DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN  
GRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW  

PROGRAM RESPONSE  
29 June 2007

The College of Human Sciences and the Department of Design wish to express their thanks to the program review team members for the time and effort they put into their review of the master’s programs in the Department of Design. We appreciate the team member’s input, their mention of how hard the faculty members work, and that the graduates of the program are well placed.

Background  
Four years ago, the College of Human Sciences evaluated its departmental organizational structure and decided to make major changes. Merchandising, Environmental Design, and Consumer Economics became Department of Design that included the programs Interior Design and Apparel Design and Manufacturing. Results have generally been positive, but the reorganization process is still underway and the Department of Design is still dealing with some of the most complicated issues, one of which is the doctoral degree.

For many years, the ID (Environmental Design) doctoral program has been combined with the Consumer Economics doctoral program that evolved into Personal Financial Planning that is now housed in the department of Applied and Professional Studies. The College has submitted the proposals to rename the current CEED degree for ID and to create a new PFP doctoral program.

This review addresses only the master’s programs in the Department of Design’s Interior Design program and does not include the doctoral degree, though it is difficult to consider the graduate program without including the doctoral degree in the planning process. As a matter of clarification, there are two master’s degrees in Interior Design. They are the traditional Master of Science in Environmental Design and the five year combined degree (Bachelor of Interior Design and Master of Science in Environmental Design). There is no graduate program in Apparel Design and Manufacturing (ADM).

Status of the Programs  
The College and Department acknowledge that there are problems with the Interior Design master’s degree programs. Two intertwined major issues challenge viability of the Interior Design master’s degrees – student enrollment and issues related to graduate faculty.

Student Enrollment  
Student enrollment has historically been low (2000 – 3; 2001-2003 – 1; 2003 – 2; 2004-2005 – 6). Enrollment now is at a high of six students. There have been six graduates in the last six years. The five-year master’s program has no students enrolled. This degree was approved two or three years ago, but no one has marketed it to students until this year. Since students have to make the decision early in their academic career to make the degree
work, it will be at least two years before the earliest students might appear in this program.

As noted in the Review document, recruitment of new graduate students is difficult.
- Graduate students feel that pay for assistantships is too low (program competes with institutions that can offer better financial support)
- Undergraduate teaching responsibilities are heavy, lessening time for faculty to seek grants that include RA positions
- Because enrollment is low, graduate classes frequently are not offered or do not make, forcing faculty to attempt to offer courses on an individual study basis with one or two students.
- Credit hour generation is very low in relation to faculty time and effort — spending the time to teach a course to one or two students is not a good use of faculty time and resources
- Salaries for graduates at the BS level are very attractive, making a graduate degree less attractive
- Interior Design industry does not seem to value a master’s degree (salary, placement) as it is currently constituted.

Faculty
Graduate Faculty Positions
- Two faculty members in the ID program do not hold graduate faculty status. Though the review team requested that the program “encourage both non-graduate faculty to apply for graduate faculty status,” neither are unlikely candidates for achieving that status in the near future. However, they make important contributions (design and leadership) to the undergraduate program.
- There are three graduate faculty members in the program (two nearing retirement) with the chair position vacant (assume will be grad faculty). The chair search will begin in the fall.
- As a point of clarification, there is a statement in the committee report regarding awaiting approval to fill a second faculty position. There is no faculty position vacant other than that of the chair mentioned above. There is an additional graduate faculty member in the department, but she is a member of the ADM program. She might serve on a thesis committee if the topic were appropriate.

Workload
- Undergraduate teaching responsibilities are typical in number of classes taught and workload, but not typical in number of hours spent in class
  - Most faculty members teach several studio classes that meet 5-6 hours a week for each class
  - Grading for each of these classes is extensive. Little of the assessment is objective. Working with students to develop and evaluate creative elements is extremely time consuming.
  - One of the graduate faculty members holds a research professorship so teaches no more than half time.
- Faculty research productivity is low at least in part because of their heavy commitment to the undergraduate program. Since the last review, the group has a total of six published articles, none since 2003. There has been some creative
work (overseeing the remodeling a local mosque by one faculty member and securing funding for the historic renovation of a house at Post by another), a couple of small grants, and the RSVP grant.

