

UCLA Academic Senate
Program Review

June 11, 2020

Students
Department of Film, Television and Digital Media

Dear Students:

The Academic Senate has completed the 2019-20 review of the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media. The review report has been submitted to the Academic Dean and a copy of the report is on file in the department's administrative office.

We invite you to study the report and to comment, if you wish, on its contents and/or on the review process. Please submit your comments to the Academic Senate Office **no later than May 3, 2021**. All such comments will be kept confidential if so requested, although they may be paraphrased (identity kept confidential) in any discussions or comments to the administration. We also encourage you to participate in the department's discussions of the report.

Should you encounter any difficulty in accessing the report, please do not hesitate to contact us at programreview@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kasko
Chair, Graduate Council

Adriana Galván
Chair, Undergraduate Council

**2019-20 ACADEMIC SENATE PROGRAM REVIEW OF
DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION & DIGITAL MEDIA**

Internal Reviewers

Megan McEvoy, Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council, Institute for Society and Genetics
Cheryl Keyes, Graduate Council, Ethnomusicology
Leah Lievrouw, Graduate Council, Information Studies

External Reviewers

Peggy Rajski, School of Film and Television, Loyola Marymount University
Margaret Stogner, Film and Media Arts, School of Communication, American University
Greg Waller, Cinema and Media Studies, the Media School, Indiana University Bloomington

Date of Site Visit: February 26-27, 2020

Approved by Undergraduate Council: June 5, 2020

Approved by Graduate Council: June 5, 2020

Appendix I: External Reviewers' Reports

Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule



2019-20 ACADEMIC SENATE PROGRAM REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION & DIGITAL MEDIA

I. INTRODUCTION

Our committee was tasked with conducting a regular 8-year review of UCLA's Department of Film, Television and Digital Media (FTVDM). The internal reviewers included Prof. Megan McEvoy (Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council representative), Prof. Cheryl Keyes (Review Team Member, Graduate Council representative), and Prof. Leah Lievrouw (Review Team Member, Graduate Council representative). The external reviewers were Dean Peggy Rajski (School of Film and Television, Loyola Marymount University), Prof. Margaret Stogner (Film and Media Arts and Executive Director, Center for Environmental Filmmaking, in the School of Communication at American University), and Prof. Greg Waller (Unit Director of Cinema and Media Studies, the Media School, Indiana University Bloomington).

In preparing this report, we drew on numerous documents, including:

- A Self-Review Report prepared and submitted by FTVDM in August 2019
- Issue statements based on the self-review report, prepared by Graduate Division, the Office of the Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, and the Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) and Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODEI) of the Academic Senate
- Supporting and background materials provided by the Registrar's Office and other UCLA administrative units (e.g., student surveys, Department and academic program statistics, and previous review reports and responses)
- Individual reports and recommendations from external members of the review team (see Appendix I)
- Additional documents provided to the review team before, during, and immediately after the site visit by FTVDM faculty, administrators, staff, and students. These included collective statements and reports from graduate and undergraduate students and area faculty, and confidential memoranda and emails from individual students, ladder faculty, lecturers, and staff members, who wished to summarize, highlight, or clarify particular issues, or otherwise provide their perspectives on the review.

In January and early February, the internal review team conducted in-person pre-site review meetings with Interim Chair William McDonald and selected members of his administrative staff, and with Interim Dean Brian Kite, as well as senior university administrators familiar with FTVDM and its programs.

The site visit was conducted February 26-27, 2020 (the schedule is shown in Appendix II). The review team met again with Interim Chair McDonald and Interim Dean Kite. We conducted group interviews/discussions with faculty in each of the Department's program and degree areas, and separate group meetings with FTVDM's technical, administrative, and student services staffs. We also met in groups with FTVDM Teaching Assistants and with groups of students from the

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Undergraduate, Producers, Screenwriting, Cinema & Media Studies, Animation, and Production programs (one of these was conducted off-site to insure participants' confidentiality).

We received an unexpectedly large number of last-minute requests for confidential meetings from individual students, staff, and faculty; again, these were held off-site to protect the participants' confidentiality. The site visit schedule did not permit individual meetings with many who requested them, so some of these individuals provided confidential statements or memoranda to Senate staff immediately after the visit, which were conveyed to the internal review team. In a few cases individuals who met confidentially with us also sent detailed memoranda afterwards.

The site visit concluded with a final meeting with Interim Chair McDonald and the FTVDM Executive Committee, and an Exit Meeting at Murphy Hall with FTVDM principals, the review team, senior University officials, and Senate representatives.

We should note that this review has taken place during a period of dramatic upheaval in the academic and administrative leadership of the Department and the School of Theater, Film & Television as a whole. Both Dean Brian Kite and Chair Bill McDonald hold interim appointments, pending the selection of a permanent Chair to replace Prof. Kathleen McHugh, who stepped down in 2019, and a search for a permanent Dean to replace Dean Teri Schwartz, whose decanal duties ended in 2019. Campus administration moved operational responsibility for the internationally renowned UCLA Film and Television Archive from TFT to the UCLA Libraries in 2019, though the Archive will continue to be linked academically with TFT. Serious climate and Title IX issues, compromised personnel actions, factionalism, personality conflicts, and other problems led Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel Michael Levine to appoint Prof. Kathleen Komar as FTVDM co-chair in a "soft receivership" arrangement in Spring 2019; she was still serving as the vice-chair for the FTVDM Production area at the time of the review (areas are discussed in the following section).



Some issues have persisted since at least the last review, and have contributed to an atmosphere of chronic resentment, distrust, and even crisis within the Department that was plainly evident throughout the site visit and in the documentation we reviewed. However, it is also clear that the general mood of Department faculty, staff, and students has begun to stabilize and improve recently under the leadership of Interim Dean Kite and Interim Chair McDonald, who are almost unanimously seen as open, fair, and dedicated – doing the best that can be expected under very difficult circumstances.

Thus a fundamental goal of the present Review is to assist and support the Department's efforts to deal constructively with its long-term challenges and more recent, specific difficulties, with a view to raising its stature at the forefront of both professional training and intellectual/artistic leadership. As one External Reviewer observed, the Department is at a critical crossroads. Depending on the choices its faculty makes, it has the opportunity not only to celebrate its past accomplishments but also to become a transformative cultural force in the future media landscape.

This Program Review Report is a little longer than usual. However, given the complexity of FTVDM's programs and organizational structure and the gravity of its enduring challenges, we feel it is important to provide sufficient context and detail to frame our conclusions and

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recommendations for the Council, the Department, and its community. This report expresses the views of all members of the review team.

Department Structure

FTVDM is a medium-sized Department, comprising 24.5 ladder-faculty FTEs (21.5 active Senate faculty and 3 unfilled FTEs). Since its last 8-Year Review, which noted the Department's concentration of Senate faculty at the full professor rank, there have been a number of retirements and other faculty departures. As a result, a dozen new faculty members have been hired since 2013, including four assistant professors, two associate professors, and six full professors (Self-Review Report, p. 8). With hires at these levels, and regular merit and step advances in the interim, the ladder faculty currently remains skewed toward the senior ranks (15 full professors, four associates, and three assistants). Of the recent hires, nine are women (including two Latinas, two African-American women, and two Asian-American women), and three are men (including one



concentration of Senate faculty at the ten professor rank, there have been a number of retirements and other faculty departures. As a result, a dozen new faculty members have been hired since 2013, including four assistant professors, two associate professors, and six full professors (Self-Review Report, p. 8). With hires at these levels, and regular merit and step advances in the interim, the ladder faculty currently remains skewed toward the senior ranks (15 full professors, four associates, and three assistants). Of the recent hires, nine are women (including two Latinas, two African-American women, and two Asian-American women), and three are men (including one Asian-American man). These recruitments have significantly diversified the ethnic and gender makeup of the FTVDM faculty, as Senate Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion's issue statement highlights. In addition, the Department hires roughly 100 temporary/adjunct faculty each academic year (Self-Review Report, p. 11). These lecturers, 7 or 8 of whom are long-time "continuing lecturers," are media industry professionals, teach approximately 70% of FTVDM courses, and often serve as students' academic advisors.

The Department is a remarkably complicated organization, divided into two proportionally larger specialization areas (Cinema & Media Studies [CMS] and Production), and three much smaller ones (Animation, Producers, Screenwriting), plus a small unit that manages the undergraduate major and minor. The great majority of FTVDM ladder faculty members are associated with either CMS or Production. Animation has one ladder faculty member (with an additional Professor Emerita on recall), and Producers and Screenwriting have two each, supplemented by varying numbers of adjuncts and lecturers. In addition to the Department Chair, there are three "area heads" for the smaller specializations and vice-chairs for Production, CMS, and Undergraduate Studies, which bridges Production and CMS.

According to the Department website, Production is further partitioned into four sub-specializations (Cinematography, Directing, Documentary, and Editing/Post-Production), each with its own nominal "head" faculty member, though there may be only one or two specialist faculty in each group. (The FTVDM Self-Review Report does not discuss Editing/Post-Production as a distinct specialization, nor is the newest specialization, Documentary, discussed beyond a basic description.) The myriad distinctions are reflected in student perceptions of their programs: Directing students tend to identify themselves as "narrative" or "non-narrative" directors, for example, and Screenwriting students tend to focus on either television or feature films. In group meetings with the review team, some students expressed a strong interest in becoming writer-directors, but also reported that it is difficult to enroll in screenwriting courses (if they are Directors) or vice-versa.

Each area in this segmented, somewhat idiosyncratic organizational scheme operates more or less independently of the others. The Self-Review Report (p. 131) frames FTVDM as "a composite of 6 units that function in practice like a 'School' since each unit has autonomous and separate



budgets, admissions procedures, enrollments, curriculum, and faculty oversight.” Area heads or vice-chairs manage their respective area’s curriculum, course scheduling/enrollments, admissions, teaching assignments and hiring, student support and awards, have their own budget allocations. (With no dedicated budget, Undergraduate Studies is the exception.)

Subsequent to the last review, which also raised organizational issues, FTVDM developed an elaborate set of bylaws for Department governance (Self-Review Report, pp. 19-30), which present the faculty as a single governing body for the Department as a whole. These bylaws were approved by Department faculty in March 2016 and by the campus Committee on Rules & Jurisdiction and Legislative Assembly in May 2016. However, in meetings with the internal review team, several administrators and faculty suggested that these bylaws have significant problems that would require the review team’s close attention, possible revision, and a new review by Rules & Jurisdiction.

Administratively, the Department Chair has responsibility across all areas and programs. The Chair supervises all administrative and operations staff, ranging from student programs, theater operations and projectionists, and equipment/studio managers, to electrical technicians, sound engineers, and insurance/logistics and film bookings staff, plus administrators who assist the various academic areas. (Student Services and SAOs are centralized in the Dean’s Office. To meet School-wide budget deficits, some Student Services staff lines were recently cut. Student protests about Student Services and other staff layoffs in TFT were reported in *The Daily Bruin* on the second day of the site visit.)

