



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2016 Program Review

CU Art Museum

Academic Review and Planning
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul M. ...'.

02/13/2017

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs : Date

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Process Overview

The review of the University of Colorado Art Museum (CUAM) was conducted in accordance with the 2016 review guidelines. The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) conducts and writes the final reviews of all academic units on the Boulder campus. In fall 2015, the museum prepared a self-study. An internal review committee (IRC), comprised of two CU Boulder faculty from outside CUAM, checked the document and suggested revisions. The unit implemented these. An external reviewer, a museum director from outside of the University of Colorado, visited the campus on February 22 and 23, 2016, reviewed the relevant documents, and met with faculty, staff, students, and university administrators. The reviewer's comments and recommendations are cited at appropriate points. This public document reflects the assessment of and recommendations for the CU Art Museum as approved by ARPAC.

Academic Review
and Planning
Advisory
Committee
(ARPAC)

Marie Banich, Professor, Institute of Cognitive Science
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Academic year 2016-17
voting members

Non-voting members

Jeff Cox, ARPAC Chair, Vice Provost and Associate Vice
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Bob Boswell, Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Community
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Katherine Eggert, Quality Initiative Leader and Professor of English
Bill Kaempfer, Senior Vice Provost and Associate Vice Chancellor
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Ann Schmiesing, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
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Staff

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Unit Overview

The CU Art Museum (CUAM) is a public facility reporting to the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S). Beginning as a teaching collection in 1939, it spent many decades under the auspices of the Department of Art and Art History, until it became a separate college unit in 1998.

Personnel and governance

A director and 10.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff manage the museum. Staff are responsible for a variety of programmatic and operational duties, including collection management, exhibition curation, marketing and membership, facilities and security, and collaborative academic initiatives. Staff generally hold advanced degrees in fine arts and related disciplines. An advisory board of community members and ex-officio faculty, as well as a collection committee, guide the art museum in its strategic decision making. The museum derives revenue for its employee salaries primarily from A&S and the provost's office, and it sources its operating revenue from the campus general fund, student fees, a public membership program, and other contributions.

Research, scholarship, and creative work

The museum hosts six major exhibitions annually, in addition to four student-curated exhibitions and one permanent gallery rotation. Additional regular programming includes the works of an artist-in-residence and traveling exhibits. The museum's exhibits promote knowledge of diverse cultures and serve as an opportunity for CU Boulder students to grow into careers as artists and art historians. The museum takes seriously its mission to further "a university culture in which art, creativity, intercultural understanding, and research advance all disciplines in contribution to society." The curation of physical artifacts is only one aspect of a portfolio of activities that also covers digitization work and community-focused programming, including lectures, symposia, and social events. Museum staff also make it a priority to leverage

museum collections, facilities, and expertise to advance learning and an appreciation of faculty research and creative work.

Space In 2010, the museum moved into a newly-constructed facility. The museum holds over 8,500 pieces of art produced over 12,000 years of human civilization from all over the world in a 25,000 square-foot facility that includes 8,000 square feet of exhibition space, an education and workshop room, and a collection study area.

Past Reviews

The museum has undergone a significant transformation since it underwent review in 2009, including a new facility and expanded staff contingent from 4.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees to 10.5 FTE today (including a new director and 2.5 FTE on a three-year temporary funding line). Adjustments also occurred after a strategic planning process led by an outside consultant and a ten-month closure due to a facility infrastructure failure that endangered collections. In many ways, this was a transformational time.

Nevertheless, many issues that arose in the 2009 review remain relevant today. Recommendations made in that report, including those regarding increasing staffing levels, furthering collaborations with campus faculty, highlighting student and faculty work, and expanding community outreach, have all been partially, mostly, or fully addressed; others, however, are unresolved, including whether the museum should seek accreditation by the American Association of Museums (a move that ARPAC supported in 2009).

Campus Context

The CU Art Museum has a broad campus role to fulfill. Though it does not generate student credit hours or roster faculty, it provides opportunities for students to learn, faculty to teach, and both research and creative work to be conducted. It also serves as an interface between the campus and broader communities, and though its history (and perhaps its present) is most heavily involved in arts and humanities disciplines, it also seeks to transcend this domain.

