

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**Senate Committee on University Priorities**  
**Memorandum**

<b>TO:</b> Senate	<b>FROM:</b> John Waterhouse Chair, SCUP Vice President, Academic
<b>RE:</b> School for the Contemporary Arts External Review	<b>DATE:</b> August 8, 2003

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The Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) has reviewed the External Review Report on the School for the Contemporary Arts together with the response from the School and comments from the Dean of Arts.

**Motion:**

That Senate concurs with the recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the School for the Contemporary Arts on priority items resulting from the external review as outlined in S.03-77

The report of the External Review Committee for the School for the Contemporary Arts was submitted on April 22, 2003 following the review site visit March 12 – 14, 2003. The response of the School was received on May 15, 2003 followed by that of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts on May 23, 2003.

Facilities

SCUP recommends to Senate that the University be advised that the issue of facilities for the School be accorded the highest priority for action in any of the planning activities of the University, including the Five Year Capital Plan.

SCUP recommends that firm deadlines be set for putting into place the financial support and planning for either facilities downtown or a new building on the Burnaby campus. **If the financial support for the downtown campus option is not forthcoming by the conclusion of the 2003-04 academic year, then the School and the University must proceed with planning and fundraising for the Burnaby facility without delay.**

SCUP recommends to Senate that the School for the Contemporary Arts and the Dean of Arts be advised to pursue the following as priority items:

## Equipment and Technical Facilities

SCUP acknowledges that the School, due to the nature of its disciplines, does have particular equipment needs and its programs are more capital intensive in comparison with some other units within the Faculty of Arts.

SCUP was advised that this year's annual equipment allocation to Faculties and Academic Units contained \$50,000 designated specifically for the School. As funds permit, additional funding can be assigned on an annual basis for this purpose.

In order to address capital needs on a longer term basis, the School and the Dean are asked to prepare an updated, prioritized technical facilities plan and discuss with the VP Academic how additional ongoing capital funding can be acquired. In addition, the

School is urged to continue to seek external funding from granting councils and from private and corporate donations in conjunction with the Advancement Office.

## Human Resources

The School should continue its examination of its administrative structure (in particular, the area coordinator positions) and curricula to better allocate its existing teaching and administrative resources and where appropriate to work with the Dean's Office to acquire additional resources.

SCUP was advised that a proposal for a Lab Instructor position, to serve as a resource for the area of technology in arts, is under consideration for funding by the VP Academic's Office.

## Undergraduate Program

A number of the recommendations by the External Review Committee were related to the design and teaching of the undergraduate programs as well as their scheduling. From the response of the School, it appears that steps to consider and address these issues are already underway. As resources permit, the recommendations around extra curricular and archiving performance should be revisited.

## Graduate Program

The School is urged to evaluate its graduate teaching capacity and re-balance admissions to the program accordingly.

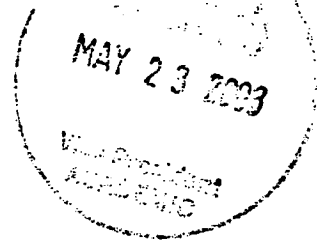
## Integration with Surrey

SCUP recommends that the School continue to develop its relationship with the School of Interactive Arts and Technology and its programs, including the appointment of joint supervisors and the use of technical facilities.

encl.

c: M. Gotfrit, Director, School for the Contemporary Arts  
J. Pierce, Dean of Arts

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts  
**MEMORANDUM**



<b>To:</b>	John Waterhouse VP Academic	<b>From:</b>	John T. Pierce Dean of Arts
<b>Subject:</b>	External Review - Contemporary Arts	<b>Date:</b>	May 21, 2003

**External Review of Contemporary Arts, Dean of Arts Response, May 20/03**

This is a very thorough assessment of the School for the Contemporary Arts detailing, through seventeen separate recommendations, areas of needed improvement and future courses of action. The report is not so much thematic as it is problem oriented and for good reason.

On the one hand the report makes it abundantly clear that the School has clarified its mission and focus and, in the process, established itself in Canada as a leading interdisciplinary centre in the contemporary arts dedicated to: balancing theory and practice in the lecture and studio context; innovation in programming and research; and contributing to the next generation of artists and scholars.

On the other hand the report takes strong exception to the chronic underfunding and under resourcing of the School in terms of building facilities, equipment and human resources. With respect to space issues and the ultimate location of Contemporary Arts, I agree with both Martin Gotfrit and the reviewers that if a decision/agreement has not been reached regarding a downtown home and location for SCA as of Sept. 04, then the university must proceed with a new building on campus. At this point the distractions from the promise of a downtown home for SCA must end. The nettle must be grasped and grasped firmly and with resolve!

The Dean's office has recognized for years the chronic underfunding in equipment for SCA. Both Roger Blackman and myself have made it clear to senior administration that we do not have sufficient resources to divert to SCA on a continuing funding basis and therefore some accommodation must be made for the shortfall. We have been able to provide one time monies, and we have worked with various individuals to try to secure additional funds through such venues as CFI, SFU at Surrey and fund raising; but the shortfall continues to be serious and ongoing.

