Report of the Film School Task Force
to the Office of the Interim Chancellor, University of Hawaii
January 29, 2002

Executive Summary

The task force on the President's initiative for a Film School has inventoried information and opinions from scores of sources and from multiple perspectives on how to realize a degree program in Film Studies[1] at the University of Hawaii.

The effort featured a "Big Tent" meeting that drew together more than 200 persons who had expressed not only interest, but also a commitment to the establishment of a comprehensive program in film/video/digital arts education. They came from the academic and professional communities, from organizations espousing media and creative expression for their constituent groups, and from related educational and festival programs.

The "Big Tent" participants provided invaluable input on what principles should be foundational to a unique, Hawaii-based Film School; how a real community partnership can be forged; how it could broadly involve the university system; and how a funding base could be secured. Participants were provided with a report summarizing the major themes of their input.

Those themes formed the basis for a planning effort, and the task force was formulated with individuals from both the university and the "Big Tent," whose expertise could be tapped to explore fully how those themes could be translated into an educational program to begin Fall 2002.

A major theme, in fact, is immediacy. How can we start something as soon as possible? With such a short deadline for action, and with the desire for continual input, the task force has assembled these essential planning and action points so that:

1. The Manoa Liberal Studies BA program in Media Production/Film Studies can be strengthened beginning Fall 2002 through a more rigorous and focused core, and a collaborative faculty using existing curriculum (supplemented with additional sections), facilities and other resources. These are normally spread throughout the university, and will be brought together programmatically for the benefit of students wishing to start a film/video/digital arts program now.
2. A coordinated fundraising campaign can be implemented to establish a permanent program.

[1] Much discussion remains on selecting a final name for the program. We are using "Film School" and "Film Studies" as they are generally recognized as programs that include video and digital arts. Other suggestions range from "Moving Images" to "Cinema" to "Digital Arts" have emerged. Program naming varies among schools in the U.S. and in Asia. Ironically, although film is giving way to digital video in many productions, "Film School" and "Film Studies" are the most recognized and accepted labels.

3. Assuming the success of both fundraising and building initiatives, a new and separate BA program, with its own faculty, curriculum, facilities and resources can begin Fall 2004, taking Film Studies out of the Liberal Studies structure and firmly establishing it as a baccalaureate degree program.
4. With the successful fundraising and building initiatives, a separate BFA program in Film Studies & Production can begin Fall 2005.

Soliciting Further Input

The task force is submitting this report for review and input from "Big Tent" participants and from those unable to attend but who have expressed interest in the initiative. Because of the need to move forward aggressively through the university planning and approval process, and to begin gathering the personnel and resources necessary to start the program, we've set a deadline of February 15 for this initial feedback on the ideas in this report, which will be reported to the Interim Chancellor.

As we further develop the plans for permanent BA and BFA programs, we will continue this informational and feedback campaign.

Recommendations

I. Fundamentals: The university establishes an interdisciplinary, undergraduate program to provide students with the operational (structural & business), technical and creative skills in the creation of moving images (film, video, digital multi-media); to ground them in the history, theories and aesthetics of moving images; and to provide them both an international scope and unique focus on creative story-telling on themes that enlighten, enliven and empower the people of Hawaii, the Pacific and Asia.

II. The undergraduate, baccalaureate program should include a BA degree in moving image studies, for what is anticipated a wider student interest in exploring the nature of moving images and that includes an introduction to visual production processes so that they are able to apply moving image theory to small projects. It should include a BFA degree in moving image production for that narrower group of students who wish to pursue additional full-time, professionalized curriculum in production that would result in a significant moving image production.

III. The competitive edge and uniqueness of the program will be in its attention to international cinema and video, particularly those of Hawaii, Asia and the Pacific, not only in content but also in story telling and production. It will not be linked to a single system of filmmaking (to use a generic term), but will explore differing cultural and industry approaches.

IV. A strengthened BA program through the Liberal Studies program can be started in Fall 2002. A separate BA and BFA programs in Film Studies will require additional faculty, staff, equipment and other resources.

V. To begin as soon as possible, the program should take advantage of existing resources system-wide and use them as a foundation to build a fully realized "Film School." This includes scores of courses across disciplines that relate to film study, and the Liberal Studies Program for structuring a degree program. This initial effort would follow the "Film Studies" model outlined above, with a core of film history, theory and aesthetics courses accompanied by optional smaller scale collaborative production projects.

