

# **Copper Mountain College**

## **Art Department**

### **Program Review**

**2008**

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**PROGRAM HISTORY (Form A)**  
**(Faculty, curriculum, support services, facilities, and technology)**

**Art Department Program Review—A History**

Initially, Copper Mountain was a satellite of College of the Desert (COD). Courses had been taught at various sites in the Morongo Basin since 1965; however, the present Joshua Tree site didn't begin offering courses until 1983. When the Copper Mountain campus separated from College of the Desert in 1999 (the result of a special provision by the California Legislature, creating Copper Mountain College (CMC) as an independent community college district), the new college, CMC, inherited courses and programs from the COD curriculum-approval process. (For a more detailed historical review of the college, see CMC's current Strategic and Educational Master Plans.)

The early years of the art program at CMC consisted of a slowly growing faculty offering a slowly evolving group of classes. The emphasis was on what we now call traditional art classes; namely drawing, painting, and sculpture on the studio practice side and general art history survey classes that presented the history of western art from prehistory through Modern art.

Michael Murillo started teaching at CMC in 1981, and became the department's full time art instructor and de facto art department chair. In 1999 he was promoted to Vice President of Instruction. M. Murillo has since returned to the class room fulltime (as of Fall 2007) and plans to retire at the conclusion of the Fall 2008 semester.

One of our two current full time faculty instructors, Michael Murillo recollected that in 1981 he started as an art instructor teaching classes at the church on Two Mile Road near Lucky Park in 29 Palms. At that time the art dept faculty consisted of Michael Murillo, Elsie Grace, and Gloria White. During this period of the 1980's the department had a proportionally large enrolment that enabled other academic programs to grow according to Michael Murillo. One of the most popular classes was a ceramics series taught by Lani Atkins. Considerable ceramic equipment such as throwing wheels, kilns, and the like were owned by COD and were utilized in 29 Palms for many semesters. At some point Mr. Atkins decided to change careers and left to install swimming pools. A replacement instructor was not found or available and the program languished. A last effort to revive the ceramics classes was staged by Ed Kiesling who offered classes with the equipment in Yucca Valley. When insufficient enrollment derailed this class, COD claimed the equipment and moved everything to their main campus in Palm Desert. No ceramics classes at the college level have been offered since. At some latter point Howard Pierce (deceased) donated a large kiln to the college. It has sat directly in the sun on the southwest side of the automobile shop for many years now. It is unclear if it works properly or if it was even in working order when it was donated. As such it's usefulness to the department is, to say the least, uncertain. While it is easy to argue a case for reinstating ceramics classes at CMC with the presumption they would be popular, this does not factor the lack of needed equipment, the toxic nature of dealing with ceramic glazes, and most importantly the nonexistence of dedicated classroom space. This situation leads this program review to place a low priority on any such developments. If a new facility were to be possible, then at that point in the future it would be time to give serious consideration to restarting ceramics at CMC.

Other highlights of this earliest period included a black and white photography class with darkroom techniques that was taught by Phil Dunham (deceased) on the Marine Base, and also partly at his own personal dark room. This class was terminated when the Base closed down the dark room facility. Later, with the availability of commercial photo processing, Dunham had

students use that method to obtain prints. There were considerations of converting a closet in room 122 to a darkroom, but it was never realized. Dunham left the art department in 1997. This review will closely consider upgrading our offerings in the important, very relevant, and highly popular digital photography class. With certainty there is no compelling reason or need to go back to the traditional chemical darkroom format.

In the 1990's Cathy Allen and Rosetta Brooks were hired as adjunct art instructors. Allen taught Drawing and Composition and Brooks taught Introduction to Art on campus and at the Marine Base. The by now full time instructor Michael Murillo had taken the Division Chair position and had to give up three classes in order to produce openings for these hires. Brooks left in 1996.

