Executive Summary: Museum Studies

Mission

The mission of the Museum Studies Program is to educate well-rounded graduates with M.A. degrees who are prepared for challenging careers in museums, historical agencies and similar institutions throughout the state, region, and nation. Drawing on the expertise of outstanding faculty in participating departments (American Studies, Anthropology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Geology, History), the skills of accomplished area museum professionals, and the rich resources of museums at KU and in nearby communities, the Museum Studies Program enables its students to develop advanced mastery of both an academic discipline and the issues and practices central to museums. With the rigorous, interdisciplinary training provided by the Museum Studies Program, our graduates flourish as life-long learners and leaders in the museum field.

The M.A. degree at the University of Kansas is a 42-hour, academic-professional program in which students are required to complete 18 hours in an academic track, 18 hours of professional museum courses, and 6 hours of internship supervised by a museum professional. Students are required to write a paper about this internship experience and pass an oral comprehensive examination.

Faculty

Two types of instructional staff support the Museum Studies Program. Members of the University’s staff in various museums, libraries, and collections or staff in regional museums are appointed to teach the required professional courses as lecturers. Lecturers who work in museums and teach the professional courses hold, at least, a master’s degree which qualifies them along with their experience to teach at the graduate level. Museum Studies employs seven lecturers who teach: MUSE 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, and 707. All of these individuals have either a terminal master’s degree in their area of specialization or a Ph.D., and all have teaching experience, some very extensive.

Members of the University faculty teach the departmental courses that fulfill the academic track requirements of 18 graduate level hours in history, American studies, geology, ecology and environmental biology, or anthropology. These faculty also comprise the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) and advise students in the various academic tracks. The program director, the president of the Museum Student Organization, and one campus museum director are also members of the FAC.

Master’s Degrees (MA)

Strengths of the program noted by the External Review Committee included producing an impressive number of graduates with distinguished museum careers. The program substantially over-performs in relation to the resources committed to it but also under-performs in relation to the potential it would have with proper resources and an updated curriculum. Other strengths include the substantial guidance and contributions from full-time university faculty, the high quality of our students who complete their degrees on time, high student and alumni satisfaction
with the program, a very successful placement record, the high quality of university, local, and regional museums where our students frequently work as interns, and the strong intellectual consensus of the faculty about the program’s future direction. The relative weaknesses of the program may be overcome by re-establishing its identity in the larger world of museum studies through the publication of research in peer reviewed journals, the publication of books on museological subjects, and service in local, regional, and national professional organizations; creating a new curriculum that has worked for over 30 years but is now nearly obsolete; renewing an outdated governance system; redeveloping close relationships with campus museums; and reaching out to Kansas museums through continuing education.

Changes as a Result of the Review Process

The program received the committee’s report in April 2011, and by late fall had begun recruiting a fulltime Director/Professor of Museology. At the time of the writing of this report, the program awaits a decision from the administration of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in regard to the recommendation of the search committee. It remains possible that the program could begin the next academic year with this Director/Professor in place.

The program expects that this appointment will significantly increase the involvement of the program, along with our campus museums, in the campus-wide strategic initiatives that have recently been developed. “Harnessing Information, Multiplying Knowledge” and “Building Communities, Expanding Opportunities” describe salient components of our educational mission. “Sustaining the Planet, Powering the World” and “Promoting Well-Being, Finding Cures” articulate substantial intellectual themes for many museum exhibitions, lectures, and events which our graduates will help manage in their career futures. The appointment of a Director (and the potential near-future appointment of a second faculty member at a junior level) is a significant change as a result of the Review Process.

Overall Evaluation

Once a permanent Director is in place, additional changes in response to the external review process will occur, such as the development of a clear identity for the program, both internally and externally. We expect that the program will retain its strong commitment to the academic disciplines that have given their support historically but that the commitment will be broadened to include other disciplines, as the interdisciplinary nature of museum studies becomes clearer.

The value that the program brings to students, to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and to the University will continue to increase, through relentless incremental change that will lead to national prominence. This program will thrive under new direction and with new investments of resources.

This program may be considered good to very good in quality now with obvious potential to be not only excellent but also to become a top five program in the United States.
Museums are a vital part of American culture. In our museums, we explore our identities, our values, and our dreams for the future. Since 1981, the Museum Studies program at the University of Kansas has prepared its graduates for a lifetime of leadership in this dynamic field. We offer our students the academic and professional training they need to prepare them for challenging careers in museums, historical agencies, and similar institutions. Students in the M.A. program in Museum Studies develop both their expertise in an academic discipline—American Studies, Anthropology, Geology, History, or Natural History—and their knowledge of the issues and practices central to museums. Students in the program work with outstanding faculty and accomplished museum professionals, and are able to take advantage of the rich resources of the outstanding museums located at the University of Kansas and in nearby communities.

In AY 2011-2012:

- Twelve students completed the program (3 at the conclusion of the Fall 2011 semester and 9 at the conclusion of the Spring 2012 semester), three with honors distinction. Those receiving the honors mark presented analysis papers including “Placing Audience in the Center” and “Aspiring to Curatorial Realignment: The Influence of Internships and Coursework on a New Generation of Curator”.
- 37 students applied to the program for Spring 2012 and Fall 2012 semesters. Three students began the program in January 2012, one as non-degree seeking with the intent to apply as degree-seeking.
- Numerous Museum Studies students and lecturers presented at the Kansas Museums Association 2011 Annual Conference, “To the Stars through Art, Culture, History and Science.”
- Numerous Museum Studies students and lecturers were involved with library and museum exhibits in the University, Lawrence and surrounding area in a myriad of projects.
- A Museum Studies student was chosen to assist with a major German research project during a summer internship at the prestigious Deutsches Museum in Munich.
- High student satisfaction indices.
- High alumni satisfaction indices.
I. Introduction.

A. Self-Study Process.

The author of this MUSE program review document is Dennis Domer, Acting Director of Museum Studies, who began his duties in August 2010. In preparing this document, I consulted department statistics, Office of Research and Institutional Planning statistics, written evaluations from alumni, faculty, students, and directors of museums, a graduate student satisfaction survey, the 2006, 2004, and 1992 program reviews, the 2008 Task Force report, proceedings of the 2010-2011 Curriculum Review Committee, and interviews with administrators, ex-directors and program coordinators, and a wide variety of stakeholders. I read recent program review documents from the departments of Spanish and Portuguese, History, Western Civilization, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. After the first draft was completed, it was sent to members of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) and the MUSE faculty. With their responses in mind, I wrote a second draft which was shared with Dean Danny Anderson, Associate Dean Haufler, the FAC, faculty, and members of the Curriculum Review Committee. A third and final draft along with appendices was delivered to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences on February 24, 2011.


The mission of the Museum Studies Program is to produce well-rounded graduates who are prepared for challenging careers in museums, historical agencies and similar institutions throughout the state, region, and nation. Drawing on the expertise of outstanding faculty in participating departments (American Studies, Anthropology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Geology, History), the skills of accomplished area museum professionals, and the rich resources of museums at KU and in nearby communities, the Museum Studies Program enables its students to develop advanced mastery of both an academic discipline and the issues and practices central to museums. With the rigorous, interdisciplinary training provided by the Museum Studies Program, our graduates can flourish as life-long learners and leaders in the museum field.

