NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN

Visitors' Report

University of New Orleans
Department of Fine Arts
New Orleans, Louisiana 70148

Art/Design Executive: A. Lawrence Jenkens

Date of Visit: April 19-21, 2009

Visiting Team: dele jegede, Team Chair
Brenda Mveng-Whitted

Degrees offered for which renewal of Final Approval for Listing is sought:

Bachelor of Arts – 4 years: Art (Art History, Studio Art)
Master of Fine Arts – 3 years: Fine Arts
DISCLAIMER

The following report and any statements therein regarding compliance with NASAD accreditation Standards represent only the considered opinion of the visitors at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by the appropriate Commission following a complete review of the application, including the Self-Study, the Visitors’ Report, and any Optional Response to the Visitors’ Report submitted by the institution.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The visitation team wishes to express its appreciation to the University of New Orleans for the assistance that it provided during the visitation. The team is appreciative of the opportunity to meet and have discussions with the Chancellor, Dr. Tim Ryan, the Dean, Dr. Susan Kantz, and the Provost, Dr. Joe King. The team also extends its appreciation to Dr. A. Lawrence Jenkens, Chair of the Department of Fine Arts, for facilitating the visit. During the visit, the team met with Pam Bernard, the Visual Resource curator and Ms. Jeanne Pavy, Associate Librarian/Fine Arts bibliographer for all acquisitions and the maintenance of the visual arts collection. Additional meetings were held with entire faculty and staff, and some students of the department, whose warmth and hospitality is hereby acknowledged with gratitude.

The visit provided us the opportunity to observe classes, labs and studios. We visited the main library, viewed student work at graduate and undergraduate levels, toured graduate studios, visited the new exhibition facility in the St. Claude Art District, and verified student transcripts among other assignments. The team is grateful to the faculty and staff of the Department of Fine Arts for facilitating our visit.

INTRODUCTION

What is now The University of New Orleans was established in 1956 by an act of the Louisiana Legislature as the New Orleans branch campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. In September 1958, LSUNO, a liberal arts college and the first racially integrated public institution in the South, began classes with 1,460 students. The new school developed into a full four-year institution. LSUNO eventually became the second largest university in Louisiana with a large academic complex embracing several colleges, schools, and institutes, offering graduate work in many different fields and awarding both the master’s and the Ph.D. degrees. In February 1974, LSUNO officially became the University of New Orleans. It is now an institution with an enrollment of 12,000 students, approximately 60% of whom are white, with 20% African Americans, 7% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 1% American Indians, 3% international and 3% unknown ethnicity. As a result of the ravaging impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Chancellor Tim Ryan declared “financial exigency” as he embarked on re-structuring the institution. Four years after, the institution continues to grapple with the attendant consequences of Hurricane Katrina, and the unanticipated impact of a global economic meltdown.
A. Purposes and Operations:
NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.A., Self-Study pp.1-5, and Appendices C

The mission, goals and objectives of the art and design unit appear to be adequately articulated.

The University of New Orleans is designated as Louisiana’s comprehensive urban university that strives to provide a comprehensive array of degree programs, which reflect the special needs and concerns of its demographic. New Orleans is considered an important regional center for the visual arts and performing arts.

The art and design unit provides adequate information regarding its mission and the extent to which it dovetails with the mission of the university. The art and design unit advocates for the arts within the university as well as the surrounding community that it serves. Its course offerings in the studio art and art history concentrations occur within the context of a broad liberal arts curriculum. The art and design unit strives to provide undergraduate students a foundation in analytical theory and equip them with appropriate creative and technical skills to thrive in competitive environments. It provides a structure through which talented and self-motivated graduate students can prepare themselves for a career as professional practicing artists.

The visiting team observed that, while the art and design unit has responded creatively in containing the devastating effects of Katrina, it appears that it would need a much more substantial support from the central administration in order to surmount current impediments. As the institution was confronted by the totality of unexpected natural disasters and economic downturn, and as it struggled to re-shape and re-define its curricular offerings, it was also faced with the realization that existing mission statement and aspirational targets needed to be re-conceptualized. The process remained on-going at the time of the visit. In re-designing the curriculum, the visiting team noted that there was need for the faculty to take a holistic approach, one that would place curricular changes within the context of institutional mission. Discussions with the faculty and observations of inter-personal relationships revealed that faculty members have continued to make individual and collective sacrifices in order to sustain the program and adapt to unexpected circumstances. However, it appears that the peculiar nature of the state of Louisiana, and especially the specific vicissitudes that the University of New Orleans has been experiencing since 2005, made adherence to thoughtfully crafted mission, goals, and objectives a difficult if not impossible task.

