University of Lethbridge

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TO: Digvir Jayas
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: June 25, 2024

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Department of New Media Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Department of New Media at its June 13, 2024, meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of: Christine Clark (Program Review Coordinator), Leanne Elias, Ryan Harper-Brown, and Dana Cooley.

The review produced 4 documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received September 18, 2023.

2. External Review Report. Written by Dr. Cindy Poremba (OCAD) and Dr. Megan Smith (University of British Columbia) based on a site visit February 8 to 9, 2024. Received March 22, 2024.

3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received April 22, 2024.

4. Dean's Response. Written by Heather Davis-Fisch, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts. Received May 22, 2024.

Self Study Report

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer feedback on several areas:

- The outlined plan for 2024 hires.

- Curriculum reshaping, including the possibility of concentrating technical instruction in the first two years and focusing on theme-based learning in years three and four, as well as addressing further efforts towards Indigenization.

- Establishing a flexible teaching space and a more robust physical footprint.

- Strategies to help with workloads (especially regarding carving out time for research, the increased pressure of WIL initiatives, and how new hires could help alleviate these concerns).

- Future direction for the capstone Internship experience.

- The shifting identity of the program area and possible name changes.

The body of the report noted several strengths of the Department of New Media:

- As a smaller institution, we offer an intimate learning environment, fostering a close cohort that is conducive to student collaboration.

- Our department consistently has the highest enrollment in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

- Our graduates are very versatile and find meaningful employment as Digital Content Creators (cultural sectors, technology startups, education, communication, government, sports and entertainment).

- Our alumni engage and network with current students.

- Our department is made up of many emerging scholars.

- The inherent interdisciplinarity nature of our field, as well as being a department housed in a Liberal Education university, enables our students to navigate complex creative pursuits.

- Research-Creation undertaken by faculty, along with ongoing professional development, directly informs and strengthens our teaching.

- Faculty support multiple work integrated learning opportunities for students.

The following weaknesses and challenges were mentioned in the body of the report:

- One potential threat to our future funding and enrollment is the current provincial government's preference for vocational and career-oriented postsecondary programs. For example, in response to the demand for workers in Alberta's growing tech sector, the 2023 provincial budget included $10 million to fund 1,100 spots in technology programs but only allocated them to colleges and computer science programs, overlooking the need for creative technologists.

- The Faculty of Fine Arts and the University of Lethbridge has undergone significant managerial changes in the last year. We are starting the Fall 2023 academic term with a new President, Provost, Dean of Fine Arts, and Associate Dean of Fine Arts. It is worth noting that in the last seven years the Fine Arts Faculty has had four different Deans. Within our own department, we recently had two tenured members move to the Department of Drama (whose positions will not be replaced), two tenured members retire on July 1, 2023, and two tenure-track replacements start on July 1, 2023.

- New Media has a small footprint in the Faculty of Fine Arts. We lack the range of teaching and workspaces available to other departments. For years we have been requesting access to a flexible space that accommodates work not tethered to a computer lab setup. We need a space that allows for instruction, critique, and students to work on projects which involve physical materials, performative elements, and installations. This space also needs to permit students to securely store work in progress. The need for such a space was also flagged in our two previous External Examinations.

- Like faculty everywhere these days, New Media faculty are finding it difficult to manage ever-increasing workloads. As a small department, this becomes even more pressing given we have a limited number of people available to teach, supervise graduate students, and carry out the service work, as well as conducting the research we are contractually obligated to do. In addition to course load inequities across Faculties (our counter parts in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences teach one less course than FFA tenured/tenure-track faculty, and yet are evaluated by the same metrics), coupled with budgetary challenges, we are finding meeting the expectations of incorporating WIL (Work Integrated Learning) opportunities into this mix a challenge. One solution would be to replace the two tenure positions that were lost to the Department of Drama so that the workload could be shared by more members.

Recommendations from the body of the report:

- In June 2023, we hired two new tenure-track positions to replace retiring faculty – one in Digital Culture Studies, the other in Video Game Design and Development. In 2024 we will need to consider how we will handle two upcoming gaps in our department: the retirement of another tenured faculty member who teaches design, as well as the expiration of the two– year contract held by another member of our department who teaches video. As both teaching areas are core to our degrees, it is imperative we have two new tenure-track hires to maintain delivery of the New Media program. It is worth noting that our current two–year contract department member has done a great deal of work to reshape and expand video course offerings, bringing them in line with the department's desire to incorporate new and emerging technologies and approaches for this medium, a tendency not previously pursued as rigorously as the department wished.

