

TO: Provost McInnis

FROM: Douglas Dempster

SUBJECT: COFA Facilities Needs

DATE: April 4, 2018

The College of Fine Arts is faced with challenges uncommon for an arts college: rapidly growing enrollments in new interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate degree programs confined to aging facilities largely dedicated to other programs and prior purposes.

These new programs respond to the university's mandate to remain current and preeminent in fulfilling its research mission; to improve student access, diversity and academic success; to emphasize experiential, service, and project-based learning; to insure positive career outcomes and successful college-to-career transitions; and to modernize the college's fine arts curriculum for a period in which creative disciplines and so-called "creatives" have a new-found value and centrality to culture and commerce. In the early years of these new programs, they are already attracting strong applicants, enjoying robust enrollments that are the most diverse in our college, and stimulating industry and employer interest unprecedented for our college.

A strategic facilities planning process that involved faculty and college leadership throughout the college, begun in 2014, identified a number of needs and potential remedies for accommodating growth while modernizing aging facilities for long-standing programs. That process resulted in the 2017 Facilities Strategic Plan, College of Fine Arts. Another copy is attached for your information.

Last fall, in response to growing concern about any further change to the Fine Arts Library, I impaneled and charged two task forces. The first was charged with exploring alternative scenarios for ensuring access to the Fine Arts collection. You've now received the report of that task force with recommendations from vice-provost Haricombe and me.

The second, internal to the School of Design and Creative Technologies, was charged with forecasting the needs of the school for instructional and operational facilities, an estimate that was only generally envisioned in the 2017 strategic facilities plan. The report of that second task force is attached.

A third step or process is continuous and ongoing since I was appointed dean: surveying existing college facilities to identify underused or antiquated facilities that could and should be adapted to serve the evolving needs of traditional programs while also accommodating the growth of new programs. Renovations and repurposing of the third and fourth floor of the Fine Arts Library, beginning in 2006, are only the most conspicuous of these efforts at modernization.

In 2008, the Visual Arts Center was created in the former Blanton Museum galleries in the Art Building, providing extraordinary exhibition galleries, badly needed new department offices for Art and Art History, a new lobby for the Art Building, dedicated studio space for MFA students, and new offices for the Mesoamerica Center. A suite of student services offices were built out in the basement of the Doty Building.

More recently, in the Art Building, Design classrooms have been upgraded and ceramic and metals studios were closed in favor of a digital Fabrication Lab. The Visual Resource Collection housing one-half million film art images was consolidated into the Fine Arts Library collection for digitization in 2009 allowing the creation of a dozen new faculty offices, a dedicated seminar room, and administrative offices for the Art History division. An Integrated Media Lab and a Theatrical Design studio were created out of storage space in the basement of the Theatre and Dance Winship Building. A state-of-the-art audio/video control room was added to the Bates Recital Hall, along with other upgrades, to support high-definition, online streaming of performances.

Continued renovation planning to accommodate the needs of both long-standing and new programs is underway in the Payne Theater, in Art Building classrooms, studios and labs, in the PAC Scene Shop, and in the recording studios of the Music Building, among other spaces. These efforts are being coordinated by the Dean's Office through the authorities and collaboration of the college's department chairs and directors.

The college is grateful to the Provost's Office for the years of financial support and administrative assistance that have made these improvements possible.

In the fall of 2018, the School of Design and Creative Technologies projects enrollments of 166 Design undergraduates and graduate students (BA, BFA, MFA) and 370 undergraduates in the BS in Arts and Entertainment Technologies. (In the fall of 2016, the Design program enrolled approximately 80 majors and the BS in Arts and Entertainment Technologies did not yet exist.)

Applications, both UT-internal and external, are robust for these programs. The BS in AET had 182 completed freshmen applications for next fall, and is expecting better than a 60% yield on those applications. Eighty-nine current UT students have applied for internal transfer to the BS from a wide variety of majors, including 18 from UGS. Yields on internal transfers typically exceed 90%.

The BA and BFA in Design expect to matriculate 66 new freshmen and transfers with total predicted enrollments in the fall of 2018 of 160 undergraduate majors, a 100% increase from a few years ago.

The SDCT undergraduate population is the most demographically diverse in the College of Fine Arts. While it's still early in the history of these programs, industry and employer interest in these students is strong. These enrollments should also significantly decrease, either directly or indirectly, the number of undeclared majors at UT searching for admission to a first-choice major.

Benchmarking against peer programs nationally (while holding to admissions selectivity and yields typical for the College of Fine Arts) student demand for these programs could double over the next several years, instructional resources and facilities allowing.

The attached report from the SDCT Facilities Task Force lays out calendar priorities for facilities needed to support these programs.

Relying on general classrooms and the college's existing classroom inventory, which now includes renovations to the 4th floor of the Fine Arts Library and other renovations underway throughout the college's facilities, the college will be able to accommodate the SDCT curriculum and enrollments projected for 2018-19. As more students move into upper-division courses in 2019-20, additional classrooms/studios, faculty and staff offices, and technical support facilities will be needed.

A good deal more technical specificity needs to be laid on top of these projected facilities needs, which will be a next step in the process requiring facilities planning expertise the college doesn't yet have.

The college will continue to make every effort to accommodate these needs by optimizing and renovating existing facilities under our management. My hope is that this process will unfold in a collegial fashion that not only modernizes existing facilities, but also encourages interdisciplinary program synergies that benefit all our COFA programs and students.

However, even under the most optimistic assumptions about optimizing the use of Fine Arts facilities or about the congeniality and creativity of the college's faculty, I can't imagine how the facility needs for these growing programs can be confined in the college's existing facilities.

We would be grateful for help in solving this problem.