

Snow College Four-Year Degree Proposal
Bachelor of Fine Arts in *Visual Studies*
Presented to The Strategic Planning Task Force
December 19, 2013

“The arts can no longer be treated as a frill... arts education is essential to stimulating the creativity and innovation that will prove critical to young Americans competing in a global economy...”¹

-Arne Duncan, *United States Education Secretary*

Degree Description

The Bachelor of Fine Arts in *Visual Studies* is a unique interdisciplinary studio arts degree. The degree provides students with fundamental competencies in artistic practice, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. These core themes are applied to concept, material process, historical context, and critical theory. The program utilizes innovative practices and technologies in the visual arts and creative industry while fostering professional networks and engaging in dialog with communities on a global level. Students, in collaboration with faculty, design a curricular emphasis specific to their professional career goals. This degree fosters an entrepreneurial spirit and provides an in-depth professional practices curriculum where students are trained in branding, marketing, business, and professional development. Embedded in the degree are opportunities for networking and internships with working art professionals. Students completing this competitive and demanding BFA program will leave with a keenly developed sensibility and skill set, and are prepared to engage with an evolving creative industry.

The BFA in *Visual Studies* is a unique degree within the Utah System of Higher Education for the following reasons:

- Interdisciplinary curriculum
- Integrated technology across the curriculum
- Unique curricular tracks specifically designed for each student’s to career goals
- Entrepreneurial emphasis

How does the proposed degree assist with statewide initiatives, goals or priorities?

The BFA in *Visual Studies* aligns with the *State Strategic Priorities* outlined in the Board of Regents *HigherEdUtah 2020* plan.²

- 66% of Utahns with a post secondary degree or certificate by the year 2020
- Increase higher education participation and completion rates
- Utah aims for 28% of the workforce to have bachelor degrees by 2020

Snow College Visual Arts has a demonstrated record of actively recruiting and retaining students. Currently, 78% of courses offered in the program rely on a non-GE population while the remaining 22% of courses meet a GE requirement. This demonstrates a strong and proven history of recruitment and participation in the Visual Arts beyond the GE student population.

The BFA degree also aligns with the *Strategic Priorities for Achieving Utah’s Big Goal* by increasing the level of economic innovation.³ The proposed BFA degree allows students to tailor a unique curriculum designed specifically to their professional economic goals. Embedded in the degree program are courses in

¹ White, Harvey, “Steam—Not Stem Whitepaper.” STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics, Web. 2010.

² HigherEdUtah2020: 2011 Report, page 4-5, Web. 2011.

³ HigherEdUtah2020: 2011 Report, page 8, Web. 2011.

entrepreneurship and an in-depth professional practices curriculum. This focus builds career opportunities for graduates and ultimately supports economic development in communities.

In addition, the BFA in *Visual Studies* supports the *2013 Legislative Priorities* outlined in the strategic action plan by *Prosperity 2020*.⁴

- Integrated arts and academics
- Increased use of instructional technologies
- STEM initiatives

The BFA in *Visual Studies* is a visionary and innovative approach to interdisciplinary learning in the arts. The artist and creative professional face a unique set of challenges working in the 21st Century global community where dialog and cultural network supplement the solitary studio model. This program integrates the practice of the studio and the laboratory to cross-traditional genres of academic study and hybridize learning in art, culture, technology, and science. The curriculum is designed to embrace interdisciplinary pedagogical methods and cross-pollinate with other departments and disciplines on campus.

Currently, the Visual Arts program teaches 28% of its courses in the Center for New Media, an interdisciplinary space for technology integration. The proposed BFA in Visual Studies will incorporate innovative technology into every course and will offer industry driven certifications in technical software applications to further prepare students for success after graduation.

Sir Ken Robinson, a leader in education research and innovation, stated in a recent TED Talks speech that people are drawn to an education that engages a creative multi-skill set approach.⁵ The BFA in *Visual Studies* epitomizes this concept and puts it into practice.

How does the proposed degree assist with regional and statewide economic development or workforce preparation needs?

The Office of Economic Development for Sanpete County estimates that 6% of nonfarm workers in Sanpete County make all or a substantial portion of their income in the arts.⁶ The Regional Industry Development Strategic Plan for the Six County area identified the arts as one of three high-impact programs recommended for the success of the regional economy.⁷

Creative thinking drives the entrepreneurial spirit that is prevalent in the region and is a core component of global industry innovation. Companies are hiring art-trained professionals for their unique ability to problem solve and contribute as part of a creative team. Steve Tepper writes, “IBM found, in a global study of more than 1,500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries, that the most important skill for successfully navigating our increasingly complex, volatile, and uncertain world is none other than *creativity*.”⁸ As Utah’s Silicon Slope continues to grow, the BFA degree prepares students for this economic reality. A primary goal of the BFA in *Visual Studies* program is to train students for an active and competitive career. Graduates enter the workforce with critical problem solving and material skills to transition them into professional practice.