- We see opportunity for future curricular redesigns to shift our program from being organized around specific areas of practice within new media to a more thematic approach, enabling us to address contemporary issues more fully through a convergence of new media domains and skills. Much of our current curriculum (for example, our series of courses related to web design and development, graphic design, and the moving image) revolves around loosely defined 'concentrations' which hinders our students' ability to make connections across domains and tends to be software or technology-focused. And, while we do try to stress to students that the field of new media inherently is interdisciplinary, the way our program is constructed leaves little room for them to explore technologies meaningful ways. We feel strongly that, as pedagogues, we need to assist students to understand the importance of having the technology serve ideas. This requires an embodied awareness and thinking deeply and critically about the interconnectedness of the world, including the dual-use nature of technology (it can always be employed in ways that are both beneficial and detrimental), and the consequences of our use of these devices, systems, and platforms.

- Another change we have discussed making is moving from proprietary software, such as Adobe, to an increased emphasis on Open-Source tools. Unlike other companies' reaction to the

pandemic shutdown, Adobe refused to alter its pay structure to accommodate the sudden shift to online course delivery, meaning students would have to pay to use their software on their personal computers. There was strong sentiment amongst many faculty that we should not support a company that operates in this fashion, furthering the view already held by many department members that we should be making fuller use of OpenSource resources. Having students learn on Open-Source software means they can continue to use these tools after graduating without having to incur the cost of multiple software subscriptions. This move also makes sense in that Open-Source software is increasingly being adopted by industry and is well-used by artists. However, there is some disagreement within our department as to whether this is the route we should be taking.

- While the redesign of our curriculum is our most pressing concern, to acquire flexible teaching space is high on our list of priorities. Currently, our studio teaching spaces are all computer labs. For many courses and activities, we require teaching / event space that permits working with physical materials and / or performative elements, in conjunction with computers, which a conventional computer lab is simply not conducive to, a point flagged in the Department's 2005 and 2015 self-study reports and acknowledged as needing to be addressed by the external examiners. What we are envisioning is something between a computer lab and a studio: a space which allows for work to be done not tethered solely to a computer (and awkwardly executed in the insufficient space in front of a keyboard), space to build, store, install, and critique hybrid work.

- The name of our department, 'New Media', has posed a challenge for some time. There is a widespread lack of consensus on what 'new media' means, which hinders our ability to promote our program both internally and externally, including to students (prospective and current), collaborators, employers, and funders. New media technologies are now so enmeshed in everyday life that the name of our department is rendered meaningless; some would argue we're in a post-media age. Considering this, the nomenclature, at one time adequate, no longer facilitates communication of the nature of our program. In past department discussions, one department name change possibility that had support was "Creative Technologies."

External Review Report

The External Review Report contained 12 (twelve) recommendations for improving the Department of New Media:

Recommendations from the body of the report:

- A new IBPOC faculty hire in critical new media practices to address the curriculum and research content gap, and to ensure that the student body is well represented and supported in their degree progress. Given the historical failure of the program to hire/retain IBPOC faculty, we strongly recommend this hire be associated with a proposed cluster hire, in order to give said faculty additional support within the institution.

- Include Indigenous cultural competency training for faculty as a key component in the program's indigenization strategy. This training is essential to help mitigate the lack of Indigenous lived experience on the faculty, and to support faculty in making informed decisions on how best to indigenize their own pedagogy and course content, guide curriculum development, and support and retain Indigenous students and future faculty.

- Implementation of a community-based New Media BFA program Advisory Board with members from the local POC and Indigenous community and creative industries. Establishing this will be an active step towards network and capacity building, helping to ensure that efforts to decolonize and indigenize the program and curriculum are done with integrity, and can lay the groundwork for increased collaboration with IBPOC community partners, including potential research collaborators, staff and faculty. In the formation of this Board, we would encourage the program to consider how decolonizing perspectives are integrated across the standards of the committee, as an indicating method of how to also foster learning environments that respect and value diverse cultural knowledge.

- Finalize and Implement Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): Given the ongoing development of PLOs, it is recommended to finalize and implement them. Ensure that they are clear, measurable, and aligned with both disciplinary and institutional standards (including University Strategic and Academic objectives), as well as current Provincial standards. This will provide a robust framework for assessing student achievement and program effectiveness.

- Regularly Review and Update Program Syllabi: Establish a standardized syllabi format across all courses, and conduct regular pedagogical reviews to update the content and to ensure all faculty and technical staff are aware of any shifting curriculum, including content gaps and overlaps. Act on the identified duplicated content and essential content gaps by revising the curriculum accordingly. Ensure that the course content reflects the most current educational standards (including student accessibility requirements), industry best-practices, and align with the finalized PLOs.

- Conduct Periodic Audits for Key Courses: Expand the practice of conducting audits, such as the recommendation to fully review and audit New Media 1000 before the 2025-2026 academic year. Re-imagining this course as the foundation to establishing the pedagogies, practices, theoretical underpinnings and ethics of the BFA New Media program, and mapping it to the PLOs and to other key courses within the program is essential. This will ensure that foundational courses remain relevant, engaging, and aligned with program goals.