From 1994 to the present, C. Allen, has taught a variety of classes during her fourteen years of employment. She has recalled that earlier in her employment, instructors regularly obtained money to buy instructional supplies of up to \$150 per semester for each designated class. The instructional supply money became more difficult to obtain after CMC became an independent college in 2001. In addition, the limited funds were impacted by management decisions that charged the department budget for items such as ink for a wax based printer that was supposedly being used by the art graphics and photo classes. In reality these classes rarely used this wax-ink printer as it produced poor quality prints. In addition, actually connecting to the printer was a constant ordeal as the computer lab staff had been instructed not to leave the classroom computers always connected to the printer in an effort to save ink. Each time a print was wanted students would have to follow an arcane set of directions to connect to the nearly impossible to find networked location of the printer in an unseen room. When the computer was turned off the link was lost again. The printer has since completely stopped functioning. Other printers that had been bought with mostly art auction money are no longer of this world. One was ruined by misuse, two finally wore out, and one was stolen. Spelman Downer who had spent considerable time managing the devices has come to the conclusion that paperless output, namely *multi media formats* are easier to control, do not use consumable resources, and are more meaningful in a class room context.

Classroom equipment was barely existent in the late 1990's. There were six easels for drawing, and approximately twenty drafting tables that served as multipurpose painting, drawing and design tables. Antique opaque projectors that were made in the 1950's were used, along with several other pieces of decrepit equipment such as spotlights with stands. Two rooms designated for Art were also shared with other disciplines which created conflicts. Room 121 was taken over by the nursing program in 2003 and a storage room was converted to maintain the two-room art designation. Ceiling spotlights were installed in room 122. Because these rooms were still shared with other disciplines, the use of particular art mediums and techniques were problematic. For example, charcoal a traditional and ordinary medium in drawing, life drawing and color/design classes was considered too messy. Instructors were reprimanded for making "messes" by administration, via the maintenance department.

Student enrollment began declining in the art program in 2001, especially programs at the Twentynine Palms Marine Base. The Marine Base program decline was most likely related to the Twin Towers Bombing in New York and the subsequent terrorist threat. The Marine Base closed their facilities to all educational programs, and classes began meeting at the Twentynine Palms High School. Those art classes dwindled from an enrollment of an average of 45 students to around 20. Classes returned to the base in 2003; however, regular deployment kept class enrollment relatively low.

Around the same time rumors existed in the community that no credit was given for CMC classes because of the separation from COD. This could have had some negative impact on enrollment.

In 2000 a search committee was formed to hire a new full time art instructor. The committee was charged to hire someone with expertise in both traditional studio arts and the emerging digital technologies for computer based art production. Also wanted was a candidate with community organizing experience. The committees choose to hire Spelman Evans Downer in the summer of 2001, and this subsequent department history is written by S Downer as he recalls the first seven years of his teaching art and his leadership role as de-facto art department chair.

In 2001 the CMC Art Department was only offering traditional classes in studio art making; Painting, Drawing, Life Drawing, Sculpture, 2D Design along with a four semester series of survey art history classes and a general interest Intro to Art class that was a popular liberal arts transferable elective. S Downer has offered digital photography since the Spring 2003 semester. This class is one of the most popular and best enrolled classes in the art department. The excellent reputation of the instructor, his deep connections to the West Coast Straight Photography school that he was exposed to in the Bay Area (first with Leo Holub at Stanford, and for graduate work with Photo Realist Robert Bechtle at San Francisco State University) have brought in numerous practicing and budding photographers to study with the instructor. Increasingly workshop participants from S. Downer's three annual photo workshops offered through the Joshua Tree National Park Association's Desert Institute sign up for a full 18 week class based on their positive experience with Mr. Downers approach. Since the Fall of 2006 he has also offered a History of Photography class. After some adjunct faculty hires failed to keep enrolments high enough for the classes to run, S. Downer also stepped into the role of the Graphic Design instructor, starting in 2005. S. Downer. He has taken the initiative to start a unique Earth Works Now series of exhibitions which will be mentioned later. In 2003 he saw an opportunity to get students more involved with developing their multi media skills, and has been organizing an every semester student competition called RGB MultiMedia which will also be discussed later.