“Innovation remains tightly coupled with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – the STEM subjects. Art and design are poised to transform our economy in the 21st century just as science and technology did in the last century.”⁹

⁴ Prosperity 2020: It Starts With Education, The Plan—2013 Legislative Priorities, Web. 2013.

⁵ Robinson, Sir Ken. “Sir Ken Robinson: Bring on the Learning Revolution.” TED: Ideas Worth Spreading. May 2010. Web. 19 Dec. 2013.

⁶ Meredith, Steven, and Vance Larsen, “Snow College Bachelor of Music, Commercial Music Proposal.” Print. (2012): 11.

⁷ “Regional Industry Development Strategic Plan.” Print. 13 Aug. 2013.

⁸ Tepper, Steve, “Is an MFA the New MBA?” Web. 28 March 2013.

⁹ “Stem to Steam.” stemtosteam.org. Rhode Island School of Design. Web. 2013.

STEM to STEAM¹⁰ (A = Art) articulates the shift from left brain isolated learning models to the integration of left and right brain models. STEAM recognizes the importance of creativity and incorporates it into the learning paradigm as an integral component. Creative problem solving, interdisciplinary collaboration, and applied skills are the focus of the BFA in *Visual Studies*.

In what way is the proposed degree consistent with or supportive of the college strategic plan, mission and core themes?

Tradition of Excellence

Snow College Visual Arts enjoys a long history of excellence in teaching as evidenced by successful articulation to senior institutions where students routinely excel and perform at the top tier of their class. Currently, all full-time faculty hold the terminal MFA degree qualifying them to teach the upper division coursework contained in the BFA degree. Faculty emphasis is placed on teaching, scholarly, professional, and creative achievement. Each faculty member is a working artist, regularly participating in national and international exhibitions, lectures and workshops, conferences, and professional commissions. The new BFA in *Visual Studies* will build upon successes and introduce a structure in which students will be able to obtain their individual goals and pursue an active and competitive career.

Culture of Innovation

The BFA in *Visual Studies* is an innovative and unique degree that is interdisciplinary by design and embraces the academic traditions and knowledge across campus. Students design their own curricular track in tandem with their professional goals and are mentored by faculty, artists in residence, and visiting critics throughout the program. Multiple exhibition spaces provide all students with opportunities to exhibit current work beyond the scope of classroom assignments, encouraging independent inquiry and knowledge of museum and gallery practices. The exploration of technology and its integration into the creative process is incorporated at every level. An intensive professional practices curriculum addresses portfolio development, marketing strategies, presentation, and entrepreneurship as it applies to the dynamics of the art world and creative industry.

Atmosphere of Engagement

The region is a thriving base for a community of successful and renowned artists, galleries, and art organizations. In collaboration with the existing vibrant arts scene, embedded in the program is active outreach to incorporate a visual dialog among creative individuals and arts communities. Students study in an official capacity as interns, gaining invaluable experience from a professional artist or individual working in creative industry. Once a week during Art Talks students, faculty, and members of the community gather to participate in lectures and workshops from nationally and internationally recognized art professionals. This series offers students an opportunity to network, gain insight into the working world of art, receive exposure to a broad spectrum of philosophies and aesthetics, and ultimately enables them to envision their own future in the arts

The BFA in *Visual Studies* program promotes the active pursuit of excellence and independent inquiry of visual dialog in an interdisciplinary environment. The student is considered an artist in progress and an integral part of an evolving community of artists and ideas crossing political, social, and cultural boundaries. Graduates complete their academic study prepared as dynamic professionals to thrive intellectually and economically in the exciting and competitive creative world.

*"Artists can have good careers, earning a middle-class income.
And, just as important and maybe more, artists tend to
be happy with their choices and lives."¹¹*

-Anthony Carnevale, *Director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce*

¹⁰ "Stem to Steam." stemtosteam.org. Rhode Island School of Design. Web. 2013.

¹¹ "What Does a Fine Arts Degree Get You? The Punch Line: Maybe a Job." The Wall Street Journal. Web. 11 Nov. 2013.