- Reduce the Internship from 15 credits to 9 credits. Consider building an agreement with the Co-op program to share resources. While the department currently funds an internship coordinator, this person could become part of the University's Co-op office and grow the presence of the Faculty within the University system, and importantly offer tailored support to the Faculty. This would further enable the students to benefit from the co-op resources, while expanding the understanding of how the New Media arts are sought in the workforce and across the community.

- Pilot Co-Teaching Approaches: Actively pilot co-teaching approaches in select courses. Evaluate the impact on student learning outcomes and consider expanding this collaborative teaching method based on positive outcomes. This can bring diverse perspectives and expertise into the classroom. A first course to pilot this in would be New Media 1000.

- Develop a 5-Year Teaching Schedule: Regularly review and update a 5-year teaching schedule to ensure that all core courses are deliverable and that the faculty and staff needed to run them are available. This will ensure that sabbatical and research leaves are supported while visualizing opportunities for faculty mobility between teaching. Ensure that the plan is flexible enough to adapt to evolving needs and opportunities.

- Encourage Exploration of Special Topics: Actively encourage faculty to explore and integrate special topics related to research integration and emerging trends. This flexibility in the curriculum allows students to engage with cutting-edge content and fosters a dynamic learning environment. One way to integrate special topics is to setup a series of 200-400 level courses under this banner. Having these can enable an Artist-in-Residence to teach a particular topic, can support more co-teaching models, and/or support faculty and staff research projects within the community, provincially or nationally through pedagogical application of practice.

- Request, or initiate in the form of service, a Faculty level Space-Use Audit where A) All programs establish their needs and requirements to continue to teach, research and serve the University into the future (5, 10 and 25 year scenarios), B) identify overlapping pedagogical needs across programs, C) Establish resource and space sharing and build an actionable plan for growth and innovation.

- Establish an annual BFA New Media - Resources & Showcase Plan. This first iteration should include the timelines for establishing the Artist-in-Residence program and the new New Media CRC position, the cleaning and emptying of abandoned studios and labs, the collective re-visioning of the re-purposed spaces, and the identification of campus-wide resources required to showcase the work and research of the faculty, staff and students across the University, (including corridors, the library, the Agility lab, all classrooms and studios). Set an achievable annual goal for this plan. This will enable an exponential increase of the program's presence on campus, while ensuring that resources and the space issue is annually addressed and shaped to support change and growth.

Challenges discussed in the report:

- Faculty workload is a common concern with most postsecondary institutions, and the New Media program is no exception. Two concerns emerged in particular: the imbalance of service (which interferes with essential time to maintain currency in research and practice), and the reliance on the passion of particular, often contract, faculty to run key parts of the program. This is an unsustainable model.

- One of the foremost challenges confronting the faculty is the underrepresentation of IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) scholars. The lack of diversity not only hampers the program's reputation but has also reached a critical juncture where future efforts to recruit and retain a faculty cohort reflective of student diversity at the University of Lethbridge are inevitably compromised. There is indication that upper administration and leadership are earnestly addressing this issue and devising strategic plans to bolster the capacity needed to support and retain new IBPOC faculty, particularly Indigenous faculty. It is imperative that this commitment to diversity hiring is translated into tangible actions through the implementation of new permanent faculty hiring, ideally at an open rank level.

  Faculty retain a tremendous amount of power and oversight into the program's curriculum and course delivery. With that power comes the responsibility to take meaningful steps towards TRC reconciliation, and this work is impossible to undertake without a formal strategy for building the internal capacity to understand and envision steps towards meaningful equity. It is a significant concern that the work to decolonize and indigenize the new media program is being taken up by settler faculty, without a parallel strategy for faculty education and training, led by equity-owed persons, to help mitigate, to whatever extent is possible, a gap in lived experience.

- Students found the supplementary costs associated with the program to be unclear and in some cases unpredictable, with one student estimating thousands of dollars in supplementary license and hardware costs. While some of these costs are voluntary, there are others that could be easily ameliorated through better institutional deals with technology vendors, which would better align with the affordability mandate of the University's Strategic Plan. Students further highlighted issues with the physical space and class scheduling, noting the subterranean nature of the current classrooms amplified mental health and concentration issues, and that the limited campus bus schedule complicated attending evening classes and/or staying late to work in the labs. These latter issues could potentially be addressed through changes in scheduling.

- Discussion of a full audit of rooms and resources at the faculty level will benefit this team, who struggle to have their work see the light of day, as the majority of the program is located in the basement of the University, often down remote corridors and generally far from the main gathering spaces on campus. The program is justified in feeling that they are still working in a 'remote' environment, despite being back on campus, as they are far removed from the campus vibe and community, with few opportunities to program their work and research within the university buildings. There is a general sense that the team feel that they have been relegated to the depths of the campus and this contributes to a feeling of not being connected to the Faculty as a whole, and that their research, teaching, and service is not valued within the greater institution.

Opportunities discussed in the report:

- The program has embarked on a crucial initiative to develop program learning outcomes during the 2023-2024 academic season. This forward-looking step ensures that the program aligns with evolving educational standards provincially and nationally and reflects contemporary best practices.

