

PROPOSAL FOR PRELIMINARY ENTITLEMENT TO PLAN

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Department of Art and Design

University of Wisconsin-Stout

October 2007

Program Description

The Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) is recognized as the terminal degree in art and design by accrediting agencies throughout the United States and in many other countries. This degree provides graduate students with rigorous educational and creative opportunities in a focused area of study within art and design. The minimum standards for this degree include at least two years of full-time graduate study and a minimum of 60 semester credits. Graduates of this degree typically will: (1) demonstrate professional competence in the creation of works in art and design, (2) produce work that shows the integration of knowledge and skills in the area of research, and (3) complete studies associated with their discipline that include historical, aesthetic, analytical, humanistic and scientific studies, and (4) produce a final project that demonstrates mastery of their field/discipline.

The M.F.A. at the University of Wisconsin-Stout is envisioned to provide a unique opportunity for graduate studies related to art and design through a variety of course delivery systems and hands-on experiences. Students in this program will have an opportunity to complete certain requirements through traditional classroom and studio experiences, distance learning, credit-by-examination if they have rigorous discipline-related experience, and a combination of work on and off campus to complete the total program. A minimum residency requirement will provide the opportunity to demonstrate and present the integrated knowledge and skills in a focused area of inquiry.

The M.F.A. program is complementary to the existing array of disciplines in UW-Stout's Department of Art and Design which includes graphic design, industrial design, interior design, multimedia design and studio art. The proposed M.F.A. program is a natural extension of UW-Stout's B.F.A. in Art which, with a fall 2007 enrollment of more than 850 students, is one of the largest undergraduate art programs in the Midwest. It is expected that practicing art and design professionals seeking graduate degrees, graduates of bachelor degree programs from across the United States, and international students will create a more diverse pool of students at UW-Stout through the implementation of this graduate program. An existing array of formal international study agreements will provide students opportunities for international studies in art and design.

Relation to Mission Statement

A Master of Fine Arts degree relates closely to the mission statement of the University of Wisconsin-Stout. The underlined segments of the mission statement clearly support the implementation of this degree.

- “UW-Stout is characterized by a distinctive array of programs leading to professional careers focused on the needs of society. These programs are presented through an approach to learning which involves combining theory, practice and experimentation. Extending this special mission into the future requires that instruction, research and public service programs be adapted and modified as needs of society change.”
- “The university offers undergraduate and graduate programs leading to professional careers in industry, commerce, education and human services through the study of technology, applied mathematics and science, art, business.....”
- “The university develops new educational strategies, provides for opportunities to learn through experimentation, and creates a climate of inquiry.”
- “The university expects scholarly activity including research, scholarship, development of creative endeavor that supports its programs at the baccalaureate level, its select graduate programs and its select mission.”

Relation to Strategic Plan

The creation of an M.F.A. degree is in keeping with the university strategic plan which emphasizes “Excellence in teaching within high quality, student centered undergraduate and graduate education involving active learning and appropriate technology.” This program supports the principle of “collaboration with business, industry, education, community and government” by providing opportunities through UW-Stout’s Design Research Center and through collaborative industry projects.

The Department of Art and Design is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) which accredits undergraduate programs including UW-Stout’s program concentrations in graphic design, industrial design, interior design, multimedia design and studio art. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) specifically accredits UW-Stout’s undergraduate program concentration in interior design. With a strong existing foundation for its undergraduate programs and a range of faculty with appropriate degrees, the department promotes excellence in teaching, research, scholarship and service and is well positioned to support the proposed M.F.A program.

Need for New Program

Over the past several years, the demand for art and design graduates with terminal degrees has expanded. Student and employer demand for advanced education and certification within professional fields of study has sparked much of the growth in master's degree enrollments. According to NASAD, 2,646 M.F.A. degrees were granted across the U.S. in 2005-06. Of this total, there were 864 degrees granted from public institutions and 1,782 degrees granted from private institutions. Of significance, only 281 M.F.A. degrees were granted in graphic design, industrial design and interior design combined. Multimedia design was not specifically represented in this survey, likely due to its emerging nature and limited offerings across the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition, "The overall employment of designers is expected to grow about as fast as average through 2014." "Among the five design occupations, graphic designers are expected to have the most new jobs through 2014."

New areas of inquiry in art, new media, digital applications and design have emerged as essential support areas for higher education, industry, communications and business. As the department investigated available graduate programs to serve this emerging need, only a limited number of terminal degree programs were identified in the region to address this demand. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin-Madison are the only two UW Systems schools to offer the M.F.A. degree. While both UW System institutions have respected M.F.A. programs, UW-Stout can offer expanded and collaborative opportunities for graduate experiences due to the expertise and range of art and design disciplines presently available. There are clear distinctions between this proposed program and other existing programs in the UW System. Students in Wisconsin presently do not have access to M.F.A. programs in areas such as industrial design or interior design and have limited access to other art and design disciplines. Regional universities that offer the M.F.A. degree include the University of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The need to expand the research and knowledge base in art and design has never been greater. A growing number of practicing artists and designers contact the department seeking to enroll in an M.F.A. degree program. UW-Stout would address an increasing demand and provide students with the only opportunity to pursue an M.F.A. degree in the northwestern part of the state. As a terminal degree, the proposed M.F.A. would also serve to prepare future faculty members for careers in higher education.

Comparable Programs Elsewhere in Wisconsin

As stated in the previous section, UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee offer the only M.F.A. degrees in the UW System. To our knowledge, no private college or university offers an M.F.A. degree in Wisconsin.

Projected Sources of Resources

Sources of support for this program would include university funding for the initial planning phase, and support for a program director and a program assistant. Additional resources would come from university reallocation of resources and through the implementation of customized/differential tuition available for this type of degree program. UW-Stout has been successful in offering graduate programs at market rates through customized/differential tuition for several years. While the existing pool of instructional faculty in the Department of Art and Design have the appropriate knowledge base and academic credentials to initiate this program, additional staff will be needed as the program expands. While current facilities are excellent, additional facilities will be needed for graduate research studios that are appropriate and customary for this type of program. With the appropriate support, this program can responsively serve the expanding need for research in art and design that fosters future initiatives for Wisconsin and the global environment.