#### **Faculty: Full-Time**

Currently Spelman Evans Downer and Michael Murillo, see above.

#### **Faculty: Adjunct**

Visual art adjunct instructors have always played a pivotal role in teaching the art classes at CMC. The college has been blessed to have had a dynamic team of professional artists teach many of its class offerings. Our adjuncts have also served the college well as ambassadors that reach out to the community and recruit returning students who wish to upgrade their skills.

In the traditional art class offerings at CMC, the following current and past adjunct faculty have made substantial contributions. In watercolor painting, two of CMC's most popular instructors; Elsie Grace and Audrey Gillick taught from 1981 to 2003 and from 1984 to 2005 respectively. Although E. Grace and A. Gillick were hard acts to follow, we were fortunate to have discovered Dave Musser in 2005. D Musser has been rebuilding the group that these earlier instructors had made into a social phenomenon. A large part of our enrolment decline can be directly attributed to the retirement of the popular watercolor instructors Elsie Grace and Audrey Gillick.

Other past instructors were Delcie VunCannon who taught art history and anthropology from 1985 to 2006. D. VunCannon (deceased) was an expert on world art and local native culture whose breadth of expertise and site work was an inspiration for many students.

Steve Rieman was our sculpture and 3D Design instructor from 1990 to 2006. A successful sculptor who specialized in public and private art commissions, S. Rieman brought

great real life insights to the CMC class room. He also taught a well regarded watercolor class based on the systems he had learned at Art Center College of Design. In addition he was responsible for designing our school sign along highway 62, the large kinetic sculpture just north of the library, and also our xeriscape garden.

Our current adjuncts include Cathy Allen who now teaches sculpture, Intro to Art, and Modern and Post Modern Art History. C. Allen is a successful and well regarded professional artist who until recently has also taught at COD.

Luther Broom teaches acrylic painting, drawing, and an occasional Intro to Art Class.

Ida Foreman teaches the first two art history surveys, and also teaches at COD. As mentioned previously, the department is blessed to have such talented and hard working faculty.

### Curriculum

The art program(s) as they exist at CMC are integrated into the college's associate degrees and general education certification. This includes 6 classes for the IETC area 3 Arts and Humanities curriculum and 7 classes as possible selections for "C" series Arts, Literature, Philosophy, and Foreign Language concentrations. Graphic Design emphasis that was inherited from COD was found to have been incorrectly instituted and was withdrawn and has not been replaced. It is currently a goal to make a priority of re-instating this major as Graphic Design is one of the better career choices art students have for employment. There is currently no possible emphasis on digital photography which is in relatively high demand. This issue and others will be addressed as part of program review.

### Existing Courses and Programs:

In department meetings at the end of summer 2008 we reviewed the associate degrees with emphasis on transfer preparation as they are defined in our college catalog. Upon careful analysis the decision was made not to alter the current required and elective classes. The pivotal role of 3-D design was scrutinized, and upon debate it was decided to keep it in its current role, but to make sure it is offered more often and that it is taught in such a way as to truly make it a useful and meaningful class that can be used in both General Art Major and Art Major with emphasis in 3-D Design. This in practical terms means not teaching it as a class mostly involved with 2-D perspective renderings of 3-D designs. Instead the new COR emphasizes class work in 3-D model making and incorporates earthworks proposals into the class.

With an inherited from COD group of 74 class offerings we have now eliminated 27 redundant or unneeded classes, and all but five of the COR of the classes we have retained have been rewritten by C. Allen over the summer of 2008. The five classes Art 31 Digital Photography, Art 33 History of Photography, Art 40 Graphic Design I, Art 41 Graphic Design II, and Art 8 Advertising Art to be rewritten by their principal instructor Spelman Downer.

The department is entertaining the notion of adapting perhaps a few art history classes to the hybrid model; part on-line, part in the traditional class room. We will look for input from our advisory board on this opportunity. A search for experienced and qualified instructors in this modality will need to be conducted.