- The program recognizes the importance of cultural diversity and inclusivity. Some efforts have been made to Indigenize the curriculum, fostering a learning environment that respects and incorporates Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and experiences. While some faculty members are shouldering the bulk of this work through independent and personal connections within the community, clear University-wide support for this work could better support the Faculty, the program, and program staff.

- To enhance consistency and coherence across courses, the program is considering the implementation of a standardized syllabi. This ensures that students receive a uniformly high-quality educational experience and that the program adheres to established disciplinary standards across all learning outcomes. It additionally enables a full pedagogical audit of the program curriculum to guarantee that the learning outcomes of the program are delivered. It was recognized that the standardization of the syllabi and filing them Departmentally will better support faculty mobility across courses. One example of a course that will benefit from a review of its Learning Outcomes and pedagogical content is 'New Media 1000'. Auditing this course demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the foundational course in setting the standard for the degree.

- The program is exploring co-teaching as a pedagogical strategy. This collaborative approach enhances the learning environment, providing students with diverse perspectives and expertise, ultimately enriching their educational experience. Recognizing the importance of staying current with research and emerging trends, the program is working through a curriculum review

committee to ensure the course content is timely and reflecting the tools, theory and processes essential for a graduate of the BFA New Media program.

- The program is deeply invested in the internship program and sees it as an avenue for strategically building and securing job opportunities for its students. The current model requires 15 credits which limits opportunity for students to broaden their course options across campus. The program is also a large portfolio of work that is dependent on one teaching faculty member to manage, which includes the community liaison with industry and ensuring that all placements are effective. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the program each year, this could constitute an unbalanced teaching load. The over-reliance on a single (albeit committed) faculty member further opens the program up to unnecessary risk.

- The faculty feel well-resourced in terms of research support at the University level but could benefit from more opportunity to showcase their research and their student work on campus and within the community. While the University of Lethbridge has artworks on display throughout the campus, there is a strong desire from the New Media program to expand their presence on campus, to increase the exposure to their practices, and to strengthen their program identity.

Program Response

In their Program Response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. *A new IBPOC faculty hire in critical new media practices to address the curriculum and research content gap, and to ensure that the student body is well represented and supported in their degree progress. Given the historical failure of the program to hire/retain IBPOC faculty, we strongly recommend this hire be associated with a proposed cluster hire, in order to give said faculty additional support within the institution.*	The Self Study Committee agrees that the hiring of a new IBPOC faculty member in critical new media practices is of utmost urgency. All tenured and tenure-track faculty in our department are of European descent, significantly limiting the range of perspectives in curriculum and research. As mentioned in the report, this lack of diversity "hampers the program's reputation" and compromises our ability to recruit and retain IBPOC faculty. As noted by the reviewers, the Department of New Media's current search for a Canada Research Chair in Digital Extremism is an immediate and appropriate opportunity to enact this recommendation. The committee would like to encourage the Dean of Fine Arts and the AQA Committee to highly prioritize this recommendation in the forthcoming Action Plan.
2. *Include Indigenous cultural competency training for faculty as a key component in the program's indigenization strategy. This training is essential to help mitigate the lack of Indigenous lived experience on the faculty, and to support faculty in making informed decisions on how best to indigenize their own pedagogy and course content, guide curriculum development, and support and retain Indigenous students and future faculty.*	The Self Study Committee would like to affirm the critical need for action to be taken on this recommendation for Indigenous cultural competency training for faculty. As noted in the report, this work is being undertaken by settler faculty without a "parallel strategy for faculty education and training, led by equity-owned persons" is of "significant concern". And while we feel this recommendation should also be a high priority in the Action Plan, it should be enacted alongside the hiring of IBPOC faculty, rather than pre-empt hiring.
3. *Implementation of a community-based New Media BFA program Advisory Board with members from the local POC and Indigenous community and creative industries. Establishing this will be an active step towards network and capacity building, helping to ensure that efforts to decolonize and indigenize the program and curriculum are done with integrity, and can lay the groundwork for increased collaboration with IBPOC community partners,*	In addition to the important rationale for an Advisory Board provided by the reviewers in the recommendation, an Advisory Board would also strengthen our ability to update curriculum to reflect current best-practices as well as the WIL opportunities that are integral to our program. Given the pace of change in new media communities of practice, the Department frequently expresses the desire to have more formal connections with practitioners outside of academia. Establishing something like