Degree Programs

Notwithstanding its organizational complexity, FTVDM offers just three academic degrees and one professional degree: the **Bachelor of Arts** in Film, Television and Digital Media (plus a minor in the same area); the **Master of Fine Arts** in Film & Television; the one-year **Master of Arts** in Film & Television (either as a “professional,” i.e., terminal, M.A. or as an M.A. *en route* to the Ph.D.); and the **Doctor of Philosophy** in Film & Television. The B.A. is Departmental; the M.A. and Ph.D. programs are offered only with a concentration in CMS.

The great majority of the Department’s graduate students seek MFA degrees, with enrollment since the last review averaging 217 MFA students per year at all stages of study (Self-Review Report, p. 10). The M.A. program (both tracks) has enrolled an average of about 18 students per year, ranging from a high of 35 in 2011-12 to a low of 9 in 2018-19, a decline of about 75%. In the same period average enrollment in the Ph.D. program was 38 students per year, ranging from 45 to 34 students, but with the trend generally flat (Self-Review Report, p. 10). The CMS section of the Self-Review Report [p. 73] presents slightly different figures, particularly for the Ph.D. program: those show an average M.A. enrollment of about 19 per year since the last review, and Ph.D. enrollment of 35 students per year, ranging from a high of 40 to a low of 29, but with the same, roughly stable, trend. The Report does not explain these differences.

The MFA is extensively segmented and differentiated by area/specialization, with wide disparities among areas in terms of degree requirements and performance expectations across areas. Some



The MFA is extensively segmented and differentiated by area/specialization, with wide disparities among areas in terms of degree requirements and performance expectations across areas. Some areas' program requirements exist formally on file and are published by Graduate Division; in

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others, curriculum and courses are revised independently, as needed by area faculty, and substantive revisions do not always go through standard campus approval channels. According to the Self-Review Report, time to degree for the MFA varies widely across specializations. Normative time to degree is about 2 years/6 quarters for students in the Producers program (pp. 82-83) and, since Fall 2018, in Screenwriting (p. 107). (Prior to AY 2018-19 the normative time for Screenwriting was 3 years; the decision to shorten TTD was made independently by Screenwriting faculty and applied to both continuing and new students. This emerged as a point of concern for a number of Screenwriting students in interviews with the review team.)

Time to degree in Animation is 3 years/9 quarters (Self-Review Report, pp. 52-53). Within the Production specialization, the normative time is 3 years/9 quarters for Cinematography students, although during the period of review only half of all Cinematography students (11 of 22) completed degrees on this schedule; nine took 4 years/12 quarters to finish, and two more completed in 5 years/15 quarters (p. 94). For Directing students, the timeline is longer: normative completion time is 4 years/12 quarters, although according to the Department, 9% of students in this specialization (6 of 68) took 5 years to complete their degrees (p. 95). (A supplemental document provided to the review team before the site visit cited a larger number of Directing students [86] during the period of review, almost 20% of whom [17] took five years to complete. Again, the difference with the figures in the Self-Review Report were not explained.)

In contrast, according to Graduate Division figures, average time to degree for the MA/Ph.D. in CMS has improved during the review period, from nearly 9 years at the time of the last review, to just under 6 years currently.

As FTVDM's only degree that charges students Professional Degree Supplemental Tuition (PDST), the MFA is also a major source of Departmental revenue (about \$11,600 per student in AY 2018-19, rising to \$12,200 for AY 2019-20; see the Registrar's website for current annual fees). In principle, PDST offsets the expense of specialized faculty, facilities, equipment, and staff



students and students in the MA and Ph.D. programs do not pay Professional Fees nor do they receive benefits from them” (p. 134). At the same time, in interviews with the review team some faculty claimed that campus budget allocations for CMS are often “shared” with Production. They acknowledged that CMS is less costly than Production programs, but pointed out that CMS must still provide competitive multi-year financial support packages for Ph.D. students, itself a major budget obligation. However, Interim Chair McDonald later informed the review team that PDST revenue does currently cross subsidize all Department academic programs, including CMS, while General Funds earmarked for CMS are not shared with other programs.

In any case, it does seem clear that the Production programs cannot cover their costs at current budget levels, even including PDST. The Department reports that FTVDM and the School use about 93% of FTVDM’s PDST revenues to fund staff salaries and program operations, so the Department is able to return only about 7% of its PDST revenue to MFA students as financial aid (Self-Review Report, pp. 134). Thus, per UC Regents Policy 3103 on PDST (<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/3103.html>), FTVDM supplements

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this amount with donor funds to meet the Policy’s requirement that professional programs that charge PDST provide an amount equivalent to 33% of their PDST revenues for student financial aid.

Finally, the Department’s newest program, the B.A., began as a highly selective, two-year, upper-division “transfer” program with about 60 students (30 admits per year). It was changed to a four-year program in 2015 and now enrolls about 90 students each year at all stages of the program, in addition to approximately 150 minors. Given intense student interest and demand for these programs, the area head and faculty teaching undergraduate courses speculated that there was enormous room to grow undergraduate enrollments, particularly with a program balancing critical/media literacy, history and critique, and basic production skills, plus a greater emphasis on digital and data-driven platforms, production, and transmedia.

II. STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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We found that the Department currently has three particularly strong areas of excellence that we see as the foundation for its programs and activities going forward: its outstanding recent faculty hires and a resolutely inclusive approach to faculty renewal; the dedication of its professional staff to the academic mission and UCLA's high standards and expectations; and an exceptionally diverse, engaged, and committed student body.

Faculty

Historically, the FTVDM faculty has enjoyed a global reputation for outstanding academic scholarship and professional achievement, and UCLA continues to be ranked among the top film/television production programs in the U.S., as all of our External Reviewers also noted. But one especially notable accomplishment for the period of this review is the Department's success in recruiting new hires following several retirements and other faculty departures. FTVDM has clearly prioritized, and has been fortunate to attract, an outstanding group of new ladder faculty, particularly but not only at the assistant and associate ranks, whose demonstrated productivity, international reputations, and successful advancements in step and rank at UCLA are testimonies to the Department's recent approach to faculty renewal.

Not only do these early- and mid-career academics show exceptional accomplishment and promise; just as importantly, they also exemplify the reality of media production and scholarship today, particularly in the cultural and demographic context of Los Angeles and the region, where women, people of color, and gender diversity feature prominently at the highest levels of intellectual and creative work and practice. Their addition makes the FTVDM faculty especially well-placed to produce graduates who are ready to challenge and enrich the often insular culture of the media, entertainment, and other creative industries. This achievement has also helped to ameliorate one of the major problems identified in previous reviews, i.e., the Department's historical tendency to hire its own graduates and reproduce its disciplinary assumptions, power structures, and curricula: the familiar phenomenon of academic endogamy or "inbreeding." In contrast, the new hires have brought new perspectives, priorities, experiences, and energy to FTVDM and their success will be the key to the Department's future growth and influence.

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Students

The review team was pleased to have the opportunity to meet and engage in frank and focused discussions with many dozens of graduate and undergraduate students, across all of the Department's academic programs, both individually and in groups. Every meeting with student groups was well- (and actively-) attended; one session alone included nearly 40 students representing all graduate programs. Their deep concern for, and commitment to, the welfare of the Department and School, their academic programs and advisors, and each other was both sobering and one of the most inspiring aspects of the site visit. Their gender, ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity and experiences are an outstanding model for comparable programs anywhere.

Many students (for example, the TAs) demonstrated clear understanding of university policies and expectations, and leadership in mobilizing and organizing their colleagues and articulating the strengths and the problems in the Department's operations and climate. They came ready with proposals for solutions and suggestions for change. The Department is fortunate to have such a large contingent of mature, thoughtful, and active students, ready to devote their very scarce time and energy to collaborating and providing their input. There is no question that the current cohort of FTVDM students will become change agents in their respective fields.

Administration / Staff

As noted previously, the present review has been undertaken during a period of tremendous institutional disruption in the leadership and administration of the Department, and TFT as a School. Yet even here there are accomplishments and strengths worth noting. Interim Chair McDonald and Interim Dean Kite have established a leadership style that emphasizes openness, equity, and acknowledging the contending interests and real difficulties FTVDM faces, while also seeking constructive and inclusive ways forward. While a few faculty dismissed these efforts in site visit meetings – casting McDonald as favoring Production, or Kite as a media industry “outsider” who may not understand its demands – most faculty, staff, and students recognize and respect their hard work, even temperaments, and commitment to the future of FTVDM.

The administrative and technical staffs are a tremendous asset and resource for FTVDM, not only because of their experience and expertise, but especially their complete dedication to the academic mission of TFT and indeed of UCLA at large. Remarkably, administrative staff members were often more articulate about the academic values of collegiality, courtesy, academic freedom, transparency, student welfare, and confidentiality in personnel matters, than some of the most experienced faculty. They serve as a highly qualified and expert administrative “civil service” that is indispensable for supporting and realizing the Department's, and the School's, ambitions.

We were particularly impressed by the technical support staff – including engineers, technicians, projectionists, equipment and facilities managers, and custodial staff. As a group, they were the only contingent of the FTVDM community to frame their remarks and suggestions entirely around *excellence*, a point recognized by External Reviewer Rajski: “staff stood out for sharing that the pursuit of excellence is one of the guiding principles for their work; they seemed to take great pride



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in each other’s accomplishments and function with professionalism and cohesion.” All members of technical staff have long careers with UCLA/TFT, and as a group they shared a range of proposals to help stretch FTVDM’s scarce resources and insure the best possible training and learning experience for its students. One section of a document they shared with the review team, entitled “What’s Holding TFT Back?” contained suggestions ranging from door locks and security systems, to assisted listening systems in theaters for the hearing-impaired, to finding ways to update lighting grids and obtain the most sophisticated sound/visual mixing and playback technologies possible for student projects. Although they are few in number relative to the Department’s size and programs, individual staff members are ready to teach industry-standard technical skills workshops for students in audio, editing, and post-production (indeed, some of them already conduct such workshops for other institutions). They proposed plans for further updating and reconfiguring production labs and spaces to meet curricular demands. (Since the last review FTVDM has in fact installed two new, dedicated sound and post-production rooms/stages, and an updated animation studio, all of which are heavily used by students.) In short, FTVDM’s small team of technical staffers is simply superb, and fully dedicated to the Department’s mission – and, of course, excellence.