C. History of the Program.

The Museum Studies Program is thirty years old in 2011 and has a history of producing graduates who go on to pursue distinguished careers in museum work.
According to the Museum Studies 2008 Task Force Final Report, “the Museum Studies (MUSE) Program is unique among the interdisciplinary graduate programs in the College. Since its creation (in 1981), the program has relied upon a partnership between discipline-based academic units (the “track” departments) and museum practitioners (who teach “core” courses).” The decision to offer a Master in Historical Administration and Museum Studies (MHAMS) degree emerged from two years of discussions among five people: Professor Donald McCoy in History, Professor Alfred Johnson in Anthropology, Professor Philip Humphrey of the Museum of Natural History, and Professor Norman Yetman of American Studies and Sociology. Professor McCoy, the leader of this group, was particularly interested in training students in the care of historical archives. The program name remained the same until 2002, when it changed to the Museum Studies Program (MUSE) and the MHAMS degree was changed to a Master of Arts in Museum Studies (M.A.).

The leadership in Museum Studies was stable for twenty years with Professor Johnson serving as program coordinator until his retirement in 2000. In the last decade 5 directors or acting directors have served the program. In 2001, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences appointed John Simmons, a Collections Manager (Senior Specialist) in the Museum of Natural History (and graduate of the MUSE program) to a .20 FTE appointment as “Acting Coordinator” within the College; this appointment included the duties of the director and some teaching, assisted by a .20 FTE administrative assistant. In 2002, Simmons’ appointment was changed to “Director” and the position increased to .25 FTE. John Simmons served director until his departure from KU shortly before fall 2007 began. His successor, Kiersten Latham, a museum professional and MUSE graduate, was appointed to a two-year term as acting coordinator but resigned from her position in spring 2008. Danny Anderson, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, was appointed acting director of the program in 2008, and Marjorie Swann from the Department of English was appointed Director in a .5 FTE position in 2009, a position she held until 2010 when she left the University of Kansas. The .20 FTE administrative assistant was increased to a .5 FTE Senior Administrative Assistant under her tenure. Dennis Domer, Director of Graduate Studies in American Studies, was appointed Acting Director of Museum Studies in 2010.

II. Curriculum.

A. M. A. in Museum Studies.

From 1981 to 2002, the University offered a Master of Historical Administration and Museum Studies degree which was changed to a Master of Arts degree in Museum Studies in 2002. The M. A. degree at the University of Kansas is a 42-hour, academic-professional program in which students are required to complete 18 hours in an academic track, 18 hours of professional museum courses, and 6 hours of internship supervised by a museum professional. Students are required
to write a paper about this internship experience and pass an oral comprehensive examination. The examination committee is composed of three faculty members, chaired by the student’s track advisor, and possibly including an internship supervisor who would be appointed on an ad hoc basis.

1. **The Professional Courses (18 hours).**

Students are required to complete 18 hours of professional courses, including MUSE 701 Museum Management, MUSE 702 The Nature of Museums, MUSE 703 Introduction to Museum Exhibits, MUSE 704 Principles and Practices of Museum Collection Management, MUSE 705 Introduction to Museum Public Education, and MUSE 706 Conservation Principles and Practices. Course descriptions and representative syllabi can be found in the Appendix.

2. **The Academic Tracks (18 hours).**

Students are required to complete 18 hours in an academic track. These tracks include American Studies, Anthropology, Geology, History, and Natural History. The Faculty Advisory Committee has recently approved an Interdisciplinary Track. A track advisor who is a regular faculty member in an academic department manages each track. The director of Museum Studies or his/her appointees manage the Interdisciplinary Track.

**a. American Studies Track.**

The American studies track is designed to enable students to achieve depth in their understanding of the American experience. Students choosing the American Studies track are trained in the use of written records and oral histories for gathering information and presenting the socio-cultural patterns and problems of American life. Students are expected to develop further interdisciplinary understanding of American culture relevant to their major interests by taking elective courses in race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, religion, political economy, material culture, social and cultural theory, popular culture, or visual arts.

**b. Anthropology Track.**

This track provides the necessary background to qualify for positions in anthropology museums, as well as in the broader field of cultural resource management. Courses provide students with an introduction to the breadth and interdisciplinary nature of anthropology, and a familiarization with anthropological approaches to material culture and associated documentation. Study of archaeology, socio-cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, and linguistic anthropology gives students the theoretical and practical training (through an internship) necessary for
understanding the nature of anthropology museums and collections. Courses in the anthropology track are offered by the faculty of the Department of Anthropology. The faculty includes members of the four primary sub-disciplines (biological anthropology, archaeology, socio-cultural anthropology, and linguistics).

c. **Geology Track.**

The geology track is focused to provide students with in-depth understanding of broad aspects of paleontology. Faculty members in the Department of Geology work closely with personnel of the Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center to provide this experience. Courses in the Geology track are taught by faculty members in the Department of Geology or allied faculty members from the Kansas Geological Survey and the Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center. The faculty members in the Department of Geology focus on theoretical and practical issues related to the study of the history of life preserved in the fossil record.

d. **History Track.**

Those who satisfy the requirements for the history track will be prepared to pursue careers in the operation of historical institutions for which academic degrees in the field of history too seldom qualify them. The resources available to students at the University of Kansas, both in terms of faculty and facilities, strongly support the program in history. Primarily full-time members of the University’s Department of History will offer courses in the history sequence. Many of the faculty have teaching and research interests that contribute to the Museum Studies program, including numismatics, cartography, genealogy and family history, diplomatics, decorative arts, and audiovisual applications.

e. **Natural History Track.**

The natural history track provides broad familiarity with biota and training in the methods for study, preservation, maintenance, and display of biological specimens. The track prepares its graduates for service in museums that require generalized competence in natural history, coupled with basic understanding of the materials, methods, and problems common to museums of diverse kinds. Students seeking specialized skills in particular groups of organisms may wish to supplement this curriculum through intensive course work dealing with the organisms of interest, or may even consider alternate master’s or doctoral programs offered in the Division of Biological Sciences and the Department of Geology.
d. Interdisciplinary Track.

The interdisciplinary track provides students with the opportunity to focus on a topic or theme involving courses in at least 3 departments selected with the advice and consent of the track advisor. Example of themes include agriculture (anthropology, history, sociology, environmental history), art (architecture, art history, design, anthropology), classical antiquity (classics, history, architecture, anthropology), historic preservation (geography, architecture, urban planning, history), material culture (anthropology, archaeology, design), and technology (anthropology, architecture, engineering, history).

3. The Internship (6 hours).

All students must complete an internship of approximately 500 hours of professional-level work. Students are required to be enrolled in one of the following while serving their internships: AMS 799, ANTH 799, BIOL 799, GEOL 723, HIST 799, or MUSE 799. Opportunities may be available to receive pay for this experience, and students may serve longer internships if they wish. Students are required to present a paper describing and critically analyzing the internship experience. At the end of his/her studies, each student must also take a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive exam for the M.A. in Museum Studies may be a written or an oral examination, according to the rules established by the academic track department or program faculty.

III. Instructional Staff.

Two types of instructional staff support the Museum Studies Program. Members of the University’s staff in various museums, libraries, and collections or staff in regional museums are appointed to teach the required professional courses. Members of the University faculty teach the departmental courses that fulfill the academic track requirements.

