**Art Department**

**Common Curriculum Visioning Committee**

1. **What are the strengths of your department/program? What do you already do well?  Remember that these responses will be shared with the community at large, so please use this opportunity to brag a little bit.  What do you want people outside your department/program to know about your successes and strengths?**

**Contemporary and cutting-edge foundations (interdisciplinary intro-level courses) and professional development curriculum (sophomore and senior topics/thesis courses)—**these aspects of our curriculum have been recognized and imitated by our program reviewers and their programs.

**A broad range of historical and contemporary practices and theories--**Within each area of our curriculum, we prepare students for the contemporary art world’s way of blending historical and new media and ideas (i.e. we offer classes in letterpress printing and handmade, 19th century photography as well as computer and video art)

**Integration and synthesis of information**—every aspect of our curriculum teaches students to integrate artistic practice with theory, context, evaluation, and revision.

**Original work**—unlike most other fields, art students create and present work that originates entirely with their own integration and expression.

**Experiential learning**—by making original work, art students must constantly present their personal understanding of course concepts to a broader audience (sometimes to, or in collaboration with, an external “client” or community).

**Engagement with the wider community**: Along with the experiential learning that takes place in all of our studio courses, we encourage our students to conduct internships (video production, pottery, book arts, etc.), and we use our courses for service-learning projects such as working with a homeless shelter to produce bowls to raise funds to fight hunger, working with the Waite Park library to create a mural geared toward children, working with St. Cloud’s Hands Across the World to create book arts posters and books to fight sex trafficking, working with internal offices such as admissions and institutional advancement to provide images and videos for marketing purposes. Such projects give our students valuable real world experience and encourage them to belong and contribute to a greater community.

**Critical self-evaluation**—we require continuous re-evaluation of one’s work.

**Critical peer evaluation**— we require continuous re-evaluation of peer work.

**Visual literacy and communication**—every aspect of our curriculum teaches students that making and analyzing the visual world shapes culture and meaning just as much as making and analyzing the written word.

**Faculty mentorship relationships**—as practicing artists and art historians, we provide our students with significant mentorship during their time at CSB/SJU and beyond. By the time students reach their senior year they work with a faculty mentor to formulate their senior capstone work; students of all levels also work with faculty on collaborative research: exhibitions, fine press printed broadsides, films, etc..; and many of these relationships continue after graduation resulting in further collaborations, admittance into graduate schools, and successful careers.

**Interdisciplinary** **relationships**—most faculty have collaborated with other disciplines/majors on various projects: an art history course cross-listed with Asian Studies, video pieces as part of dance performances; papermaking with help from biology faculty; visiting artists brought to campus in conjunction with Fine Arts Programming, Environmental Studies, Latino Studies; etc..

**Professional relationships**—we bring professional artists to campus for short visits or, when possible, longer ones like Patrick Dougherty’s Stickwork residency, to help our students understand the relevancy and possibility of art beyond the classroom and understand how effectively their student art works communicate to an outside audience. Professional artists show students what they do, how they do it and how they contextualize it. They also help our students make professional connections.

**Intradisciplinary collaboration**—We communicate effectively about how our distinct artistic disciplines relate to each other, team teach courses, and work together to form syllabi for new courses, etc.. We also collaborate on self-assessment and use student assessment used to improve our program via end-of-year curriculum workshops.

1. **What do you wish you could do better, or do more of?  What would it take (resources, support, etc.) for you to reach those goals?**

**We need to offer more art history and museum studies coursework.** Currently we have only one full time faculty member devoted to art history. We supplement with adjunct faculty, but only enough to fulfill our studio major requirement. Our program reviewers identified further course offerings as a significant need in their 2013 report:

The curriculum is very well designed on the studio side, particularly at the foundation level, but the art history component can benefit from an institutional investment in additional instructional support to bring greater variety and balance to its offerings. . .