VI. A Faculty Committee, representing various interests in the system, needs to be established to help "collect" the existing curriculum, programs and resources and help guide the success of the initial program of study.

VII. A program director should be recruited immediately to oversee faculty and staff recruitment, coordination of equipment and technical resources, fundraising and community and professional outreach. In lieu of a permanent director at this point, a leading film school academic familiar with both university administration and the professional industry could be retained for one or two years to oversee the establishment and development of the program.

VIII. This initial stage of a film studies degree program will need a commitment of at least $205,000 to provide:

- a Program Director and secretary
- lectureship positions and GTA's for additional sections of courses, particularly in production
- a series of visiting professionals to offer instruction, consultation and public lectures.

IX. An informational campaign, conducted with the Liberal Studies Program, needs to be mounted to produce brochures and web-site information on the availability of film studies and production courses that are available, and potential "tracks" within them that would constitute a core and elective requirements for a Liberal Studies BA degree.

X. An Advisory Committee should be formed, consisting of university, professional and community members to help guide the establishment of a permanent program, including recruitment of personnel.

XI. While we have a sense of curriculum for a Film Studies program, and some existing faculty would certainly have partial appointments, we are in need of faculty with specialized expertise to develop a fully realized BA and BFA program and its curriculum. As filmmaking is a collaborative and interdependent effort, the program will be most successful if its faculty can develop it in concert. This would require at least four new faculty positions (including a program director) in areas such as cinematography, editing, sound & music, digital animation, etc. Because of the labor-intensive nature of filmmaking, at least two graduate teaching assistants would be needed to assist in production and editing supervision, and at least one technical APT position to supervise and oversee maintenance of studio and equipment resources. One Civil Service position would be required for program secretary.

XII. A major endowment campaign should begin immediately that will generate necessary annual funds for salaries for a director, faculty members, secretary, APT and GTA positions; and for, equipment, maintenance and other programmatic needs

XIII. The program's faculty (new hires and joint appointments) should develop the new degree program(s) and curriculum in writing, directing, cinematography, editing, digital animation, and the business & financing of motion pictures.

XIV. The program director should begin immediately to establish partnerships with existing non-credit programs, both within and outside the system (e.g. Pacific New Media; Hawaii Filmmakers Initiative). Partnerships with the state and county film offices, and through them to the film industry, also need to be established to provide internship opportunities. Partnerships with professional and non-profit organizations such as the Hawaii International Film Festival and Pacific Islanders in Communication will also be integral to the success of the program.

XV. Space, in the form of the proposed Theatre & Dance/ITS/ICS building, will be needed for a fully realized Film School, built to the needs of production, instruction, and related enterprises.

XVI. Immediate Tasks for Spring Semester 2002:

- Hire a program director/consultant to begin Fall 2002
- Establish both Advisory and Faculty Committees
- Work with Liberal Studies Program to create curriculum and "track" options from existing curriculum for a Liberal Studies BA in Film Studies
- Create Information Campaign for the Liberal Arts/Film Studies Program
- Inaugurate the fundraising campaign to endow the permanent program.

Task Force Membership (in alphabetical order):

- Gregg Ambrosius, Media Lab Director, School of Communications, UHM
- Tom Brislin, Chair, School of Communications, UHM
- Glenn Cannon, Professor, Department of Theatre and Dance, UHM, and President of Hawai'i Screen Actors Guild
- Dennis Carroll, Chair, Department of Theatre and Dance, UHM
- Georgette Deemer, Former Director, State of Hawai'i Film Office
- Carol Fukunaga, Hawai'i State Senate
- Jeannette Paulson Hereniko, Director of the Asia Pacific Media Center, Annenberg Center for Communication, University of Southern California, and film producer. (Founder, Hawai'i International Film Festival)
- Vilsoni Hereniko, Associate Professor, Center for Pacific Island Studies, UHM, and Filmmaker
- Bob Hochstein, Professor, Division Chair, TV Production Program Coordinator, LCC
- Susan Horowitz, Director, Pacific New Media, UHM
- Judith Hughes, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities, UHM
- Colin Macdonald, Assistant Professor, School of Communications, UHM

- Mike McCartney, President, Hawai'i Public Television
- Gay Garland Reed, Special Assistant to the Chancellor, UHM
- Georja Skinner, Founder and Executive Director, Hawai'i Filmmakers Initiative