Funding remains an obstacle in the implementation of action plans, especially those that depend on having the right caliber and number of faculty members for maintaining programmatic sustainability. Operational and structural synergy, an essential ingredient in ensuring effective and customized learning, appears compromised. Of significance is the inadequacy of the building and, by extension, facilities in some programs. This has been a recurrent problem. It appears that to the extent that the university’s recurrent promise of providing adequate building for the relocation of the art and design unit remains unmet, the art and design unit will remain hamstrung in meeting expected standards. The central administration appeared genuinely concerned about the
consequences of budget shortfall, seemingly inadequate faculty numbers and deficient facilities. The team’s discussions with the administration indicated that there was sensitivity to these issues and a genuine willingness to address them.

B. Size and Scope

The art and design unit seems to be in compliance with NASAD standards regarding size and scope.

Enrollment in the art and design unit has dwindled significantly in the aftermath of Katrina. Although the central administration moved quickly to contain what was an unprecedented natural calamity by initially offering online courses and eventually re-opening the campus in December 2005, student enrollment took a tumble. State-wide, higher education experienced a severe budget cut, which further affected the financial buoyancy of the University of New Orleans. The Chancellor declared "financial exigency," and the university embarked on a re-structuring process, which entailed down-sizing and attrition of faculty and staff.

Enrollment in the art and design unit fell by about 33% while there was a net loss in the number of faculty members after Katrina—from 12 to 8, one of whom was a resident faculty. The art history program appears to be the most severely affected in the art and design unit as it lost half the number of majors and two-thirds of its faculty. The only full-time faculty member in the art and design unit is the Chair, who teaches one course in addition to a retinue of administrative responsibilities. Currently, there are 28 majors in the art history program. For a program of this size, available faculty strength appears inadequate.

The faculty has responded creatively by re-assessing curricular offerings and developing new containment and growth strategies. It abandoned the traditional model in favor of one that re-aligned digital arts, photography, and printmaking into a new concentration branded imaging. The art and design unit was awaiting approval for the new curriculum from the College of Liberal Arts Committee on Courses at the time of the visit. An application for Plan Approval for the new program is expected to be sent to NASAD once approval has been obtained. As a result of the efforts of the faculty and the central administration to trim the size of the institution, there appears to be sufficient base enrollment in the art and design programs. The combined enrollment of undergraduate and graduate majors reported in the 2008-2009 HEADS Data Survey for the art and design unit is 192, which comprised 17 graduate and 175 undergraduate students. In the fall of 2008, the MFA program registered 10 new students, the largest cohort since the program began in 1976. The faculty was optimistic that this was the beginning of a new trend, which would effectively ensure sustainability of the program and allow it to meet the minimum state-wide graduation rate of 5 per year for all masters programs as the Board of Regents has mandated.

Enrollment data for the art and design unit seem to suggest that there is some stability in
the number of majors post-Katrina:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Fall 06</th>
<th>Spring 07</th>
<th>Fall 07</th>
<th>Spring 08</th>
<th>Fall 08</th>
<th>Spring 09</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>178</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, the faculty strength of the art and design unit appears lopsided in favor of painting, the specialization of four of the seven full-time tenured faculty members. In addition to meeting the core requirements in the major, the art and design unit also provides instruction for non-majors, especially in art history, which typically has large enrollments. From discussions that the visiting team had with faculty members, it seemed apparent that faculty size is not sufficient to enable the art and design unit respond adequately to the curricula, administrative, and professional needs of students.

C. Finances

NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.C., Self-Study, pp. 8-9)

The art and design unit does not appear to be in compliance with NASAD standards regarding finances.

The institution appears to be seriously challenged on many fronts, not the least of which is funding, with inadequacy of budget allocations posing a significant threat to the attainment of the long-term goals and objectives of the art and design unit. The budget of the art and design unit has remained flat since 1996 while actual expenditures of the unit continue to outstrip income. Budget deficits have been managed on ad-hoc basis, with occasional supplemental budgets from the College of Liberal Arts and, in recent times, from incomes realized from fund-raising campaigns. In March, the institution froze all budget lines. The direct impact of budgetary constraints became accentuated in a post-Katrina environment and the strains of survival were further compounded by an unanticipated global recession. It appears that the cumulative impact of a precarious budget environment portends a deleterious effect on curricular innovation and faculty development.

The faculty appears to have borne a good share of the institution’s financial burden. They have remained productive and professionally active without any assured travel or development supports. Discussions with the visiting team showed that faculty members appear aware of the enormity of the situation and remained united in guiding the art and design unit through its challenges. In addition to stepping up their fund-raising efforts, the faculty members appear to have maintained a focus on re-designing the studio curriculum in response to dwindling resources. In November 2008, a new gallery was opened in the St. Claude Art District, which was meant to provide a strong alternative to the Julia St. or Warehouse Art District and give the institution a chance to increase institutional visibility and leverage its film and tourism potential. Through individual resourcefulness, the faculty has attracted funding from FEMA, which has led to acquisition of much-needed equipment in some of the programs.
The central administration appears eager to address the critical issues of funding and provision of facilities and equipment. Among the steps that the institution has listed in its Strategic Plan 2007-2010 is the restoration of new faculty lines to departments and, in the case of the art and design unit, the construction of a new Fine Arts building. The visiting team did not find evidence of sufficient financial resources to ensure a robust, long-term sustainability of the art and design programs as they are currently constituted.