A. Professional Staff.

Since the program is professional in nature, the College of Arts and Sciences decided from the very beginning, according to Alfred Johnson, to hire lecturers who work in museums to teach the professional requirements. These lecturers usually hold a master’s degree which qualifies them along with their experience to teach at the graduate level. Museum Studies employs seven lecturers who teach: MUSE 701, 702, 703, 704, 705 and 706. MUSE 707 Archival Principles and Practices is also taught regularly.
The current, part-time faculty includes Mary Madden, Sheryl Williams, Bob Keckeisen, Bruce Scherting, Witney S. Baker, Sofia Galarza Liu, and John Pierce; their curriculum vitae are in the Appendices of this document. All of these individuals have either a terminal master’s degree in their area of specialization or a Ph.D., and all have teaching experience, some very extensive.

Part-time faculty members are appointed from year to year, which means that turnover is more characteristic of this group than of tenured or tenure-track faculty. The part-time faculty in 1992 had turned over completely by 2004. None of the part-time faculty listed in the 2004 Program Review is currently teaching in the program. While it might seem challenging to fill part-time teaching positions with appropriate and experienced individuals, a rich concentration of campus, local, and state museums, libraries, and collections has provided a dynamic pool of highly qualified individuals who teach our students the professional practices and skills necessary to begin a successful professional museum career. The 1992 program review suggests that the Museum Studies program at the University of Kansas was consciously established in 1981 to take advantage of both the regional concentration of museums and the personnel who worked in them. It has done that. The 2004 Program Review states that “the success of the MHAMS program is due to the diversity and quality of museum, library, and academic resources available at the University of Kansas. Carefully selected personnel from the area museum community are employed as core course instructors and internship supervisors to expose the students to cutting-edge professionals in the field.” The program is no less dependent on this concentration of professionals and resources in 2011 than it was thirty years ago in 1981.

Part-time faculty have teaching responsibilities but no obligations to conduct research in museology or to engage in service activities, though some do publish research and all engage voluntarily in service activities.

B. University Faculty.

Over the past thirty years the University faculty, particularly in the track departments, have conducted a remarkable partnership with the professional personnel at campus and regional the museums, libraries, and collections so that the University of Kansas could offer Kansans and others graduate level education and training in Museum Studies. University faculty have participated in this partnership as instructors, advisors, track advisors, and examination committee members and have counted this voluntary work as part of their teaching or service obligation to the University. The 18 credit hours of track courses which make up 43% of the MUSE curriculum are drawn from courses these faculty regularly teach in their home departments.

University faculty participating in MUSE are appointed primarily in the departments of American Studies, Anthropology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Classics, Geology, and History, though students take courses taught by
faculty in a wide array of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and to a lesser extent in the professional schools. All of these faculty are responsible to their primary departments, and not to the Museum Studies program, for teaching, research, and service.

The track advisors from the academic units have a powerful influence on policies in Museum Studies for they all serve on the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) along with one director of a museum on campus and the president of the Museum Student Organization (MSO). The director of museum studies has had an academic appointment in one of the track departments for most of the history of the program. The current track advisors and FAC committee members are Professor John Janzen of Anthropology, Professors Deborah Smith and Leonard Krishtalka of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Professor Bruce Lieberman of Geology, Professor Jeffrey Moran of History, and Professor Dennis Domer of American Studies. Their curriculum vitae may be found in the Appendices of this document.

The partnership between University faculty and museum personnel has consistently produced a successful program, using student and alumni evaluations as good indicators of success. In addition, this partnership has created a high return on investment for the University, which has used its regular faculty resources very efficiently to provide departmental teaching and to teach useful and applicable skills to Museum Studies students.

C. Faculty Evaluations of the Program.

Both University faculty and part-professional faculty have evaluated the Museum Studies Program to help the program prepare for the External Review. Professor John Janzen of the Department of Anthropology who has been associated with MUSE for thirty years notes that “In its present institutional manifestation, MUSE is healthier and more resilient than it has ever been” because in 2008 the College of Arts and Sciences decided “to give the program an independent office, a secretary, and the status of an independent program.” In his opinion, these changes along with allocating .50 FTE to the director’s position “means that students do not so easily lose their way” because “the program is now run with much greater hands-on care by more people than at some stages in its past.” Janzen believes that advising has been improved, and from the student perspective “there is stronger peer collegiality, more rigorous training, greater oversight for the interpretation of internship experiences, and a more self-conscious understanding of what it means to be trained in a discipline.” From his point of view, the MUSE program is on a much surer footing than previously.”

Professor Jeffery Moran praises the academic tracks, though “students in the past have sometimes found this to be their least favorite part of the program.” The tracks, according to at least one survey, provide “the best training for their hires.” He also remarks that “Although the students in MUSE come in to the program
with, on average, slightly lower test and GPA scores than the History Department’s doctoral candidates, many of the MUSE students are equal or superior to History graduate students. They take to the disciplinary program pretty quickly, and are enthusiastic about the additional skills and knowledge they develop in the regular History graduate course and in the handful of upper-level undergraduate seminars that instructors have intensified to fit graduate needs.” Moran also endorses the recent change in advising which allows students more choice of courses in their tracks.

Professor Bruce Lieberman remarks on the world-class strength of the University’s museums and their collections and how these museums provide “excellent opportunities for student mentoring and also for internships.” He believes that the relationship between the program and these museums needs to be strengthened. He endorses the current administrative approach and he notes that “the students that we have had through the program, including the current crop, are of very good quality. They are hard workers and have been a real credit in terms of the positions they’ve landed, the internships they’ve done, etc.” From his perspective, the weaknesses of the program are the “revolving” director problem, the relatively weak relationship between the program and the museums on campus, and the lack of financial support for students.

Professor John Younger newly appointed to the Curriculum Review Committee and in the process of teaching the new Introduction to Material Culture course, is surprised that no faculty meetings have been held in recent memory and that the program retained “a rather conservative idea of how the students learn about museums.”

Five part-time professional faculty evaluated the program. Mary Madden, who teaches MUSE 705 Introduction to Museum Public Education, graduated from the program in 1983 has “watched the program ebb and flow” over the past 30 years. From her long-term perspective she states, “I believe the MUSE program is in its best position since its creation as a result of the department’s current leadership and support from the program’s faculty.” She remarks on two recent changes. “I have strongly held the belief for years that the program needed a material culture studies class,” and I am very pleased this course will be offered in the spring semester 2011.” She also considers the recent adoption by the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Interdisciplinary Track to be a major advance because it allows for the possibility of “integrating art history into the MUSE program.” This is important because Art is present in many museums that are not by definition art museums. In the real world graduates of this program will be expected to know how to care for, exhibit, and interpret art thus making it an essential part of their academic and professional training.” In her opinion, the internship is “a critical piece of the program” that needs more oversight, and the final master’s examination of the internship experience in its current form lacks the substance of a written examination. She finds “the quality of students” to be “very good and some are exceptional.”
Bruce Scherting, who teaches MUSE 703 Introduction to Museum Exhibits, says that the program “has an excellent reputation with a strong record of graduate placement and an ever-increasing network of professional alumni nation-wide.” He believes that the program is moving in the right direction but criticizes the track system of the curriculum which “has left no pathway into the program for students from design, graphic design, industrial design, space planning, science education, communications or information technologies to participate and pursue a museum career in their area of interest. Having these student populations engaged in the program will have a huge impact on all student experiences and creative synergies within the program.” He believes that the program is rightly based in the College of Arts and Sciences where it can “draw upon the rich and diverse assets of the University as a whole.”

