

Photography Department

External Peer Review

January 23, 2003

Neil Chapman, Ph.D. Professor of Photography, Mt. San Antonio College

Dr. Chapman first participated in a full Photography Department Program Review in December, 1989. As we have developed our program in part after his critique at that time, we decided to ask him to revisit the Department for the 2002-2003 Program Review. He consented and review materials were prepared for him in the Fall Term 2002.

He visited the campus on December 18, 2003. During that visit he reviewed our facility, the Department of Communications Department facility, met Dr. John Gingrich, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and participated in a lunch meeting with Gary Colby, Kevin Holland, Kevin Bowman and Jason Smith. Our informal interaction with Dr. Chapman was positive, constructive and rich in critique. What we learned from his visit and hope to accomplish because of his visit far exceeds the content included here.

The review materials, including Dr. Chapman's hand-written notes, are included in the tabbed section after the text of this document. Reference to these notes is necessary for understanding of Dr. Chapman's remarks here.

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PROGRAM REVIEW / University of La Verne, Photography Department

January 23, 2003

Dear Gary,

It is again a pleasure to be asked to review your photography program. It comes at an opportune time as our photo program, at Mt. San Antonio College is in the same process. With the onslaught of digital technologies and industry transitioning into digital photo programs are now pressed to follow suite. I believe we all saw the handwriting on the wall ten years ago.

As image-makers it really should not matter what technology we choose in the production of creating visual communications. Having said that, I myself still employ and enjoy creating images with a 4x5 view

camera and printing fine prints in silver. The more I use digital systems in my own work the more I realize that the older technologies will be relegated to a craft, practiced by those who are purists in the old tradition. But today I am aware of the financial factors keeping programs from currently converting totally to digital.

The most common defense given by traditional photo nay-sayers is the cost comparison, digital vs. chemical. On the surface they make a strong case. But, when you consider software updates, computer life-span, and high-end cameral costs, I'm pressed to say traditional still wins. I myself still own an enlarger 20 years old and looks and works like new. I can't say the same for any of my past 6 computers purchased in half that time, and at a total cost of 9 times that of my enlarger. Let's not mention the cameras. But without a doubt visual creators are changing to digital. As educators we must prepare our students for that *future*.

I felt the need to include these previous statements as they may provide a context for my position on photo technologies. I hope they will also provide insight to the suggestions I've presented for your program update and/or changes for the future.

I was impressed with all the changes you initiated to your program in light of the 1989 review. After reviewing the materials you provided I would say the changes have benefited your students well. Because of this I would say there are little suggestions I have to offer with respect to your traditional-based program. You seem to have it honed well for the number of faculty you have. This is why you will find that most of my comments have centered around digital.

I appreciate your suggestion that I make my comments in red pen on the materials themselves. As you directed I will simply list the item with a page and reference number for you. And of course, if you have any questions please feel free to call or write them down and we can discuss them when I visit you or can email me.

I. Mission Sheet

- 1) Mission Statement
 - a. **Comment: p 1, p 2** Simplify both mission statements.
- 2) Photography Curriculum
 - a. **Comment: p 3** (This would be reflected if other digital changes are made)
- 3) Letter to John Gingrich
 - a. **Comment: p 4** Agree with changes completely.
- 4) Resumes
 - a. **Comment pp 8-10** Based on resume, HIRE Jason Montgomery Smith!

II. Catalog

- 1) p 11 “Personal development” would suggest incorporating this phrase directly into your mission statement to show congruity between you and the university.
- 2) p 83 Error.
- 3) p 103 This mission statement is not the same as the one on the Mission Sheet I.
- 4) p 201, 202 These descriptions will change if other changes are made from this review. We should talk about these.

III. Course Description and Syllabus

The comments here are minimal as I've referred you to **IV. Course Outlines**. I wrote most of my comments in that section.

IV. Course Outlines

- 1) PHOTO 210 See notes on page 1 and 2.
- 2) PHOTO 310 See notes on page 1
- 3) PHOTO 450 See notes on page 1

V. Budget

1) Regular Faculty Salaries

This salary level is low. The university needs to increase your salary commensurate with your service and years. Your figure is approximately 10% lower than comparative programs for someone with twenty-years service. (continued below)

2) Administrative Salaries

Add an allowance here, especially given that you are currently acting as Carlson Gallery Director with no pay.

3) Equipment (not computer)

This seems low and tells me you are probably not keeping up with equipment replacements. I would suggest an increase in keeping with the current pricing for the equipment you need to replace.

4) Computer Software

Knowing that you have a 12 station computer lab and based on one program (Photoshop) costing approximately \$200 dollars per upgrade, I'd say this figure is low and should be doubled to accommodate keeping up with industry upgrades. I know you are using more than just Photoshop.

5) Equipment Maintenance and Replacement

This is definitely too low. One camera system can cost \$1190. My suggestion would be to estimate, over the past 5 years, your replacement costs (if you had replaced those needing replaced) and the repairs that have been done or should have been done and average your total out for one year. I'm going to guess it would be more like \$3000 to \$4500 a year.

VI. Facilities

THIS SECTION WILL BE eMAILED TO YOU AFTER I'VE VISITED YOUR FACILITY.

After our visit was completed and Dr. Chapman had promised to send a written copy of his observations to us, both he and his wife were diagnosed with serious, possibly life-threatening illnesses, distracting him from this work. He was subsequently unable to locate his notes, but Kevin and I have reconstructed his remarks fairly well. We are in touch with Dr. Chapman, and wish him well.

First, additional storage space must be found to take in the gallery equipment and

materials now stored in the Studio, Miller 20.

Second, it may soon be possible to close a darkroom, and use that space for tool crib and gallery storage, or computer lab space.

Third, the computer laboratory looks good. Arrangement of stations is good for class participation.

Fourth, open table space for student work is at a minimum; it could be better.

Fifth, identify lively locations on campus where current student work could be regularly displayed.

VII. Misc. Additions

The only other thing I might add but might not be possible just yet. If you have a website I would suggest using it both as a resource center for your students and as a P.R. tool. It's a great way to advertise locally your program.

As a resource tool for students you could upload PDF files of your syllabus, assignments, exhibit student work, and latest info. As P.R. it's more of a show-and-tell sort of info. When someone asks a student where do you go to school they can guide that person to the Photo Program Website.

Gary,

I commend you and your colleagues as you have done a fine job developing and expanding your program. I can tell, however, that the workload and fiscal issues are taking their toll.

It's obvious the major area of my suggestions are in the digital technology. I feel the greatest benefit would especially be in your color area. There's no magic or love for the equipment, chemistry cost, maintenance etc. which would virtually be gone with a system like the Fujix. You would be welcome to come to Mt. SAC and see ours.

As you suggested I took a red pen and a red marker and went after your materials. As you will see I also used yellow stickies with titles to help locate my marks. I avoided long detailed explanations but tried to make general comments. You've been around the block so I know you'll easily interpret between the lines.

I enjoyed looking over the visual materials as well. The newspapers and the magazines show that your students are putting to work what they learn in a real and practical way. I look forward in the future to discussing this even further.

Sincerely,

Neil Chapman Ed.D. Photography Professor