[T]he art history minor, may not reach [its] full potential without further faculty support . . . As it is established now it is almost impossible, because of course requirements and the lack of additional 300 level art history course offerings, for an art major to complete an art history minor. . .

Our reviewers recommended a full time Art History positionfor reasons related to the liberal arts mission of CSB/SJU as well as needs of our department. Because we are only able to staff the bare minimum of art classes necessary for our studio art major, it is currently almost impossible for a student to fulfill the art history minor requirements, or create an individualized major in art history.

**We need the ability to shape our visiting artist program.** As noted above, one of our strengths is our vibrant visiting artist calendar. However, we do not have significant dedicated funds for this program so must always apply to the FDRC for curriculum and professional development funds and/or scramble to pool various course fees and moneys solicited from other areas of campus such as the Literary Arts Institute, which have been highly supportive but have their own needs to prioritize.

**Specifically, we need to have an artist-in-residency program.** An external artist staying and working on campus for a significant amount of time could work with students in a consistent and high impact manner. A major part of the learning process for a studio artist is seeing an artist at work and working collaboratively with the artist—for example when Patrick Dougherty created Stickwork with over 300 campus collaborators. Such an opportunity would benefit us as faculty as well as our students and energize our entire department and everyone outside of our department who takes our classes or collaborates with us. Furthermore, each residency could consistently result in an additional exhibition, work for our permanent collection, or even a large-scale public sculpture or performance such as Stickwork. Such collaborations and their resulting art works have great potential to increase visibility of our institutions to outside audiences.

**It is necessary to ensure that the quality of the work in the galleries has, at all times, a component that feels relevant to contemporary art and contemporary issues—a baseline of academic rigor.** We would like to facilitate programming within the campus galleries that is provocative and challenging and deals with contemporary concerns.

**We need to offer more advanced classes**. As noted above, our curriculum is well designed for the foundation level and for professional development of our majors in majors-only sophomore and senior courses oriented toward developing their exhibitions, resumes, career plans, etc.. However, we and our majors recognize that we lack opportunities for the most significant benefit to their future career plans—the ability to study at an advanced in-depth level in an area of focus. Currently our 300 level classes are offered infrequently (and easily missed by students who study abroad). Thus our majors don’t have the opportunity to develop significant skills in an artistic discipline.

1. **Leaving aside discipline specific knowledge, in what ways does your department/program best contribute to providing our students with a liberal education for their lives beyond college, as informed and engaged citizens, productive employees, ethical beings, etc.?**

**Integrative, interdisciplinary, and creative problem solving--** We encourage our students to express themselves through making art about something bigger than themselves. Our classes achieve CSBSJU’s coordinate mission to focus on “questions important to the human condition” and the “betterment of human kind.” We require students at every level to complete research and consider cultural context. Our students learn to examine problems/needs from a variety of disciplines--ranging from local issues like facilitating awareness of sexual harassment on campus to further afield such as stopping sex trafficking state-wide--and then integrate their own artistic practice with artistic theory and social-political-historical context in order to evaluate the problem and create a visual solution. This creative problem-solving ability serves all students at all times, not just practicing artists--as evidenced by an increased interest in creative majors in business, legal, and medical fields.

**Integrative, experiential and intercultural learning**—our classes also achieve CSBSJU’s coordinate mission of “promoting the integration of professional and personal lives through opportunities for experiential learning.” As noted above, all students in art classes must constantly make and present original work that showcases their personal understanding of artistic and social/political concepts to a broader audience. This experiential learning, in combination with the many opportunities for service learning present within our department, makes the arts a place where students learn to question and reconsider their assumptions about themselves and the world around them. In studio and art history classes students must examine how art works impact society and how their views on the world impact and are affected by others’ views of the world. As students learn how art is shaped by and a shaper of culture, they learn that everyone’s perspective, including their own, is shaped by cultural forces. This teaches students empathy and the Benedictine value of respect for individual persons.