As to human resources we recognize that there are shortages. Some of these can be accommodated via reorganization and pedagogical change within SCA whereas others require direct increase in resources. We recently, for example, increased to full time status two lecturer positions. Technical staffing is a problem which we are

in the process of mitigating; in fact we will be submitting a SIF proposal for technical lecturer support in connection with the Surrey campus.

Where we disagree with the review team is in terms of the supposed inequities in workload between lecturers and tenure track appointments. As the review team itself opines at the beginning of the document, "...the clear collective priority of the faculty...is teaching." The primary responsibility of lab instructors and lecturers is teaching. I see no imbalance in workload and by extension inequities by virtue of a standing ratio of 8 lecturers/lab instructors to 20 tenure track faculty. These individuals were hired to devote their time to teaching and not to research. This complement is necessary to sustain the demands on teaching. Parenthetically, when inequities arise we will deal with them on an individual and case-by-case basis. We are in the process of converting a lecturer to a tenure track appointment in recognition of his expanded role in research.

Of the remaining recommendations, I believe #5, 7, 11 through 17 (except 15) are relatively minor and can be acted upon internally with a minimum amount of effort and controversy. A number of these issues are covered in Martin Gotfrit's response.

The Arts and Culture Stream (R.8) is being rejuvenated. The new faculty will have to be carefully integrated into the School. And arguably the purpose of this area may need some rethinking, as the report points out. Certainly the School needs to pay attention to the recommendation that FPA 111 be converted into an arts appreciation course or at the very least reduce its focus.

With respect to the graduate program (R.9) there are some difficult choices and trade-offs to be made here. Given the demands of the undergraduate program SCA must have a clear vision of its graduate teaching capacity. There are limits here and they must be recognized.

I am concerned about the administrative load of the area co-ordinators (R. 10). Are there not functions and duties that could be shared amongst the five co-ordinators? I will be asking the Director to examine their respective workloads and responsibilities.

And lastly there is no question that we must work together to better integrate Surrey IA programming with the SCA programming (R.15). I believe the School needs to come up with a formal plan to accomplish this important and timely goal.



JTP/rt

Cc: M. Gotfrit, Director, School for the Contemporary Arts  
T. Perry, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts  
L. Summers, Director, Academic Planning

M e m o

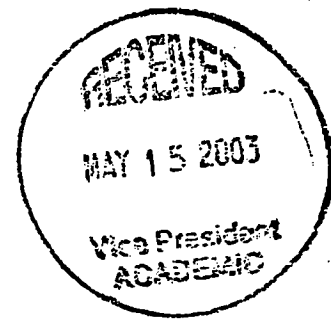
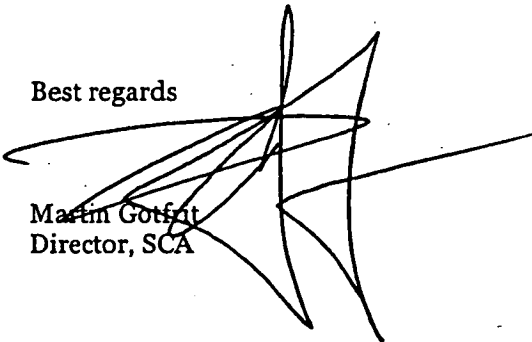
To	Laurie Summers, Director of Academic Planning
From	Martin Gotfrit, Director
Re	School for the Contemporary Arts External Review Report Response
Date	May 13, 2003

Dear Laurie,

Please find attached the School for the Contemporary Arts' Response to the External Review Report. Thanks to you and your office for your assistance to the School during this process.

Best regards

Martin Gotfrit  
Director, SCA



# School for the Contemporary Arts

## Response to the Report of the External Review Committee of March 2003

May 12, 2003

The School for the Contemporary Arts underwent an External Review during the 2002-2003 academic year. In the Fall semester we completed a "Self Study" and prepared for a site visit by the review committee (March 12 -14, 2003). Despite the amount of work associated with an External Review, we found the process to be both enlightening and positive. We had frank and illuminating discussions before the site visit and continued on in this spirit with the reviewers. Overall we are pleased with, and encouraged by their report.

Of the seventeen recommendations raised by the committee, the first three (clearly the most critical) are undeniably the responsibility of the university administration. Of the balance of recommendations, a few will require a collaborative effort in regards to the additional resources required and the rest are within the purview of the SCA. In general, we found all of the recommendations to be clear, articulate and reasonable. We have been working on many of these ideas in recent years and are pleased to see our direction and vision reinforced by an External Review.

This is the second External Review of the SCA. Seven years ago, the shocking state of our facilities also began that document. Mentioned as well for the second time was the "vastly under resourced" technical facilities and funding for capital equipment that has plagued us for many years. Although one may argue that there has been increased attention paid to finding the SCA a new home in the past few years, there clearly has been no response to the recommendations regarding capital funding. These are critical aspects of our program and represent, in part, our fiduciary responsibility to the students. We request that the administrative bodies who commission these External Reviews not ignore these primary recommendations once again. Surely, at the very least, there are resources available to address the capital funding issue. It is one thing to occupy clearly "disgraceful" facilities; it is another to have them filled with cast-off surplus furniture and less than adequate equipment. Students do notice that they sit in ergonomic task chairs in Applied Science and old plywood stacking chairs in the SCA. Given the importance of both faculty and student

morale, retention and recruitment, one has to ask that these recommendations not be ignored for a second time.