III. GOALS AND PLANS

To recap, FTVDM is organized into five “areas” or specializations (Animation, Cinema and Media Studies, Producers, Production, and Screenwriting), plus the Undergraduate program. With the exception of the latter, area operations and academic activities are largely independent of one another. Faculty see their areas as discrete, self-governing units with faculty and staff FTE allocations, which independently develop and teach curricula and courses; as External Reviewer Rajski characterized it, they share the “perception that every specialization is its own profit/loss center.” At the same time, Department bylaws present the unit as a single body governed by all

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Given this finely-partitioned operational and programmatic structure, therefore, the goals and plans of the Department as a whole were difficult to ascertain. The Self-Review Report presents separate sub-reviews and priorities by area, with little synthesis or expression of shared aspirations beyond introductory and closing sections by then-Chair McHugh. (As Vice Provost and Graduate Division Dean Robin Garrell noted in Graduate Division’s issue statement, “We wonder whether the structure of the document reflects a department that is functioning and perceives itself as a conglomerate, rather [than] as a cohesive entity with a shared purpose and vision.”) The structure was also reflected in the site visit agenda, where review team meetings with faculty were organized by area (excepting confidential meetings with individuals). In a group faculty meeting for one of the large specializations, the review team was struck by the fact that the numerous faculty members in attendance could not respond to External Reviewer Waller’s question: “Where would you like to be in three years?”

Nonetheless, although there did not seem to be a unitary or cohesive vision, shared goals, or concrete plans, the review team was able to discern a few common themes in interviews and documents: (1) a desire to update and expand respective area curricula; (2) a desire to strengthen ties across campus and with industry partners, especially to remain at the forefront of industry

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developments; (3) the need to improve communication, relationships, and climate within the Department, and to work across specialization areas; (4) the need to provide more competitive financial support for graduate students; and not least, (5) a frequently-expressed desire for more



IV. AREAS IN NEED OF ATTENTION

In this review we found that FTVDM has experienced chronic operational and procedural problems, a contentious and distrustful work environment, and generally low morale among its faculty, staff, and students. These were well-documented in the 2011-12 review and are still evident in the present one. Some recommendations from the previous review are still pending or not fully addressed. In her report, External Reviewer Stogner observed “alarming issues evident throughout [FTVDM]...[that] are putting the institution at risk for extensive reputational damage.” External Reviewer Waller’s report paints a similar picture: “[FTVDM] is quite clearly at a crossroads...[after] what looks by all accounts to have been a very contentious and difficult period that nearly stretched this unit to the breaking point...It was very rare to hear from anyone in the unit who spoke directly of successful and rewarding personal experiences in the department.” In her report External Reviewer Rajski was direct: “If the department is not able to address the serious complaints coming from the student body and the contentious atmosphere in the faculty ranks, it seems hard to imagine how the program can successfully continue.”

One of the more serious and enduring problems is the long-standing antipathy between CMS faculty (whose traditions are academic, scholarly and broadly humanist) and Production faculty (whose dominant cultural values and professional ties, like those of the Animation, Producers, and Screenwriting areas, appear to lie outside academia in the media/entertainment industries). One interviewee remarked that FTVDM’s situation couldn’t be that dire because “we’re still winning awards.” Faculty and staff repeatedly invoked “the industry” as FTVDM’s lodestar – the purpose of the Department, one said, is to “meet the needs of the industry.” A faculty member dismissed former faculty in their area who hadn’t “worked in the industry.” Another criticized some students as “quirky people who don’t fit in the industry.” One senior ladder faculty member who had encountered recent criticism from colleagues insisted that the “university doesn’t know how to handle issues with faculty who have public profiles.”

The divided faculty vote on the Self-Review Report (12 approve, 5 disapprove, 2 abstentions) – itself an amalgam of separate reports from the various curricular areas with overviews from the Chair – was another indicator. Several interviewees characterized the Report as untrustworthy, a “flawed document” containing “engineered” data meant to favor certain areas over others. The team received several supplemental “review” documents (not voted on by the faculty), before and during the site visit, that disputed or rebutted information in the Self-Review Report.

In confidential interviews, individual staff and faculty members deplored the lack of confidentiality in academic personnel actions and discussions; faculty, staff and students made dismayed allegations of abusive or retaliatory behavior by colleagues, supervisors, or instructors, and disregarded or stalled grievance processes, both within the Department and at the campus-wide Senate level. Many described the “weaponization” of information, industry connections,



students, and budget resources to advance one faction or another. Students across all areas and degrees reported multiple hurdles in getting current, timely, and consistent information from faculty, SAOs, or administrative staff about academic programs, course scheduling, funding or employment opportunities, or advising. SAOs reported that area faculty would make curricular or course changes without communicating them back to Student Services.

Student criticism was wide-ranging and vocal, though many students also praised their close advising relationships with faculty, and MFAs particularly appreciated the generally prompt and detailed feedback on their work (more detailed responses are included in student surveys conducted by Graduate Division). However, students also described certain faculty members, particularly adjuncts, as “aggressively anti-intellectual” and “un-academic.” TAs reported instances of certain instructors (notably adjuncts) requiring them to do work unrelated to instructional support, thus exceeding union workload and hourly limits, “because [the instructors think] the TA isn’t a heavy job.” One faculty member was said to choose which students in that area got to take which courses, and to assign more talented students to ladder faculty advisors and others to adjuncts. Several students reported incidents of faculty derision or *ad hominem* shaming in class meetings and feedback on assignments (a problem identified in the previous review). One student claimed that “the majority of us have mental health issues,” and at least a half-dozen others in the same meeting agreed. Another said that given the lack of academic rigor in their area, “I wish I’d gone to trade school.” Lacking sufficient fellowship support or funding assistance from the Department, one student reported having to live in their car in order to complete a thesis film.

Similarly, as noted previously, degree requirements and expectations vary markedly across MFA specializations, and seem to change at will in some areas. A supplemental document provided to the internal reviewers before the site visit showed that while Producers and Screenwriting students complete the MFA in two or three years, in some Production tracks it is not unusual for students to take five years (15 quarters) to complete the degree. The same document outlined a model first-year degree plan in Production, in which students are expected to take eight courses in fall quarter alone – some for two units, some for four, some for variable units, but for a total 22 to 26 credits and 25 or more in-class hours per week (per course listings on the Registrar’s website). The winter quarter plan included just four courses, but for a total of 20 units of credit (14 contact hours).

These points only begin to suggest the sense of exceptionalism, compliance problems with university standards and policies, and distress we encountered throughout the site visit (and afterward in the many personal communications we received). Sometimes we have found it difficult not to be overwhelmed by the difficulties and strains that we observed and that FTVD’s people are still going through.

But we are also confident that prompt and decisive action in two main areas will help restore trust and insure the Department’s future survival and flourishing: its **administrative structure and faculty governance**; and the **organization and operation of its academic programs**. The following 11 Recommendations address specific problems in each of these domains, followed by the Final Recommendations for the Review.

The recommendations will require serious investment from the campus administration, the Senate,



The recommendations will require serious investment from the campus administration, the Senate, and everyone involved with FTVDM, but we believe this work is essential to insure the future

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health and wellbeing of the Department and its community. FTVDM is indeed at an inflection point, with a rare opportunity to reinvent itself, re-assert a new vision and agenda, and re-establish its status as the premier academic program in 21st century media production and scholarship.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

To EVC/Provost, VC for Academic Personnel, and TFT Dean:

1) Immediately launch a national/international search for the next Chair of the Department (professor rank) from outside UCLA.

The ideal candidate would be an internationally recognized colleague in a relevant field of media scholarship and practice, whose academic qualifications and accomplishments, administrative experience, collegiality, temperament, and intellectual leadership meet the standards and expectations of the world's top-ranked public research university. We wish to stress that this recommendation does not reflect on the fine (and courageous) performance of Interim Chair McDonald since he assumed responsibilities in 2019. However, with a solid commitment and mandate from the administration, a new candidate would bring a fresh perspective and constructive attitude to the challenges facing the department and its faculty, and avoid any perceptions of insider "patronage" or favoritism. This leader would expect and empower the FTVDM faculty to work together to (1) make sorely-needed changes in its academic programs to open bridges between theory/scholarship and professional practice, and (2) set new priorities for the future of FTVDM – not just for the next year or until the next review, but for decades to come. We realize that this search may coincide with the upcoming Dean search for TFT, and may require a new FTE, commensurate incentives, and aggressive recruiting, but in our view the leadership uncertainties must be resolved as quickly as possible.



To TFT Dean:

2) Establish a formal, documented, strictly confidential, and easily-accessible reporting and resolution process for complaints or grievances from any member of the TFT/FTVDM community (faculty, staff, students), including formal channels for appeals to the School and Campus levels as needed, with clear reporting channels and timelines for action to insure meaningful responses at each step and prompt resolution.

Although there is a page on the TFT website related to equity, diversity and inclusion, with links to campus policy statements and workshops for faculty, we were not able to immediately find a tool or link for confidential counseling, incident reporting, or a description or guide to the incident reporting and resolution process at TFT. The Department (and TFT) may wish to consult with other professional schools and Deans, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, and the Office of the Dean of Students to find models for such a reporting and resolution structure best suited to FTVDM and the School. Associate Dean Myung Hee Cho is the appropriate

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officer to lead this effort, and should recruit participation and advice from faculty in both Departments of TFT.

3) Require and document training for both ladder and non-ladder faculty in diversity, equity, and inclusion beyond that required by Title IX, and establish a strong faculty mentorship structure, particularly for pre- and recently-tenured faculty and adjuncts/temporary faculty.

Evidence of completion of EDI and Title IX training is vital and should be a requirement for employment, particularly for temporary and adjunct faculty. The Department must not permit any member of the instructional staff to dismiss or claim ignorance of the Faculty Code of Conduct or other standards for academic work and collegial behavior, and senior ladder faculty must be ready and willing to mentor their junior colleagues. Currently adjunct and temporary faculty teach the great majority of the Department's courses, but many are apparently not fully familiar with academic institutional culture, standards, norms, and expectations for conduct, particularly with respect to classroom teaching and advising. Again, this effort may be appropriately delegated to



great majority of the Department's courses, but many are apparently not fully aligned with academic institutional culture, standards, norms, and expectations for conduct, particularly with respect to classroom teaching and advising. Again, this effort may be appropriately delegated to Associate Dean Cho.

To TFT Dean, FTVDM Chair, and FTVDM Faculty:

4) Establish, or review and revise existing, Departmental workload policy to insure consistency and equity of faculty teaching workloads, not just in terms of numbers of courses, but also with respect to units of credit and student enrollments.

Teaching workload policies for ladder faculty are required for all programs on campus; the Department's policy should be documented and available for faculty information.

To FTVDM Chair and Faculty:

5) Immediately undertake a rigorous and inclusive process to develop a new mission, vision statement, and detailed strategic plan for the Department, including measurable, executable goals and methods to assess their short- and long-term accomplishment.