Whitney Baker, who teaches MUSE 706 Conservation Principles and Practices, has taught in the program since 2004. She notes that four directors in 6 years have brought “rapid shifts in ideologies and foci” which “have created considerable stress among the students and to some degree among the instructors as well.” From listening to students, she believes that the greatest dissatisfaction is with the track system which was initially considered “a strong asset” but is viewed among some students as not always relevant to career goals, and lacking in course choice. In some tracks students feel that they are “second-class citizens.” Baker hastened to note that student opinion about the tracks varied widely, depending on which track the student was pursuing. In her view, there has not been enough continuity of professional faculty and the faculty have not met regularly to discuss instructional goals and the curriculum. On the other hand, “the students in MUSE have been consistently strong. I admit I was pleasantly surprised when I began teaching by their intelligence, writing skills, and logical reasoning. While the track system needs to be strengthened, it also affords a richness to my classes, as students with different perspectives provide unique viewpoints.” Further, “I believe we have a strong institutional commitment to this program and campus-wide interest in fortifying the program. I would like to see more cross-disciplinary and institutional partnerships; more focus on research and presentations at state, regional, and national levels; greater utilization of our alumni network for mentoring and employment opportunities; and more flexibility in course offerings to allow students to craft a more relevant and satisfying academic experience.”

Two professional faculty who have taught in the program for a short time bring opinions similar to those of longer term faculty. One, a paleontologist who recently took a position at the University of Colorado, remarked that the “KU MUSE program has “a very good reputation in the museum community” and that the internship requirement “is one of the most valuable aspects of the program. Having practical hands on experience is critical to obtaining a job in the museum profession today. This is one part of the program that I would not change.” She does wish for regular faculty meetings for many reasons. John Pierce, with long experience as a tenured professor, dean, and vice chancellor wrote, “My
experience is that the students are bright, hard-working, conscientious, dedicated
to their professional futures, pleasant, and high quality individuals.” He
recommends that the program create courses that focus museum studies students
on “the political, governmental, social, cultural, and technological”
environments,” and on leadership. He believes that the role of faculty needs to be
formalized in student admissions and curriculum change, that the program needs
to strengthen its relationships with external constituencies, and that several full-
time faculty need to be appointed, “this providing a focal point for
communication as well as personnel with an undivided commitment.”

IV. Students.

A. Current Cohort.

The current cohort of active graduate students is comprised of 29 individuals from
13 states and 2 foreign countries. Forty-three percent of these students are Kansas
residents. Thirty-one percent come from the Midwestern states of Illinois,
Missouri, Ohio, Michigan, and Iowa. Twenty-four percent came from the South,
the West, the East, and from foreign countries.

Among these 29 students, 11 have declared the Anthropology Track, 12 the
History Track, 2 the Geology Track, 2 the Interdisciplinary Track and 2 the
Natural History Track. The American Studies Track was discontinued for two
years and then continued anew in fall 2009 but the track attracted only one
applicant for fall 2011. In historical terms, this distribution of the current cohort
students among the tracks, except for the American Studies Track, is about as
expected. From 1981 to 2006, 39 percent of our graduates were in the History
Track, 34 percent in the Anthropology Track, 17 percent in the American Studies
Track, 8 percent in Natural History, and 2 percent in Geology.

Twenty-nine enrolled students in spring 2011 make up one of the largest groups
of current students in the history of the program, which has grown steadily over
the years. According to the 2008 Task Force Report, “During the 1980s,
enrollment in MHAMS averaged 5-8 students, increasing to 15 students during
the 1990s. In the new millennium, the program has become more popular than
ever: this year 29 students are enrolled in MUSE.” In the past two years, a number
of students have been re-admitted to the program, having dropped out for various
reasons. Five new students were also admitted in spring 2011 to bring the active
number to 29.

B. Student Quality.

Student quality is impossible to reduce to a reliable and valid set of numbers, but
numbers are the most readily available indicators of student quality. The most
reliable indicator of student quality is the GPA, which results from hundreds of
“hands-on” academic evaluations done by University faculty, part-time
professional faculty, and intern supervisors. Over the past four years, the average overall GPA of our students, which includes professional, academic, and internship courses, ranges from 3.5 to 3.68. The faculty is saying through their evaluations (i.e., grades) that the performance of our students is, on average, very good to excellent at the M.A. level of museum studies. The strength of this indicator is buttressed by the fact that MUSE students sometimes achieved even higher GPAs in their track courses than in their professional courses and therefore have shown that they compete very well with department majors. In a study of 36 students who enrolled between Spring Semester 2006 and Spring Semester 2010, we found that the average GPA in the American Studies Track was 3.74, in the Anthropology Track 3.89, in the Geology Track 3.67, in the History Track 3.91, and in the Natural History Track 3.78.

The GRE score is a standardized measure of the quality of the entering student. If we take the verbal GRE raw scores at their face value, one must conclude that the quality of our students has fallen about 7.5 percent since the turn of the 21st century. The 2004 Program Review showed that students had an average verbal score of 579 from 1997 to 2001. The verbal scores of our cohorts of students from Summer/Fall semesters 2004 to 2009 shows an average score of 535. The verbal GRE scores in Summer/Fall 2008, 2009, and 2010 averaged right at the 70th percentile. In contrast, the quantitative GRE score has gone up by almost 4 percent. From 1997 to 2001, our students scored an average of 539 on the Quantitative GRE examination but from 2004 to 2009 our students made an average score of 560. Nevertheless, their quantitative scores in 2008, 2009, and 2010 were at about the 45th percentile, and their writing scores were at the 55th percentile in those three years. Our conclusion is that there is little correlation between the GRE scores and the GPAs that our students have achieved overall and in their tracks. If the GRE score were a strong indicator of student success in these courses, our students should have much lower overall and track GPAs because they could not compete with students who have much higher GREs. If the GRE were a strong indicator of quality, students with higher GRE scores in the departments, such as in History which according to the History Program review document averaged 643 on the verbal GRE in 2009, should get significantly higher GPAs than MUSE students with a 535 average on the verbal GRE. History students may have an average GPA of 4.0 but this would not be significantly higher than the most recent MUSE student History Track average of 3.91.

The GRE scores obviously don’t indicate much about their ability to achieve at the master’s level in their course of study at the University of Kansas. Some of the best indicators of student achievement and quality in terms of their contribution to a high GPA are seldom measured: willingness to work hard, interest and enthusiasm in the subject, emotional maturity, ambition, and persistence in the face of difficulty and frustration. We have not measured these indicators of quality but we do observe them frequently in our students which is a
major reason why they have a high rate of graduation and almost never face time-to-degree difficulties.

Placement of students in museum work and in other careers is usually considered a good indicator of student quality. While we have not yet done a study of our students in their careers since the Great Recession hit, the 2008 Task Force reported “robust placements” as of April 2008, when the task force ascertained that 103 graduates out of 157 up to that time “work in or have retired from museum-related employment. Although several MUSE graduates work for national museums such as the Smithsonian and the National Museum of the American Indian, most are employed by local and state institutions, a majority of which are located in Kansas and Missouri.” This 2008 list reflects the wide array of institutions our graduates worked in at that time. This report has been updated in November 2010 and can be found in the Appendix.

