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# DOC 2013-05 Proposal to Rename the Department of Visual Arts

University of Dayton. Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

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**PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE**

**TITLE:** Proposal to Rename the Department of Visual Arts

**SUBMITTED BY:** Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

**DATE:** Approved: December 13, 2013

**ACTION:** Legislative authority

**REFERENCE:** Senate Constitution II.B.1.a. Also see Senate Document 12-08 “Department Proposal Process”

**1. Background:**

Following discussions with the Dean and the Provost, the Department of Visual Arts submitted to the College’s Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) a formal proposal to rename the Department as the “Department of Art and Design” (AAC Document 13-03). This proposal was reviewed and approved by the AAC on September 27, 2013.

Faculty in the Department, the Dean of the College, and members of Enrollment Management all feel that the current name of “Department of Visual Arts” does not inform prospective students of the broad scope of their degree programs. The title is currently used by a small number of colleges across the nation, most of which offer only the generalist Bachelor of Arts degree in “Visual Arts.” Through research undertaken during 2013, the Department of Visual Arts has learned that the title, “Art and Design,” is the phrase most prominently used to describe academic programs that offer the professional Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in fine arts, photography, graphic design, art history and art education.

Accordingly, in order to distinguish more clearly among the broad range of professional degrees offerings within their department, members of the Department propose to change the name to the “Department of Art and Design.”

At the present time, the proposal to change the name of the Department of Visual Arts does not require changes in the Department’s curriculum or its resources.

**2. Rationale:**

The name “Department of Visual Arts” does not inform prospective students of the broad scope of our degree programs. The title is currently used by a small number of colleges across the nation, most of which offer only the generalist Bachelor of Arts degree in “Visual Arts.” Through research undertaken during 2013, we have learned that the title “Art and Design” is the phrase most prominently used to describe academic programs that offer the professional Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in fine arts,

photography, graphic design, art history and art education. In order to distinguish more clearly among the broad range of professional degrees offerings within our department, we move to change the name to the “Department of Art and Design.”

The Department of Visual Arts faculty voted on August 16, 2012 to begin the process to change the name of the department to the “Department of Art and Design.” The faculty believes this change more effectively communicates the nature of our academic programs and the focus of our educational mission. Faculty research into national trends has determined that the name “Art and Design” is more broadly used by incoming students, that the term is concise and is broadly understood, and is less confusing than the more vague term “Visual Arts.” It is the expectation of the faculty that the title, “Department of Art and Design,” will draw a greater number of prospective students to investigate our degree programs.

### **3. National context for departmental naming:**

The Department of Visual Arts has, over the past year, investigated widely across the national academic field as it researched the terms “Art and Design” and “Visual Arts.” Our research indicates that the term “Art and Design” is the most prominent phrase used to describe programs that offer the professional degrees in fine arts, photography, graphic design, art history and art education. For example, the 2011 edition of the College Art Association’s publication entitled, “Graduate Programs in the Visual Arts,” provides the title “Art and Design” as the most appropriate terminology for identifying academic programs that focus on studio arts, graphic design, photography, art history and art education. The term “Art and Design” is utilized instead of the terms “Visual Arts” or “Fine Arts.” The College Arts Association (CAA) is the premiere national professional arts organization for academics and provides the central directory for academic program listings. Within the CAA directory, a minority of universities and colleges list departments of “Visual Arts,” while a majority use the term “Art and Design.”

Another prominent academic arts resource is the National Association of Colleges of Art and Design, the national accrediting agency for academic programs in the arts. The 2012 Directory of Members of the National Association of Colleges of Art and Design (NASAD) indicates that 69% of the accredited members use the term “Art and Design” to designate their arts division. Only 16% use the term “Fine Arts,” while 15% use other terms such as “Visual Arts.” Following the examples set by CAA and NASAD, it is reasonable to believe that the general population, including prospective students and their families, will search for academic units using the search term “Art and Design.” Prospective students and families frequently access college ratings publications and websites, internet search engines, and the CAA and NASAD websites. When prospective families search for degree programs at these locations, the largest number of results can be attained by using the search term “art,” “design,” or “art and design” “degree programs.”

Searches on Google for “department of art and design” that include the term “academic” resulted in 9,690,000 selections. Those results are then narrowed with additional search terms such as the “BFA degree program” or the “Midwest region.” A similar search using the term “department of visual arts” and the term academic resulted in only 160,000 hits (as of June 13, 2013). This is an unsatisfactory return. The vast difference in the number indicates “Art and Design” as the most widely used search term and thus can be considered the term most likely employed by prospective families. It is unfortunate to see that a common search for “department of art and design” “academic” “BFA” “Midwest” would

not bring forth results that include the University of Dayton because our title requires a search that specifies “department of visual arts.”

Faculty research also indicates that those academic departments titled, “Visual Arts,” more often than not offer only the generalist degree in Visual Arts, in other words the BA in Visual Arts. Most do not also offer the more intensive professional degree programs such as the BFA in Graphic Design, the BFA in Photography, the BFA in Studio Arts or Fine Arts, or the BFA in Art Education. NASAD-affiliated institutions who use the name “Department of Visual Arts” and offer only the BA in Visual Arts include Brown University, Emory University, California State University at Fullerton, University of Chicago, College of the Holy Cross, Huntington University, Rutgers University, and many others.