We also must concur with the Reviewers recommendation regarding human resources. This is an area where we are working hard to do whatever that is in our power to remedy. We are re-examining our administrative structures and looking at our curriculum. Clearly our large number of non-tenure track faculty and our pressing need for technical staff exacerbate the stresses of teaching and administration.

The balance of the reviewer's recommendations have been taken to heart. We are currently undergoing an examination of our curriculum in light of issues of interdisciplinarity. Given the addition of two new faculty members in the Art and Culture Area this coming fall, we are confident that there will be significant changes to both that Area and the teaching of theory throughout the SCA. The issues of Canadian content and the hegemony of Eurocentric focus in the arts have been a concern of ours for many years. Responses to these recommendations are complicated by the need for additional faculty, the pressures to reduce courses to further nurture interdisciplinarity, and the need to maintain disciplinary rigor. We will continue to strive to find ways to address these issues beyond our current activities (activities such as the Gamelan courses, the Ghana Field School, the Cinema in Canada course and the integration of Canadian content in many of our offerings). In response to the general pressure to increase "student access" throughout SFU we have been looking at ways to improve our scheduling. With a relatively small faculty complement (particularly from an Area point of view) and in response to the need for courses to be offered in a Fall/Spring pattern to enable students to complete their degrees in a timely fashion, we have in the past offered minimal Intersession and Summer offerings. We are now looking at creative ways to change that pattern and are pleased to note that the recent approval of our request to give our long-term Senior Lecturer in Theatre a 12 month contract and a similar action to our Dance Area Lab Instructor will facilitate the further development of our Intersession and Summer activities.

S.

In conclusion we are buoyed by this positive review. We believe it represents a strong endorsement of our efforts and vision. We will endeavour to address all of the recommendations in as timely a manner as possible and note that most of this activity is currently underway. When we began this process in the fall of 2003, we were promised at a School for the Contemporary Arts meeting that these External Reviews would now be taken seriously by the administrative bodies that have requested them. We have fulfilled our part of the exercise to the best of our ability. We respectfully ask that the University respond in kind.

Martin Gotfrit  
Director, School for the Contemporary Arts

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SCUP 03 - 029

April 14, 2003

Dr. Bill Krane.  
Associate Vice President, Academic  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, B.C.  
V5A 1S6.

FACULTY OF  
FINE ARTS

Department of  
Film & Video

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Dear Dr. Krane:

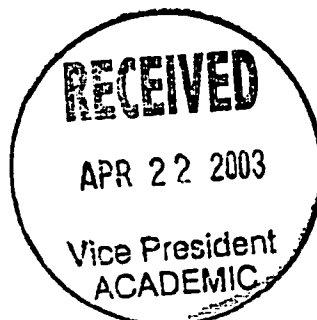
I am enclosing the External Review Report that we have prepared for the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University. Our report has been written after a careful perusal of the School's own internal review and the documents and materials provided to us by the university, as well as by our intensive immersion in the School over a period of three days this past March. During that time we met and had extensive conversations with the Director of the School, Martin Gotfrit who was unflinchingly hospitable and helpful in helping us understand the complexities of his institution. We had meetings with faculty and staff from all disciplines, and with students in both an open forum and in smaller consultative encounters. We were conducted through all major building facilities both on campus and at the Alexander Centre downtown. In all instances, discussions led by students, faculty and staff were conducted in a spirit of generosity and openness and this dialogue played a key role in our evolving understanding of the School. I believe I can speak for our committee, that we all left the School energized and inspired by what we had seen.

We would like to thank Laurie Summers for her administrative support and Simon Fraser University for this unique opportunity to work together. The report is jointly authored but each of us would be happy to respond to future queries.

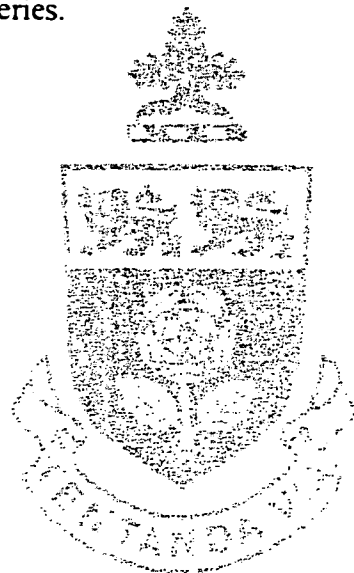
Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Longfellow".

Brenda Longfellow  
Graduate Program Director  
Film and Video  
York University



7.

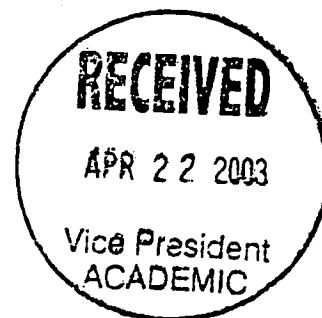


**REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW  
COMMITTEE**

**School for the Contemporary Arts**

**Simon Fraser University**

**March 2003**



## SCHOOL FOR THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS REVIEW, 2003

Review Committee: Brenda Longfellow, York University, Chair; Geoff Proehl, University of Puget Sound; Iro Valaskakis-Tembeck, Université du Québec a Montréal; Carole Gerson, Department of English, SFU.