External Reviewer Stogner puts it bluntly: "Work together on a strategic vision. This will require a pivotal discussion to determine foundational changes. It is unlikely the department can survive as a small chain of islands that operate separately... Systemic restructuring is needed." External Reviewer Waller adds that the existing structure "may have worked in the past with a different cohort of faculty, a narrower view of what constituted film production, and a more traditional version of cinema studies, yet this way of organizing and operating the department is not viable now." The strategic planning process is likely to be an enormous challenge for everyone involved, and will take a major investment of time and effort. It might begin, for example, with an intensive, closed retreat. It may require guidance from University group process and conflict resolution specialists. External Reviewer Rajski suggested that the formulation of a shared Goals and Values document and Departmental Code of Conduct might be part of this process. But however conducted it will mark a positive turning point, so must include and transparently document the participation and contributions of students, staff, alumni, donors and other external stakeholders,

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as well as Department ladder and temporary/adjunct faculty. Crucially, recent hires – especially assistant and associate professors – must play a central role: they have the greatest long-term stakes in the Department’s welfare and future.

6) Reorganize FTVDM to reflect the new mission, vision, and strategic plan. Replace its fragmented administrative structure, multiple vice-chairs, and area/sub-area heads with a simpler, more robust (i.e., disinterested and equitable) academic governance and operational structure.

A new structure would require service by all ranks of ladder faculty in a limited number of broad-based standing committees with clear charges, defined terms, and chairs or conveners appointed by the Department Chair, in addition to service on short-term, task-based *ad hoc* committees, named as needed by the Chair. This should not be an exercise in marginal trimming, adjustment, or rearranging existing niches and prerogatives, but a chance for a whole-cloth rethink of the governance structures and processes needed to achieve and sustain FTVDM’s academic mission and advance its global reputation. A basic standing committee structure might include Undergraduate Studies; Graduate Studies, perhaps with subcommittees for the MFA and MA/PhD programs; Instructional Facilities and Technology; Student Welfare; Professional/External Relations; or others as appropriate. All committees should post a regular schedule of meetings at the start of each academic year, keep records of discussions and decisions taken, include active student and adjunct faculty representation and staff participation/support, and report at least annually to the FTVDM faculty as a whole. The Department Chair should meet regularly with all standing committee chairs, who together may function as an advisory committee, for example.

To FTVDM Chair:

7) Immediately redesign and continuously maintain open, accessible, and up-to-date channels of communication and information (both technological and organizational) for students, faculty, and staff, but especially clear, complete, and timely information for students about program requirements, courses, degree progress, and financial support.

Strong, effective communication channels don’t just disseminate information -- they also foster listening, respectful interaction, constructive and positive feedback, and responsive action. Top priorities include a Student Handbook, updated before the start of each academic year, and containing detailed information and procedures regarding academic programs and degrees, requirements, courses, sources for forms and documents; a public and continuously-updated listing of internship, fellowship, and employment opportunities for students; frequent (monthly) brown-bag or town-hall type meetings with faculty, students, and staff hosted by the Chair; an ongoing program of active alumni outreach, tracking and cultivation for fundraising, internship and mentoring opportunities; frequent website updates with links to all current Department activities and programs; and so on. An *ad hoc* committee of faculty, student services staff and students might be convened to conduct a communication “audit” of the Department and determine its needs and a plan. The Department/School should consider adding an administrative staff member (if one is not in place now) whose sole charge is internal and external communications, who will work with this committee and other relevant standing committees of the Department to design and maintain



not in place now) whose sole charge is internal and external communications, who will work with this committee and other relevant standing committees of the Department to design and maintain

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these channels and activities. Public communication channels (e.g., websites, press/media inquiries, social media streams) must of course be integrated with the TFT platforms.

8) Subsequent to the strategic planning and reorganization processes, charge a Departmental *ad hoc* committee to revise the Department's Bylaws to more accurately and succinctly describe its new organization and governance structure, and to streamline and conform Department Bylaws with the Bylaws of the UC-wide and Los Angeles Divisional Senate, and other relevant UC policies.

The current Bylaws, approved by the Department, the Senate Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction, and the Legislative Assembly in 2016, have several important problems. For example, the structure and duties of standing committees are not described in sufficient detail, the source of authority is not described, and the text is sometimes unclear or inconsistent from section to section. Article IV on Personnel Actions mainly reproduces UC Senate Bylaw 55 (B) para. 1-6. Section (C) of Bylaw 55, however, also stipulates that the extension of voting privileges to various ranks of ladder faculty, such as those shown in the table in Article IV, may only remain in effect for one year, after which any regular voting member can request a reconsideration and vote – otherwise that extension expires. Thus the reporting of such temporary votes is not appropriate in the body of permanent bylaws. Article V, concerning the “Selection and Renewal of the Chair,” conflicts directly with the University of California Academic Personnel Manual policy 245 and its Appendix A, which govern the appointment, period of service, and promotion of Department Chairs (all of which are at the discretion of the Chancellor), and their responsibilities -- most of which are not subject to repeated faculty votes or approval. It would be useful for this *ad hoc* committee to consult Sturgis's *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (campus standard) regarding the strict scope and proper organization of bylaws, and with TFT's academic personnel officers or the Senate Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction for advice in preparing the new version.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

To FTVDM Chair and Faculty:

9) In parallel with (or as part of) the Department reorganization, undertake a comprehensive curriculum review of all degree programs (graduate and undergraduate) across specializations and areas, with the goals of streamlining and codifying program requirements and cross-curricular connections; establishing consistent unit requirements and time to degree limits; publishing standard course descriptions, units, and content that meet campus standards (e.g., the normative limit of 18 units of graduate course credit per quarter); documenting criteria for capstone requirements and their evaluation (thesis, dissertation, or other culminating projects) as appropriate; and establishing observable learning outcomes for each course and each degree overall.

Although many FTVDM faculty members voiced the pressing need for a comprehensive curricular review and overhaul, to date only limited steps have actually been taken. Yet some curricular areas (particularly within the MFA) are seen by students and faculty alike as outdated or unworkable in their current forms, especially as they restrict or exclude students across specializations, or have

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been slow to incorporate topics related to contemporary data-driven, algorithmic media. A curriculum review/audit/redesign should begin simply, by culling courses that have not been taught recently (e.g., the last five years), and then move to a more substantive process (perhaps initiated in a dedicated curriculum retreat, supported by TFT and campus administration) that will produce a clear articulation of what kinds of graduates FTVDM wants to produce for each degree (minor, BA, MA, MFA, PhD) and the competencies and values they should acquire in their studies at UCLA. External Reviewer Waller's report provides an excellent list of basic questions that any such review should answer. Particularly for the MFA and MA/PhD programs, the curriculum design process should identify specific opportunities for cross-specialization, team-based learning, and/or cognate studies for every student, as well as a common MFA core with options for concentrations. To assist with this process, the Department may wish to consult with campus instructional/curriculum design specialists in the Center for the Advancement of Teaching.

We wish to expand on this recommendation and rationale, since curriculum problems are perhaps



We wish to expand on this recommendation and rationale, since curriculum problems are perhaps the most worrisome symptom of the broader structural and relational difficulties in this unit. Many faculty members (especially newer hires, who must have a major voice in redesigning the curriculum going forward) stressed the necessity of producing graduates who can thrive in the 21st-century professional media environment, where teamwork, adaptability, cross-cultural literacy, cross-platform competencies, and networked forms of creativity and project organization are the norm. External Reviewer Rajski stressed that “filmmaking is an inherently interdisciplinary process where all the disparate parts need to work in the service of the greater whole.” The “auteurship” or “one-student-one-film” architecture of film programs of the past cannot produce such graduates. Although certain aspects of training may lend themselves to a “workshop,” “conservatory,” *atelier*, apprenticeship, or other model of practice, ultimately UCLA is an academic institution of the first rank that educates the whole student in the interests of the larger society. Skills training and creative production must be informed by critical thinking, intellectual breadth, reflection and insight, diverse viewpoints and worldviews, and (not least) the sound ethical judgment, values, and professional, collegial behavior modeled and exemplified by faculty and staff in its academic programs. The challenge for professional schools at UCLA is to get this balance right, first and foremost in their curricula.

As a final note regarding this recommendation, per UCLA Academic Senate requirements, any Department actions regarding substantive changes to academic program requirements, degrees, specializations, curricula, or courses, should be routed through the TFT-wide Faculty Executive Committee for review and a vote. From there they may need approval from the campus-wide Senate Graduate Council or Undergraduate Council (as relevant), and ratification by the Legislative Assembly of the Senate. New degrees, majors, or minors require further approvals at the statewide level; please consult the appropriate Senate Council for details.

To FTVDM Chair:

10) In parallel with the curriculum review, reassess the balance of teaching responsibilities in the Department, which are currently over-dependent on temporary and adjunct faculty.

The teaching of courses in academic programs is a primary, and non-delegatable, responsibility of ladder faculty; temporary faculty should be used to supplement this responsibility appropriately,

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not to provide the bulk of instruction. The present model, with approximately 70% of courses taught by temporary faculty (particularly in the MFA), should be rebalanced. Curriculum, tenure-track faculty hiring plans, teaching loads, and budgets should all be adjusted to reflect this basic principle (see Recommendation 4 regarding workload policy, above).

11) Determine and publicly distribute firm schedules for courses and teaching/TA assignments, and for student financial support packages, as far in advance as possible -- ideally by the end of Spring quarter for the following academic year.

Students can only make course decisions, enroll in a timely manner, and stay on track with respect to time to degree if course scheduling is set and announced well in advance of each quarter. Funding decisions (including TA appointments) for graduate students should be made as far in advance as possible and clearly communicated on a regular schedule each year, to allow students to make financial and academic plans for the year.

Final Recommendations:

The review team recommends that the 8-Year Review not be closed, and that Progress Reviews be conducted in AY 2020-21 and 2021-22 to monitor Department progress on items outlined in the schedule shown below. These reviews should be followed by an internal Interim (3-year) Review in AY 2022-23. The Progress Reviews and Interim Review should not be waived.

To insure that faculty, staff and administrators have sufficient time and attention for this important process, we further recommend a one-year suspension of FTVDM's graduate admissions for AY 2021-22 (see Section 19 of Appendix XVI of the Senate Bylaws of the Los Angeles Division). The objective here is to provide FTVDM with the necessary "breathing room" to undertake the kind of fundamental self-study and renewal recommended in this Report. We expect this admissions hiatus to last for just one year, but it may be extended for an additional year (AY 2022-23) if the first Progress Review in 2020-21 indicates that an extension would be helpful for the Department.

These recommendations should be understood as a pledge of collaboration and support from both the Senate and the administration as the Department considers the future of its academic programs and undertakes such consequential administrative and curricular restructuring, including at least one new faculty hire. FTVDM needs relief from the pressure of new admissions across its many specializations to accomplish all that needs to be done. Ironically perhaps, given the current institutional and enrollment challenges faced by the campus as a result of the pandemic (particularly difficult for performance-based programs), in fact AY 2020-21 may be an opportune time for such a productive "pause" and renewal of FTVDM's internal operations and external relations.

Undergraduate admissions and instruction should proceed on the regular schedule, and indeed might benefit from the additional focus directed its way during the curriculum review process. Continuing graduate students will be entitled to pursue and complete their studies



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Undergraduate admissions and instruction should proceed on the regular schedule, and indeed might benefit from the additional focus directed its way during the curriculum review process. Continuing graduate students will be entitled to pursue and complete their studies

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according to the respective degree requirements on file with Graduate Division for the year they entered the program.