including potential research collaborators, staff and faculty. In the formation of this Board, we would encourage the program to consider how decolonizing perspectives are integrated across the standards of the committee, as an indicating method of how to also foster learning environments that respect and value diverse cultural knowledge.	an Advisory Board for our programs has felt out of reach due to a lack of visible models for this type of oversight at the University. We would like to express support for such a model and would like to see meaningful integration into the program. For example, internship placements with board members would provide opportunities for integration between students and the board. We also request support and guidance for how to work towards the establishment of a diverse and meaningful board membership. Direct assistance on the formation and integration of an Advisory Board will need to be provided for the program to navigate this recommendation effectively. For these reasons, we see this recommendation as a longer- term goal.
4. *Finalize and Implement Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): Given the ongoing development of PLOs, it is recommended to finalize and implement them. Ensure that they are clear, measurable, and aligned with both disciplinary and institutional standards (including University Strategic and Academic objectives), as well as current Provincial standards. This will provide a robust framework for assessing student achievement and program effectiveness.*	As we are in the process of implementing PLOs for the BFA New Media programs, the committee is fully supportive of this recommendation. The department will be mapping PLOs to courses at the Spring Retreat on April 25 and will be well positioned to begin implementing them in the 2025/2026 academic year and beyond.
5. *Regularly Review and Update Program Syllabi: Establish a standardised syllabi format across all courses and conduct regular pedagogical reviews to update the content and to ensure all faculty and technical staff are aware of any shifting curriculum, including content gaps and overlaps. Act on the identified duplicated content and essential content gaps by revising the curriculum accordingly. Ensure that the course content reflects the most current educational standards (including student accessibility requirements), industry best-practices, and align with the finalized PLOs.*	The committee is unsure with exactly what is meant by standardized syllabi and are assuming that it refers to consistent document formatting and types of information. A consistently formatted syllabus seems like good practice to help students gain clarity about course structures, requirements, policies, and resources. However, we do not agree that moving towards a standardized syllabi should correspond with pedagogical reviews. For pedagogical reviews, the Department of New Media currently maintains a series of curricular documents for each course, called 'modular documents.' These documents are internal and provide a robust outline of course learning outcomes, concepts, methodologies, and resource requirements. These documents offer a much more thorough picture of course curriculum and content than do course syllabi, which often reflect a moment in time for a particular offering of the course and may not include extended details about course content. We suggest that the implementation of a standardized syllabi is separated from the process of reviewing and updating curriculum. Rather, we feel that the pedagogical reviews mentioned in this recommendation should be a part of Recommendation #6.
6. *Conduct Periodic Audits for Key Courses: Expand the practice of conducting audits, such as the recommendation to fully review and audit New Media 1000 before the 2025-2026 academic year. Re-imagining this course as the foundation to establishing the pedagogies, practices, theoretical underpinnings and ethics of the BFA New Media program and mapping it to the PLOs and to other key courses within the program is essential. This will ensure that foundational courses remain relevant, engaging, and aligned with program goals.*	All courses offered in the BFA New Media programs, including key courses, will be reviewed in relation to our recently approved PLOs at our Spring 2024 Retreat. Our longer-term goal is to work towards a program redesign, as discussed in the Self Study Report. The redesign will take into account many of the suggestions the reviewers mention in Recommendation #5, including "duplicated content and essential content gaps", and "current educational standards (including student accessibility requirements), industry best-practices, and … the finalized PLOs."

	Following this redesign, periodic audits will help us understand how courses are succeeding in their new form and position in the program. We would appreciate a framework for auditing courses, especially in relation to the PLOs and with opportunities for self-evaluations from instructor(s) of record. We would also invite support from the Teaching Centre. We are hopeful that once we have the PLOs, we will have a clear pathway through this audit process. This service work may be a fit for new media's curriculum committee in collaboration with the instructor(s) of that course.
7. *Reduce the Internship from 15 credits to 9 credits. Consider building an agreement with the Co-op program to share resources.*	In the Self Study report, the committee outlined 3 options for the Internship program: 1. a) introduce a 9-credit internship; 2. b) end or move the internship to another unit; 3. c) create a more focused internship program with deeper connections to community stakeholders. Recommendation #7 appears to favor a combination of a) and b). However, the Department is concerned about the autonomy and quality control that we would lose for one of our capstone experiences if it was moved to Career Bridge. Our Internship Coordinator is also an integral member of our department who teaches key courses in the degree program. Losing them to another department would be detrimental to the program. As cited in the Self Study Report, option c) is the Department's favoured option. It involves setting up a series of reoccurring "plum" internship placements with respected organizations. These internships would be competitive and come with compensation. This option has a number of advantages: • Students would be able to complete internships with organizations outside of Lethbridge. This is useful because Lethbridge has a very small digital media industry. The 9-credit option would require residency in Lethbridge as they would be taking it at the same time as other courses. • The formalization of the placement would help ensure the experience would be of high quality for the student and the employer. • Competitive, high-value internships would be useful for recruitment and would make students who complete them more competitive in the job market after graduation. • These types of internships could be offered to members of the proposed Advisory Board recommended by the External Reviewers. We believe that the best way forward is to offer a), the 9-credit internship, for most students to complete, while making option c), the "plum" internship, the option to strive for. By offering both options to our students, we may be able to get the best of both worlds.
8. *Actively pilot co-teaching approaches in select courses. Evaluate the impact on student learning outcomes and consider expanding this collaborative teaching method based on positive outcomes. This can bring diverse*	We are in the process of exploring a co-teaching approach for New Media 1000 and hope to offer the course this way in 2025. As suggested by the reviewers, we would expand this approach to other courses as appropriate. Other courses that might fit this model is NMED 2150: Memes, Influencers, and Digital

perspectives and expertise into the classroom. A first course to pilot this in would be New Media 1000.	Convergence and NMED 4690: Advanced Studio. We are also in the process of developing 3000 and 4000 level required studio courses where students respond to current issues through a variety of media forms, encouraging multidisciplinarity and convergence. Co-teaching may also be a good fit for this model.