The review committee was unanimously impressed by the excellence and vitality of the School for the Contemporary Arts and by its clear articulation of its mission. Within the field of fine arts education at the post-secondary level in Canada, the School is unique in situating interdisciplinarity as the central principle of both pedagogy and organizational structure. While other Fine Arts faculties insist on maintaining (if not policing) the borders between arts disciplines through the traditional structure of autonomous departments mapped around disciplines, the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University has constituted itself through an immensely creative cross-fertilization and dialogue between disciplines. The uniqueness of its mission and the excellence of its execution are making an enormous contribution not only to the training of the next generation's artists and scholars but to Simon Fraser's national and international reputation as an institution that encourages creativity and innovation.

The faculty, which include many world class artists and academics, are distinguished by a range of professional accomplishments which have received national and international recognition. While maintaining impressive research profiles, however, the clear collective priority of the faculty (and "joy" as one individual put it) is teaching. All are passionately devoted to it and to ensuring that the mandate and creative environment of the school are maintained at the highest level. We had the impression, in fact, that the classroom for this faculty is a space of incredible creative synergy and experimentation in which pedagogical practice is continually refined as part and parcel of the creative evolution of both faculty and students. Ongoing self-reflection and deep collective dialogue appear to be an essential part of the culture of the School (and not simply an additional responsibility provoked by the imminence of a review). Faculty enjoy a healthy collegiality, and collaboration among members frequently extends beyond the School into independent artistic and research projects.

The undergraduate students are enormously articulate and mature, with powerful self-definition as independent artists working toward professional excellence, but open to innovation. All praised the devotion and hard work of their instructors, and the level of student satisfaction with their educational experiences in the School is incredibly high. School alumni are excelling in all fields and are well and firmly integrated into professional fields upon graduation. A high percentage of the new theatre companies initiated in Vancouver have been formed by SFU graduates and one of these recently received the prestigious \$60,000. Alcan Award for its work. SFU dance grads are touring with local companies and students graduating from the Music area have gone on to become leading new

music composers and sound technicians in post production houses: In the last six years, the opening film of the Vancouver Film Festival has featured an SFU graduate. Graduates in the Visual Arts are quickly integrated into the local vital arts community as well as into collateral fields in which their background and training is welcome. It is not farfetched to suggest, given this range of accomplishment, that graduates of the School are amongst the best and most thoughtfully trained students in North America.

The committee felt that the key to the School's success has been a carefully developed honing of focus and mission. At the School level this has involved a commitment to interdisciplinarity, to the balancing of theory and practice within both studio and lecture courses and to a School-wide emphasis on contemporary artistic practices. Additionally, throughout the School, areas seem to be most effective to the degree in which they have clarified particular missions: Music, for example, has focused on composition and new music; Film, on bringing in clearly defined cohorts who work through various stages of the production process as mini-communities; Theater, on the development of independent artists who can generate original work and initiate their own projects across a range of disciplines; Visual Arts, on an insistence that incoming students learn to think in non-figurative terms as they actively engage in the development of critical vocabulary at each stage of their process; Dance, on contemporary performance and choreography; Arts and Culture, on the exploration of critical issues which cross artistic disciplines.

The emphasis on contemporary work and on interdisciplinarity has fostered a critical and unique educational context that questions existing practice and seeks to create and imagine not only new work but also new ways of working. We are convinced that the School is a gem in the firmament of fine arts educational contexts within this country.

We have organized a more detailed examination of the school by subject. We are aware that focusing on resource allocation as a first priority is somewhat outside the mandate of a review. However, given that the under-resourcing and poor facilities of the School for Contemporary Arts are of such a glaring nature and will have the most forceful impact on the School's future, we have taken the liberty of insisting on their importance.

## 1. BUILDING FACILITIES

The committee was shocked at the disgraceful state of the facilities in which most of the School is housed. We wish to articulate our dismay in the strongest possible fashion for clearly, the key factor inhibiting the continual growth, vitality and evolution of the school, not to mention its continued morale, is the substandard and shoddy conditions of its facilities. The pervasive smell of mould, the presence of rats and vermin in the film trailers, roofs and windows which leak, claustrophobic classrooms, offices with no heating, theatre studios with low

ceilings and bad sight lines are not only health hazards, but directly impact on the quality of education which instructors are able to deliver and which students receive. Housing portions of the School in temporary trailers which are visibly rotting reflects poorly (and directly) on the School's public image and casts a disappointing perspective on the place of the School within the priorities of the university.

The one exception, of course, is the Visual Arts area which is housed in the Alexander Centre downtown and which stands as a model of the potential that architectural renovation and expansion will have for the School as a whole. Airy and bright, with high ceilings and excellent exhibition spaces, the Alexander Centre has enormously facilitated a vital interface and interaction between the School and the Vancouver professional arts community and audiences. The other excellent facility is the dance studio in the East Mall annex but this is slated to be taken over by the UniverCity development.

Time and time again, however, we heard from both students and faculty of the inhibition that the dispersed structural housing imposes on interdisciplinary collaboration and learning. Students who spend most of their time on the Burnaby campus rarely have the opportunity to meet with their peers and colleagues from the Visual Arts area and students from all areas articulated a strong desire for enhanced social and creative interchange. The absence of a common meeting space is immediately and directly preventing the possibilities for spontaneous creative collaboration which are central to the pedagogical philosophy and unique mandate of the School.