**Department and College Position of Findings of the Review**
The committee provided good feedback in several areas. However, it is felt that they were overly "generous" in its findings related to the following.

- The report evaluated vision statements in the department’s strategic plan. The team did not report on the goals for the graduate program. The ID faculty members are not making progress toward achieving their goals.
- Faculty research productivity was reported as good. As noted above, publishing output has been sporadic at best, even with a research professorship in the department. External funding might look good in terms of dollars, but the major source of funding in the department is from an ongoing grant that has little or no relationship to the ID graduate program, provides the university no F&A, and occupies valuable space in the college.
- The team report noted that “in spite of the reputation, enrollments in the graduate program are small.” The quality of enrolled students is likely fine, but the quantity is not adequate. The Department of Design 2006 Strategic Plan, Goal 1, Objective 1.1 suggests the implementation of an enrollment management plan to achieve optimal enrollment in the graduate programs. No progress has been made on determining the optimal enrollment or achieving it.

**College and Department Dilemma**
The “review committee urges that resources be supplied to the program to hire additional faculty.” In light of the current focus on growth by the university, it is safe to assume that allocation of additional faculty positions over the next few years will be based on their potential for increasing enrollment and/or research funding.

- **There is little potential for significant growth in Interior Design.**
  - At the undergraduate level, accreditation controls then number of students per studio class. Each additional faculty member would add only 18-22 students.
  - At the graduate level, growth is severely limited by a very small recruitment pool and an industry who does not value an advanced degree.
  - ID research generally does not generate impressive external funding.

- A plan for the master’s program could be developed, but this does not really deal with the issue of balance and resource allocation between graduate and undergraduate programs because of the doctoral degree (not currently under review). Students are in progress, and the ID graduate program director is attempting to recruit more into the doctoral program.

- The college’s alternatives include:
  - **Option one** – Make minor changes, invest new resources, and operate our current programs. Even then the program will continue to have graduate classes that don’t make and students with a degree plan largely filled with independent study. This does not seem to be a viable option.
  - **Option 2** – Place the master’s and doctoral degree programs on hiatus for two or three years (no new students, quickly finish the ones currently enrolled). This will permit time for several changes to take place:
Leadership – hire department chair
Undergraduate program
  • Allow faculty members to concentrate on program revisions currently underway in the undergraduate program.
  • Gauge the interest of undergraduate students in the joint master's degree.
Graduate Faculty
  • Allow potential graduate faculty members to develop a more robust research contribution that will make them eligible for graduate faculty status.
  • Explore and identify potential graduate faculty members from other disciplines. Finding additional graduate faculty members in related academic areas is a possibility, though the ID faculty members have not pursued that option.
  • One way to generate more faculty time for graduate instruction is utilizing community-based adjunct faculty members. However, qualified adjunct faculty members in this field are very difficult to find.
Viability
  • Allow faculty members to contemplate the viability of a graduate program in their area.
  • Explore “the possibility of interdisciplinary linkages” as recommended by the review team. The program graduate faculty members are currently looking at the possibility of implementing a graduate professional design degree in collaboration with architecture and landscape architecture. This will encourage graduate students from allied disciplines to take environmental design courses. Faculty members also report that they collaborate on papers and grant proposals with faculty members from other disciplines. However, graduate student recruitment through these endeavors has remained minimal.
  • At the end of two or three years, a graduate degree option will be reevaluated by the college.
  • Option 3 – The last alternative is to eliminate some or all of the ID graduate programs.

The second alternative has been selected, effective fall 2007. Pouring further resources into the program (option 1) with little expectation of significant change is not wise in light of the university's growth expectation. Eliminating the graduate programs (option 3) seems premature. The program needs a chance to reconsider and reorganized their graduate offerings.