. enrollments. The lasting international reputation for research at the Ph.D. level may be unsustainable.

2. Taken separately from internationalization efforts, race and ethnicity as a field of study is lacking, despite previous strengths in this area.

3. Research and travel funding may be insufficient for research intensive faculty to participate in conferences and field work. Travel bursaries available to faculty are low as compared to many at peer institutions.

4. Full time office staffing (at one FTE) is insufficient, given the demands of students and faculty, supervisory requirements of part-time faculty, and the addition of a new program.

5. **Recommendations.**

1. As may be expected with a school that has seen a change in focus and turnover in staff, many faculty expressed concern for the future, and more importantly, recognizing their ability to rectify these concerns. Several things said by faculty are beyond this review team’s ability to advise, but we have concerns that may require the school and college to
   a. utilize the ombudsman’s office, or other external resources, to resolve lasting faculty differences in general communication, and ability to make decisions as one faculty, as there seems to be a division between production and studies areas,
   b. ensure that any curricular changes and changes to hiring priorities be driven by departmental faculty, and work diligently to reduce DARS exceptions,
   c. ensure that committees for graduate and undergraduate affairs anticipate, monitor, and report staffing, equipment and other concerns about scarcity to the departmental director as frequently as needed,
   d. create extra opportunities for faculty to contribute concerns and suggestions about inequities, perhaps including consultations with more extra-departmental organizations, and
   e. clarify faculty grievance procedures and resources.

2. As replication issues become more pressing, especially for women and underrepresented minorities, a formal independent exit interview strategy should be implemented. Results should be compared with campus/school climate study results and reported to the Director.
3. Solicit faculty ideas and implement a solution to address heavy undergraduate advising loads and increase efficiency in handling them.
4. Solicit an ADA evaluation for facilities, as some are inaccessible.

6. Commendations.

1. High student enrollment/demand in most areas, with both graduate and undergraduate students being satisfied with their career prospects.
2. International reputation in international communication and global media studies led by a high quality faculty, including recent hires.
3. Effective use of the quarter-to-semester transition to anticipate student needs and restructure programs accordingly; and program innovations such as a semester in Los Angeles and certificate in social media.

7. Overall judgment: Is the program viable as a whole?

We found the program to be viable.
RESPONSE TO THE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

We would like to thank the review team for a measured and thoughtful report. We greatly value the effort members invested in this exercise. We do also appreciate the judgment that the School of Media Arts & Studies is "a quality department with outstanding faculty...which offers excellent undergraduate and graduate education." As the team noted, the time available for the review was short, and this is a school offering multiple degrees with highly varied and complex programs. Undoubtedly for this reason, a few minor errors in the report are evident, but they do not mar its overall accuracy. Rather than focusing on discrepancies, the comments below attempt to respond broadly to the key concerns raised in the report.

Generally, we have already recognized many of the issues the reviewers noted; and we have been engaged with them over significant periods of time in various retreats, full faculty meetings, and school committee meetings. Our analyses of those issues and our responses to them have continued to evolve as conditions have changed.

Diversity in the school. We have always placed importance on diversity in searches and hiring decisions but we intend to elevate its priority even further. There are serious diversity issues in the media field as evidenced by controversies surrounding the Academy Awards and in the games industry, and we need to play our part in addressing those shortcomings.

Advising. The advising problems mainly stem from a large and growing enrollment and from patterns that arose in the confusing and complicated advising conditions of the transition from quarters to semesters. We recognize that school advising needs an overhaul and this will be high on our agenda over the months ahead. As an example, for the first time this semester we are implementing an advisor evaluation process, the results of which will be fed into annual merit reviews. Changes in the way that advising is overseen are being considered too.

Curriculum. At the time of quarters to semester transition, our faculty took the opportunity to make major changes in our curriculum. As time has gone on, we have begun to see what has worked with those changes and what has not. There are modifications being implemented to address issues that have arisen and they are in the UCC approval process. Additional changes are in processes internal to the school, and these may be reported out within the next academic year. Additionally, the recently approved MFA program will enable us to add courses taught by students in the program, thus affording flexibility in planning and scheduling our course offerings while ultimately providing more curricular stability.

Faculty Communication. The tension between the media production and media studies areas is inherent in our field and major programs like ours across the country face similar issues. Most find the best remedy to be sympathetic and sensitive collegiality. It seems unlikely that these tensions can be entirely eliminated, but the proposal to engage an external agent such as the ombudsman's office is interesting and something we will consider.
ADA compliance. This definitely needs to be addressed; we will perform an evaluation and seek remedies where needed. Studio C, which has been our main multi-camera teaching lab, is a particular concern, but our initial estimates of costs to achieve compliance seem prohibitive. We will study this further, conducting a general review of all our facilities.