An indirect indicator of the comparative quality of our students can be derived from an evaluation by alumni of the quality of their education at KU compared to their professional peers. Of the 72 alumni who answered the survey, 57 or 79 percent rated their education as very good or excellent. If the quality of our students and later graduates had been weak, they probably would have been less successful and would have rated their education lower because they would have been less able to compete with students for jobs who have museum studies degrees from other institutions.

C. Admissions.

The program undertakes fall, spring, and summer admissions processes which require an application, GRE scores, three letters of recommendation, a statement of interest, and a writing sample. The track advisors review the applications to their tracks and usually come together with the director in the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) to discuss whom to admit. In some cases, the Director may admit an exceptional student when it is timely to act without consultation with the track advisor or FAC.

The trend in the number of applications is generally up from 22 in the Summer/Fall of 2004 to 46 in the Summer/Fall 2010. The Fall 2011 applications total stands now at 36 and we expect to have about 45 applications by April 15. The program is not highly selective but the trend has been toward more selectivity. From 2004 to 2010, the average rate of admission was 63 percent, though in 2008, 2009, and 2010, the admission rate average was 54 percent, and the 2010 admission rate dropped to 49 percent. The admission rate in 2011 will probably move higher to about the historical average.

The surest way to increase selectivity is to recruit more applicants. The program’s recruitment is almost entirely passive in that we wait for prospective students to contact us, usually through our website. It would not be difficult to
undertake a somewhat active recruitment initiative by improving the program’s website as a recruiting and information tool, building professional networks by presenting papers at conferences and publishing in widely read books and journals, hosting graduate reunions at professional conferences, establishing a more student-friendly admissions process, and increasing the financial support to students in the form of graduate research assistantships and paid internships. Students are especially attracted to good financial support opportunities, but in the current set of circumstances, our students receive relatively little grant or scholarship funds, though 57 percent of our students in the four years from 2006 to 2009 received $868,920 in financial aid. The trend in financial aid, however, is down from $331,510 in 2006 to $237,631 in 2009. If the trend were up, the admission-matriculation conversion rate would be higher than the current 46 percent.

KU should invest in sending representatives to participate in the vendor or exhibitor halls at regional and national museum conferences where other graduate programs such as Colorado, Seaton Hall, Oklahoma, JFK, Texas Tech, George Washington, etc. recruit students and promote their programs.

D. Student Satisfaction.

There are two studies of Museum Studies student satisfaction that involve current students and past students.

In 2010, KU Research and Graduate Studies conducted a graduate student satisfaction survey of Museum Studies students and compared Fall 2005 to Fall 2009 student responses on 6 variables, using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1= poor, 2= Fair, 3= good, 4 = very good, and 5= excellent. The six variables were “Overall Program Quality,” “Quality of Teaching by Faculty,” “Quality of Academic Advising,” “Overall, Climate of Program is Positive,” “Advised on How to Search for a Job?,” “Select KU if Starting Over.” The mean scores on all these variables declined from 2005 to 2009, except for “Advised on How to Search for a Job?” which went up from 3.27 to 3.67. “Overall Program Quality” declined 17 percent from a mean of 4.08 to a mean of 3.38; “Overall, climate of Program is Positive” declined by 25% from a mean of 4.38 in 2005 to a mean of 3.29 in 2009. “Select KU if Starting Over” declined 5 percent from 2005 to 2009. In this study it appears that students’ satisfaction with the program has gone from very good to good.

In this same study, the College of Arts and Sciences measured 6 “obstacles to academic progress” in Museum Studies, again comparing 2005 with 2009 data. The obstacles were “Work/financial commitment,” “Program structure or requirement,” “Course scheduling,” “Availability of faculty,” “Family obligations,” and “Other.” The “Work/financial commitment” obstacle did not change but remained the biggest obstacle to Museum Studies students. The second biggest obstacle was “Program structure or requirement,” which became
somewhat more of an obstacle over the period of study. The “Course scheduling” obstacle was reduced in the students’ view. The obstacles that grew somewhat were “Program structure or requirement,” “Family obligations,” and “Other” but they generally were considered minor obstacles, except for “Other.” “Other” went from no obstacle to a major obstacle for a small minority of people. “Availability of faculty” improved considerably from 2005 to 2009. Museum Studies students perceive most of these obstacles to be lower than do graduate students in other departments.

In a second study, the Acting Director with the support of the Museum Student Organization (MSO) conducted in fall 2010 a survey of current students. The Acting Director met with students and discussed 9 questions he asked them to answer: 1. My Academic track is, 2. Most Valuable Courses and Why, 3. Least Valuable Courses and Why, 4. What types of courses would you like to see taught in the program that are not taught, 5. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the program, 6. Evaluate the internship and how to strengthen it, 7. Evaluate Advising, 8. Evaluate the administration of the program, and 9. Evaluate your fellow students as colleagues.

Seventeen current students, or about 43 percent, responded to this questionnaire.

Nine history track students named professional courses to be the most valuable, with the exception of The Nature of Museums, which they often found the least valuable course. They believed that the faculty who teach the professional courses and who have professional experience are a strength of the program. They dislike their track because they believe that their professors do not understand them, and they believe that there should be more professional courses and fewer academic courses in the curriculum. They were disappointed in advising, though some noted that it was improving. They believe that the program should take more advantage of the nexus of museums on campus. They were satisfied with current administrative practices and very happy with the quality of their fellow students.

Six anthropology track students answered the survey. They agreed that the professional courses were the most valuable, and the least valuable was the Nature of Museums. They would like to see more hands-on professional courses in the form of advanced courses in specializations. Several of these students mentioned that they came to KU because of the anthropology track, and an equal number thought the program structure should be re-balanced toward more professional courses and fewer academic courses. Most found the internship very helpful, though to some the internship process is confusing and the internship itself expensive. They feel lucky to have Dr. Janzen as their advisor. The few who chose to evaluate the administration recognized a positive change. Anthropology students are generally very happy with the quality of their fellow students.
E. **Museum Student Organization (MSO).**

The Museum Student Organization is active, meets on a frequent basis, and has good leaders who have a very good working relationship with the current administration of the program. MSO is represented on the Faculty Advisory Committee by their president and on the Curriculum Review Committee by their president and vice president, Melissa Sheinman and John Coats.

V. **Alumni.**

A. **Number of Graduates.**

From 1983 to 2010, the University has graduated approximately 187 students with a master’s degree in Historical Administration and Museum Studies or a Master of Arts in Museum Studies. As graduates, these students have taken professional positions all over the world and primarily in jobs directly related to their museum studies education at the University of Kansas. Since 2000, the University on average has graduated 9 students a year. Since 2006, this number has gone up to an average of 10 a year.

B. **Where They Work and What They Do.**

In a survey of 156 graduates whom we could locate, completed in 2007 and updated in 2010, 129 responded with information about their work. Seventy-seven percent of them had jobs in museums, archives, and collections, 13 percent in education, and 10 percent worked in other fields. A large number of our graduates worked in regional institutions in Kansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Missouri, Colorado, Texas, Montana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio. A small concentration of our students worked in Arizona and Utah, and a number held positions in states in the Northeast, such as Pennsylvania, Maryland, the District of Columbia, New York, and Connecticut.