Thus we propose the following timeline for completion of the main recommendations in this Report, in order of priority. Operational and budget details are to be determined in consultation with representatives of the Offices of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel, and Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate Division.

Year 1 (AY 2020-21)

High/Immediate Priority• Conduct Departmental mission/vision/strategic plan process, and reorganize governance and operational structure, with new plan and structure to be submitted with materials in advance of the first Progress Review Meeting in Spring 2021 [Recommendations 5 and 6].

- Conduct audit of existing courses to identify and cull non-current courses, update and standardize course titles and descriptions, numbering, unit credit [Recommendation 9].
- Initiate external search for new Department Chair [Recommendation 1].
- Suspension of graduate admissions for AY 2021-22 [Final Recommendations].
- Establish formal, transparent grievance reporting and resolution process for Department and TFT [Recommendation 2].



Year 1 (AY 2020-21)

High/Immediate Priority • Conduct Departmental mission/vision/strategic plan process, and reorganize governance and operational structure, with new plan and structure to be submitted with materials in advance of the first Progress Review Meeting in Spring 2021 [Recommendations 5 and 6].

- Conduct audit of existing courses to identify and cull non-current courses, update and standardize course titles and descriptions, numbering, unit credit [Recommendation 9].
- Initiate external search for new Department Chair [Recommendation 1].
- Suspension of graduate admissions for AY 2021-22 [Final Recommendations].
- Establish formal, transparent grievance reporting and resolution process for Department and TFT [Recommendation 2].

Medium Priority

- Establish and track EDI and Title IX training for all faculty; establish formal faculty mentoring program [Recommendation 3].
- Conduct communication audit and create plan for improved Department communication channels, particularly for students; hire communication specialist as needed [Recommendation 7].

Year 2 (AY 2021-22)

High/Immediate Priority

- Conduct comprehensive curriculum review for all academic programs and submit revised curriculum proposals (including program requirements and course proposals) with other materials in advance of the second Progress Review Meeting in Spring 2022 [Recommendation 9].

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- Prepare and distribute new Student Handbook for all academic programs (including program requirements, revised course listings, and sample curricula), and course schedules, teaching assignments, and student financial support packages for AY 2022-23, not later than 10th week of Spring quarter 2022 [Recommendations 7 and 11].
- Review and establish faculty workload policy and balance of ladder and non-ladder faculty [Recommendations 4 and 10].
- Pending results of the first Program Review and Senate approval of curriculum changes, resume graduate admissions for AY 2022-23 [Final Recommendations].

Medium Priority

- Revise Department Bylaws to reflect organizational restructuring and conformance to University bylaws and policies, and submit to Senate Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction for Review [Recommendation 8].

Year 3 (AY 2022-23)

High/Immediate Priority

- Admit graduate cohort (MFA, MA, PhD) under new program requirements and curriculum.
- Conduct internal Interim Review; close 2019-20 Eight-Year Review in Spring 2023 pending results [Final Recommendations].

Respectfully Submitted,

Megan McEvoy, Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council, Institute for Society and Genetics

Cheryl Keyes, Graduate Council, Ethnomusicology

Leah Lievrouw, Graduate Council, Information Studies



Appendix I: External Reviewers' Reports

Deadline





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May 3, 2020

Senate Review
Department of Film, Television & Digital Media
External Reviewer Report

Thank you for the opportunity to conduct a review UCLA's Department of Film, Television & Digital Media (FTVDM). The department is recognized as one of the top film and television programs in the United States and has a storied list of alumni. I have known various members of the faculty over the years from our shared time in the industry, and they are people whose work and professionalism I respect and admire.

I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the internal members of the review committee who were outstanding partners in guiding this committee through a fair and thorough review. Their insight as seasoned members of the UCLA academy were a great aid in the process, as were the perspectives brought by my accomplished fellow external reviewers whose professional and academic experience brought valuable and complementary expertise to this important service. My thanks as well to Conrad Alumia and other members of the staff of the Academic Senate who made the process as smooth as possible, and to the abundant number of students, staff, and faculty who met with the committee to share their thoughts and/or sent us confidential statements.

The documents provided to the review committee by the Department of Film, Television & Digital Media (FTVDM) certainly highlight some of the successes and accomplishments the department and its students have achieved over the past several years. Diversity and inclusion efforts resulted in a notable increase in faculty of color, particularly in the cinema and media studies (CMS) part of the department. One would of course encourage the department to continue expanding representation amongst the production ranks in future fulltime and part-time hires. Faculty members continue to accrue notable professional accomplishments in the entertainment industry, which enhances the reputation of the school while extending potential professional contacts and connections for students; and area faculty in Production and CMS have brought forward course development initiatives to increase the currency and variety of curricula offerings. The entire department is to be commended for these forward-thinking measures.

At the same time, the committee heard passionate and often conflicting testimony from multiple members of every area of the department—faculty staff and students—about the department's current state.

Structurally, FTVDM consists of two major areas: the production-centric side (Production) which teaches filmmaking from start to finish -- content development through physical production through marketing and distribution; and the cinema and media studies (CMS) side which teaches the analysis of that content.

I think it's important at this juncture to note -- and stress -- that filmmaking is an inherently interdisciplinary process where all the disparate parts need to work in service of the greater whole. A script doesn't mean much if it is never made into a film, a film doesn't mean much if it doesn't reach an



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I think it's important at this juncture to note -- and stress -- that filmmaking is an inherently interdisciplinary process where all the disparate parts need to work in service of the greater whole. A script doesn't mean much if it is never made into a film, a film doesn't mean much if it doesn't reach an audience, and a film won't reach an audience if certain aesthetic and craft requirements aren't well-realized—e.g. directing, cinematography, editing, sound, etc.



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As such, Production instruction at most film schools is subdivided into complementary areas or 'specializations'; at UCLA, those are writing, producing, directing (narrative and documentary), cinematography and editing. Ideally, there is an understanding and respect for the critical role each specialization contributes to building the whole. The most prominent and respected industry rankings for film schools, and UCLA carries one of the highest, reflect the *totality* of instruction, not one specific area. Interviews with many of the faculty at UCLA, however, reflect little respect for each other's contributions to the collective whole, internecine fighting over resources, a perception that every specialization is its own profit/loss center, and that somehow a film school can survive, continue to attract top students and maximize resource allocation through this kind of bifurcated 'narrow lens' approach. Herein, I believe, lies the crux of many of the issues plaguing the FTVDM department.

If the department is not able to address the serious complaints coming from the student body and the contentious atmosphere in the faculty ranks, it seems hard to imagine how the program can successfully continue. Students' concerns and complaints are receiving media play, and faculty have been accused of attacking and undermining each other on social media. This is damaging to the wider institution as well as to the department, and is contributing to a work environment that is consistently referenced as stressful, debilitating and exhausting by all parties—faculty, staff and students.



As such, Production instruction at most film schools is subdivided into complementary areas or 'specializations'; at UCLA, those are writing, producing, directing (narrative and documentary), cinematography and editing. Ideally, there is an understanding and respect for the critical role each specialization contributes to building the whole. The most prominent and respected industry rankings for film schools, and UCLA carries one of the highest, reflect the *totality* of instruction, not one specific area. Interviews with many of the faculty at UCLA, however, reflect little respect for each other's contributions to the collective whole, internecine fighting over resources, a perception that every specialization is its own profit/loss center, and that somehow a film school can survive, continue to attract top students and maximize resource allocation through this kind of bifurcated 'narrow lens' approach. Herein, I believe, lies the crux of many of the issues plaguing the FTVDM department.

If the department is not able to address the serious complaints coming from the student body and the contentious atmosphere in the faculty ranks, it seems hard to imagine how the program can successfully continue. Students' concerns and complaints are receiving media play, and faculty have been accused of attacking and undermining each other on social media. This is damaging to the wider institution as well as to the department, and is contributing to a work environment that is consistently referenced as stressful, debilitating and exhausting by all parties—faculty, staff and students.

While there certainly are important administrative issues in need of addressing related to marketing, communication, student services, human resources, lab fees and organizational efficacy that reside largely under the purview of the Dean and Chair, the soul of any school largely resides with faculty. They create the curriculum, they teach the courses, they have the most intimate contact with students...and with each other. Given seniority and tenure, the only realistic way things related to climate will improve is if a substantial number of the faculty body choose to come together to help heal the undermining and enmity evident between and within every curricular area of the department.

I would recommend investing in bringing in outside help to mediate and facilitate this process to help lead the body toward healthier models of governance and collaboration that are, ultimately, in everyone's best interests. It would also be helpful if the university could allot some resources, e.g. funds for needed additional FTE and staff, for the dean and chair to access and release if and when certain benchmarks by faculty are achieved.

Of all the groups the committee met with, staff stood out for sharing that the pursuit of excellence is one of the guiding principles for their work; they seemed to take great pride in each other's accomplishments and function with professionalism and cohesion even in the midst of budget cutbacks and layoffs and what seemed to be longstanding performance of duties beyond their prescribed roles without additional compensation.

Possible approaches and recommendations to help address the issues identified herein are below.

1. Address and redress culture: personalities are driving decision-making more than principles. Weak administrative oversight and siloed approach to curricula is feeding divisiveness and undermining collaboration and communications. Strongly believe this group needs outside help from a mediator and/or facilitator to work through major issues.





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- a. Immediately adopt bylaws for departmental meetings that articulate ground rules for faculty interactions culled from existing best practice models; goal is to reduce opportunity for verbal harassment and bullying. Enforce Roberts rules of order, adopt guidelines that limit amount and number of times any one person can speak, use procedural guidelines to minimize opportunities for people to monopolize conversation and maximize opportunities for more voices to be heard.
 - b. Clarify and craft concise Mission and Vision Statements for the Department. As part of process, work with skilled facilitator to guide idea-generating exercise with faculty and leadership. Gather and share input from staff, alumni and students prior to retreat and/or working group meeting.
 - c. Articulate and adopt shared Goals and Values document for department. (See Jeffrey Buller books for examples.)
 - i. Establish Standards of Excellence to assess teaching, service and professional work.
 - ii. Establish or clarify a Code of Conduct for faculty that outlines expectations for civil behavior and professionalism conducive to creating a respectful and cordial work environment, and outlines expectations and parameters for interactions with colleagues and students.
 - iii. Establish disciplinary measures for non-compliance with code of conduct or poor performance relative to standards of excellence, e.g. impacts performance review, merit raise, disqualification for faculty grants and awards, censure, etc.
2. Address UG and Graduate Student complaints regarding course and program design, weak advising and thesis support, course availability and registration challenges, misinformation on website re requirements and progress to degree, weak oversight of adjuncts, poor quality control of instruction, weak onboarding and assignment of TAs, concerns re mentoring and exit strategies:
- a. Clarify and strengthen administrative and curricular oversight of key programs, and streamline and standardize structure of 'area' heads and titles. (Confusing to follow exactly who was responsible for what in each area.)
 - i. Establish Vice-Chair or Director of UG Studies and Vice-Chair or Director of Graduate Studies that serve under Chair for the Department. Need dedicated focus, particularly on Graduate programs, to assess viability of programs and specializations, improve consistency and quality of instruction and curriculum design, and examine length of time to degree. (Is 4 years realistic or necessary for some of graduate programs given concerns re: expense?)
 - ii. Create heads of study or area heads for 'specializations' in Production, and for CMS.
 - iii. Create a department wide Curriculum Committee that includes representatives from each specialization area to foster holistic and interdisciplinary approach to student experience. Institute subcommittees as needed to address specialized areas of Production. Important for one



- iii. Create a department wide Curriculum Committee that includes representatives from each specialization area to foster holistic and interdisciplinary approach to student experience. Institute subcommittees as needed to address specialized areas of Production. Important for one committee to understand and balance potentially conflicting needs for facilities and resources based on curricula design and pedagogical goals. (If



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CMS increases 'production' side of classes, for example, more demand may be placed on equipment and facilities.)