The committee is convinced that the School and the University administration are perfectly aware of this situation and have devoted much time and attention in attempting to resolve it. The School has developed a detailed plan for a downtown campus and for maintaining a strong and vital presence on the Burnaby campus. The committee felt the School exhibited a clear unanimity and resolve on the issue and that progress has been hampered by administrative and funding factors out of their control.

*RECOMMENDATION: We recommend, given the pressing nature of the facilities issue and given that the School and University have already spent years attempting to resolve it, that a firm deadline must be agreed upon for putting into place the financial support for a downtown campus. If financial support for a downtown campus cannot be organized by September 2004, the School and University must commit to a new building on the Burnaby campus which would house all areas. We also recommend, however, that if the latter becomes the option for resolving the facilities issue, it would be advantageous for the School to cultivate a downtown presence through the development of a performance venue for theatre, dance and music. Visual Arts is well represented by the*

*facilities at the Alexander Centre. A downtown presence will allow the School to nurture a vital interface with the public and the arts community at large.*

## 2. TECHNICAL FACILITIES

The School as a whole is vastly under resourced (relative to the rest of the University and relative to other fine arts departments in the country) in terms of technical facilities. For example, the film and video departments at both York and Concordia have capital equipment budgets averaging at least \$50,000. per year which are augmented by special grants and bequests. York, for example, has just received a \$100,000. donation from Universal Studios to upgrade its digital editing studios and is currently working on a comparable donation from OMNI television. Concerted fundraising on the part of the university is central to the viability of arts departments in the new century. "Having to make do with less" has been a constant over the last decade at the School but this fiscal reality is seriously impinging on the School's ability to deliver the excellent education it is capable of. Given that contemporary art is the focus of the school and given that digital technologies are central to all contemporary art practice, the School is in desperate need of a centralized and fully equipped media lab that would serve the needs of faculty and students across all disciplines. Access to technology is currently delivered in an ad hoc way or through individual 'under the table' relations cultivated by faculty who are cross appointed or who have access to other facilities across campus.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*Methods must be sought to ensure stable and yearly capital acquisition monies which would allow the School to develop, maintain and run the technical facilities it requires. One potential method might be to consider, in the internal allocation of provincial funding, the weighting of SCA students along the lines of science students, whose heavier weighting is due to the expenses of their lab courses.*

*Additional capital might be made up through a combination of external grants, private donations (the William F White equipment agreement is a prime example), and administrative allocation. The committee was impressed with the CFI proposal authored by Professor Henry Daniel as a productive and ambitious initiative to develop cutting edge dance research facilities at the School. Whatever the result of that application, however, a clearly defined plan and administrative and fundraising commitment must be put into place.*

*As part of the elaboration of a technical facilities plan, the School must address the heavy financial demand placed on film students in the completion of their training and course work who, we were told, are spending up to \$15,000. each to complete their thesis films. Many are working at full and part time jobs in order to finance these, with an immediate and direct effect on their academic performance.*

*At the graduate level, technical needs are partially met by the facilities in the Interactive Arts program at the new Surrey Campus. This relationship should be institutionalized through a formal agreement or understanding that ensures continuous access to these facilities on the part of graduate students from the School for Contemporary Arts.*

### 3. HUMAN RESOURCES

Given its limited resources, much of the success of the School has been consistently fueled by the high idealism of its faculty and support staff who have been willing to invest tremendous time and energy in supervising and nurturing an ambitious curriculum and extra curricular initiatives. This ambition, however, comes with long term costs, evident in faculty and staff fatigue and potential burnout with serious health impacts.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*It is necessary to continue a process of regular and frank appraisal as to the immediate human consequences of the program as currently designed and the immediate resources at hand to execute that design. The committee is more concerned with the immediate and long term wear and tear on an outstanding team of teacher/artists/scholars/staff members than with a dilution of quality in teaching, performance, research, or administrative services. The committee urges the faculty and staff to continue to be extremely vigilant about how individuals and areas manage the human resources currently at their disposal. To this end, all members of the department need to listen strongly to concerns with regard to time and energy management.*

*One of the most problematic areas in human resource management is the structural inequity of the School's multi-tiered system of appointment. This system perpetuates a serious injustice in the case of long time appointees whose commitment to and work for the department are extraordinary, whose expertise is essential to the core curriculum of the School and who are, in every way, equal to their tenured full time colleagues in research and academic accomplishment. The high number of non-tenurable appointments (8 lecturers and lab instructors) in proportion to the tenure-stream faculty (20 professors) creates inequities in areas that require collaboration across the ranks, as well as imbalances in workload (graduate supervision) and opportunities for study leave.*

*As a key step in rectifying these inequities, we find reasonable and just the School's request that the part time teaching appointments in Theatre and Dance be converted to full time status.*

*The School has an obvious and pressing need for additional technical and staff support and for the conversion of sessional appointments to additional*

*lecturerships or tenure lines in each area. We also find an administration quite adamant about limited resources for funding these requests. We hope and expect that in time ways will be found to address many of these needs.*

#### 4. INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Historically, the School has identified interdisciplinarity as its distinctive mandate but there are wide variances within the School about the success of this mandate and how to achieve it. Some faculty argue for greater interdisciplinarity and a continued erosion of the boundaries between disciplines, while others emphasize the necessity for disciplinary training and depth in craft and intellectual pursuit. We found students who wanted the School to serve as an interdisciplinary matchmaker earlier in their time at SFU through a second interdisciplinary studio course in the second or third year. At the same time, we found faculty concerned that such a class, uninformed by more grounding in the discipline, would lead to shallow work and that there were marked differences from one area to the next concerning the levels at which interdisciplinarity is best introduced.