Prior to pursuing co-teaching more broadly, we would like clarity about how a co-taught course is counted towards workload and some guidance as to how this can be timetabled. |
| 9. *Develop a 5-Year Teaching Schedule: Regularly review and update a 5-year teaching schedule to ensure that all core courses are deliverable and that the faculty and staff needed to run them are available. This will ensure that sabbatical and research leaves are supported while visualizing opportunities for faculty mobility between teaching. Ensure that the plan is flexible enough to adapt to evolving needs and opportunities.* | We would like to express support for the development of a 5-Year Teaching Schedule. A 5- Year Teaching Schedule will be helpful for departmental planning and it may also help students plan for electives more easily. As mentioned by the reviewers, it will need to be flexible. We feel this recommendation can be acted upon immediately as the Chair of the Department is already in the process of being developed. |
| 10. *Encourage Exploration of Special Topics: Actively encourage faculty to explore and integrate special topics related to research integration and emerging trends. This flexibility in the curriculum allows students to engage with cutting-edge content and fosters a dynamic learning environment. One way to integrate special topics is to setup a series of 200-400 level courses under this banner. Having these can enable an Artist-in- Residence to teach a particular topic, can support more co-teaching models, and/or support faculty and staff research projects within the community, provincially or nationally through pedagogical application of practice.* | The Department of New Media does regularly offer Special Topics courses, typically at the 3000 level. We also have a history of regularizing Special Topics courses, which then become part of the list of New Media electives. As the development of any new course, including a Special Topics course, is a considerable time commitment, ensuring that all tenured Department members equally share this responsibility will be important. Including the development of a new (Special Topics) course in each tenured Faculty member's 5-Year Teaching Schedule (described above) and/or tied in with Study Leave, would be one way of managing this workload. |
| 11. *Request, or initiate in the form of service, a faculty level Space-Use Audit where A) All programs establish their needs and requirements to continue to teach, research and serve the University into the future (5, 10 and 25 year scenarios), B) identify overlapping pedagogical needs across programs, C) Establish resource and space sharing and build an actionable plan for growth and innovation.* | We believe that a Space-Use review is currently taking place under the leadership of the Associate Dean. We echo the external reviewers' comments about the difficulty of navigating territorialism around space, as we all feel squeezed. However, as expressed in the Self Study report, our program curriculum is largely confined to computer labs, despite this only representing a segment of how new media is made. New Media is also the only program with spaces that can be booked by other Fine Arts units without our permission, adding unexpected constraints on course scheduling and open studio time.

Despite the strength of our program, we are struggling for visibility and inclusion in the footprint of the University Centre for the Arts and the UofL campus at large. A reconfiguration of teaching spaces as suggested by the reviewers would encourage more interdisciplinarity and cross-pollination between departments and programs. We would welcome efforts by the Associate Dean and Dean to conduct a Space-Use Audit and reimagine the University Centre for the Arts with New Media as an equal and integrated member. |
| 12. *Establish an annual BFA New Media - Resources & Showcase Plan. This first iteration should include the timelines for establishing the Artist-in-Residence program and the new New Media CRC position, the cleaning and emptying of abandoned studios and labs, the collective re-* | We are pleased to see that the reviewers recognize the importance of space and visibility for the BFA New Media programs. The external reviewers also see the potential for new flexible spaces, commenting that: "the University of Lethbridge has an extensive array of spaces that are ready for retrofitting |

visioning of the re-purposed spaces, and the identification of campus-wide resources required to showcase the work and research of the faculty, staff and students across the University, (including corridors, the library, the Agility lab, all classrooms and studios). Set an achievable annual goal for this plan. This will enable an exponential increase of the program's presence on campus, while ensuring that resources and the space issue is annually addressed and shaped to support change and growth.

and repurposing to serve the current and future demands of this innovative program." Our department has been working hard to propose solutions for our resource and showcase needs, as outlined in a recent Space Request Proposal submitted to the Associate Dean of Fine Arts. The proposal has been well received and is currently in the budgeting phases.