- b. Improve and update curricula: A serious reassessment needs to occur in a timely manner given number of concerns expressed, particularly in animation and production. Would recommend considering the following:
 - i. Feedback/Responsiveness: Where/how are depts. gathering feedback around curriculum design? How are outcomes assessed? Would be helpful to inform and include students regularly in the process.
 - 1. Set up ongoing feedback mechanism to standardize feedback process from students on an ongoing basis. Require written response by faculty to that feedback on an annual or semiannual basis, and include timeline for implementation of any agreed upon changes or investigations.
 - 2. Consider having students sit in on task force re: curriculum or on curriculum committee.
 - ii. Conduct current and ongoing assessment of comparator schools and programs, and student outcomes, to help inform curriculum redesign.
 - 1. Address serious concerns and frustration around animation: datedness of curriculum, improve rigor of critiques, add opportunities for team projects, increase organized outreach to alumni.
 - 2. Increase collaboration between screenwriting and



- CMS increases 'production' side of classes, for example, more demand may be placed on equipment and facilities.)
- b. Improve and update curricula: A serious reassessment needs to occur in a timely manner given number of concerns expressed, particularly in animation and production. Would recommend considering the following:
 - i. Feedback/Responsiveness: Where/how are depts. gathering feedback around curriculum design? How are outcomes assessed? Would be helpful to inform and include students regularly in the process.
 - 1. Set up ongoing feedback mechanism to standardize feedback process from students on an ongoing basis. Require written response by faculty to that feedback on an annual or semiannual basis, and include timeline for implementation of any agreed upon changes or investigations.
 - 2. Consider having students sit in on task force re: curriculum or on curriculum committee.
 - ii. Conduct current and ongoing assessment of comparator schools and programs, and student outcomes, to help inform curriculum redesign.
 - 1. Address serious concerns and frustration around animation: datedness of curriculum, improve rigor of critiques, add opportunities for team projects, increase organized outreach to alumni.
 - 2. Increase collaboration between screenwriting and production/directing
 - 3. Increase opportunity for directing students to analyze and shoot projects/exercises written by someone other than themselves to enhance collaboration and professional practice skill set.
 - iii. Build on growth opportunity in Undergrad CMS area by increasing 'theory and practice' design for degree.
 - 1. Ascertain reasons for declining interest in Graduate program and how and if alternative models may be implemented to attract and retain students.
 - iv. Consider building up Digital Media side of program given strong, positive response to course additions.
 - c. Improve student services
 - i. Create faculty/staff committee to improve communication and consistency in messaging to students regarding course and degree requirements and progress to degree design.
 - ii. Maintain advising oversight in dean's office—given all the departmental infighting and budget constraints, recommendation to move into individual departments seems unrealistic.
 - iii. Consider establishing 'remote' counseling sessions on-site in classroom building during certain days or hours in week.
 - iv. Strengthen Graduate advising overall and thesis advisement in particular. Consider other models that are less demanding on FTE. Recognize faculty are being stretched thin.
 - d. Website: fact check and overhaul for inaccuracies and inconsistencies.





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- e. Setting Student Expectations: Several complaints from students and strong sense of disappointment from feeling website and recruiting led them to believe there would be stronger support for transition into industry post-graduation, stronger mentorship, stronger interaction with industry professionals. Need greater alignment in messaging about what faculty can and will do versus what students think will be provided.
 - i. Invest in more support for exit strategies and career development opportunities for students.
 - ii. Create workshops or courses that enhance pitching skills and presentation of self in professional settings.
 - iii. Strengthen instruction around 'biz of the biz' for every student, not just producing majors.
 - f. Invest in stronger alumni outreach and mentorship.
3. TAs: improve onboarding and payment structure. Numerous complaints re payments and contract being late and causing cash flow issues.
 4. Cultural training/Inclusive teaching: increase. As noted by one faculty member, it 'can't only be relegated to one online training course.'

Thank you again for the opportunity to be of service, and I hope these observations and recommendations are helpful. It is my fondest hope to see the Department of Film Television and Digital Media move forward in a new and united direction. I know the challenges the department is facing have been exacerbated by COVID, and can only say I am wishing for the best for everyone in these difficult and unprecedented times.

Stay safe and stay well,

Peggy Rajski
Dean, School of Film and Television
Loyola Marymount University





March 20, 2020

**UCLA Senate Review Committee
Department of Film, TV & Digital Media
External Reviewer: Maggie Burnette Stogner**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for conducting an exceptionally well-organized review process. The organizers navigated us through a nonstop series of small group and one-on-one meetings with each unit, program and subprogram, and we heard perspectives from administrators, staff, faculty and students. We were provided extensive background documents before our site visit, as well as materials during the site visit and follow up letters and reports. Thank you for your hospitality and the rigorous preparation that made the site visit meaningful and insightful. All those with whom we met reflected a strong commitment to taking this review seriously.

OVERALL POSITIVES

The UCLA Department of Film, TV and Digital Media has a long-standing excellent reputation and has historically been amongst the top-rated film schools in the country. It has the benefit of significant advantages due to its proximity to Hollywood and well-established media production entities that provide a robust source of networking, career opportunities, experienced faculty and adjuncts, and much more. The Department has talented, dedicated faculty and staff across every unit/program/subprogram. The students we spoke with were engaged and passionate. In fact, I found the students' level of devotion to and concern about the excellence of their respective programs truly exceptional. The conservatory design of the programs, with small cohorts and one-on-one mentorship, stands out. The diversity of the Cinema Media Studies faculty is commendable.



GENERAL CONCERNS

After hearing from all constituents through written reports, confidential meetings with groups and with individuals, and through the additional letters and documents that we received, there are some alarming issues evident throughout the Film, Television and Digital Media Department. The severity of these issues are putting the institution at risk for extensive reputational damage.

Stogner, External Review, UCLA

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The following is a general assessment, followed by more specific thoughts and recommendations. I emphasize again that the dedication, commitment and passion demonstrated during our site visit gives me every hope that many of these issues can be addressed and surmounted.

THREE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

After reviewing all of the materials and my notes from the site visit, I think it is most helpful to focus on these three recommendations.

1. To evolve together as a 21st film school by creating a cohesive structure at the departmental level that fosters collaboration and strengthens the whole as well as the individual programs.
2. Improve communication on all levels, with critical attention to students.
3. Institute mandatory training for all adjuncts and incoming faculty that includes Title 9 requirements and a comprehensive orientation.

#1: CREATE A COHESIVE STRUCTURE

All film programs today are struggling with how to transition into the 21st century, one that is



#1: CREATE A COHESIVE STRUCTURE

All film programs today are struggling with how to transition into the 21st century, one that is internet-driven with digital natives, that feeds a gig-based economy, that must deal with fast-changing technological upgrades. The Chronicle of Higher Education provides frequent appraisals of how our pedagogy, degree programs, financial structures, etc. must change to meet the needs of today's students and the realities of institutional survival. The UCLA Film, TV and Digital Media department is not alone in this.

The most important recommendation I can make is to find a way to come together to address these common challenges and unite around a clear vision.

Most striking during the site visit was the divisive, acrimonious atmosphere evident between and within many of the programs. Despite all of the many positives of the department, the successes of the students, the exemplary dedication of the staff, and the exceptional talents of the faculty, the core discussion kept coming back to the serious rifts between faculty and programs. Finding a path forward that works for the department as a whole, philosophically and pragmatically, is crucial.

Stogner, External Review, UCLA

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Some of the people we met with described the dysfunction as recent due to leadership issues. However, it is very clear in the prior 8-year review that many of the systemic issues existed then and have worsened. There are several points of conflict that include the following.

- There is resentment, particularly since financial cutbacks several years ago, between programs such as Screenwriting and Cinema Media Studies that make surplus money for the department and the production units that necessarily spend more than they bring in. Some feel that each



- There is resentment, particularly since financial cutbacks several years ago, between programs such as Screenwriting and Cinema Media Studies that make surplus money for the department and the production units that necessarily spend more than they bring in. Some feel that each program should be self-sufficient financially. This is not a viable solution for production programs that necessarily require more funding.
- There is philosophical contention on several fronts: between those see their programs as academic and those who emphasize professional and career; those who want to maintain the individual programs versus those who embrace collaboration (screenwriting and directing for example); those who want to streamline the MFA programs to two years and those who want to keep the status quo of three years, etc.
- There is, according to many we heard from, acrimony between faculty who have been teaching at UCLA for a long time, many of whom are graduates of the program, and those who are relatively new. The rub seems to be that the “old guard” does not want anything to change. There is a “narrative” of old vs. new. Several people challenged this narrative and blamed recent leadership for pitting programs and faculty against each other.

Ultimately, some of these issues will be resolved by the financial realities around the cost of programs and the students’ ability to pay for them. Sadly, this kind of reactive decision making is causing even more divisiveness.

RECOMMENDATION: Work together to create a 21st century vision that build on collaborative opportunity while nurturing the strongest, unique attributes of the programs.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1) Work together on a strategic vision. This will require a pivotal discussion to determine foundational changes. It is unlikely the department can survive as a small chain of islands that operate separately. In keeping with the university-wide strategic planning, work together to create a department-wide vision and mission. Identify areas of core strengths in each of the programs, as well as areas of synergy and potential collaboration.



