

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN THE BOOK ARTS PROGRAM**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new Master of Fine Arts in the Book Arts Program which will be administered by the Graduate College.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed program is designed to complement the Certificate in Book Studies/Book Arts and Technologies offered through the University of Iowa Center for the Book which offers an interdisciplinary approach to studying the relationships between the book in culture and the arts and technologies of book production. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide "educational excellence and impact."

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of proposed program.** The proposed program will be a three-year graduate program to train students in the art of the book. It will require 60 semester hours and will build on the current Certificate Program offered through the University of Iowa Center for the Book (UICB), with areas of emphasis in Papermaking, Printing, Digital Bookwork, Calligraphy, Bookbinding, Artist Bookwork, and supporting coursework in the history of the book. After completing a set of core courses, students will work with a faculty advisor to specialize in one of the areas of emphasis, resulting in a capstone project, the MFA thesis.
- ◇ **Relationship to existing programs.** The proposed program emerges from a graduate certificate program that has been offered for 14 years with an average of six graduates per year. The 24 semester hours required by the certificate program will provide the infrastructure for the proposed program. The UICB has longstanding ties to the School of Art and Art History, Nonfiction Writing Program, Writer's Workshop, as well as to English, History, and the School of Library and Information Science. The proposed program will enable faculty, many of whom are jointly appointed in these traditional disciplines, to integrate their creativity and research with the enhanced curriculum and student body and to promote enriched course offerings to undergraduate and graduate students in the arts and humanities. The certificate program will be continued to provide opportunities for graduate students in the arts and humanities in the UICB.
- ◇ **Duplication.** The proposed program is not offered at any other institution of higher education in Iowa. No such program exists in the Big 10 consortium of universities. There are only four other universities in the United States that offer an MFA in the book arts – University of Alabama, University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Columbia College in Chicago, and Mills College.
- ◇ **Student demand.** Demand for the proposed program is expected to be strong. In 2009-10, the applicant pool for the certificate doubled. However, admitted students interested in pursuing a degree program have had to choose one of the other four MFA book arts programs in the nation.

- ◇ Projected enrollment. The projected enrollment is eight students in Year 1, increasing to 24 students by Year 3. Enrollment is expected to remain at 24 students through Year 7.
- ◇ Unique features. Since it joined the Graduate College in 2006, the UICB has experienced remarkable success, enhancing its national and international profile. External grants awarded to the UICB in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 amounted to more than \$750,000, which was five times its annual operating budget and which made financial support for graduate students possible while enabling significant research and artistic production. In 2009, the UICB hosted the inaugural College Book Art Association conference which had 240 participants from throughout the world. A founding member of the UICB, Tim Barrett, was awarded a MacArthur “genius” grant in 2009.
- ◇ Need for proposed program. The new professional organization, College Book Art Association, has precipitated a renaissance of the book arts and book history in the academy. The association has identified book trades entrepreneurship, academic arts programs, library and conservation work, and public access book arts facilities as areas of opportunity. University press publishing has seen a growth in imprints devoted to book studies. Similarly, humanities Ph.D.s with a book arts emphasis at the university have seen success on the academic job market.
- ◇ Resources. The UICB is well-positioned to offer the proposed program in its current facilities in North Hall. The proposed program will be overseen by the UICB director and program assistant. Currently, there is a roster of 14 permanent and visiting faculty that staffs 25 courses per year. The certificate program has been run through established committees that provide oversight and management of admissions, programming, and curriculum. The proposed program will follow the same administrative format.

The facilities for papermaking, printing, and bookbinding instruction include a state-of-the-art upgrade to the papermaking classroom in 2008. Letterpress facilities include the student studio, professional studio, and digital lab with five Vandercook presses, many cases of type, platemaking, and photopolymer technology and current computing and laser printing equipment. The Kolarik Book Studio is a fully-equipped bindery with open workspace in which binding and artist book classes are held.

- ◇ Cost. Minimum new costs are expected for the proposed program. The total costs for the University of Iowa Center for the Book is expected to be sufficient to cover the expenses of the proposed program. The current costs for the UICB are \$253,373. They are expected to increase to \$297,822 by Year 7. An Iowa Arts Fellowship of \$27,230 provided by the Graduate College will yield one new stipend and tuition scholarship.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The University of Iowa’s 2010-2016 strategic plan emphasizes “New Frontiers in the Arts” and recommends the development of arts synergies to complement the rebuilding of the arts campus. Establishing the proposed program is expected to promote and advance such synergies. The proposed program is expected to parallel the pioneering work of the university in developing graduate degrees in creative writing and studio art in the 1930s.