Anasazi State Park Museum, Helen Allen Textile Collection, University of Wisconsin, Kansas Biological Survey, New Jersey State Museum, Discovery Science Center, Ft. Collins, Museum of Northern Arizona, Old Shawnee Town, Agriculture Hall of Fame, Tyrrell Historical Library, Stannard Conservation Laboratory, University of Kansas Libraries, University of Wisconsin at River Falls Area Research Center, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum, Historical Society of Frederick, Maryland, Tallgrass Prairie National Park, Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Historic Site, Bucks County Historical Society, Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, Texas State House Museum, Sioux City Public Museum, American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, and the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Of the 129 alumni who responded, 99 were in museum or museum-related jobs and they held job titles, such as Supervisor of Collections, Archivist, Archives Director, Administrator, Exhibit Designer, Collection Manager, Executive Director, Director and Associate Director, Development Officer, Registrar and Assistant Registrar, Education Assistant, Museum Specialist, Collections Assistant, Collections Manager, Senior Curator, Curator, and Assistant Curator, and Museum and Scientific Consultant.

C. Alumni Responses and Evaluations.

The program has kept up well with its alumni, where they live and what they are doing. Eighty-six alumni or 46 percent responded to our request for information about them, their careers, what they liked about their educational experience, what could be improved, and what needs to be done in higher education to respond to the changing needs of professionals in museum careers. Fourteen alumni wrote letters, and 72 answered a survey conducted through Survey Monkey.

Those who wrote letters expressed high satisfaction with their education at the University of Kansas, whether they have a museum career or related career. For many, the museum studies program was a foundational and transformative educational experience. A museum archivist said that “It certainly changed my life and opened up my opportunities.” A staff member in a regional museum stated that “The KU museum studies program gave me the opportunity to fulfill my lifelong dream.” A curator remarked that Museum Studies at the University of Kansas “was a wonderful experience and generally gave me a solid foundation in museum work.” A museum director who had had a ladder of jobs said that “My education and training in the MHAMS program prepared me well for these various adventures.” An alumna in Seattle said that “I have found that my museum coursework has greatly enhanced my work as an archivist.” A 2008 graduate, who faced a deep recession crisis upon graduation, started volunteering in a museum in Butler County and now is the chief curator of the Reno County Historical Society and the Reno County Museum, exclaimed that “the program is a great one,” and “it has been quite the ride thus far.” Even the alumni who were working outside the museum field showed no regret about having KU’s Museum
Studies degree. A Federal Reserve Bank corporate trainer stated that “Though I am no longer working in the museum field, I really do feel like my MHAMS background helps me out every day.” An alum who just completed his Ph.D. in biology and is starting a postdoctoral fellowship responded that “I think the Museum Studies program helped me develop a practical sense about biological materials,” and he was happy that “the program also gave me perspective about common issues shared between art, history, anthropology, and natural history where ultimately preserving materials is the goal and by default bridges such disparate disciplines.”

A minority of these letter writers mentioned what they thought the museum studies program should take into consideration, including the need for greater understanding of computer systems and their organizational effects, a deeper understanding of the interaction between technology and core museum work, and the need for students to take a more multi-disciplinary approach to museum studies. An information and knowledge manager in Germany thinks our museum courses are “on target” but she emphasizes that she lacked communications skills as a student and would like for the program to take up writing and presentation issues in courses throughout the curriculum. The need to address communication skills came up several times. It is remarkable how few considerations there are when alumni write letters in response to an acting director’s request that they “fill us in on your career.”

Seventy-two responses come from a Survey Monkey survey that Sofia Liu, collections manager in the Spencer Museum of Art and a graduate of the MUSE program, developed in consultation with Dennis Domer. Liu is currently a lecturer in collections management, and is also very interested in working on the creation of an active alumni organization that can contribute to the identity of the program. Ninety-six percent of the respondents graduated since 1990 and 68 percent since 2000 so this response is most representative of young and mid-career professionals. Forty-four percent took the History Track, 24 percent the Anthropology Track, 19 percent the American Studies Track, 10 percent the natural history track, and 4 percent the Geology Track.

When asked to compare their education with the education of their professional peers, 27 percent said excellent, 52 percent very good, 18 percent good, 2 percent adequate and 2 percent poor. In a question that asked “which courses did you find to be the most valuable in your development as a professional,” these alumni overwhelmingly identified our professional courses, such as education, exhibits, collections management, conservation, the nature of museums, and museum management. There was only one mention of the academic tracks and that was American Studies core courses and collection theory.

Ironically, in response to “which courses did you find to be the least valuable to your professional development,” these alumni almost always named one of the professional courses. References to the track courses came up only 4 times. In
response to “what topics do you wish you had had more exposure to in the program now that you have worked in the field,” the respondents mentioned archives, libraries, grant writing, statistics, law, packing and shipping, creating exhibits, contracts and funding, grant writing, preservation, education and visitor services, business and marketing, budgeting, leadership, development, finance, ethics, effective communications skills, computerization and computer skills, curatorship, hands-on, practical applications, and working with local governments and schools. There were also references to academic courses, such as anthropology, art history, and material culture.

When asked to respond to which of the following changes would you make to improve the Museum Studies program, 43 percent said that they would change the ratio of professional courses to academic courses, and 43 percent said that they would change the advising system. Thirty-two percent said that they would change the track system, 13 percent would change nothing, 9 percent would change the internship requirement, and 20 percent would change something not yet mentioned. In their explanations of these changes, these respondents overwhelmingly wanted more professional courses and fewer track courses. Dissatisfaction among students in the history track was frequently expressed; many students in other tracks also thought that the track courses detracted rather than added to their education and wanted to change the ratio of professional courses to academic courses. This is not true, however, of everyone. “In the end, one respondent said, “I really enjoyed my American Studies courses.” Another said “I really enjoyed my anthropology courses.” There was mention of and strong support for the internship component of the curriculum. One of the most frequent complaints was about advising, such as “I don’t think our track advisors know what to do with us,” “many of the track advisors seemed to treat the Museum Studies program as inferior,” “the current advising systems is largely misguided,” “my advisor didn’t seem very interested in the program, so one of his employees signed all my paperwork,” and “I basically had NO advisor.”

VI. KU Museums, Archives, and Collections.

The University of Kansas brings together an exceptional group of museums, libraries, archives, and collections on campus at the Spencer Museum of Art, the Spencer Research Archives, the Natural History Museum, the Watson Library, the Anschutz Library, the Spahr Engineering Library, the Music and Dance Library, the Art and Architecture Library, the Wheat Law Library, the Dole Institute of Politics, the Wilcox Classical Museum, and the Booth Family Hall of Athletics on the Lawrence campus. In Kansas City, at the KU Medical Center there is the Dykes Library, and the Farha Medical Library, and on the Edwards Campus is the Regents Center Library. The Museum Studies program has relatively weak or no relationships with most of these institutions and has developed somewhat stronger relationships recently with the Spencer Museum of Art, the Natural History Museum, the Spencer Research Library, and the Dole Institute of Politics where
museum studies students often undertake internships under the supervision of the staff in those institutions.