Museum efforts to facilitate learning include ongoing commitments to the departments of Art and Art History, Classics, English, History, and Religious Studies; these have leveraged the collection study center, which the self-study describes as a “customized, experiential learning [environment] in which faculty and students can interact directly with artworks in [the] collection study center and galleries.” Museum exhibitions regularly highlight student accomplishments, and the museum hosts graduate internships, assistantships, and undergraduate work study appointments.

Museum/faculty collaborations open opportunities to further university research and creative work. Faculty curate exhibits, conduct original scholarship centered on CUAM holdings, and lead some acquisition efforts.

Beyond these traditional collaborations, the museum also undertakes initiatives further afield. An example: CUAM staff helped with the preparation of an anthropology student-curated exhibition in the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History (CUMNH). CUAM is also in the process of developing a curatorial practicum course, which would be run as part of the Museum and Field Studies program in CUMNH. The museum has taken an active role in the chancellor’s Grand Challenge, developing ties to Science Discovery, a K-12 science education initiative in the

Division of Continuing Education, and has joined the College of Engineering and Applied Science IdeaForge. The museum plans to play a role in the expansion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education by including art as an emphasis. CUAM describes this approach in its self-study, arguing that “formal and informal learning infuses art and design principles, the humanities, creative works and performances, writings, close looking, and art making into STEM instruction and curricula.”

As noted, much of the work CUAM does involves students, faculty, and community members interested in artistic and humanistic pursuits. CUAM is crucial in the matriculation of many MFA students, and as the 2009 review noted, CUAM operates as an “interdisciplinary laboratory for the arts and humanities programs at the university.” Indeed, this statement offers a perspective that is even more pronounced in the new Visual Arts Complex (VAC). The VAC has facilitated collaborations never before possible on campus. The museum has also taken care to expand its online footprint, reaching out to departments to assist in the use of virtual (i.e., digitized) museum holdings. In many respects, the museum is at the forefront of campus digitization work.

The museum also serves as an arm of campus community outreach. In addition to traveling exhibits, the museum participates in activities such as Boulder Arts Week and the Conference on World Affairs. A community membership program is a source of donations and interest as is the innovative Collector’s Circle program that targets young local professionals interested in collecting art.

Moreover, the museum is keen to employ its new space as a hub for dialogue and learning, a place where students, faculty, and the community engage in art and its role in the human experience.

National Context

The museum's national peers—museums at research universities—share circumstances familiar in Boulder. Like CUAM, these are facilities focused on offering faculty and students opportunities to learn, teach, research, and create. They enhance the reputations of their institutions in the broader community and in a larger disciplinary context. Collection size and emphases vary widely, but the intellectual concept of exhibiting, studying, and providing inspiration to produce art is common to all.

Perhaps most notably with respect to challenges—as addressed in both the 2009 review and by the external reviewer in 2016—the CU Art Museum's staffing size and budget are “modest” in comparison to national peers. The 2016 external reviewer pointed also to another dissimilarity: many art museums at peer institutions report directly to the campus chief academic officer.

Analysis

ARPAC agrees with the external reviewer that the CU Art Museum is “poised on the brink of a new era in its history, with extraordinary potential to contribute deeply and broadly to the intellectual life of the institution, as well as to enrich the quality of life for the communities on-and off-campus in Boulder.” With a modern facility, increased staffing levels, new leadership, and encouraging new interest from faculty, students, and the community, CUAM is positioned favorably for the future. ARPAC hopes this analysis and associated recommendations benefit the museum in the years ahead.

Personnel and governance

The review committee considers the university’s increased investment in art museum staff wise. ARPAC strongly supports making the 2.5 temporary FTE permanent and believes the 0.5 FTE administrative assistant position should be made full-time. While the museum approaches the current staffing level as a ceiling to be made workable, a fair perspective would suggest that 10.5 FTE appears skeletal. The external reviewer put it this way: “it is very difficult to imagine that CUAM could function effectively with fewer employees than it now has.” ARPAC suggests future assessment metrics may help demonstrate how CUAM staff contribute to student success and faculty reputation (see below). The museum has a strong case to make for seeing future resource allocations and for staffing levels to grow.

