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Provost Peter Lange, Ph.D.
Thomas A. Langford University Professor
Duke University
220 Allen Building
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Dear Provost Lange:

At its meeting of 4 September 2014, the Academic Programs Committee considered a proposal for a new MA in Art History. APC members had access to the proposal in advance of the meeting, and spent a little over thirty minutes with Prof. Hans van Miegroet discussing it and posing questions. On the whole, the tenor of the conversation, as well as APC's response, was positive. APC received frank answers from Prof. van Miegroet that tended to assuage its concerns; specifically, APC felt reassured about the projected cohort size and duration of the program, the relationship to other graduate degree programs in the department, the level of faculty buy-in, the teaching plan, and budget projections and negotiations around financial self-sustainability. Prof. van Miegroet asserted with confidence that the program would be ready to go as soon as it was approved.

Subsequently, APC voted to approve the proposal, but has identified four areas where it feels the proposal ought to be modified before being passed to Academic Council. The vote on the proposal, as well as on the comments below, was unanimous (16 yes, plus 1 abstention owing to absence):

1. Being innovative, it is somewhat difficult to predict how graduates of a terminal master's degree focusing on digital visualization may be received by the marketplace. For this reason, the proposal should describe an explicit process for monitoring student outcomes post-graduation. Additionally, the program should carefully develop mechanisms for preparing its students for the marketplace, e.g., by providing (or tailoring the use of extant) career and professional advising services, and through the cultivation of connections with potential employers.
2. It is also somewhat difficult to predict how sustainable interest in the program will be, or how the program may need to evolve over time. For this reason, the proposal should articulate an explicit process for monitoring the level of faculty involvement and engagement, financial sustainability, effects on the undergraduate program and teaching (adverse or salutary), and whether a 4+1 combined BA/MA program might eventually be advisable. These sorts of evaluations will in due time become part of standard departmental review processes, but since the program is new and innovative, close attention should be paid in the years immediately after it is launched.
3. In its present incarnation, the proposal requires all students to join one of a fixed set of established research projects (currently five). APC feels this is unnecessarily restrictive and

should be made more flexible by allowing students to propose other research projects they would like to join. These could still require program approval, but would give students an opportunity to find projects that may be a better match for their interests. Such flexibility would also promote “entrepreneurial outreach”, allowing students to establish new, perhaps unexpected, research connections for the program. Language would need to be accordingly modified at least on page 7, page 9, and page 29.

4. The current, shorter title of the program as recommended by ECGF, “Art History”, seems inadequate to capture the exciting digital distinctiveness of the program’s thrust and mission. APC supports a more descriptive title. The original, longer title, “Art History: Historical & Cultural Visualization” would be an improvement, but is itself a bit cumbersome; perhaps a suitable intermediate can be found. We leave this, however, to the proposers.

In closing, APC commends the Art History department for its innovative efforts to develop new intellectual trajectories within its field in the direction of digital humanities, and hopes that this program will not only train students at the vanguard of the discipline, but also support and prepare them for the range of possible careers they may seek to pursue upon graduation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Hartemink". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Alexander J. Hartemink

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