The School of Art is very appreciative of this opportunity to review and assess our graduate programs, and very grateful for the time and efforts of the review committee members, external reviewer, and the Graduate School dean, associate deans, and staff in making this a meaningful and effective process. The review committee’s report seems to strongly support several of our general conclusions regarding the challenges facing our three graduate programs as they strive to grow without compromising the quality of the educational experiences our students deserve, particularly the lack of high quality facilities for our programs, which the review committee accurately assessed as “poor”. We again emphasize that our lack of high quality facilities for our programs has to be addressed, and though the 3-D Annex has provided excellent facilities for Metalsmithing & Jewelry Design and Ceramics, and should do the same for Sculpture in the near future, basic health and safety concerns persist in the current Art and Architecture buildings. Ventilation in these buildings must be improved in order for us to provide a safe and healthy environment for all our students, and well-equipped, up-to-date studio and office spaces are necessary for all the graduate degree programs.

We are pleased that the committee found the School of Art graduate programs to have good overview and vision, quality and quantity of students, and curriculum and programs of study. We are also gratified by the committee’s commendation on faculty diversity, which we have been slowly improving over time. Despite some questions regarding faculty productivity as measured through the self-study data, addressed below, we note that this area was still considered satisfactory. There are several helpful review committee observations and recommendations that bear addressing directly:
Although the current strategic plan lists no goals for faculty numbers, the SoA is developing a priority list for necessary program expansions and consequently our priorities for our next new-line hires.

The review committee noted that “while the number of professional exhibitions seems adequate for a School of Art, the number of refereed articles/abstracts seems low for a School administering a Ph.D. program.” We wish to clarify that only Art History (six faculty) and Visual Studies (four faculty) publish research primarily by articles/abstracts. This is 10 out of 32 full-time faculty, which may contribute to the appearance of lower publication numbers.

Our limited travel funding ($300 per year) is being addressed in our Strategic Plan, which advocates ensuring 40% of faculty time for research and increased opportunities for students, faculty and staff to participate in regional, national, and international venues. The plan also stresses seeking internal and external grants to provide additional sources of professional development funding to support students, faculty, and staff to participate in regional, national, and international conferences, exhibitions and research; improve support for faculty and staff involvement with national professional organizations and educational and training opportunities; and establish a process and plan for informal faculty exchanges with peer institutions. Limitations on research productivity caused by a lack of grant funding opportunities should be lessened now that we have a new Coordinator of Development for the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Marilyn Arland, and a new grant writer, Allison Boroda joining the School of Art during summer 2010.

Faculty Workload concerns have not been alleviated or clearly addressed by this review of our graduate programs, and the School of Art maintains that a heavy teaching and service load is a hindrance to the quality and continued development of our graduate programs. As the review committee noted, SoA faculty teach five courses per year. Nearly all faculty are directly involved with our graduate programs in some way, and serve on many student committees and work independently with graduate students entirely as overloads. The review committee points out that from 2003 through 2007, the average faculty workload (calculated for fall semesters) for the university was 15.16; for the College of Visual and Performing Arts 15.16; and for the School of Art 14.39, which surprises the SoA faculty because our work load is reported as slightly less than university and college averages. These figures remain unclear. If these numbers actually represent the faculty average for one semester, then it appears that the average faculty member at TTU exceeds the minimum requirement of 18 for the year by an incredible 67%. After inquiring as to what individual loads are counted toward this number, we understand that all individuals teaching a class or more, including GPTIs, are counted in this overall number, which would distort our numbers heavily due to our practice of assigning only one GPTI teaching responsibility to our graduate students, which we feel is essential to protect the quality of their experience and accomplishment as students. We would appreciate more information on this part of the data used to assess our faculty workload.

Faculty Service assessment is also of concern because it seems to consider only our responsibilities/leadership in professional societies and service on graduate committees. The review committee notes that “…the school had from 3 to 5 faculty members serve as journal editors or editorial board members from 2003 to 2008, the number of officers in national organizations ranged from 1 to 3 over the same time period, and participation of professional society committees ranged from 1 to 2 annually. Three faculty members were editorial review members annually.” Based on the service listed on the report, the committee concluded that faculty members have a light service load. Fewer than half of our faculty have much of an opportunity to participate in the types of service in professional societies and editorial activities emphasized by the review. Our concern is that
considering only professional service and service on grad student committees (we normally consider grad committees to be part of teaching) results in a narrow sampling of faculty responsibilities in the area of service. School of Art faculty regularly contribute service efforts and leadership in administrative and faculty governance committees at the departmental, college and university levels; maintenance and development of equipment and facilities; keeping studio labs functional, safe and accessible to students; serving on search committees, T&P committees; organizing course scheduling for their areas; determining and updating special instruction fees; advising students; training T.A.s and GPTIs; and many other tasks. By failing to include these activities in the reported service load, the format of the self study encourages a mistaken perception in the area of faculty service.