The structure of the art museum advisory board requires reevaluation. CUAM is exploring splitting the board in two, establishing one board for the community and another for faculty and students. The external reviewer makes the case that various models are workable and that an alternate approach might better help the museum grow its membership numbers and donations. As things stand, contributions have decreased in recent years. It may be reasonable to consider significantly increasing and

clarifying the expectations of community board members. ARPAC suggests that the director study peer institutions to determine best practices for community boards. The CU Boulder Office of Advancement might help in identifying possible donors, but it is in the museum's long-term interest to further establish its own fundraising capabilities.

Whatever advisory structure it chooses, ARPAC believes that the museum should do more to hone its focus. A comprehensive strategic planning effort will assist greatly, and the museum should also engage campus leaders in helping to define its role as a campus resource and in gaining greater empowerment to fulfill its mission. Campus leaders should take seriously the external reviewer's recommendation to move the director's reporting line to Academic Affairs. The Museum of Natural History already has this arrangement and it is a practice endorsed by the Association of Academic Museums. In any event, ARPAC suggests the CUAM director continue to work with the deans and the provost to determine how the energies of museum personnel are best directed, especially given its modest budget. While the new Visual Arts Complex gives the campus reason to expect significant returns from CUAM, the modesty of current funding does not align with the expectations of a community eager to make the most of the riches that the museum's collections and spaces afford.

ARPAC strongly discourages any inclination to interpret declining arts and humanities enrollments as a reason to freeze or contract art museum support. ARPAC is confident that the current trend will regress toward its historic mean. ARPAC further believes a strong art museum is foundational to a quality liberal arts education and supports CUAM in its continued efforts to support and enrich scholarship of all stripes.

Research, scholarship, and creative work

The art museum must continue to develop, maintain, and analyze metrics on how its spaces and events are utilized. Recently, the museum witnessed a 33 percent increase in use of its online database of digitized art and recorded over 1,000 visits to a joint anthropological exhibit with CUMNH. These are good examples of useful metrics. In addition to visit totals and qualitative anecdotes like strong faculty support for the museum study center, it is also useful to consider ways to articulate how the museum contributes to student success and retention or, perhaps, how faculty/museum collaborations enhance the university's reputation. A stronger case can help draw resources and energies in the future.

ARPAC also encourages the museum to better articulate the strengths of its collection. Impressive as they may be, in what ways do the holdings distinguish us from national peers? Communicating this may help guide future acquisitions, programs, and outreach efforts, including exhibitions. In addition, consider the external reviewer's suggestion that "all [CUAM's] exhibitions fully reflect the unique excitement and intellectual ferment characteristic of a great research university." This statement not only may act as a guide in determining exhibits, but also may help distinguish CUAM among regional art collections. ARPAC agrees and urges the museum to articulate a vision that places our collection's strengths at the forefront of advantages CU Boulder offers to scholars and the general public alike.

Travelling exhibits also appear to be an area that could use some concerted attention. As the ERC notes, "a strong program of exhibitions that travel would bring significant reputational rewards." ARPAC agrees this is an activity that could yield greater recognition for the museum and the university, but also

understands these are time-intensive efforts that must be balanced against many other projects.

Space The new Visual Arts Complex has become an important campus hub. The self-study provides ample examples of how museum spaces benefit students, faculty, and the public. ARPAC commends CUAM staff for their dedication, and especially resilience, having recently endured a ten-month closure for HVAC upgrades. The committee also commends the group for fully leveraging the rehab pause to energize planning work and for making alternate access possible for those most impacted by the closure.

Testaments from faculty in many departments speak to the importance of CUAM's spaces and how they are managed. The Collections Study Center was highlighted in many comments. Faculty appreciate the opportunity the center provides their students to closely explore art and its connection to the human experience. Student- and faculty-curated exhibits outlined in the study are impressive, as are the social and intellectual events the museum hosts to make the most of opportunities for intellectual engagement. The museum's proximity to art studios, classrooms, and faculty offices also appears to benefit the campus visual arts community.

Budget A recent focus of expenditures is the digitization of CU art collections. This is laudable work and will bring new attention to the university among scholars. The museum currently relies on grants to fund the production of high-quality photographs and to curate these images online. Long-term support for this work, however, is a campus responsibility. Moreover, this is a need shared across many entities that manage digital data and assets, and so a larger case can be made for better support.