D. Governance and Administration

NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.D., Self-Study Art, pp.9-11

The Department of Fine Arts appears to be in compliance with NASAD standards regarding governance and administration.

1. Overall Effectiveness

It appears that the University of New Orleans meets NASAD operational standards for administration and governance of the art and design unit. There appears to be more than adequate information (print and electronic) easily available on university policies in regard to self-governance, collective decision-making and university-wide opportunities for participation. In meetings and conversations with the visiting team, faculty expressed no concerns regarding these issues and informed the team that the academic environment is conducive to meeting stated goals.

2. Policy-Making

There appears to be an open and ongoing communication between the Chair and faculty. Departmental decision-making polices are made in a democratic manner with faculty input. Administrative and educational policies are proposed and developed through group discussions during meetings and, when necessary, processed through appropriate university channels. There appears to be a fluid communication channel between the College of Liberal Arts and the art and design unit, and the small size of the faculty appears to promote collegiality and favor broad consultation and consensus on issues affecting faculty and students. All policy and information pertaining to the governance of the institution, including processes for faculty appointment and conduct, is published online. The art and design unit provides in its Self-Study a comprehensive, clearly enumerated institutional effectiveness plan for its graduate and undergraduate programs. (Appendix C). It recently constituted a UNO Fine Arts Advisory Board to assist in its visibility efforts.

3. Art/design Executive's Load and Responsibilities

The Chair is appointed by the Dean for a three year term, after consultation with the faculty. His duties include carrying out the will of the faculty regarding both administrative and educational matters, overseeing the budget and the facilities, and faculty and staff appointments and promotions. The Chair follows general guidelines that are discussed with the faculty and approved by the administration. The Department Chair
is expected to stay current in his or her respective field, conduct regular scholarly research and/or creative projects, and participate in community activities. With his reduced workload, the environment appears to be conducive for the Chair to pursue his research interests. The Chair’s teaching load of one three-credit-hour course in addition to his administrative responsibilities appears to be appropriate for the size and scope of the art and design unit.

4. Communication

The Chair serves as a liaison between the faculty and the administration. He also implements the administration’s directives at the departmental level. The team was very impressed by the open, candid and collegial atmosphere during discussions. Lines of communication seemed to be very open and quite effective. The Chair’s open-door policy for students gives them opportunities to speak either openly or confidentially with him about their concerns, grievances, and expectations. All participants—from the upper administration to the departmental unit level—seemed to work in an effective and consultative manner. During the on-site meeting with them, students indicated that the faculty was proactive and supportive of students. They also indicated that they were easily discouraged by the lack of communication with the faculty, a perception that projected the department as organizationally challenged.

E. Faculty and Staff

NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, I.E., Self-Study, pp. 11-14)

The art and design unit appears not to be in compliance with NASAD standards regarding faculty and staff.

The art and design unit has a complement of six tenured faculty members, one tenure-track assistant professor, an artist-in-residence, and an emerita professor. It also has a number of part-time instructors, listed as four during the visit. All faculty members, including part-time instructors, appear to have appropriate terminal degrees. Although it may appear that the current number of faculty is adequate for an art and design unit that offers two undergraduate and one graduate degree with a total of 192 students, a closer examination seems to indicate a contrary situation. The current faculty list represents a contraction from a pre-Katrina faculty of 12. Additionally, the distribution of specialties appears lopsided in favor of painting, which has 50% of the total number of faculty for the art and design unit. Conversely, the art history program appears to be the most severely affected and the most threatened; it lost two of the three faculty members in the program. On-site observation confirmed what the Self-Study articulated: the future of the art history program appears to be in jeopardy as a result of insufficient faculty capacity to deliver the curriculum. With 28 majors, the only full-time faculty member in the art history program is the Chair. It appears that, given the number of students in the art history program and the curricula essence of the course for non-art majors, there is a crucial need for additional full-time faculty in order to be in compliance with NASAD standards. Added to this tenuous situation is the likelihood of additional cut in the faculty roster, with art history facing a possible elimination.
Faculty members operate in a highly collegial environment, which appears to have served as a stabilizing force in the post-Katrina era. They appear to be buoyed by an enthusiasm for their students, and by a determination to use the challenges posed by Katrina to their advantage. Morale appears to be quite high and, based on their high productivity, their record of major exhibitions in prominent galleries across the nation, and the number of grants attracted and awards won, the MFA program is strong. Student/faculty ratio appears adequate for the studio program although the challenges attendant upon the full implementation of the newly developed concentration in imaging remain to be fully analyzed. Given the nature of the task that they are confronted with, it seems that the faculty has a good grasp of the curricula implications and are responding forcefully and creatively. Creating a concentration in imaging, infusing technology into the curriculum with introduction of digital requirement into the core requirements, and adding a departmental honors program into studio art are insightful approaches to curricular revision. A post-Katrina reduction in faculty size led to a corresponding increase in the administrative responsibility that devolved on the remaining faculty.