The review committee also recommended more even distribution of faculty service on graduate thesis/dissertation committees, noting that a few faculty seem to be particularly involved in committee work, creating a centralized workload. The nature of the graduate degree programs in the School of Art results in particular faculty serving on particular committees, and this may not have been clear in the report. The faculty directly involved in PhD instructional roles are ten out of thirty-two (six AH and four VS), so chairing of PhD student committees is shared among those ten faculty. Regarding the other two graduate degrees, each group of faculty in that field forms the pool for possible chairs: sixteen MFA faculty form the pool for possible MFA student committee membership, and four MAE faculty for the MAE student committees. In the MFA program, the chair role has to be taken by one of the studio faculty (there are usually only two faculty in a given studio area) whose expertise is in that student’s chosen studio area and therefore service on committees is directly connected to admissions in each studio area. The number of committees an MFA faculty member serves on depends a great deal on how many MFA students are admitted to the program with a primary or secondary emphasis in that faculty member’s area. The MFA is a 60-hour minimum, terminal masters degree, so the students take three years of full-time study to complete the program. Faculty time invested in advising and serving on committees corresponds to this length of time. The four MAE faculty are the ones who decide how many students to admit to their 36-hour minimum MAE program, so the number admitted ultimately determines the amount of committee service that will have to be performed by those four faculty. For the PhD program, we are pleased to report that PhD Coordinator Fehr made progress distributing advising of PhD students more evenly across the PhD faculty, which may result in broader distribution of PhD committee chairing. The interdisciplinary PhD program’s nature results in frequent service on PhD committees for students outside the SoA but within the college, and individual faculty may choose to serve on several committees outside the college as well. Another concern noted by the review committee was the possible lack of a shared vision across the faculty, and Dr Fehr’s efforts in distributing initial mentorship of the PhD students across the faculty may help develop a shared vision for the program.

In addressing the quality of graduate students, the review committee concluded that an admission percentage of less than 50% for the MFA and PhD programs indicated that either the quality of the applicant pool was poor or there were problems with recruitment of students. Although both of these may be factors, it is important to note that studio space limitations for MFA students create a finite number of spaces for incoming students, and in the past, delays in progress through the program in the PhD has slowed acceptances of incoming students. Also, a constant frustration for both programs is that budget planning for TTU has never, in the time period reported, provided sufficient departmental budget information for the next year to enable confident and accurate offers to be made to the top recruits for each program. If competing institutions offer these students definite awards of scholarships and assistantships, and the offers we are able to make are tentative and based on less money than we will actually have, we are placed at a serious disadvantage. Although most of the graduate students from all three programs who are in residence receive an assistantship, students are
admitted based on assessment of their applications and often commit to our program without guaranteed assistantships and scholarships. It is simply not realistic for us to expect to enroll top quality graduate students unless our financial awards make the costs of attending TTU at least competitive with other institutions. We recently applied for additional scholarship moneys for graduate students to the Helen Jones & CH Foundations without success. The review committee noted particularly high percentages of admissions in 2005 for the PhD (7/8 or 88%) and 2007 for the MFA (62%), and recommended examining what may have led to this difference in order to identify possible strategies or policies that might be implemented more consistently and/or expanded. We will have the PhD Coordinator analyze the circumstances surrounding the quality of applicants who applied in 2005 to consider any possible strategies that may have benefited recruitment for the PhD program. Regarding the MFA admissions, there is a maximum total number we can admit based on the amount of available space. In 2007, we had a lower number of total students in the program because although we had admitted an average of twelve in the three years prior, an average of only eight per year attended, leaving the total number of students in the program at approximately 24, with nine of those graduating during the year we admitted 21. This created a circumstance where we knew we would have plenty of spaces for a large incoming group. There is no immediately apparent recruitment strategy or program publicity effect, and the quality of applicants may not have been significantly higher than other years. The review committee also noted higher numbers of out-of-state applicants in 2006 and recommended seeing if these correlate with specific recruitment strategies. They also commend the PhD program on its international applicant pool, which is appreciated, and raise concerns regarding the lack of diversity in both the applicant pool and admitted students as well as the low number of graduates from the PhD program between 2004 and 2008. The School of Art plans to address recruitment strategies needed to target underrepresented groups, as specified in the revised Strategic Plan: **1.1.2 - Identify underrepresented group source areas (high schools, community colleges and universities) and implement the recruitment plan targeting two-year programs to provide an effective matriculation of highly-qualified transfer students to the School of Art and to increase awareness of the educational opportunities in art at Texas Tech University.** Also, graduate students, particularly in the MFA program, have recently received increasing amounts of financial support from the Graduate School enabling them to present work at conferences and other academic institutions, where they are lecturing and reviewing portfolios, which is helping recruit and publicize the program:

- In April of 2009, MFA Student Coordinator Christopher Voss attended the Southern Graphics conference for recruitment purposes
- Contemporary Dialogue in Visual Art, exhibition by 26 Texas Tech University MFA students, March 2 – April 17, 2009, Runnels Art Gallery, Eastern New Mexico University (included portfolio reviews of ENMU students’ work by MFA students)
- Under Prof Flueckiger’s guidance, MFA students Esther Delaquis and Jenn Barr presented at the Foundations in Art, Theory and Education annual conference in spring, 2009, and in spring, 2010, Prof Flueckiger was accompanied by two MFA students in presenting at the TASA (Texas Association of Schools of Art) conference in Austin where ten of her MFA students exhibited posters
- Students in the Ceramics area regularly attend the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts annual national conference
- Students in the Jewelry Design and Metalsmithing area regularly attend the Society of North American Goldsmiths annual national conference
- Students in the Sculpture area regularly attend the annual Texas Sculpture Symposium
- Photography MFA students regularly attend the annual Society for Photographic Education national conference
Printmaking students attend the Southern Graphics annual national conference and participate in print portfolio exchanges.

We hope to be able to continue these efforts, and the SoA, CVPA and Graduate School have all supported them so far.

The review committee also recommends considering how best to support students to increase graduation rates for the doctoral program, and that consideration should be given to how a larger percentage of doctoral students can be employed. PhD faculty are employing new, distributed mentoring strategies and are targeting the 4 year maximum to graduation. Since most students who are in residence do receive employment, the figures are probably distorted by the number of students who are ABD and no longer in residence. By lessening ABD time and ensuring timely graduation, this problem should be eliminated.

The review committee found publication activity by doctoral students could be stronger, so we will have the PhD coordinator evaluate the guidance and encouragement PhD students receive in this area and consider implementation of a professional seminar for doctoral students to increase publication and creative activities as suggested in the committee’s meeting with students.

Finally, the committee indicates the most pressing facility needs are space to accommodate graduate students. We appreciate the recognition by the committee that existing graduate students came to TTU “despite poor facilities for themselves, to the credit of outstanding faculty.” Although some space will be gained with the Sculpture area move to the 3-D Annex (projected to begin in fall 2011), this will not address health and safety concerns related to the existing spaces in the Art and Architecture building, nor will it fully address the needs of growing graduate programs. It is essential that the School of Art receive sufficient funding for a major renovation to the existing facilities or new facilities for the 2-D MFA studio areas, PhD program and MAE program.

General Comments on the Graduate Programs review process:

For the most part, the data utilized and the structure of the self study were helpful and will assist us as we continue to shape and develop our programs. As we noted throughout the process and in some of our responses above, some of the data was apparently unreliable, and some is simply not clear in terms of what it actually represents (as previously noted, if the average faculty load for the whole university is around 15 for one semester, then the average faculty member at TTU exceeds the minimum required load of 18 by 12 points or 67% annually!). We now realize that some of the particular nature of the School of Art programs might be more clearly communicated in the self study, specifically the way our graduate programs work as separate degree programs, with particular groups of faculty dedicated to each.

We also note that the self study document format and contents as provided by the Graduate School don’t show a complete picture of the program, particularly regarding faculty activities. For example, the data on faculty contains the following: number, rank and demographics of the faculty (tenured and tenure track), GPTI’s and TA’s, summary of the number of refereed publications and creative activities, responsibilities and leadership in professional societies, and committee service on graduate student committees. As already noted, School of Art faculty regularly contribute many service efforts and leadership roles that are not recognized by this particular review format.