It does not appear that the museum has a dedicated fund to acquire new works or collections. The funding of future acquisitions is largely restricted to whatever gifts in-kind, donations, or organized fundraising might generate. A modest budget for acquisitions may assist CUAM in growing collections especially when existing excellence already establishes a foundation for growth.

Inclusive excellence

The museum does good work in support of campus diversity efforts, but ARPAC notes it has not submitted an Inclusive Excellence Plan to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement (ODECE). The museum's programs and outreach efforts unquestionably contribute to intercultural communication and understanding. Moving forward, it should submit its plan to ODECE and to continue to grow its engagements with students, faculty, and community members from underrepresented backgrounds.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) address the following recommendations to the CU Art Museum and to the offices of the dean, provost and chancellor. It is the committee's intention that the recommendations serve to benefit program improvement and development and to further the mission of the University of Colorado Boulder.

To the unit

1. Implement the current strategic plan, being careful to direct energies toward areas that distinguish CUAM from other regional art museums. Make a concerted effort to outline a process for identifying exhibits and programming that both highlight the work of the university and generate community interest;
2. Evaluate the structure and mission of the museum advisory board. Work with the advisory board to increase member enrollments. As a part of this effort, reach out to peer institutions, the Office of Advancement, and the College of Arts and Sciences dean's office to determine best practices;
3. Explore formal mechanisms to gain faculty and student advisory guidance, especially if the current advisory board is reconstituted to include primarily individuals without a direct university affiliation;
4. Articulate the strengths of the CU Boulder art collection. Which holdings distinguish CU Boulder from its national and regional peers? These strengths may be used to further student success and faculty research, but they also hold promise to grow the university's connections to donors and for facilitating additional art acquisitions;

5. Develop assessment metrics that tie CUAM activities to student success, reputation enhancement, and revenue generation priorities. Use these metrics as a guide for directing future programming and resource requests;
6. Collaborate with the University Libraries on digital humanities/scholarship initiatives;
7. Join efforts to develop a cultural heritage collections task force already involving the University Libraries, the CU Heritage Center, the College of Media, Communication and Information, the Film Studies Program, and the CU Museum of Natural History. Work with the Research Data Advisory Board to articulate the storage needs of campus heritage collections kept by CUAM and how digitization work will shape data storage requirements into the future;
8. Continue to engage the faculty on projects that might win grant funding; especially promising are initiatives in the science disciplines;
9. Continue efforts to attain American Association of Museums accreditation;
10. Submit an Inclusive Excellence Plan to ODECE;
11. Hire and work with students, faculty, and community members from underrepresented backgrounds;
12. Continue efforts to further establish the CU Art Museum as a campus resource by collaborating on initiatives such as artists-in-residence, faculty fellowships, and student internships;

13. Continue to align the museum’s strategic direction and resource outlays with the expectations of campus leaders, including in the College of Arts and Sciences but also more broadly within the Division of Academic Affairs.
- To the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
14. Make permanent the funding for 2.5 temporary FTE in CUAM. Also, consider whether the 0.5 FTE administrative assistant should be increased to a full-time position;
15. Consider transferring supervision of the unit to Academic Affairs. Such a move would follow the protocol already established by the Natural History Museum, and may assist CUAM in its inter-school and college efforts;
16. Work with CUAM and the Office of Advancement to cultivate and expand giving opportunities among donors.
- To the provost
17. Consider transferring supervision of the unit to Academic Affairs;
18. Consider establishing an art acquisitions budget to support campus teaching and research needs. Stable acquisitions funding could help the art museum to extend areas of existing excellence and to enhance the reputation of the campus as a regionally and nationally significant center of cultural studies.
- To the chancellor
19. Support the art museum’s fund-raising work, especially to direct the Office of Advancement to help.

Required Follow-Up

The director of the CU Art Museum shall report annually on the first of April for a period of three years following the year of the receipt of this report (i.e., April 1st of 2018, 2019, and 2020) to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the provost on the implementation of these recommendations. Likewise, the dean shall report annually on the first of May to the provost on the implementation of recommendations addressed to the college. The provost, as part of the review reforms, has agreed to respond annually to all outstanding matters under her/his purview arising from this review year. All official responses will be posted online.