### Curriculum Course Additions:

Upon completion of this review, S. Downer intends to develop a certificate program in digital photography. The digital photography class is one of the few offerings that is not part of a four series of studio discipline offerings; e.g. Drawing A, B, C. and D. It is anticipated that a new photo program would be designed using a vocational model. Also being considered at this time, is a newly designed art class that could be part of the now developing Desert Studies offerings.

This class would feature how to design and present earthworks related art projects using our campus a site. This would also be integrated into our on-going EarthWorksNow exhibition series. Spelman Downer has gained considerable experience in getting public projects approved through his six year relationship with the Australian sculptor Andrew Rogers. While unable to build a large geoglyph earthwork on CMC's campus, mostly because of needed protections for our desert tortoise reserve, an alternative site was located by Mr. Downer in the Town of Yucca Valley. In an eight month process Mr. Downer was able to secure acceptance of the gifts from Andrew Rogers to the Town, and two huge geoglyphs have just recently been built at the Black Mesa site.

Also being considered is the addition of a computer animation class. This Spring Marjorie Franklin will be offering such a class in a community services framework to test the waters in this area.

### Curriculum and Course Scheduling:

As witnessed by the difficulty of scheduling by Division Chair G. Gilbert this semester, this review will make the case for a consolidation of computer based art classes in one specific class room (Digital Photography, Basic Design and Color with Digital Emphasis, and Graphic Design I and II). The reasons to insist on a specific classroom for these offerings are that the necessary software and hardware need to be consolidated so that the limited software licenses that the school has paid for can be utilized in one place. The same holds true for hardware, and especially peripheral devices such as scanners, card readers, and printers. Without a known classroom where all these items are installed, functioning, and are available on a continuing basis, the lack of efficiency, waste of time spent constantly moving things around, installing and reinstalling software and drivers in a musical chairs scenario becomes highly inefficient and frustrating for both instructor and students.

As part of this review an Ed Tech Plan for the Art Department has been forwarded and approved by the Ed Tech Committee. The plan in a nutshell presents the opportunity to upgrade both hardware and software by creating a new laptop computer lab in Art Room 201. Please see attached plan for a full outline of the concept. One important corollary effect of this idea would be to open up to the entire college more lab scheduling possibilities in our school's three labs. As this plan is dependent on securing considerable funding, the department is also putting forth a much less ambitious proposal (Ed Tech Plan B) that can be accomplished with far less monetary resources.

### **Support Services**

#### Institutional Data:

For the first time, the Art Department has been provided with data concerning attrition, student success, grading, and census information categorized by full-time and adjunct faculty roles and course format. This initial provision of data has been helpful for program and course review, and while more analysis needs to be completed, there are a few initial observations. S. Downer's digital photo class illustrates perhaps a common occurrence at CMC, at least observed in this class that relatively high numbers of students drop out quickly in the first month of this class. He attributes this to the common misperception that some students have that the class will be "easy", and that all they will have to do is point a camera at something. When they find out the class is a serious college level class requiring technically based reading and that they will have to learn a new vocabulary and master the intricacies of both camera operation and software manipulation they decide their level of interest in serious photography is considerably less. The overall success rate of completion is 43%. That said the students who dig in and learn the material benefit immensely from the class and learn the skill sets that make them

"photographers". The comradery of those that stick it out is considerable, and a good many of the survivors go on to take more digital classes at CMC. Once continuing students move on to the next higher class, for instance Graphic Design 40, the success rate becomes a respectable 72%. As part of program review, the digital photo class will have a revised COR. This will include a new class description that will be printed in the schedules that will more adequately describe the rigor of the photo class offering and hopefully better prepare students for the level of difficulty of this demanding but rewarding class. It will also change the acceptable cameras must have for the class. Camcorders will be dropped, and students will be advised, although not absolutely required to have a camera with manual controls.

Dave Musser's classes which he took over from Elsie Grace and Audrey Gillick (see program history) have a generally high retention rate; 75%, 83%, even 100%. This is a good indication of Mr. Musser's teaching abilities and also reflects the generally social nature of the class that is composed of community members that love to meet at CMC for a watercolor class year after year. Nonetheless, the overall enrolment in these stacked classes has declined significantly and is most likely an indicator of an area that has passed.