A university-wide system concerning faculty appointment, teaching load, faculty evaluation, review, promotion, and tenure is applicable to faculty in the art and design unit. Faculty teaching load is consistent with institutional teaching load norms published online by the university. Class sizes appear to be within NASAD standards. Although a tour of the facilities by the visiting team indicated that some classroom environments were crowded, there did not appear to be safety violations. Indeed, the sculpture studios are exemplary in terms of equipment, maintenance, and the opportunities that are afforded students.

The current economic climate appears to have placed in jeopardy any support for faculty to remain current in their research and creative work. Faculty development funds, at best irregular, have dried up with the budget freeze. There are no assurances for faculty travel, which has placed the burden of remaining professionally current through attendance at conferences and exhibitions squarely on the faculty.

F. Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety
NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.F., Self-Study Art, pp.15-19

The art and design unit appears not to be in compliance with NASAD standards regarding facilities and equipment.

The Fine Arts Building, a 33,000 square foot facility constructed in 1973, is a temporary warehouse facility that was renovated to accommodate lecture and lab classrooms, offices and studios, a gallery, and other areas. In 2006-2007, a major renovation of the HVAC system was conducted to update the system. During the visit, this system did not appear to pose any problems. On-site observation confirms the Self-Study with regard to safety measures in place in the studios. Safety programs have been developed and are enforced by the campus safety officer. It appears that major physical safety ventilation concerns in printmaking and photography studios have been resolved. There appears to be a need for
a technical assistant in the sculpture area to operate and monitor equipment and ensure student safety. As a result of the financial support received, the art and design unit ensures that it is in compliance with all requirements regarding dangerous chemicals.

For the past 15 years, the Fine Arts Building and the equipment in its lab/classrooms have remained on the top list of concerns that the faculty has consistently raised before the upper administration. The Self-Study indicates that the art and design unit needs a new facility. The visiting team’s tour of the facilities, including the building housing the graduate program, confirms the urgency of a new building. The current building in which the undergraduate programs of the art and design unit are housed does not appear to be adequate for the size and scope of the art and design unit. Graduate studios, which are located in the Commons, a different facility on the campus, have no HVAC. Although there are air conditioners, there is no air exchange. It is not handicap-accessible, and the institution does not offer any janitorial services whatsoever. The facility, which is equipped with a computer station supporting a Mac Pro computer and a color printer, has created a stronger sense of community among the MFA students. The absence of proper ventilation in the Commons has resulted in a decision not to permit students to use any toxic solvents or materials in that space. As presently constituted, the building appears to pose a serious health hazard to students. During the visit, the Chancellor was forthright in articulating his vision for the institution—a vision that included penetrating the art scene in New Orleans, attracting quality faculty, recruiting students, stabilizing the budget, and implementing the institution’s first priority on the capital outlay, which is the construction of a new Fine Arts building. The idea has been mooted that the Human Performance Building on the campus might be a fallback option in the absence of adequate funding for a new building. The visiting team believes that the art and design unit’s input will be crucial in whatever relocation option is decided upon by the institution.

From the Self-Study and discussions, the visiting team noted that building maintenance or repairs appear when circumstances require them. Regular schedules of preventive maintenance have been limited and affected by budgetary constraints. Major repairs have alleviated drainage problems around the building’s perimeter and in the courtyard. The faculty of the art and design unit embraced the challenges that Katrina posed and, through a prudent and aggressive approach, was able to secure $200,000 funding from FEMA, which they committed to replacing equipment and furniture. The sculpture studio, which received funds from FEMA to replace major pieces of equipment damaged during the hurricane, is equipped with a central dust collection system and emergency cut-off switches (panic button) for all large equipment items. Appropriate instructions and safety equipment appear to be in place, including eye protection, protective clothing, and restrictions against the use of certain pieces of equipment by inexperienced operators. Sculpture, however, would benefit greatly from a technical assistant. The studio has metal and wood working areas with equipment and sanders. Foundry, located outside the studio, has a protective fence installed around it to prevent injury to by-standers. Hot metal work is executed in a designated area. The studio appears to be in compliance with the NASAD safety standards.
Measures appear to be in place to implement safety procedures. Students must utilize their access card in order to have access to the facility and a protocol for operating equipment appears to be working well. With the shift to digital technology, the art and design unit faces the challenges of adequately equipping the new studio, which appears to be most acute with regard to photography. The Visual Resource keeps a database of more than one hundred thousand slides. Useful slides are placed on blackboard for instructional purposes. The technician is aware that digital images are inevitable, but there appears to be no budget for it. This lab uses graduate students for assistance.