We highly welcome the opportunity to build on the success of the current proposal through an annual space plan that addresses the remaining needs we have. As noted by the reviewers in the report, space issues with our labs must be addressed for our program to flourish: "The program is justified in feeling that they are still working in a 'remote' environment, despite being back on campus, as they are far removed from the campus vibe and community, with few opportunities to program their work and research within the university buildings. There is a general sense that the team feel that they have been relegated to the depths of the campus and this contributes to a feeling of not being connected to the Faculty as a whole, and that their research, teaching, and service is not valued within the greater institution."

While the Self Study Committee finds the idea of an Artist-in-Residence program intriguing, we were puzzled by this as it was not something mentioned in our Self Study report. We would need clarification regarding the initiation of this suggestion, as well as guidance and support in order to implement such a program.

Dean's Response

The Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts responded to the 12 (twelve) recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. *A new IBPOC faculty hire in critical new media practices to address the curriculum and research content gap, and to ensure that the student body is well represented and supported in their degree progress. Given the historical failure of the program to hire/retain IBPOC faculty, we strongly recommend this hire be associated with a proposed cluster hire, in order to give said faculty additional support within the institution.*	The Dean agrees with this recommendation, particularly with the importance of a cluster hire. Staffing plans are submitted to the Dean annually by department chairs, and if such a request came forward from New Media in collaboration with other departments, the Dean would strongly support it.
2. *Include Indigenous cultural competency training for faculty as a key component in the program's indigenization strategy. This training is essential to help mitigate the lack of Indigenous lived experience on the faculty, and to support faculty in making informed decisions on how best to indigenize their own pedagogy and course content, guide curriculum development, and support and retain Indigenous students and future faculty.*	The Dean's office agrees and is currently putting this recommendation into place at the Faculty level, with professional development training around Indigenizing the curriculum and other topics planned for the 2024- 25 year.
3. *Implementation of a community-based New Media BFA program Advisory Board with members from the local POC and Indigenous community and creative industries. Establishing this will be an active step towards network and capacity building, helping to ensure that efforts to decolonize and indigenize the program and curriculum are done with integrity, and can lay the groundwork for*	The Dean agrees with the need for an advisory board an recommends a conversation about advisory boards to include all department chairs, as well as a consideration of how this board might intersect with the Faculty's Iniskim Advisory Circle's mandate.

increased collaboration with IBPOC community partners, including potential research collaborators, staff and faculty. In the formation of this Board, we would encourage the program to consider how decolonizing perspectives are integrated across the standards of the committee, as an indicating method of how to also foster learning environments that respect and value diverse cultural knowledge.	
4. *Finalize and Implement Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs): Given the ongoing development of PLOs, it is recommended to finalize and implement them. Ensure that they are clear, measurable, and aligned with both disciplinary and institutional standards (including University Strategic and Academic objectives), as well as current Provincial standards. This will provide a robust framework for assessing student achievement and program effectiveness.*	The Dean strongly supports this recommendation.
5. *Regularly Review and Update Program Syllabi: Establish a standardised syllabi format across all courses and conduct regular pedagogical reviews to update the content and to ensure all faculty and technical staff are aware of any shifting curriculum, including content gaps and overlaps. Act on the identified duplicated content and essential content gaps by revising the curriculum accordingly. Ensure that the course content reflects the most current educational standards (including student accessibility requirements), industry best-practices, and align with the finalized PLOs.*	The Dean encourages the Department to explore a common syllabus format and to engage in conversations with other departments about adopting this across the Faculty.
6. *Conduct Periodic Audits for Key Courses: Expand the practice of conducting audits, such as the recommendation to fully review and audit New Media 1000 before the 2025-2026 academic year. Re-imagining this course as the foundation to establishing the pedagogies, practices, theoretical underpinnings and ethics of the BFA New Media program and mapping it to the PLOs and to other key courses within the program is essential. This will ensure that foundational courses remain relevant, engaging, and aligned with program goals.*	The Dean encourages the Department to undertake a full pedagogical/curricular review and any needed course/ program redesign following its mapping of program learning outcomes against curriculum, and to address duplications, gaps, and educational standards as part of this process. This process should also include a consideration of any duplications of content with other units. The Department should then implement a regular review process and set timelines for that going forward.
7. *Reduce the Internship from 15 credits to 9 credits. Consider building an agreement with the Co-op program to share resources.*	The Dean encourages the Department to address its internship program first as part of its pedagogical/curricular review and then to work with the Assistant Dean on discussions of future directions for Work Integrated Learning with appropriate groups e.g. Career Bridge.
8. *Actively pilot co-teaching approaches in select courses. Evaluate the impact on student learning outcomes and consider expanding this collaborative teaching method based on positive outcomes. This can bring diverse perspectives and expertise into the classroom. A first course to pilot this in would be New Media 1000.*	The Dean encourages the Department Chair to discuss potential structures for co-teaching with the Dean's office and other departments' chairs.
9. *Develop a 5-Year Teaching Schedule: Regularly review and update a 5-year teaching schedule to ensure that all core courses are deliverable and that the faculty and staff needed to run them are available. This will ensure that sabbatical and research leaves are supported while visualizing opportunities for faculty mobility between*	This is a good practice to implement and the Dean's office supports this initiative, following the completion of the curricular review. Further, the Dean would encourage the Department to ensure that students can see the teaching schedule in order to plan their courses.