While there is considerable variation of success rates for the 20 or so art classes offered at CMC, the one pattern that is fairly consistent is that after any initial shake out before first census the success rates are reasonable, generally between 70 and 90 percent.

#### Student Advising:

In November 2004, CMC's academic senate authored a white paper on advising that has as yet to have its recommendations initiated and supported by the institution. Recommendations included that faculty spend hours in Student Services answering student queries about various majors; that adjunct faculty be enabled to advise, perhaps through paid office hours; that the college resurrect career sessions with faculty, perhaps in conjunction with Transfer Empowerment Program (TEP), Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and DSPS; and that faculty who lack specific expertise or vital currency in an academic area be granted sabbaticals for that purpose. Another area that remains worthy of consideration by the department has to do with a general integration of course and program planning with all resources and services offered throughout the college and within the local community. In addition, the department would be better equipped to advise students by becoming increasingly familiar as a whole with the standards and goals of other general educational and vocational programs at the college. This sort of integration of efforts is consistent with the 2002 Accreditation Standards.

#### Leadership:

With regards to college leadership, as a result of System Office and Board of Governors findings, funding for instruction will be increased so that CMC will comply with the Fifty Percent Law, thus permitting an increase in the number of full-time faculty. This should prove beneficial to the department and its students. In addition, recent requirements from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) that all CMC programs complete reviews by December 2008 has had the effect of making access to data a priority at the college. In addition, CMC has requested that part of its Fifty Percent Law settlement is payment to faculty who work on program review outside of their contracted hours. It is expected that the combination of available data and additional paid working hours will result in the department establishing a data driven cycle of evaluation and planning.

### Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC):

Visual art, especially multi media skills are increasingly important to our ever expanding distribution of digital information and entertainment. As such many people are not truly cognizant of the role visual literacy can provide as a critical survival skill in today's media driven culture. The art department is placing increased awareness of the need for its students to have refined language skills; both spoken and written. These effective communication skills must be effectively integrated into all student projects. How these skills are employed in presentations, narrations, and projects that are distributed by electronic and other means are crucial to well versed and liberal arts trained students.

### Marketing:

Enrollment levels have generally declined over the last seven years for a variety of reasons since the District was established. The Art Department is willing to work with the college Public Information Officer (PIO) concerning how to publicize courses, and advertise extra-curricular activities such as the EarthWorkers Art Club, the RGB MultiMedia events and other free art lectures as they are scheduled on campus. Prospective students need to be informed of these unique opportunities at CMC that will enhance student's academic experiences.

### Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS)

DSPS works closely with instructors to ensure that students get proper accommodations. In particular, students take advantage of extended test-taking times, note takers, and tape recorders, and they utilize adaptive software programs in the DSPS lab to assist the visually, physically, and hearing-impaired with reading textbooks and writing assignments. As is generally recognized, such students can often shine in the world of visual art production, and our department makes sure that such students are warmly welcomed.

### Counseling:

Advising and counseling are vital components for creating an academic plan that works best for students. Whether they are struggling with academic or personal issues or trying to construct the best plan for their academic and professional futures, CMC's counselors provide greatly needed services. Where the department should work for improvement has to do with making certain that all full-time and adjunct faculty are fully informed concerning the services that are available to students at CMC, including CalWORKS, TEP, and other related services.

### Associated Students of Copper Mountain College (ASCMC):

Student organizations offer invaluable opportunities to develop study groups and to have a more socially fulfilling college experience. The Art Club has been active for many years at CMC.

### CMC Art Club

In 1997, an interest in establishing an Art Club was shown by students. Students approached Cathy Allen who accepted the responsibility on a volunteer basis for four years. During that time Allen designed and donated the Public Art Pathway project as a fund-raiser to the Art Club. The proposed project was accepted by the college with the agreement that it was to be inherited by the club and developed on a long term, and continual basis. Over \$2,000.00 was