**Critical thinking and communication**: Our students learn how to critically evaluate the art work of their peers as well as their own, and how to receive and respond positively to criticism. This ability to be both critical and respectful developed in our classes and critiques can be applied to any context later in life—particularly the “reading” and making of all forms of communication whether visual, verbal, political, or social. Our students critically examine what they and their peers are communicating and what that means in terms of social responsibility.

**Visual literacy and communication**: In an era when everyone communicates visually via social media, we help students refine and use visual literacy skills in professional way. They learn that anything presented visually has meaning and a story (i.e. no portrayal of a human body should be made without considering the “gaze” and motivation of the viewer and what ideas he or she may bring or take away about gender, sexuality, body image, etc.). Our students must always ask “what does this image mean to whom and why am I using it?” Our students learn to be present and mindful in the moment—we teach our students to examine every clue within their surrounding environment before making their next move, whether artistic, productive, social, political or spiritual. We teach them to truly see rather than simply look—to listen with the Benedictine ear of the heart rather than just hear.

**Resiliency in response to critical feedback**—our students learn to be comfortable with ambiguity, failure, criticism, risk-taking, and adaptation. Students start to understand that meaningful results require meaningful time commitments and flexible processes. First drafts of art works, prior to peer review, often don’t communicate well and, through peer and faculty review, often in a public forum, students learn that this is common and a strength that prompts better work rather than an ultimate failure. As former CSB/SJU art teacher Joseph O’Connell put it “there are no mistakes, only design changes.” Students also learn how to disagree with their peers and professors in a non-confrontational way. They learn that life presents more than one answer and that they may have to sort through multiple answers to find what they want to live by. The need to publically present their original work on a subject forces art students to take this process of sorting personal beliefs, research and critical feedback very seriously.

**Consideration of gendered perspectives—**images have an incredible power to respond to and shape sexual and gender identity and expression. Students in art classes constantly encounter and make work that teaches them to reconsider their assumptions about gender and gender roles—whether in an art historical discussion of why certain artistic elements and principles are considered masculine or feminine and how such assumptions vary across cultures and times, or in a student-initiated photo project about Photoshop’s role in creating idealized images of bodies.

**Consideration of the common good in relation to the environment and the material world—**Art students are constantly asked to consider how the materials they are using relate to environmental and ethical considerations.

**Creation of ethical and empathic beings—**overall we feel that our courses constantly ask students to position themselves as makers and shapers of culture and, therefore, they must consider ethical questions from the perspective of one who can make a difference. They have to take ethical and moral questions seriously and have a real response to them that they can stand by in a public setting.

1. **Are there ways in which you would like to see your department/program contribute to liberal education that so far it has not been able to?**

**Teaching more art history classes on our campuses would allow us to be more even more interdisciplinary and impact more students.** Art history has the ability to reach every student regardless of artistic background and convey every strength listed above--integrative, interdisciplinary, intercultural, critical, visual, and ethical thinking. We would like to build an art history major. At the very least we need to be able to offer enough art history classes for our art history minors. This would assist CSBSJU with our coordinate mission of a coherent liberal arts curriculum, an integrative environment for learning, the growth of women and men, and the habit of promoting the common good. Furthermore, offering courses that focus on the close relationship between Benedictines and the preservation and promotion of the visual and literary arts would give all CSBSJU students a clear experience of Benedictine values.

**We would like** **more time to develop classes with other depts**. We recognize that there are many connections between the studio arts and other departments. We want time to develop courses in collaboration with other departments, which would help illuminate such connections.

**We would like to offer museum studies classes,** which would be relevant to students in a wide variety of majors—business/management, history, communication, etc.—and thereby serve as an integrative elements in the liberal arts.

**We would like to host external visiting artists in residence that serve the liberal arts curriculum.**

**We would like to ensure that what is programmed in the campus galleries has a clear relationship with the art curriculum and the liberal arts curriculum.**

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