A persistent theme that emerged in discussing these issues and many others is the challenges of achieving and maintaining good communication, especially when students, staff, and faculty do not share a common space.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*Faculty members and students should extend their ongoing consideration of interdisciplinarity as the unique and core pedagogic mission of the School. From our perspective, this consideration might benefit from a clarification of the following questions in the interests of developing a shared discourse:*

*What is the relationship between artistic practices?*

*What is the relationship between theoretical or critical disciplines in general and the work of the artist?*

*When the School looks at such issues, it must consider the differences amongst (1) requiring a student to learn intellectually about another discipline; (2) requiring a student to learn, usually at an introductory level, how to begin doing another discipline; (3) providing formal opportunities for collaborations amongst folks from different disciplines; (4) providing informal opportunities for collaboration amongst folks from different disciplines; (5) working in hybrid art forms (installation, performance or new media, for example) which incorporate aspects of at least two disciplines. A clarification of these issues must address conflicting schedules and demands dictated by the nature of the disciplines involved and by limitations in resources, both human and material.*



*One structural change to consider would be the addition of an interdisciplinary studio course at the second or (preferably) third year level, a demand persistently articulated by students. Many students observed that interdisciplinarity as an intellectual and artistic practice only profoundly 'clicked' in the fourth year studio courses. An additional interdisciplinary studio course could establish a foundation of interdisciplinary practice which would be enhanced and refined in the fourth year course.*

## 5. EVALUATION.

The primary strength of an interdisciplinary department lies in the rich diversity of the academic and artistic backgrounds of faculty and students. This diversity, however, may occasionally contribute to a serious misreading of the value of an individual's work which is outside one's own area of expertise.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*Upper division courses with a mix of students should have a clearly articulated evaluation schema for assessing students of varying disciplinary backgrounds. Across the faculty, evaluating colleagues for tenure and promotion and merit must rely on a developed and shared expertise and understanding of the complexity of different research contexts.*

## 6. AREA REQUIREMENTS

While the School has moved to reduce requirements in each area there is still an incredible investment demanded of both students and faculty to meet the disciplinary requirements. Concerns were raised about 'hidden' requisites constituted by the extensive and frequently arduous number of hours that students spend in rehearsal and performance. Students will often take fewer courses (or revert to part time status) to be able to participate in these heavily demanding performance courses, thereby jeopardizing their eligibility for student loans. These hidden requisites contribute to a perceived lack of parity among the area requirements and structurally limit the possibility for interdisciplinary work.

In general, we would urge the department to err on the side of economies of human energies in considering these issues rather than on the side of even the current level of expenditures.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*As a radical, and perhaps unthinkable possibility, we would ask all of the areas to consider eliminating one or two of their requirements, letting the students instead fill those credits as unspecified electives elsewhere in the university, thereby shifting some of the cost of each student's education back to the rest of the*

*university. (This would not necessarily mean eliminating courses; it would mean allowing more than one course to fill a requirement that can currently only be filled by a single class.) And yes, this would mean that students graduating under the reduced requirement would not be trained in exactly the same way current students are trained. Such a change would test the faculty's individual and collective ability to re-imagine what constitutes excellent training; it also, frankly, would require a degree of humility, the willingness to concede that even if a given student did not have a particular learning experience from a particular teacher, this student would still have received a fine education.*

*Additionally courses which demand huge expenditures of rehearsal and performance time (Black Box, for example) might be assigned 4 or 5 credits rather than 3.*

## 7. "A LANGUAGE AROUND OUR ART"

These were the words one student used to commend the integration of theory and practice she has found in the School. We believe that such a goal is central to the School's identity. Even though the faculty has a positive, even exemplary attitude toward the integration of theory, history, and practice, ideas of what constitutes a vigorous or rigorous theoretical perspective vary. While we were regularly told by students that Visual Arts was exemplary in this regard, students from other disciplinary areas felt that critical reflexivity and conceptual depth were not being sufficiently developed. This was a particularly vocal complaint on the part of the Dance students. Balancing the demands of cultivating craft and technique as well as critical understanding is a delicate art in studio courses, particularly within the context of a university (whose mandate is different from that of an arts college or conservatory). The solution cannot be to delegate theory as the exclusive responsibility and domain of Arts and Culture courses, something that the School, to a great extent, has avoided doing.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*An enhanced commitment to consistency and to an ongoing interrogation of the role, definition and weight of 'theory' in studio practice would be of considerable value. An opening ambit to this interrogation might consider the relationship between various theoretical or critical approaches practiced throughout the School, particularly between approaches that are more or less centered on form (to use, in itself, a suspect dichotomy) and those more or less centered on implicit, explicit, or encoded content. This conversation needs to take into account that the nature of theory changes from discipline to discipline, and that theory must be seen not as a static topic, but as an evolving process whose general goal is to situate artistic practice within broad social, political and aesthetic contexts. In this respect, the history of the discipline may be an equally important path to illuminating contexts.*