The art and design unit maintains one on-campus gallery, which in actuality is an improvised walk-through space that offers no protection against theft or vandalism. There is another gallery in the St. Claude Avenue in the heart of the emerging Arts District, convenient for exhibiting contemporary art. There appears to be a need for an on-campus space, complete with proper lighting, temperature control, and secure access. What currently exists is only a stop-gap, and does not seem to be adequate as a “gallery.” The St. Claude Art District gallery is located in a renovated warehouse and represents a bold move on the part of the art and design unit. The gallery appears to be strategically located to raise the profile of the art and design unit in the surrounding visual arts community. At the time of the visit, the art and design unit had yet to install a climate control system in the gallery.

The provision of a new building for the art and design unit remains of paramount importance if the faculty is to effectively meet all curricular needs of their students. The visiting team was concerned that there were no adequate budgetary provisions for the maintenance and updating of equipment.

G. Library

NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.G., Self-Study Art, pp. 19-21

The library appears to meet NASAD’s threshold standards regarding library and learning resources.

Since the last visit by NASAD in 1996, the art and design unit’s digital databank and electronic media collections have been absorbed into the Earl K. Long Library’s general collection, a move that appeared to facilitate access and maximized resource management. Although limited, the books, digital, archival, journal, and art-related holdings in the Earl K. Long Library appear adequate for the needs of the art and design unit. During the visit, some areas of the library building were undergoing repairs and remodeling, a reminder of the pervasiveness of the Katrina effect. The library’s hours, which are published online, are flexible and adjusted to respond to demand patterns that are associated with academic seasons. Access to the library, including critical phone numbers and the key departments, are published for the general public.

Following Katrina, ARTStor donated two years of free database access to the library. The opportunity to continue its subscription at the end of the two years was allowed to lapse because of lack of funds. In addition to over 15,000 print books in its general collection,
the library also subscribes to 11 art journals, and furnishes access to more than 25 electronic databases. Although the library’s subscription to these electronic databases, financial constraints made it impossible to subscribe to all desirable electronic databanks, including the BHA. The library liaison of the art and design unit works in concert with the appropriate reference librarian to determine each year’s acquisitions, based on available budget and a pre-determined formula. As itemized in the art and design unit’s Self-Study (pp. 48-49), allocated library budget for the Fine Arts has remained flat at $7,500 since the 2005-2006 academic year. It was at $2,656 when the budget was frozen by the institution in March.

Admittedly the institution is not immune from financial vicissitudes. Still, the library appears to have in place the structure, personnel, and cooperation of faculty in the art and design unit to manage available resources in ways that allow it to remain relatively current in supporting the needs of faculty and students in the art and design program.

H. Recruitment
NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.H., Self-Study pp. 21-24

Admission remains one of the challenges facing the institution. With a 23% graduation rate for the 2002 cohort, and a retention rate of 63% for undergraduate students institution-wide, and with enrollment that has plummeted since Katrina, there appears to be a need for a holistic recruitment strategy. The art and design unit offers a liberal arts program and does not require a portfolio review for prospective undergraduate students. Admission requirements for all prospective undergraduate students are published online. While the numbers are down from pre-Katrina period, it appears that they are beginning to stabilize around an average of 185 students per academic year, going by available figures for the last three years, 2006-2009. Individual faculty members often honor invitation to make presentations to high schools. In spite of this, there appears to be no formal recruitment policy by the art and design unit. Beside the official web site of the Office of Admissions, which has an effective streaming video and an array of recruitment topics, the visiting team did not find evidence of a concerted effort aimed at recruiting students on the part of the art and design unit. Added to this is the non-availability of scholarships targeted at prospective art majors. All full-time faculty members handle advisement while the Office of the Registrar remains the sole custodian of students’ academic records.

At the graduate level, the art and design unit seems to have a much more successful recruitment approach. It has assistantships and fellowships, which provide tuition and stipend to successful applicants into the MFA program. Admission appears to be competitive, based on a number of factors, which include the location of the institution, the reputation of its faculty, the focused range of its offerings, and availability of assistantships and fellowships. Admission is undertaken through a portfolio review process that does not include personal interviews.

The visiting team found that among the factors militating against the development and implementation of a coherent admissions policy are the reduction in the number of
faculty members (which places additional service commitment on the faculty), and insufficient resources. It seems apparent that these shortcomings notwithstanding, there are a number of steps that the art and design unit can take to increase its recruitment tempo and complement the efforts of the Office of Admissions. The need to apply the same inventive strategy that accompanied the curriculum re-design seems to be paramount in the face of dwindling resources and the need to assure the sustainability of the program.

I. Published Materials
NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.I., Self-Study p. 25

The institution appears to meet NASAD standards in regard to published materials.

