

Separation of the Department of Art and Art History into the Department of Art History and the Department of Art

Motion:

CEPP moves that Skidmore College create a separate Department of Art History as an independent program of study, and that the former Department of Art and Art History be renamed the Department of Art.

Rationale:

Art history at Skidmore began in 1953-54 to serve the studio area. Later it became a minor, then a major, and currently has its own program director, curriculum, budget, administrative support staff (9-month full-time) and teaching and office space outside of the Saisselin Art building where the studio faculty is housed. Studio and Art History majors receive different degrees: an Art History major receives a B.A., while a Studio Art major receives a B.S. Teaching methods and assessment measures are divergent. As the discipline of art history has developed over the past twenty years, it has become increasingly interdisciplinary and intertwined with methodologies originating in diverse areas of the humanities and social sciences (ex. history, anthropology). Consequently, it has become progressively more difficult for the art historians to assess personnel issues in the Studio Art area, and to feel confident about the assessments made by the studio faculty concerning personnel issues in the Art History area. Personnel issues (including hiring, reappointment candidacy, reappointment, tenure, promotion and the election of the chair) are currently decided by the department as a whole. The chair of the department, whose role in personnel issues should not be minimized, has (for reasons related to the complexities specific to the management of studios, art materials, models, etc.) always been a member of the Studio Art area, never an art historian. Thus, as a small group within a large department (5 fte vs. 15 fte), art historians are not fully in control of the management of their program. Having control and responsibility for the Art History program, and being released from personnel matters in the Studio Art area to which art historians can only minimally contribute, will have several salutary effects for both Art History faculty and their students. It will lead to greater effectiveness, both administratively and pedagogically. It will allow for better clarity in the mentoring of junior faculty and lead to improved teaching, more scholarship and enhanced contributions to the College community. Department status will strengthen the identity and collective purpose of majors in Art History. It will be consistent with recent curricular changes, including a new capstone for seniors and foundation course for new majors emphasizing the practices of Art History. A recent self-study and external review, and ongoing assessments of graduating majors have identified needs that can be best addressed in an independent department structure.

Costs and Consequences:

While the effects of the establishment of the Art History department will be considerable and positive for both programs, the expected costs of this relatively minor organizational restructuring remain very slight. The two programs already enjoy separate office spaces, classrooms, administrative support, and budgets. Currently, the Art History program director receives one course release; no additional releases are necessary or requested. The new chair of the Art History Department should be compensated equitably and appropriately in comparison to chairs of other departments with five full-time tenure lines. Other costs will be one-time only, including modifications to the College Catalog and directory, public relations materials, departmental categories for committee service, handbooks, etc. to reflect the establishment of a new department. No alterations in either the Studio Art or Art History curriculum will result from this separation. The one specifically required Art History course for Studio Art majors (as mandated by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design [NASAD]), is also required for Art History majors. It will continue to be taught. Thus, separating the programs will not have any consequences for the studio program in terms of its accreditation from NASAD. The art historians anticipate no significant changes in the near future to the Art History major or minor, and intend to retain the current major requirement of one studio course. The separation of the Art and Art History Department into its two constituents is supported by both areas.