- 2) Systemic restructuring is needed to create a cohesive entity that can support the fundamental strengths of individual programs and run the department more efficiently.
- 3) Improve faculty relations. Much of the department seems to be personality-driven. We read and heard about many deeply rooted resentments and toxic levels of behavior. This is disruptive to the faculty, students and staff, at the expense of the department as a whole. It is sidelining efforts and energy that could and should be spent on teaching, research, and creative output. Shift focus from personality to program.
- 4) Use an outside facilitator to work with the units/programs/subprograms individually and together to resolve differences. Put your differences and in-fighting aside. A facilitated retreat and ongoing meetings could be useful in helping to move the department forward as a whole. Strongly recommend doing this with specific goals in mind, rather than open-ended.
- 5) Explore ways to create a better balance between academic and professional pedagogy. UCLA is a research institute and is well-positioned to offer more than skills training. It is also geographically in the heart of a media mecca, from movies to TV, animation, and emerging mixed and immersive media, which provides an abundance of professional opportunities. You might explore a mix of MA (professional), MFA (academic), and certificate (skills) programs. Can the directing, screenwriting, cinematography, documentary, animation programs find ways to create opportunities for both specialized and interdisciplinary experiences for students?
- 6) Create better frameworks for evolving curriculum. The field continues to change rapidly, demanding a steady review of curriculum that achieves a balance of old and new, and that addresses pedagogical diversification. Faculty have the advantage of long-range perspective and deep understanding about their field of study. Students are understandably anxious about their job prospects upon graduating, especially if they are burdened with student loan debt, as many are. Do programs need to be shortened? Many students complained that the current three-year length of programs is problematic without more student funding. Create a cyclical approach to reviewing course materials.
- 7) Provide opportunities and support for taking risks, so faculty and students are not penalized for trying new approaches.



It is not hyperbole to state that unless the ship is fixed as a whole, the growing holes in the hull will ultimately sink a magnificent ship.

#2: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

This area ranges from student and faculty confusion about program requirements to an alarming lack of concern about student safety. It is disturbing that some faculty members responded defensively and dismissively about students' request for clearer information and more extensive communication.

- Lack of means for students to confidentially report incidents of abuse.

Three students in separate circumstances made statements such as, "I do not feel safe in this classroom", "the professor is abusive", "I am fearful of recrimination". If support does exist, it needs to be communicated to students much more extensively. There were also reports of cultural insensitivity, and some students stated that faculty and particularly adjuncts were not receiving adequate training.

Recommendations: Communicate clearly and frequently where students can seek and receive confidential help and report instances of abuse. Provide faculty and adjuncts more training (see #3). Provide opportunities for students and faculty to discuss together issues of cultural sensitivity and inclusion.

- Confusion around program requirements.

The different units, programs and subprograms are disjointed and inconsistent. There does not appear to be an overarching umbrella that could foster collaboration and efficiency, navigate financially difficult times, and evolve a clear UCLA vision for the 21st century. Communication is outdated on the website. There is a shortage of advisors. Students are receiving erroneous information from some faculty.



Recommendations: As a Department, update all program requirements. Make available on the website and through regular communication with students across multiple platforms (web, online, orientation, class visits, etc.) Students need frequent, ongoing communication.

- Confusion on the university process for updating and changing programs.

There was tremendous confusion caused by the Screening Writing program change from 3 to 2 years, for example. There seems to be a lack of understanding and compliance with the university's policies.

Stogner, External Review, UCLA

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Recommendation: The university has a process for program changes that needs to be disseminated and followed to avoid this unnecessary chaos. See #3 re Training.

#3: MANDATORY TRAINING

Making sure that adjuncts, new faculty, new staff, etc. receive comprehensive training about requirements and procedures. It is not clear to me if the amount of confusion and chaos that came up so frequently during the site visit, is due to lack of communication and training or to out-of-date procedures, or both. Here are some specific issues and recommendations:

- The lack of training of adjuncts.

With such a high number of adjuncts (someone mentioned over 100), there appears to be a serious lack of oversight and training. This that can result in inappropriate and possibly dangerous behavior, i.e. abusiveness, safety issues. Pedagogical quality also came up. One faculty member admitted that adjuncts did not always follow through with the online Title 9 training and that there was little enforcement of this training. Another mentioned that some adjuncts are hired last minute and receive no orientation or training at all.



Recommendations: On-line Title 9 training can be tracked in ways that show whether a person has taken it. Orientations for all adjunct and incoming faculty can also be made mandatory.

- Cultural insensitivity

Several students mentioned incidents of cultural insensitivity from racial bias to lack of understanding about gender identification.

Recommendations: Add training in diversity, equity and inclusion beyond Title 9, so that all faculty are well-versed in how to guide discussion around difficult topics. Provide opportunities for students to discuss their concerns with faculty, and for faculty, staff and students to find solutions together.

- Labor issues for teaching assistants.

Several students who work as teaching assistants complained that faculty and adjuncts required a workload far greater than what was contractually agreed upon. Also, there were many complaints about the hiring process. This is a serious labor issue.

Recommendations: Increase oversight at the Program administrative level and the Department level. Improve the hiring process.

Stogner, External Review, UCLA

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CONCLUSION

Many of the challenges that the Film, Television and Digital Media department face are not unique to UCLA. Financial pressures on the institution and on students, contending with best ways to streamline programs while keeping their integrity intact, updating and adding new programs that better suit the needs of the future – these are issues all film schools face today, even those that are well-financed. How to resolve these challenges is what is at stake here.



CONCLUSION

Many of the challenges that the Film, Television and Digital Media department face are not unique to UCLA. Financial pressures on the institution and on students, contending with best ways to streamline programs while keeping their integrity intact, updating and adding new programs that better suit the needs of the future – these are issues all film schools face today, even those that are well-financed. How to resolve these challenges is what is at stake here. Having strong leadership that can direct the passion and dedication of the faculty and staff, recruited externally, will make a significant difference. It is also incumbent on the faculty to set their egos aside and work toward the great good of the department as a whole. Coming together to work on a century strategic vision for the 21st century is essential to your long-term success. The sum is truly greater than the parts in ensuring your school maintains a stellar reputation and flourishes.

MB Stogner

Maggie Burnette Stogner
Professor, Film and Media Arts
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THE MEDIA SCHOOL

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

March 6, 2020

Senate Review
Department of Film, Television & Digital Media
External Reviewer Report

I appreciate having had the opportunity to participate in the program review of UCLA's Department of Film, Television & Digital Media, a department I have long admired. The internal members of the review committee were outstanding and fully committed to conducting a fair and thorough review, as were the other two external reviewers, who brought valuable perspectives and a wealth of experience to this important service. Conrad Alumia and other members of the staff of the Academic Senate made the process as smooth as possible, and I particularly want to thank all the students, staff, and faculty who met with the committee at scheduled group and individual meetings or sent us confidential statements. The involvement of so many members and sectors of the department in this review process testifies to their investment in the unit as much as it reflects their serious concerns about the recent history and current state of the department. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the current production divisions and the cinema and media studies unit as "specializations" within the department.

The documents provided to the review committee by the Department of Film, Television & Digital Media highlight certain significant accomplishments over the past several years, including a greater diversification of the faculty, successes of certain graduate students, professional accomplishments of the production faculty, and scholarly contributions and course development initiatives by the faculty in cinema and media studies. For these accomplishments the department is to be commended. Yet, based on the site visit and all the material I have examined, my sense is that the Department of Film, Television & Digital Media is quite clearly at a crossroads as it faces the future and tries to work through—or at least leave behind—what looks by all accounts to have been a very contentious and difficult period that nearly stretched this unit to the breaking point. Things may have calmed down a bit in terms of day-to-day operations, but there was little evidence during the review that the various internal problems the department faced over the past several years have been resolved. Strong personal animosities are apparent among the faculty, as is the tendency to attribute blame to specific people, to mistrust and devalue colleagues, and to see the department as an arena of competition between faculty and between specializations, with the odds unfairly stacked and resources and power unevenly distributed. Just as telling, graduate



among the faculty, as is the tendency to attribute blame to specific people, to mistrust and devalue colleagues, and to see the department as an arena of competition between faculty and between specializations, with the odds unfairly stacked and resources and power unevenly distributed. Just as telling, graduate students from across the department raised a host of well-articulated points about their difficult (and precarious) position, given the current state of Film, Television & Digital Media. In addition to the amount of stipends and the requirements for

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certain courses, these complaints concerned teaching assignments, outdated or restrictive curriculum, faculty availability, and insufficient attention to internships and alumni relations. It was very rare to hear from anyone in the unit who spoke directly of successful and rewarding personal experiences in the department.

Representatives of each specialization underscored the need for new faculty hires, and additional resources would surely help the department--particularly if the funding was earmarked for much-needed support for the graduate students and for the salary for what looks to be a very hard-working and dedicated technical staff. But I think that adding new faculty to the department in its current state would not solve its problems. These problems lead me to wonder whether Film, Television & Digital Media should or can exist as a single academic unit. After considering all the material involved in this review, I am convinced that it is in everyone's best interest that Film, Television & Digital Media remain intact as a department. Successful survival (and growth) will, however, depend on if the faculty is willing to put in the considerable effort and to make the serious compromises that will be necessary for this department to regain and then maintain its high national and international status in terms of both studies and production. This effort will require buy-in from the faculty, careful attention to the concerns voiced by students, and even-handed participation by the Dean of the School of Film, Theater, and Television.

All the documents the review committee received from the department—the internal review, various addenda, and individual statements—create the sense that Film, Television & Digital Media is less a department than a collection of distinctly separate specializations, some having as few as one or two tenure-stream faculty. Maybe this is necessary for a film and media production program; maybe this is inevitable for a unit that includes very different kinds of graduate degrees programs. This structure may have worked in the past with a different cohort of faculty, a



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All the documents the review committee received from the department—the internal review, various addenda, and individual statements—create the sense that Film, Television & Digital Media is less a department than a collection of distinctly separate specializations, some having as few as one or two tenure-stream faculty. Maybe this is necessary for a film and media production program; maybe this is inevitable for a unit that includes very different kinds of graduate degrees programs. This structure may have worked in the past with a different cohort of faculty, a narrower view of what constituted film production, and a more traditional version of cinema studies, yet this way of organizing and operating the department is not viable now. Responses from graduate and undergraduate students, who have no stake in the long-running, highly personalized departmental divisions and antagonisms, make clear that significant changes and difficult choices are in order. I will indicate below some suggestions for how this process might proceed, which all tend to focus on ways of getting the department to operate as a department. Many but not all of these suggestions take up issues and complaints raised during our meetings with the various constituencies of Film, Television & Digital Media. Please excuse any oversight on my part based on a lack of familiarity with UCLA's governance procedures, budgetary policies, administrative titles, established mediation practices, and strategic goals.

Administrative structure and responsibilities

In order to address certain systemic problems related to the organization of Film, Television & Digital Media, I would recommend that this department:

- Replace the current system of Vice Chairs and Area Heads with a Director of Cinema and Media Studies and a Director of Production (covering animation, screenwriting, film production, documentary, post-production, and



cinematography), each supported by a committee that draws from all faculty ranks.