## 8. ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and Culture, with its emphasis on and skills in articulate reflection, is well-suited to aid the school in this process of self interrogation, performing, in addition to its own critical practices, a dramaturgical or curatorial function for the School itself. Arts and Culture should not, from the perspective of the committee, be the theory that compensates for practice or the prime deliver of arts to the unskilled masses, so much as an active collaborator in the making of contemporary, interdisciplinary art and in the making of a School for Contemporary Arts. To be more specific, the Arts and Culture stream ideally functions as:

- ❖ a collaborator who brings to the table a deep commitment to the artist and the artistic process;
- ❖ a collaborator respected and welcomed by the artist;
- ❖ a collaborator attuned to the intricacies of any dialogical process;
- ❖ a collaborator who understands the stringencies of the disciplines and difficulties of creation and who offers a degree of perspective easily lost in the midst of the disciplinary performance and rigor.

Central to this function is the commitment of Arts and Culture to furthering an ongoing dialogue that will endeavor to understand and clarify the goals of the School and its constituent areas. To this end, Arts and Culture should continually ask itself and the School, "What does it mean to be interdisciplinary? What does it mean to be contemporary? "

In recent years, Arts and Culture has been exemplary in its willingness to eliminate course offerings that stretched its abilities beyond its means. With the new hires in this stream, that process of refinement will continue. Clarity of this sort provides a filter through which to understand each stage of the curriculum and then judge the success of their outcomes.

Such clarity is also a function of careful hiring. With two new hires, including the prestigious Wosk Chair, Arts and Culture is on the threshold of a long overdue expansion and grounding in a tenured faculty complement. How these new faculty members are integrated into the evolution of Arts and Culture in particular, and the School in general, will require careful reflection.

Arts and Culture has defined its own unique mission by focusing on critical issues and debates which arise in contemporary arts practice as opposed to an art history approach (the typical mandate of academic streams in fine arts departments). In the curriculum offerings there is only one course which refers to art practices which predate the twentieth century.

Arts and Culture is also the site in the School where the theoretical framing of interdisciplinarity is most complex and perhaps no more so than in FPA 111, the

required introductory course for all majors. Traditionally organized as an omnibus course with the responsibility for covering all of the artistic disciplines in the School, the range and extent of the course has frequently left students and faculty (who are expected to develop expertise in areas outside of their research and training) overwhelmed.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*The committee questions the extent to which the ambitious mandate of FPA 111 might unintentionally mitigate against intellectual depth and understanding. We would encourage the School to consider that majors might be better served by a more concentrated introduction to a discipline either through reducing the focus of FPA 111 or through an alternative requisite system which requires two or three introductory discipline based courses at the lower division rather than FPA 111. FPA 111 could be reformulated as an arts appreciation course for non majors, providing a crucial service course to the university and an alternative pathway for student recruitment.*

*While the committee felt that the focus on contemporary art was appropriate given the limited rotation of courses in Arts and Culture, we would encourage an ongoing consideration of the way in which history and historical practices and contexts might illuminate contemporary critical issues. An exclusive focus on the "now" (and this includes studio courses as well as academic ones) might be too quickly captured by current fashions in the art world and, as a consequence, might lose crucial perspective and analytic depth.*

#### 9. THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

The committee encountered some very diverse opinions on the success and value of the MFA program with respect both to the quality of the educational experience provided and to the contribution the graduate program makes to the School itself. Some faculty felt that students in the graduate program were considerably less accomplished than the School's superior advanced undergraduates. There was a concern that some students were admitted without an academic background and were now experiencing real challenges in reading and writing at a graduate level. Another faculty member complained that many graduate students were electing to do performance based theses without sufficient background or solid training in performance and that these projects were placing an undue strain on faculty and technical facilities.

The committee generally found that while the graduate program shared the same interdisciplinary mandate as the undergraduate program, it was unclear as to how this was differentiated at a graduate level, with respect to recruitment, training and curriculum.

The Graduate Program is very explicitly committed to attracting students with an established arts practice who are seeking to refine both their art making and their critical reflection within the context of an academic environment. However, the backgrounds of students seemed to vary considerably and this has perhaps to do with how the interdisciplinary mandate is being interpreted. Would it be more advantageous to the Graduate Program to select students with more developed disciplinary training (but with interdisciplinary interests) who would be mentored accordingly? How important is the development of a cohort for peer collaboration and growth? At the moment, graduate students appear to seek collaboration from the ranks of undergraduate students but not necessarily from each other.