Graduate Program. The report suggests PhD enrollments are declining, but this is incorrect. We continue to receive well more qualified applicants than we can accept, and we get acceptances from all or nearly all of those we admit. Teaching and advising capacity in our graduate program is a concern we are addressing by a new Group I hire last year and the replacement of one Group I this year. Moreover, we are working closely with FILM to collaborate in our graduate program, including participation in advising by FILM faculty and their teaching of MDIA courses.

Again, thank you and please contact me if you would like me to elaborate further on any of these points.

Drew McDaniel, PhD
Professor, Director
School of Media Arts & Studies
Saturday, April 16, 2016

Dr. David Ingram
Chair, Programs Review Committee
University Curriculum Council
Ohio University

Dr. Ingram:

I have had the opportunity to review comments provided by the program review team assigned to the School of Media Arts & Studies, as well as their own self-report documents. I appreciate the time of the review team as well as their attention to detail in providing thoughtful suggestions and comments. As I read the report, there were several excellent suggestions, to which I'm sure the School will give direct attention. I focus on three areas in this letter: the Graduate Program and mix of faculty, faculty communication, and sensitivity to inclusion.

1. Future success of the Graduate Program

The School of Media Arts & Studies has a long tradition of excellence in training young scholars in the field through a robust graduate program. The school has directed much attention to its graduate programming in the past several years. In fact, the proposed MFA, which is a graduate-level terminal degree, was recently approved by the University Curriculum Council and is now working through final approvals at other levels. This expansion of the School's graduate program will be quite significant. And, in collaboration with the College of Fine Arts, this initiative has the potential to create a truly distinctive MFA program that competes at the highest levels nationally/internationally.

The PhD program, as noted by Director McDaniel, has remained stable in terms of enrollment. While applications have declined, this pattern may be part of a larger trend in declining international applicants across the college and broader university, to some degree.

The most significant step we are taking to bolster the PhD program involves the hiring of two Group I, tenure-track faculty. One faculty member started in January of 2016 and another will start in August of 2016. Those faculty, coupled with the resources provided through the collaboration with the College of Fine Art’s film program, will greatly enhance course offerings, available advisers, and substantive expertise at the PhD level. I also note that they School is beginning dialogue on revision to several of its programs. My desire for any such revision to align resources and attention in ways that will be beneficial to both the large undergraduate program as well as the distinctive graduate programs.

I also note that a college-wide initiative for the coming year is to promote better collaboration among our three PhD offering units. Such collaboration could better
comingle students in the various programs, thereby opening up new possibilities for coursework, “methods” courses, and other productive opportunities.

2. Faculty Communication

I share in Director McDaniel’s observation that there is commonly a lack of understanding between “media studies” faculty, who often hold the PhD, and “production” faculty, who more typically hold the MFA. Our objectives are to work with faculty so that they better recognize the interrelatedness, and mutually beneficial coexistence, of both “media studies” and “production.” For instance, the introduction of the MFA will actually provide teaching power, through the addition of production oriented graduate students, that will free up faculty to teach graduate level courses (including media studies faculty). Thus, there is a potential benefit for both sets of faculty in the school. Likewise, new Group I faculty hired as media studies faculty offer courses like Social Media Analytics that will be of relevance to those emphasizing production. In short, we will work to help both groups of faculty understand their strengths in collaboration, and in so doing, will hopefully address these concerns.

I will work with Director McDaniel to discuss other approaches to enhancing communication in the School. For example, another School Director started sending an informal “announcement” email each week. I also feel that there could be some utility in revisiting the strategic objectives of the school so that faculty in all areas can potentially reach agreement on outcomes desired for students.

3. Diversity

A core objective of the Scripps College of Communication is to promote a diverse and inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students. Recent hiring practices demonstrate to me that the School of Media Arts & Studies is taking very seriously this objective and attempting to promote diversity among its faculty. Such actions are critical to also promoting diversity and inclusion among students. To continue these efforts, I will work with Director McDaniel to identify other opportunities to enhance diversity and inclusion in the school. As he noted in his letter, this is critical for the field nationally.

In closing, the review team correctly observed that MDIA is “a quality department [school] with outstanding faculty and well-regarded leadership, which offers excellent undergraduate and graduate education.” I concur with that statement, noting that there are always areas in which improvement is possible. The areas highlighted in this area will be given explicit attention in the next year and beyond.

Sincerely,

Scott Titsworth, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean

Cc: Dr. Drew McDaniel, Director, School of Media Arts & Studies