

September 7<sup>th</sup> 2009

IUPUI and Heron School of Art and Design  
Masters in Art Therapy Proposal Review

Dear Committee Members:

After reading your proposal through twice, I feel like you have been very thorough in responding to the requirements of the American Art Therapy Association and have an excellent design and superior environment for an art therapy program. However, since I am not in a position of assessing graduate programs (though I have assisted in the development of one) I will leave commentary on the details of that aspect to a more qualified person, Ms. Abbenante.

Here then, are my questions, comments and observations as an artist/art therapist and educator:

1. Do you have a target audience you hope to attract? Is it your intention to recruit from your BFA or MFA students. In other words, do you hope to be training artists in particular as well as others? I know you have a section that clearly outlines this area, but the fact that you are operating from within an art school provides a special “slant” on the training that may be especially appealing to visual artists...assisting them to secure viable work (in the absence of becoming “famous”).
2. Related to the question above...though you have a superb fine arts faculty...there are only 6 credits of studio courses available within the current curricular structure. While I realize you will be strapped by the requirements of AATA...it might be possible to condense one course with another and offer more studio. It is often a weakness (in my opinion) in graduate art therapy programs. If a student comes who has not had very much art training (this happens more often than you know) then they still will not be receiving the depth of immersion in art making that really marks this field as different from a psychologist just using art here and there.
3. With regard to the curriculum...you do show a breadth of offerings with “depth” being the overall program. However, (I am just wondering here and I would seek advice on this from someone else) several of the 1.5 credit courses may be good for initial exposure but not sufficient to provide actual skill in an area. Which again makes me wonder if you may want to consider offering more art training to help establish a particular identity. Some of the more successful art therapy programs have operated from a particular perspective...such as St. Marys-in-the-Woods which is ecologically driven. You may want to be more clearly “studio” based and “arts-based” and less psychologically oriented. Now, having said that, I don’t know if that would jeopardize accreditation...my understanding is that its all in the actual “content” of the courses where creativity can take place and allow for a certain kind of identity or specialization.
4. My last question is about recruitment. Do you know if your program (being at a state institution) will cost less than so many graduate programs currently

operating that are extraordinarily expensive. Given the economic situation in the U.S. now, it would be another good selling point if you can offer this program for less than the going rate. I think this will directly influence recruitment. Most art therapy programs have white, middle/upper class females in them. There is a desperate need to train a more diverse group. Cost would certainly influence recruitment of a diverse population...possibly even the "identity" I referred to in the question/comment above. More thought may need to be given to this aspect of your proposal...how will you recruit for diversity?

I think that's it for me at the moment. I would be happy to clarify if I have been obtuse! I think you have a fabulous location and plan with the children's hospital etc. Great!! I just am wondering if you can maintain a strong and clear sense of the "art" part which so often ends up on the short end of the stick in graduate programs.

Thanks for inviting me to review your proposal!

I think you will be very successful.

Respectfully,

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