The University of New Orleans has migrated nearly all its promotional, recruitment, and bulletin materials to its web site. This move, which is in accord with trends in technology, appears to be an effective tool, which also has the added advantage of saving cost. Nearly every item dealing with the institution, from academic and administrative units to admissions and class schedule, is available on searchable online databanks. In a seamless environment, the institution appears to have used its web site effectively to disseminate information on sundry issues, and has on its admissions site a streaming video, which has the advantage of appealing to the desired demographic.

Other than the publication of some promotional flyers and a 2009 exhibition catalog on Thirty Years of MFA at UNO, the art and design unit follows the institution with regard to published materials: it places nearly everything on its web site. The curricula are published, including new changes and current course offerings. Visitors to the site can view the graduate program, apply online, download individual faculty resumes or follow links to their personal web sites, with color images of their work. The publications appear to be in conformity with NASAD standards.

J. Branch Campuses, External Programs. Use of the Institution’s Name for Educational Activities Operated Apart from the Main Campus or the Primary Educational Program.

Not applicable.

K. Community Involvement and Articulation with Other Institutions

The institution seems to be in compliance with NASAD standards in terms of its community involvement and articulation with other institutions. It maintains articulation agreements with Delgado Community College and Nunez Community College. There are also automatic transfer protocols between the University of New Orleans and others, which make it easy for those who are qualified to transfer into the major. Additionally, the art and design unit is invested in the community with individual faculty members actively involved in various arts organizations in New Orleans.
L. Non-degree-Granting Programs for the Community

Not applicable.

M. Standards for (A) Independent Postsecondary Art/Design Units Without Regional of Other Institutional Accreditation an/or (B) Proprietary Schools (if applicable)

Not applicable.

N. Programs, Degrees, and Curricula

The institution offers two liberal arts degrees—the BA in Art (Studio) and the BA in Art (Art History). It also offers the MFA in Fine Arts. The undergraduate curriculum is designed with a broad, liberal arts bent. A third concentration in imaging was, at the time of the visit, being processed internally for approval. Plans are afoot by the art and design unit to initiate an introductory photography course for non-majors in future, in response to popular demand for it. (Self-Study, pp. 37-38.) This will be in addition to two art appreciation for non-major courses, which are offered off-campus in the evenings and on weekends, and which fully complies with NASAD standards regarding visual arts in general education.

I. Specific Curricula:

Baccalaureate Programs

Bachelor of Arts — 4 years: Art (Art History)
NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, VII.F., Self-Study, pp. 27-31

(1) Status: Submitted for renewal of Final Approval for Listing

(2) Curriculum: The curriculum is designed to give students the necessary exposure to a broad range of contexts within which the history of art can be located. It seeks to develop an appropriate set of research and analytical skills that will prepare students for graduate school or enable them function in society. In terms of distribution of percentages, the curriculum appears to be in compliance with NASAD guidelines. Concentration or work in studio art is 5% while that of art history is 30%, for a total of 35%, which is within the range stipulated by NASAD. There is a requirement for one foreign language in addition to other university requirements for liberal education.

(3) Title/Content Consistency: The title for this degree appears consistent with NASAD standards.

(4) Student Work: The visiting team did not have the opportunity to review student work in the history of art program.
appears to be effective in giving students quality education in the visual arts. Although only a small number of students—a total of six, including one graduate student—showed up during the meeting with the visiting team, they complimented the faculty, whom they described as talented, motivated, helpful, proactive, and available. They were concerned about lack of visibility, even within the institution, for the art and design unit. Still, they averred that the program was highly respected and recommended over similar but more expensive programs in other institutions in the state.

**Graduate Programs**

**Master of Fine Arts – 3 years: Fine Arts**

(1) Status: Submitted for renewal of Final Approval for Listing

(2) Curriculum: The curriculum appears to be in compliance with NASAD standards. The Master of Fine Arts is a terminal, professional degree with a total of 60 credit hours, 70% of which are in studio courses. Requirements for art history account for 7.5% of the remaining electives. The curriculum appears designed to give each student the latitude, depth, and exposure necessary to develop an individuated language that embodies a synthesis of written expression and creative rigor. Required courses in art history provide the necessary context for historical understanding of modes and contexts of production, and challenges students to grapple with theoretical and critical analysis necessary for professional growth.

(3) Title/Content Consistency: The title for this degree appears consistent with NASAD standards.

(4) Student Work: The team visited with graduate students in their studios in the Commons, and was impressed by the inventiveness of the students and the high quality of work produced. The students appeared to share a strong esprit de corps, which seems to show in their work that transcended the strict traditional boundaries imposed by media.

(5) Student Evaluation: Evaluation occurs through mandatory critiques that occur two times every semester, in which all graduate faculty and graduate students participate. Students are advanced to candidacy upon successful presentation and defense of a thesis outline. Successful completion of the program occurs after a candidate has fulfilled all the requirements, which include a written thesis and a one-person exhibition of a body of work created during his or her studies.