It is not appropriate that our strong array of degree program offerings be associated with a title that suggests a limited or generalist approach to research and education in art and design. The title of “Department of Art and Design” is most befitting a unit that offers the varied professional degrees in Photography, Graphic Design, Art Education, and Fine Arts, along with the BA in Art History and the BA in Visual Arts.

Within the Department of Visual Arts, we work continually to build connections between the conceptual practices and the technical skills developed by designers, artists, photographers and educators. Towards this end, we integrate the study of design and art within Foundations courses provided to all the majors. We implement shared criteria for excellence across a common set of expectations (visual ability, intellectual ability, and communicative ability) throughout our art and design curriculum. As students progress through their years of study at the University of Dayton, we provide common experiences, lectures, workshops, and exhibition opportunities that bring students into reflective conversation about creative engagement. We highlight the critical inquiry, design concepts, and expressive possibilities shared across our varied degree programs. It is the very activities of artistic pursuit and design analysis that distinguish all our programs. For these reasons, we believe the title “Department of Art and Design” best represents the philosophical and pedagogical spirit of our department.

#### **4. Consultations:**

The Department of Visual Arts has consulted with appropriate departments in the College of Arts and Sciences (Department of Music, Department of English, Department of Sociology, and the Department of Global Languages and Cultures). The chairs of these departments all gave written support for the proposed name change, after consulting with their faculty members. In addition, Kathy Harmon, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, has confirmed that this department name change will facilitate recruiting. The School of Engineering was consulted and also confirmed their support for this department name change. These letters of support are included in the Appendix.

## Appendix

To: Judith Huacuja

From: Kathy McEuen Harmon  
Dean, Admission and Financial Aid

Re: Support for proposed revision of the department name, from Visual Arts to Art and Design

Date: August 16, 2013

The current name of the department does not fully lead prospective students to the broad opportunities within the department. The research provided by the exploration of national academic programs does show that a department name of Visual Arts is limiting, vague and not used in the majority of academic settings. The majority of participating institutions of the College Arts Association and the accrediting agency, the National Association of Colleges of Art and Design, use the term 'Art and Design' to include the broad offerings of their academic programs.

In addition to being consistent with the national use of this term, the departmental name change would be beneficial to our prospective students and visiting families, our admission and financial aid team, and our student ambassadors to promote the opportunities available for those searching for graphic design, art history, photography, the fine arts and art education. The term 'Visual Arts' is not only limiting, the vagueness of it may lead prospective students to discontinue the early exploration of the opportunities at the University, especially for those with a specific interest in graphic design, art history and art education, as well as for parents who are considering their child's future professional opportunities and prospects upon their child's graduation from the University. As many college-bound students and families begin their preliminary searches online, the change of name could only be beneficial in raising awareness of the opportunities here.

I fully support the proposal to rename the Department of Visual Arts.

September 16, 2013

Judith Huacuja, Chair  
Department of Visual Arts

Dear Judith,

I have reviewed the proposal to change the name of the Department of Visual Arts to the Department of Art and Design, and I have shared the proposal with the English Department faculty. We also discussed the matter briefly at our department meeting on Friday, September 13. We find the proposal to be well reasoned and well researched, and we support it entirely. Thank you for sharing your plans and consulting with us!

Sincerely,



Sheila Hassell Hughes  
Professor and Chair  
shughes1@udayton.edu

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September 13, 2013

Department of Global Languages and Cultures  
University of Dayton

Dear Dr. Huacuja,

Thank you for sending your proposal to change the name of "Department of Visual Arts" to "Department of Art and Design." Your proposal was discussed at our departmental meeting on September 9. We found your proposal very well researched and documented. The rationale is solidly persuasive for changing the name. Therefore, the Department of Global Languages and Cultures strongly supports your proposal since it clearly shows evidence of being consistent with national use and because the new name will be more informative for prospective students, admission and financial aid teams, and student ambassadors in promoting the mission of your department.

Best regards,

Francisco Peñas-Bermejo, Chair

September 17, 2013

TO: The Academic Affairs Committee

FROM: Dr. Sharon Davis Gratto, Chair  
Department of Music

SUBJECT: Department of Visual Arts name change proposal

As Chair of the Department of Music, I write in support of the proposal by the Department of Visual Arts for a name change to the Department of Art and Design. Visual Arts faculty have thoroughly researched other institutions' art program names and have conferred with UD Teacher Education to be certain their proposed change aligns with policy and public understanding and awareness. The proposed new name more clearly represents what is taught in Visual Arts and is inclusive of the department's teacher education program and its art history courses. I am pleased to support this change without reservation.

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September 16, 2013

Dear Judith,

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work discussed the proposed name change for the Department of Visual Arts at our Department meeting on September 10th. We were in full agreement that you present a strong rationale, and we are fully supportive of changing the name to Department of Art and Design.

All the best,

Laura M. Leming, FMI  
Associate Professor and Chair  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work  
(also representing the Criminal Justice Studies Program)

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From: Riad Alakkad

Sep 12

To: Don Pair

Don,

School of Engineering will support the name change to Art and Design.

Riad Alakkad  
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies  
School Of Engineering  
University of Dayton