While the graduate students were content with the quality of mentoring and supervision they were receiving and were particularly impressed by the system of interim advisors, the committee did have concerns about the general pedagogical approach of the Program which centres on self directed research and artistic practice. Although fostering autonomous work must be an objective of all graduate education, this must be balanced with the necessity of providing in-depth training in both technique and critical studies. Individual practice at the graduate level can only flourish when it is challenged, deepened, and contextualized by a structured academic core of study, writing, reading and debate.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*Given the extensive demands placed on faculty and support staff by the undergraduate School, the committee recommends a strict limit be placed on the number of students admitted to the Graduate Program. Even if a particular faculty member has time and energy to mentor a student, the repercussions of that mentoring on human and physical resources across the School needs to be carefully reviewed with the goal that a faculty member might mentor a student once every four years instead of once every two, reducing faculty work load. At the same time, graduate students may and often do bring extremely important resources to the school as teachers, teaching assistants, technicians, and performers. In other words, a complex barter economy exists in and around the admittance of each graduate student. The school is well aware of that economy. We merely underscore its importance.*

#### 10. ADMINISTRATION

Given the complexity of running a School with the equivalent of six departments, the task of centralizing administration is a difficult one in view of the expertise required in terms of scheduling, space needs, the hiring of sessionals, etc. Area co-ordinators receive no administrative off load although their responsibilities and work are intense and demanding.

## RECOMMENDATION:

*We would recommend a careful and itemized evaluation of the duties of area co-ordinators with the intention of isolating and transferring those tasks which do NOT require such expertise to a centralized administrative body -- for example, student advising and assignment of advanced standing and course equivalencies. These seem to take up a fair amount of time on the part of area co-ordinators even though they are also part of the responsibility of the administrative staff. Given the School's ongoing relations with various colleges in the province, the assignment of advanced standing and course equivalencies could be more systematized and centralized. Ideally, the transfer of these functions would not overburden an already overburdened support staff but might become the responsibility of an Undergraduate Chair or Associate Chair who would receive a partial offload.*

## 11. SCHEDULING

The problem of moving through a degree in a timely manner was consistently raised by students, many of whom claim they are taking up to six years to graduate because desired or required courses are not offered with sufficient frequency. Faculty seem very reluctant to consider summer teaching as this has traditionally been their research semester.

## RECOMMENDATION:

*Flexibility and a commitment to offering educational opportunities should be structured into an awareness that the university runs on a three (and not a two) semester basis. The University offers three models of summer instruction which could be used to by the School to offer additional required and elective courses: intensive intersession (8 weeks, May-June), intensive summer session (6 weeks, July-Aug), and the full summer semester. The summer might provide a productive time to offer lower division interdisciplinary studies courses which would additionally serve the large constituency of arts, communications and humanities students at SFU and could, conceivably, be taught by sessional faculty.*

## 12. EXTRA CURRICULAR PERFORMANCE

The Off-Centre Performance Group has clearly played an important role in the identity of the Dance area. However, it was probably wise to call a hiatus to a program that was putting a serious drain on some members of the dance faculty. The Group, however, offers a rich and unique opportunity for students to gain performance and touring experience as well as publicizing the School to a broader community.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*We encourage the School to consider reconceiving the Off-Centre Performance Group in a way that will not over-burden this area. That decision must, however, be carefully weighed. In the interim, it is important that prospective students understand at each step of the way the degree to which a class or program will or will not be available.*

#### 13. EUROCENTRIC FOCUS.

Many students expressed the desire that the curriculum in both studio courses and Arts and Culture be expanded to include art theory and practices from non European based traditions.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*While the field school in Ghana, the courses on Gamelan and the proposed field school in Cuba go some way toward reforming a Eurocentric bias, the School might commit to a broad cross disciplinary effort to include material across the curriculum which addresses diversity. This is particularly the case in the Music area which would reap great benefit from hiring a scholar in the field of World Music. The committee felt that the dance history courses would also benefit by a more inclusive approach. In particular, the History of Dance: origins to the 20th Century might be re-oriented from its exclusive focus on "western theatre dance and classical ballet" to include World Dance.*

#### 14. CANADIAN CONTENT

The committee felt that the Canadian contribution to the contemporary performing arts as an area of scholarly research and historical example was acknowledged in an uneven way across the disciplines. While the film area has a course dedicated to Canadian cinema, it was unclear how Canada's vital contribution to contemporary art was represented in the other disciplines. For young artists and scholars who, for the most part, will be working within Canada upon graduation, an intimate knowledge of the structural contexts, policy implications and creative work of their immediate and historic predecessors must be a key objective of all fine arts education.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

*The School should commit to a broad cross disciplinary effort at including material across the curriculum which highlights Canada's contribution to contemporary arts practice and theory.*

## 15. INTEGRATED ARTS AT SURREY

The School is very open to a partnership and on going collaboration with the Surrey program of Integrated Arts. Many of the faculty in Surrey are SFU graduates and understand the specific orientation of the School for Contemporary Arts. Graduate students in the MFA program are seeking out joint supervisors with faculty in Surrey.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*Clearly the School would stand to gain great advantage through a formalized relationship with the Surrey campus through cross listed courses, shared facilities and joint ventures.*

## 16. ARCHIVING PERFORMANCE

### RECOMMENDATION:

*The School could productively commit to documenting all stage productions through video or still photography and through careful archiving of published catalogues and programmes. Archival stills of past performances could be part of an ongoing and changing exhibition in the lobby of the theatre.*

## 17. STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES.

Students occasionally voiced a concern that their participation was not solicited on departmental committees and that misunderstandings had developed because of the absence of clear systems of communication.

### RECOMMENDATION:

*Students should be invited to participate in departmental committees where appropriate.*