- Sooner rather than later, conduct a national search for the next permanent chair. This is not intended to imply a judgment of the current or past chair. Someone from outside the fray is needed, empowered by the administration to make changes and given some resources (including, eventually, approval for permanent faculty hires) to encourage faculty buy-in for these changes.
- Given the number and degree of complaints by graduate students across the various specializations, create a formal, permanent mechanism that would offer students the chance to register without fear of recrimination any suggestions and any complaints about faculty (including all instructors hired on a course-by-course basis), mentoring, teaching assignments, course offerings, and access to equipment. In this regard, it is not at all clear to me why the review committee received recommendations to move Student Services from the Dean's office to the department. If effectively implemented, the current arrangement should allow and encourage students to speak openly and confidentially—provided that there is some formal route that will bring the information and concerns from students back to the department. As would be expected, the committee heard much more from graduate than undergraduate students, but there was enough input to indicate that undergraduate majors also have significant concerns about curriculum, resources, and access to faculty—and they, too, should have a designated place to voice these concerns.
- Create a Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), given some measure of budgetary oversight in this area, and made responsible for scheduling and staffing the undergraduate curriculum and working with advising to represent and assist the undergraduate students as an important (and now largely overlooked) constituency. The DUS should be tasked with developing a new undergraduate major that draws largely from Cinema and Media Studies, but also includes at least some type of production classes—ideally, with a curriculum that bridge studies and production, theory and practice. Developing this new major offers the department a great opportunity, not only for increased undergraduate enrollment, but for thinking seriously about what it can and should provide to students in terms of media practice as well as media literacy and critical skills.
- Create a Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), responsible for general oversight of all the graduate programs, including vetting any proposed curricular changes in graduate course offerings across all the specializations



- Create a Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), responsible for general oversight of all the graduate programs, including vetting any proposed curricular changes in graduate course offerings across all the specializations and guaranteeing that, when necessary and appropriate, students are able to (and encouraged to) take courses outside their particular area of

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specialization. Assisted by a committee that includes a representative from the MFA programs and a representative from the MA/PhD programs, the DGS would also be responsible for overseeing the assigning and training of teaching assistants as well as the hiring of instructors on a course-by-course basis. Ideally, the DGS would represent the interests and concerns of the graduate students across the department, strengthening mentoring practices, promoting professionalization, and keeping abreast of internships and other opportunities. MFA students need to be encouraged and assisted in taking full advantage of the professional opportunities of being in Los Angeles; MA/PhD students need to be encouraged and assisted in taking full advantage of the research opportunities and archives available in the area.

Curriculum

Although there was not consensus concerning curricular changes among the faculty the review committee met—or in the various documents included in the internal review—it seemed clear to me from the various meetings with faculty and students, that this department would definitely have much to gain by a rigorous, department-wide reconsideration of the entire curriculum. Doing this separately, specialization-by-specialization, will likely only reinforce the current experience of separation, competition, and retrenchment.

Above all, the department needs to act and think like a department in this most important matter, which should not necessarily entail ignoring differences of opinion and of priorities. Faculty in a great many (if not most) departments have to work with insufficient resources, interpersonal conflicts, and a lower than needed number of FTFA, and they have to deal with colleagues who are committed to



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Above all, the department needs to act and think like a department in this most important matter, which should not necessarily entail ignoring differences of opinion and of priorities. Faculty in a great many (if not most) departments have to work with insufficient resources, interpersonal conflicts, and a lower than needed number of FTEs, and they have to deal with colleagues who are committed to different ways of fulfilling the larger academic mission. The process of extensively revising the curriculum for Film, Television & Digital Media will no doubt be difficult and will require compromise (and likely some sacrifice), as well as innovative thinking, for this process should directly address a number of admittedly tough questions, including:

- At this moment (not historically, not ten or even five years ago), what are the strengths of this department?
- How can changes in the curriculum best take advantage of the department's strengths while allowing or encouraging students to move across and take advantage of the resources in the various production specializations and the graduate offerings in cinema and media studies?
- What type of formal committee structure should be responsible for creating the curriculum in each of the department's specializations? How many specializations can the department responsibly offer?
- Should there be a permanent department curriculum committee? Should all curricular changes be vetted and voted on by the full faculty?
- How can the current list of courses be reduced? Are all the listed courses actually being taught on a regular basis?



- To what extent is it effective (and beneficial to students) to have a curriculum that is heavily dependent on temporary instructors hired on a course-by-course basis?
- To what extent should any part of the curriculum be tied to and dependent on a single instructor? Should there be a specialization with only one or two faculty?
- How can the time to degree (and hence the likely significant amount of debt accrued by graduate students trying to survive in Los Angeles) be reduced?
- What should be the role of television as a field of production and study in this department?
- What areas of concentration define this PhD program in cinema and media studies?
- What precisely is the department's investment in the production and study of "digital media?"
- In terms of curricular revision, what opportunities to the department are afforded by the priorities of the university at large regarding diversity initiatives, budgeting models, new concerns for media literacy, etc.?

Given the evidence during the review and in the internal report of a lack of cooperation (and collegiality) across the department's various specializations, I am not sure how to guarantee that there is the necessary faculty buy-in for this revision of the curriculum, especially if there is no promise of additional resources for the department. But faculty involvement and a commitment to the department's shared broader goals and priorities are necessary. And curricular revision ought to be undertaken with full recognition of budgetary and enrollment matters in the university at large that will likely impact the department.

Here are a few suggestions for undertaking this process of curricular reform that I think could address the particular situation in the Film, Television & Digital Media:

- Create a representative ad-hoc committee (drawn from across the department faculty) to gather and take seriously input about anything related to the curriculum from current students, faculty, and staff, especially including junior faculty and recent faculty hires.
- Solicit responses from all the recent graduates from the MFA, PhD, and MA programs—not only from the most disgruntled or the most well-employed—concerning their experience with the curriculum and how it could be revised. Recent graduates can also provide valuable information about teaching conditions, internship opportunities, and mentoring in the department.
- Create another ad-hoc committee to compile accurate, up-to-date information about what are deemed to be comparable departments in studies or production, as well as departments that combine studies and production—including information about time-to-degree and teaching



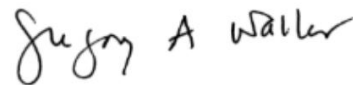
- Create another ad-hoc committee to compile accurate, up-to-date information about what are deemed to be comparable departments in studies or production, as well as departments that combine studies and production—including information about time-to-degree and teaching opportunities for graduate students. Don't rely on vague claims or anecdotal

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accounts or likely inaccurate reports about the supposed rank of the department.

- Have the Dean's office solicit the input of alumni, keeping in mind that curricular changes should be designed to look not backward but forward, taking most prominently into account changes in the faculty, in student interest, in the relevant discipline(s), in resources, and in the changing mediascape at large.

I hope these suggestions are in some way helpful. Let me repeat that I think that it is well worth the time and effort of all concerned to make Film, Television & Digital Media a fully functioning, forward looking department--and once again a leader in the field, nationally and internationally.



Gregory A. Waller

Provost Professor
Director, Cinema and Media Studies



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Gregory A. Waller

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Provost Professor
Director, Cinema and Media Studies
The Media School
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana



Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule

Deadline

UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
Department of Film, Television and Digital Media
School of Theater, Film and Television

Site Visit Dates: February 26-27, 2020

Review Team: Internal

Megan McEvoy, Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council, Bioscience

Cheryl Keyes, Graduate Council, Ethnomusicology

Leah Lievrouw, Graduate Council, Information Studies

External

Maggie Stogner, Film and Media Arts, American University

Peggy Rajski, Film and Television, Loyola Marymount University

Gregory Waller, Provost Professor, Unit Director, Cinema and Media Studies, Indiana University
 Bloomington

All meetings will be held in Melnitz Hall, Room 1462 (Television Studio 3) unless otherwise indicated.

February 25, 2020

7:00 p.m. Dinner meeting: Initial organizational session for review team members only

(Luskin Conference Center- Plateia, 425 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095; 310-794-3563)

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

8:00am Breakfast discussion with Interim Chair **William McDonald** (East Melnitz Hall, Room 203A)

[Catering arranged by the Academic Senate Office]

9:00am Meeting with Interim Dean **Brian Kite** (East Melnitz Hall, Room 202A)

10:00am Break

10:10am Meetings with Program Faculty

10:10am Screenwriting Program

10:35am Animation Program

11:00am Cinema and Media Studies Program

11:25am Break

11:35am Undergraduate Program

12:00pm Production Program

12:25pm Producers Program

12:50pm Lunch – Review Team Members only (Faculty Center)

2:00pm Tour of Melnitz Hall (meet in Melnitz Hall, Room 1462/TV3 to begin tour)

2:45pm Meeting with Technical Staff

3:10pm Meeting with Administrative Staff

3:35pm Break

3:45pm Meeting with Student Affairs (Advising)

4:10pm Meetings with Program Students, Part I



3:45pm Meeting with Student Affairs (Advising)

4:10pm Meetings with Program Students, Part I

4:10pm Meeting with Undergraduate Program Students

4:35pm Meeting with Producers Program Students

5:10pm Closed Session for Review Team only *[Off-Site]*

5:50pm Reception for Review Team with faculty, staff and students *(James Bridges Theater Lobby)*

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UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
Department of Film, Television and Digital Media
School of Theater, Film and Television

Thursday, February 27, 2020

8:00am Breakfast - Review Team Members only

8:45am Review of Teaching Assistant Program

9:10am Meetings with Program Students, Part II

9:10am Meeting with Graduate Screenwriting Program Students

9:35am Meeting with Graduate Cinema and Media Studies Program Students

10:00am Break

10:10am Open Individual Meetings with Review Team *[Off-Site]*

12:00pm Meetings with Program Students, Part III

12:00pm Meeting with Graduate Animation Program Students

12:25pm Lunch – Review Team only (onsite, Melnitz Hall, Room 1462/TV3)

1:25pm Meetings with Program Students, Part IV

1:25pm Meeting with Graduate Production Program Students

1:50pm Closed Session for Review Team only

2:50pm Final Meeting with Interim Chair McDonald and Executive Committee *(East Melnitz Hall, Room 203A)*

3:50pm Depart for Murphy Hall



9:35am Meeting with Graduate Cinema and Media Studies Program Students

10:00am Break

10:10am Open Individual Meetings with Review Team *[Off-Site]*

12:00pm Meetings with Program Students, Part III

12:00pm Meeting with Graduate Animation Program Students

12:25pm Lunch – Review Team only (onsite, Melnitz Hall, Room 1462/TV3)

1:25pm Meetings with Program Students, Part IV

1:25pm Meeting with Graduate Production Program Students

1:50pm Closed Session for Review Team only

2:50pm Final Meeting with Interim Chair McDonald and Executive Committee (*East Melnitz Hall, Room 203A*)

3:50pm Depart for Murphy Hall

4:00pm Exit Meeting (*Murphy Hall, Room 2121*)

*The meeting includes Review Team Members, Interim Chair **William McDonald**, Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost **Emily Carter**, Interim Dean **Brian Kite**, Vice Provost for Graduate Education **Robin Garrell**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education **Patricia Turner**, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion **Jerry Kang**, Undergraduate Council Chair **Adriana Galván**, Graduate Council Chair **Andrea Kasko**.*

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