

**Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo**  
**Department of Cinema and Television Arts**  
**Cinema and Television Arts BA and Screenwriting MFA programs**

The 2023-2024 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for Cinema and Television Arts BA and Screenwriting MFA programs in the College of Communications (CCOM) concluded with a culmination meeting on May 09, 2025.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Sean Walker (Deputy Provost), Jason Shepard (Dean), Heather Osborne-Thompson (Associate Dean), Garrett Hart (Department Chair), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the programs for completing the PPR process and commended the department for its contribution to the university and community. He also praised the long-term leadership of the Department Chair. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The department's mission and curriculum align and support the University and field values and goals and provide students with a comprehensive, high-impact learning experience. Such experience is invaluable to support student career success in the field, which makes the programs more attractive than similar programs in other institutions.
- Faculty contribute to scholarly activities and remain active in the field. Faculty are recognized for their work and contribute to the department's partnerships with media companies.
- The department, its faculty, and the program curriculum are dedicated to ensuring students are exposed to and engage in critical industry discussions on diversity and representation.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. MFA program curriculum:

- The external reviewers recommended the department to continue assessing the MFA program curriculum to ensure relevance to industry needs.
- The Deputy Provost shared the suggestion from the Office of Graduate Studies to review competing programs and assess program differences to stay competitive. One aspect to examine is the current program requirement of 42 units – Is this requirement too high? Might it contribute to the declining number of applications?
  - The Chair stated that this requirement is standard for the MFA program. He reported that one challenge is to fill the classes as many MFA faculty are working professionals that are sought after by competing institutions (e.g. CSUN, USC, Chapman).
  - The Chair inquired whether it is a must to hire lecturers with terminal degrees.
    - The Provost indicated that this is a decision within the department's purview and should align with the department and college policies.
  - The Chair asked for help with marketing the program. The department is under-resourced to advertise the program, which partially explains the low number of applications. Support from the university on this issue would be very helpful.

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- The Chair shared that the department is thinking about turning the MFA program into a full-online program, which would be one way to distinguish the program from the competitors.
  - o The Provost stated support for the idea and encouraged the department to explore both state-support and self-support options. The Deputy Provost will coordinate a meeting between the department and Extensions to explore further.

**2. Student Advising:**

- The external reviewers recommended the department to consider assigning full-time faculty advisors to enhance curricular and career advising.
- The Chair reported that this issue was brought up by a small group of students, which might have given somewhat skewed impressions. The department faculty are encouraged to make themselves available to advise in the major. The Chair felt that advising should not be limited one person – every faculty member should do so. He is open to survey the student body to get a more comprehensive view of their advising experience and address the gap based on the findings.
- The Chair shared one possible issue between staff advisors and faculty advisors is that CTVA faculty encourage students to take major classes early, not just GE classes (a tendency by staff advisors).
  - o The Dean acknowledged the importance of taking major classes early for CTVA students and encouraged the department to ensure accuracy of the degree roadmap so that this expectation is clearly communicated to the staff advisors.
  - o The Provost also agreed to speak with AVP for Student Academic Success to clarify expectations regarding the timing of GE vs. major course-taking.

**3. Department publicity and visibility:**

- The self-study acknowledged the need to enhance the department's visibility and publicity, such as tracking alumni and post-graduation student success, furthering alumni engagement, and strengthening public relations efforts.
- The Office of Graduate Studies recommended website updates including alumni highlights, and adding structured mentorships (through ELEVAR grant) or studio partnerships to improve job placement and networking.
- The Dean acknowledged that the college website in general needs improvement. The college is in need of a marketing and communication person and is working to seek Provost's support for the position.

**4. Resource needs:**

- The Chair shared the department now has two full-time production faculty, and would like to hire one more. He is working with the Dean's office to prioritize the hire.
- The Chair advocated for a building – a “home” – for the College of Communications that includes space for all the facilities/equipment the department needs.
  - o The Provost acknowledged the desire and recommended that the Dean and the Chair work together with himself to develop a plan in Fall 2025 to share with the cabinet.

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- The Chair also requested that the IRA grant for feature film projects be kept this year for the department.
  - o The Provost said that he would work with Admin/Finance to determine feasibility, but said that unused IRA funds roll over to the general IRA fund account the following year.

The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the college and department leadership for their hard work and contribution to the university.