A. The Spencer Museum of Art.

The Spencer Museum of Art is an exceptional University museum in the United States. Seven galleries display selections from the permanent collection of more than 36,000 works of art. Special exhibitions drawn from the collection or touring from other museums are displayed in four additional galleries. Because the Museum serves as a resource for the teaching and study of art history, fine arts, and the humanities, the collection is comprehensive in nature. It spans the history of European, North American, and East Asian art. Areas of special strength include medieval art; European and American paintings, sculpture and prints; photography; Japanese Edo-period painting and prints; 20th-century Chinese painting; and KU’s ethnographic collection, which includes around 10,000 Native American, African, Latin American and Australian works. More than half of the Western paintings and sculpture are on permanent display. The numerous Western and Asian prints, drawings, photographs, and decorative arts, including the Spencer Museum's renowned quilt collection, are shown on a rotating basis in short-term, thematic exhibitions. Those objects not on view are available for scholarly examination by appointment.

B. The Spencer Research Library.

The Spencer Research Library is a major repository of cultural resources housed in its three main collections. The Kansas Collection is the regional history division of the University of Kansas Libraries. The collection provides researchers with primary source materials that document the history of Kansas, the region, and the people who have lived here. In order to support teaching and research at the University, and elsewhere, staff of the Collection acquire, preserve, and make available such resources as manuscripts, historical photographs, maps, architectural drawings and blueprints, books, newspapers and other serial publications, film and videotapes that document the "Kansas Experience." The Kansas Collection is also a depository for publications of the state of Kansas and for Douglas County records. The University Archives is the repository for the records documenting the history of the University of Kansas. Included are the official papers of the chancellors, records of student and faculty activities, and selected publications and papers of alumni and faculty. The Department of Special Collections contains a wide range of rare books and manuscripts. Its primary charge is the collection and preservation of original sources for use by students of the humanities, of the history of science, and of the history of the book. The Department presently holds about 250,000 volumes printed since the mid-15th century and about 500,000 manuscripts dating from Antiquity to the present with particular emphasis on ancient and medieval manuscripts, 19th and 20th century literary collections, the history of science, 18th century collections, the history of American education, and the Irish collections.
C. Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Institute.

The Natural History Museum, the most visited museum in Kansas, was founded as a “cabinet of natural history” in 1864 as a part of the University’s original charter. In 2003, it became a part of the Biodiversity Institute which encompasses all of the museum's collections-based research programs, scientific staff and graduate students. As one of its units, the KU Natural History Museum continues to be a local and regional resource for natural history exhibits and public education programs. What began as a “cabinet” now includes some 8 million specimens and 1.2 million archaeological artifacts. Students and staff are distributed across seven buildings on campus and conduct research on all continents. Their work is supported by millions of dollars in federal research grants. Biodiversity Institute scientists continue to seek answers to core questions in biodiversity science, evolution and environmental change.

D. The Dole Institute of Politics.

The mission of the Dole Institute of Politics is to promote political and civic participation as well as civil discourse in a bi-partisan, balanced manner. By providing a forum for discussion of political and economic issues, fostering for public service leadership and encouraging participation in the political process, the institute emphasizes that politics is an honorable profession and that only through political and civic participation can citizens redirect the course of our nation. While the objective is to accomplish this mission on a broad scale, the location at the University of Kansas provides a unique opportunity for outreach to young people and students. Three distinct components of the Dole Institute are utilized to accomplish this mission: unique displays that tell the compelling story of U. S. Senator Bob Dole's life in the context of Kansas and The Greatest Generation; the largest congressional archives in existence that house all of the Senator's congressional papers and will someday be the scene of critical historical research; and finally, the aggressive public programming conducted by the Dole Institute.

VII. Other Local and Regional Museums.

Students in Museum Studies undertake internships in a variety of local and regional museums, including the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, the Watkins Community Museum in Lawrence, various state historical sites, museums especially in Johnson County and Douglas County, and in other institutions generally in eastern Kansas and western Missouri.
VIII.  Administration and Leadership, Governance, and Budget.

The Museum Studies Program is a stand-alone entity situated in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Director, who administers the program, is appointed by the Dean of the College and reports to an Associate Dean of the College. The director is responsible for the smooth functioning of MUSE. In the administration of the program the Director consults with the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), which is appointed by the Dean for three-year terms and composed of one representative from each of the academic tracks, a director of one of the campus museums, and the president of the Museum Student Organization (MSO).

The Bylaws of the Museum Studies Program, revised in Spring 2004 and in the Appendix, spell out principles of governance, administrative roles, rights and responsibilities, consultation and policy making processes, membership requirements, curriculum requirements, student affairs, support staff, faculty appointments, and grievance procedures.

The MUSE program has its own budget consisting of a director’s line, an administrative staff line, other operating expenses, and a faculty line from which all part-time appointments are made.

The Museum Student Organization serves as an interface between students and the administration of the Museum Studies Program, maintains a network of alumni and museum professionals, encourages students to become active members of the museum community, and represents MSO's interests in the academic and museum community.

The budget for Museum Studies has more than doubled in the past five years, going from .2 FTE for both the director and administrative associate to .5 FTE in both of those positions. Part-time professional faculty salaries, however, average only $4,000 per course, which is about $1,000 less per course than is paid on average to part-time lecturers in the College of Arts and Sciences. Since the program cannot operate without faculty, it would be wise to address this problem in the next budget. The program also has minimal OOE funds and a small endowment that is used for activities that University funds cannot cover.

IX.  Facilities.

MUSE has a one-room program office in 208 Bailey Hall which is used for administrative support and program meetings. The director does not have an office, unless she/he has an academic appointment in another department, which up to now has always been the case. Since Bailey Hall is scheduled for renovation in the near future, it will be important to find other quarters. The best situation would be to place the program office in one of the leading museums on campus where the
program would be more closely associated with museums on campus and where it would present a stronger identifiable face to the outside world.

X. Challenges and Opportunities.

A. Identity Formation and Strategic Decision-Making.

Who is, what is, and where is the Museum Studies Program and what should it be? These four lingering, complex questions challenge the University, MUSE’s director, faculty, students, alumni and critical supporters, such as campus museum directors, local and state museum directors, and the College of Arts and Sciences. Over the past five years, MUSE has lost identity, though not necessarily reputation, in the professional world of museum education primarily because of MUSE’s failure to participate consistently in regional and national professional organizations and to produce any scholarship directly relevant to the field of museum studies. The lack of consistent participation and scholarship has happened primarily because there have been five directors or acting directors during this period. The connection to the outside world of museum education, which provides a network of museum educators, graduate students, prospective students, intellectual and financial resources, and opportunities for collaboration with museum educators and professionals throughout the United States, is essential for the informed vitality of the program and its competitiveness. Re-connecting and participating should not be difficult but interest, effort, and a willingness to be there are critical factors.

MUSE also has not cultivated its relationships well with campus museums, leaving directors of museums, collections, archives, and libraries at a loss about why this is or should be so, especially when they have expressed interest in the Museum Studies program. Though there has been long-term substantial support of the program among local and regional museum leaders who have provided many internships and part-time professional faculty, the program has not reached out to them successfully or appreciated them enough. Further, the program has conducted an essentially passive admissions process which does not reach out successfully to prospective students through an effective, informative website and a personal recruitment process. MUSE has never organized an alumni organization, and it has almost never convened its faculty, as defined by its Bylaws. The MUSE newsletters that were published during the past two years should be continued in virtual form to provide current information about MUSE to all these relatively untended constituencies that need further cultivation. Further leadership and initiatives in all these areas will certainly improve the identity and quality of the program externally and internally.