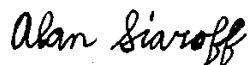|	
teaching. Ensure that the plan is flexible enough to adapt to evolving needs and opportunities.	
10. *Encourage Exploration of Special Topics: Actively encourage faculty to explore and integrate special topics related to research integration and emerging trends. This flexibility in the curriculum allows students to engage with cutting-edge content and fosters a dynamic learning environment. One way to integrate special topics is to setup a series of 200-400 level courses under this banner. Having these can enable an Artist-in- Residence to teach a particular topic, can support more co-teaching models, and/or support faculty and staff research projects within the community, provincially or nationally through pedagogical application of practice.*	The Dean agrees with this recommendation.
11. *Request, or initiate in the form of service, a faculty level Space-Use Audit where A) All programs establish their needs and requirements to continue to teach, research and serve the University into the future (5, 10 and 25 year scenarios), B) identify overlapping pedagogical needs across programs, C) Establish resource and space sharing and build an actionable plan for growth and innovation.*	Space use is part of the Associate Dean's portfolio, and a review of space use is underway. Long-term space planning should be considered as part of conversations about Destination 2.
12. *Establish an annual BFA New Media - Resources & Showcase Plan. This first iteration should include the timelines for establishing the Artist-in-Residence program and the new New Media CRC position, the cleaning and emptying of abandoned studios and labs, the collective re-visioning of the re-purposed spaces, and the identification of campus-wide resources required to showcase the work and research of the faculty, staff and students across the University, (including corridors, the library, the Agility lab, all classrooms and studios). Set an achievable annual goal for this plan. This will enable an exponential increase of the program's presence on campus, while ensuring that resources and the space issue is annually addressed and shaped to support change and growth.*	The Dean suggests the Department separate this into two recommendations, one concerning showcasing student, faculty, and staff work, and one concerning space use and maintenance. The Dean supports the idea of developing a plan to showcase work and research, and encourages the Department to look for opportunities to collaborate with other units in the Faculty. This may intersect with planning for FFA year-end festival. The Department should work with the Facilities Manager, Operations Manager and other staff on developing a plan for space use, effective space management, and maintenance. One significant concern relates to planning for future computer replacements.

While the External Reviewers' Report contained 12 (twelve) recommendations for improving and/or maintaining the Department of New Media, the area, Dean Davis-Fisch, and the Academic Quality Assurance Committee each felt that the recommendations were too narrow in focus and were better presented as broad goals to be met before the next review. The committee modified and consolidated the 12 (twelve) recommendations into the following 11 (eleven) recommendations:

1. The Department of New Media will finalize and implement Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), ensuring they are clear, measurable, and aligned with both disciplinary and institutional standards (including University Strategic and Academic objectives), as well as current Provincial standards.
2. The Department of New Media will consider the ways student access could be improved in light of equity, diversity, and inclusion concerns, including but not limited to:
   a. Timetabling, particularly for required courses and evening courses,
   b. Provision of remote access to software for students,
   c. Transparency around additional course costs, provided prior to registration.

3. The Department of New Media will work with the Faculty of Fine Arts Dean's Office, in their coordination across departments of the Faculty, to prioritize the cluster hiring of IBPOC faculty.
4. The Faculty of Fine Arts will provide Indigenous cultural competency training for faculty as a key component in the program's indigenization strategy.
5. The Department of New Media will work with the Faculty of Fine Arts to implement a community-based Advisory Board with members from the local IBPOC community and creative industries.
6. The Department of New Media will undertake a curriculum review including but not limited to:
    a. ensuring that the course content reflects the most current educational standards (including student accessibility requirements), industry best-practices, and aligns with the finalized PLOs,
    b. identifying duplicated content and essential content gaps and revising the curriculum accordingly,
    c. encouraging faculty to explore special topics related to research integration and emerging trends,
    d. exploring the possibility of reducing the Internship from 15 credits to 9 credits.
7. The Department of New Media will work with the Faculty of Fine Arts Dean's Office to discuss the piloting of co-teaching approaches, including how they will be counted as part of the teaching load. New Media 1000 will be central to this conversation.
8. The Department of New Media will consider developing a 5-year teaching schedule that ensures all core courses are deliverable and accessible to students, and that the faculty and staff needed to run them are available.
9. The Department of New Media will meet with the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts and campus planning to develop a plan to use space effectively and future resourcing.
10. The Department of New Media will consider collaborating with other departments and areas across the University to showcase faculty and student work.
11. The Department of New Media will work with ORIS to identify grant opportunities available, particularly through industry.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of New Media academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

Alan Siaroff

Dr. Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee
Professor, Department of Political Science

cc Michelle Helstein, PhD.
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)