(6) Overall Effectiveness: It appears that the MFA program is a very effective program. Its reputation is anchored in part on the curriculum, which promotes guided but uninhibited creative exploration, and on the vitality and professional output of its faculty as well as the success that its alumni have garnered in the
region and nationally. While the institution does not fall within the east coast/west coast contemporary art axis, it has built a sustainable reputation for itself as the locale of contemporary art, and has begun, especially in the wake of Katrina, to attract global attention to its visual arts. Discussions with students during the visit indicated that the program has a strong reputation in the region, due in part to the visibility of its alumni and the ability of the faculty to connect with the community. The recent opening of the St. Claude Gallery appears to be a forceful evidence of the insightful plan of the art and design unit to leverage its potentials and become an active factor in the resurgent visual arts sector.

2. **Study of the Transcripts of Recent Graduates and Comparison with Catalog Statements.**

Transcripts for the Bachelor of Arts in Art (Studio), Bachelor of Arts in Art (Art History), and Masters of Fine Arts in Fine Arts are not included in the Self-Study but were reviewed onsite and were found to be accurate reflection of the courses offered in the programs.

3. **Performance**

The institution appears to be grappling with very serious issues that range from decline in enrollment to a serious shortfall in the budget. The recent freeze in the budget, which had remained flat for some years, the attrition in faculty size, the less than ideal facility in which the art and design institution is located, and the inadequacy of equipment that has plagued the unit are all a result of the economic fragility of the institution. Despite these issues, the faculty seems to have responded stoutly to the issues, and members appear to have invested their personal resources whenever needed in order to sustain the art and design unit’s reputation and visibility.

4. **Art/design Studies for the General Public**

Through its curriculum, which allows for non-majors to take courses in art appreciation, and through its most recent initiative in the St. Claude District, where a new gallery was recently opened, the art and design seems to be serving the general public. A modest art gallery within the Fine Arts building organizes exhibitions, which serve public interest.

O. **Art/Design Unit Evaluation, Planning, and Projections.**


1. **Evaluation, Planning, and Projections Development**

To the extent that circumstances have permitted, the institution has worked on formulating a grand, strategic plan for mapping and managing its growth. The visiting team is aware that an institution-wide planning took place in the 1990s. The current iteration, the Strategic Plan 2007-2010, lists the institution’s plans for rebuilding the university. Strategic initiatives include restoration of new faculty lines to departments, improving on student retention, and attracting and retaining faculty.
During the team’s meeting with the Chancellor, he expatiated further on some of the key visions embodied in the plan. These include a focus on specific programs such as jazz studies, film studios, the hospitality sector, and naval architecture. The plan makes the construction of a new Fine Arts Building a key component of its campus-rebuilding mission.

The art and design unit works with the institution’s Strategic Planning Group, SPG, in customizing its own strategic plans. The art and design unit has been consistent in requesting for a new Fine Arts Building, an appropriate complement of mechanical and computer equipment, new faculty positions to stabilize the unit, and additional technical support staff to run the equipment. It appears that adversity has further strengthened the existing bond among the art and design faculty, who have taken on additional administrative responsibilities even as they have risen to the challenge of devising strategies for innovative curriculum. The uncertainty of the budget remains a nagging issue for which no immediate solution appears to be in sight. Although the art and design unit has taken bold steps in re-shaping the curriculum, the visiting team did not see the investment of such creativity in terms of recruitment and sustained attempts at promoting visibility. The faculty situation does not call for optimism. The art history program appears to be seriously threatened, with only one full-time faculty member. Of the five full professors, three are in painting. There is the high probability that three faculty members will retire within the next five years. The art and design unit has an Institutional Effectiveness Plan, which was reviewed by faculty in September 2008. It is a 22-page document that succinctly articulates the unit’s goals and objectives for all the degrees it currently offers. What appears missing is a staffing plan, which will lay out the number of faculty members needed to deliver which programs.

2. Completeness and Effectiveness of Self-Study

The Self-Study is very well written and concise. It contains factual information and incisive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses and it gives projections that appear to be in accord with the university plan to provide the facilities and personnel necessary for the department to effectively fulfill its mission. The Self-Study reinforced, to faculty and administration, the significance of the art and design unit within the university and its immediate community.

P. Standards Summary

The art and design unit appears to meet NASAD standards in all the areas except the following:

1. Finances: The institution remains embattled in this area as a result of a combination of economic and environmental factors (NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.C.).

2. Faculty and Staff: The future of the art history program is in jeopardy as a result of the appearance of insufficient faculty capacity to deliver the curriculum, with art history remaining the most threatened program (NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.E.).
3. Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety: In terms of facilities and equipment, the art and design unit continues to face mounting challenge. It is critical for the institution to relocate the graduate studios from the Commons because of it compromises health and safety standards. A more suitable building for the art and design unit remains an imperative (NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.F.).