In spite of these lingering questions, the program has been resilient, has slowly grown over three decades, and appears primed for new leadership and new
opportunities. MUSE is a small graduate program in a large University so it will never have extraordinary influence at the University of Kansas, but the frequent change of directors has reduced the program’s contributions to the academic community. Key to identity formation within the academic community will be the appointment of a “permanent” director with tenured faculty status who has strong museum studies credentials and who can undertake the responsibilities of teaching, research, and service expected of all faculty. An appointment of one additional faculty member would not only solve some of the identity problems but open up a reservoir of untapped opportunities to demonstrate excellence and make the program one of the best in the United States.

The underlying strategic question that helps clarify the nature of the program’s identity and its strategic future path is: MUSE is very good; what do we need to become excellent?

B. A Curriculum for the 21st Century.

The curriculum is certainly the foundation of any future identity for MUSE. The current Master of Arts curriculum has existed for only 9 years but is not changed substantially from the Master of Historical Administration and Museum Studies degree which was in place for three decades. Is this the curriculum that will position MUSE to compete with other programs nationally, attract excellent students and faculty, and serve the needs of a dynamic profession in a rapidly changing knowledge world? The Acting Director posed this question to a large, representative committee of stakeholders asking them to envision a contemporary curriculum that would make the program more responsive to the needs of the 21st Century.

The Curriculum Review Committee, appointed by the Acting Director, met from October 2010 to February 2011 and was co-chaired by Saralyn Reece Hardy, Director of the Spencer Museum of Art and Leonard Krishtalka, Director of the Biodiversity Institute and the Natural History Museum and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Members of the committee included Whitney Baker, Conservator for KU Libraries and MUSE program lecturer; Professor John Hoopes, Anthropology and Indigenous Studies departments; Sofia Liu, Collection Manager, Spencer Museum of Art, and MUSE program lecturer; Mary Madden, Director of Education and Outreach at the Kansas State Historical Society and MUSE program lecturer; Professor Jeffry Moran, Department of History and the History Track Advisor; John Pierce, program lecturer and retired vice chancellor, dean, state museum director, and professor of political science, Melissa Sheinman, President of MSO, Professor David Cateforis, History of Art, Professor Deborah Smith, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Beth Whittaker, Head of the Spencer Research Library, Professor John Younger, Classics and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Director of the Wilcox Classical Collection; Brian Rosenblum, Scholarly Digital Initiatives Librarian, and John
Coats, Vice President of MSO. The minutes of this committee can be found in the Appendix.

The committee reached a broad consensus on a vision for a 21st century curriculum, including the five following components:

1. Developing a year-long, object-oriented, on-site, and in-place seminar that immerses students and engages them actively to address a system of educational objectives, including Knowledge Discovery, Knowledge Futures, and Knowledge Dialogue, as discussed and shown in the minutes of October 21, 2010. This Object-as-Narrative immersion, as discussed and shown in the minutes of November 11, 2010, should demonstrate how the various specializations in museum work are tied together in a seamless web of relationships.

2. Remodeling the departmental track system by adding an 18-hour “trackless” sequence of graduate courses that students could take based on the student’s interests and developed with the advice and consent of the students’ advisor. The committee recognized that students may choose to take courses in the traditional tracks and in the interdisciplinary track and that new tracks may emerge but all courses should work in the individual student’s interest.

3. Retaining the professional courses and integrating more fully the impact of new computer technologies into these courses.

4. Retaining the internship requirement, but strengthening it by (a) re-thinking the final paper and oral examination so that they are more analytical and critical rather than descriptive in nature, (b) developing a more collaborative relationship between the program and internship providers, and (c) arranging for international, national, and state-wide internships. The recent establishment of two paid summer internships in the Deutsches Museum in Munich is only a first step toward a more global understanding of museums and the creation of a variety of study abroad internship options for our graduate students.

5. Appointing a full-time director and full-time faculty members who conduct research in museology.

On February 10, 2011, the Curriculum Review Committee met in consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee and University and part-time professional faculty to discuss its vision for the future curriculum.
C. Governance.

The Bylaws that govern the program, as revised in Spring 2004, need to be updated to reflect current expectations by the College and they need to be reconsidered in 2011, because the governing mechanisms they establish do not represent the wide range of stakeholders in the program and do not provide the checks and balances normally expected in academic governance.

The Faculty Advisory Committee is not representative of the faculty and should be renamed the Executive Committee to act on admissions and give advice on policy. A more representative body, perhaps originating out the present Curriculum Review Committee, can be renamed as the Museum Studies Advisory Board, to advise the program and help raise program awareness and resources.

The Bylaws do not give faculty their usual rights or responsibilities for the curriculum and ensuring academic excellence, thus eliminating any reason for them to meet. Part IV. B. 3 states that “All MUSE faculty have the right to vote on appropriate issues.” That bylaw will not bring a faculty together, and bylaw Part IV. B. 2. which states that “MUSE faculty meetings are called by the Director as needed,” does not encourage regular or any meetings for that matter because only one current faculty member can even remember a faculty meeting. No wonder the essential coordination of the curriculum one expects of the faculty was difficult to accomplish.

The Bylaws also need to formally establish a “Director’s Group,” made up of the current directors of KU museums and collections. An informal director’s group that has operated for several months, and the establishment of a formal group is critical because these directors are powerful opinion makers, have a great deal of influence on campus, know the museum world, are enthusiastic supporters of the program and want to be “engines for the program.”

The Bylaws should also establish an alumni group, since they have clearly indicated their desire to ensure its future strength and the vitality of the program. The formation of such a group is already underway.

The Museum Student Organization (MSO) meets on a frequent basis, has strong leadership, and only needs further encouragement and support to undertake a range of student and career-expanding activities that will develop their identity and influence on the Museum Studies Program.

D. Climate of Consensus – Way to the Future.

In interviews with more than 25 stakeholders that the Acting Director conducted in August 2010, it was clear that everyone—faculty, staff, directors, students, alumni, and administrators—recognized that it was and is a pivotal moment for MUSE. Since then, the Curriculum Review Committee was formed to re-think
MUSE. What was most remarkable is that these stakeholders have been on the same page concerning the issues that faced the program and the prospects for improvement. They indicated their fervent desire to reset it through a period of intense evaluation and self-study, philosophical renewal, relationship building, and strategic thinking about the future. They have already adopted an Interdisciplinary Track, created a new elective course in Material Culture, adopted greater flexibility in the tracks, completed the first phase of curriculum review, established international internships, and developed new lines of communication with campus museums, archives, libraries, and collections. The Faculty Advisory Committee has also discussed and indicated its interest in adopting an Indigenous Studies Track. Outreach opportunities to the state of Kansas, such as developing an on-line museum studies training program for Kansans who work in hundreds of museums in the state’s 105 counties, abound and fit well within the Provost’s strategic idea of Engaging Scholarship for Public Impact (ESPI).

In concert with these changes and opportunities, this External Review has provided the opportunity to conduct a rigorous self-study and to receive valuable insight from our external and internal reviewers: Professor Jay Rounds, University of Missouri St. Louis; Professor Marjorie Schwarzer, John F. Kennedy University; and Professor Jorge Soberon, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, the University of Kansas.