4. Recruitment: A structured and consistent approach to recruitment is essential, one that harnesses the resources of admissions office in developing a customized strategy (NASAD Handbook 2009-2010, II.H.).

Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendation for the Program

1. Strengths

- A group of dedicated professors who seem to derive immense joy in pouring themselves into their work and making all necessary sacrifice that will contribute to the sustainability of the art and design unit. They have a lot of ingenuity, creativity, and the wherewithal to accomplish set objectives in spite of obvious financial limitations. Students describe them as “talented and innovative.”
- The boldness of the faculty in responding to curricular challenges and evolving new strategies to stem potentially corrosive effects of the prevailing economic climate. The development of a digital medium in imaging and their ability to source external funding from FEMA, attest to the resourcefulness of the faculty.
- A Chair whose leadership is appreciated by his colleagues, who has a sense of direction of where the department should go and takes proactive steps in accomplishing set tasks.
- An understanding Dean who is supportive of the art and design unit and responds positively to the needs of her faculty.
- The high quality of the graduate students despite obvious facilities constraints.
- The reputation of the art and design unit in the region, and its potentials to become the professional and intellectual flagship of the culture sector in post-Katrina New Orleans. The establishment of the St. Claude Art Gallery reifies the potentials of an active art and design unit with leadership profile in the region.
- Alumni who have, through their work and enterprise, demonstrated the quality of the art and design unit.

2. Recommendations for Short-term Improvement

- Find a solution to the budget problems of the art and design unit and provide appropriate funding for professional development of the faculty.
- Provide, as a matter of priority, a better suited facility to house both the undergraduate and graduate programs in one place. Such a facility must be provided in consultation with the faculty, whose advice and participation, especially in relocating vital equipment in the sculpture unit, are essential.
• Upgrade the computer units in the art and design unit and bring it in sync with current technology for the benefit of students.
• Address the shortage of faculty and ensure the stability of the art history program. Consider hiring more faculty and technical support staff to bolster the programs of the art and design unit.
• Re-evaluate the unit's curriculum and develop a staffing plan that adequately accounts for qualitative delivery of instruction.

3. Primary Futures Issues

• Pursue the internationalization of the programs by strengthening the study abroad profile of the institution. The UNO Rome Programs in Innsbruck, Prague, Montpellier, Costa Rica, and Rome have the potentials of bringing visibility to the institution, generating excitement among students, and fulfilling a critical component of a liberal arts program.
• Strengthen the exchange programs among UNO and other external entities such that graduate students will benefit through regular exhibitions and exchange of creative activities.
• Reactivate the UNO-Ogden Museum of Southern Art pact in accord with the Chancellor's objective of fostering educational opportunities for faculty and students.
• Strengthen the operational thrust of the UNO-St. Claude Gallery and build it up as a vital feature of the contemporary arts scene in New Orleans.
• Develop a staffing plan that takes into consideration impending faculty retirements and projects appropriate re-distribution of faculty expertise to effectively deliver the curriculum.
• Convene a faculty retreat for mapping out strategies for survival and for re-designing a curriculum that infuses technology into the program and ensures programmatic sustainability. There is need for a review of assessment plans that take advantage of the state-of-the-art studies in this area.
• When finished, an application for Plan Approval for the new imaging program must be sent to NASAD.

4. Suggestions for Long-term Development

• The visiting team strongly recommends that the art and design unit develop a recruitment policy and intensify fund-raising efforts.
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS
Department of Fine Arts

Action:

The Commission voted to accept the response and continue the institution in good standing with the degree listing indicated below.

The Commission requests a progress report addressing the issue cited below.

NASAD Degree Listing:

  Bachelor of Arts – 4 years: Art (Art History, Studio Arts).
  Master of Fine Arts – 3 years: Fine Arts.

Next Full Review:

2018-2019 Academic Year

Item for Progress Report:

The institution is asked to provide a progress report that documents steps taken to continue attending to health and safety issues in the Commons (see Self-Study, pages 15-19; Visitors’ Report, pages 2, 7-9; Optional Response, page 2; NASAD Handbook 2010-11, section II.F.).

Due Date for Progress Report:

September 1 for consideration at the Commission meetings of October 2011.

The Procedures for Submitting Responses and Progress Reports may be downloaded from the NASAD Web site at http://nasad.arts-accredit.org (see “Publications,” “Accreditation Procedures and Documents,” and beneath that “Other Procedures Related to the Accreditation Process”).
Note:

The institution is reminded that should it choose to discontinue the degree Bachelor of Arts – 4 years: Art (Art History), the NASAD National Office should be notified immediately (see Response, page 1).

Commendation:

The Commission commends the institution for finding a short-term solution to staffing art history courses.

Samuel Hope
Executive Director

SH:mm