April 14, 2009

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan  
President  
Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

The purpose of this letter is to notify the Commission on Colleges that Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi offers certain courses in art at an off-campus site: the Islander Art Gallery in the Hamlin Center at 4024 Weber Road, Corpus Christi, Texas 78411. Students pursuing the painting concentration within the Master of Arts (MA) program in Studio Art or the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program in Studio Art can earn 50% or more of the credits toward their degree at the Hamlin site. (This statement does not apply to students pursuing other concentrations within the MA and MFA programs, such as printmaking, drawing, photography, ceramics, or sculpture.) We regret the delay in notification regarding the off-campus site.

The Department of Art offers both graduate and undergraduate programs. The MA program was implemented in fall 2001, and the MFA program was implemented in fall 2002. The university provided information on the graduate programs in studio art, along with all other graduate programs, in the August 2001 Follow-up Report for the 2000 reaffirmation of accreditation process.

Graduate studio courses in painting have been offered since 2004 in the Hamlin Center, which is less than five miles from the university campus (a 10-12 minute drive). A key reason for moving graduate painting courses to that location involved ventilation and health issues for our graduate art students. At that time, the space on campus for graduate painting students was a heavily used, small space with poor ventilation, which posed health and safety problems for the students. Because efforts to secure state funds for a new facility on campus were not successful, the institution arranged to rent space in the Hamlin Shopping Center and to convert that space into a well-lighted, well-ventilated, safe environment for classes and studios for graduate students.

Students in the MA in Studio Art program must successfully complete 36 semester credit hours in art. Of these, 18 hours (50%) must be selected from one of the following studio art concentrations: painting, printmaking, drawing, photography, ceramics, or sculpture. (Occasionally, a student may be allowed to choose a cross-media selection of courses instead.) The other 18 hours in the MA program include 3 hours in an MA art studio seminar, 6 hours in art history and criticism, 6 hours of art electives, and 3 hours in a project (exit requirement). MA students selecting painting as their concentration currently complete the required 18 hours in studio painting courses at the Islander Art Gallery. Studio courses for all other concentrations are offered only on the university campus.

Students in the MFA in Studio Art program must successfully complete 60 semester hours in art. Of these, 30 hours (50%) must be chosen from one of the following studio art concentrations: painting, printmaking, drawing, photography, ceramics, and sculpture. The other 30 hours in the MFA include 3 hours in an MFA seminar in art, 12 hours of designated electives in art history and criticism, 9 hours of studio electives (or minor area of concentration), and 6 hours of MFA exhibition. MFA students selecting painting as their concentration currently complete the required 30 hours in studio painting at the Islander Art Gallery in the Hamlin Center. Studio courses for the other concentrations are offered only on the university campus.

Most students attending classes at the Islander Art Gallery are MA students; a few are MFA students. Graduate courses taught at the Islander Art Gallery include ARTS 5305 (Studio in Art: Painting) and ARTS 5315 (MFA Studio in Art: Painting), both of which may be repeated. Occasionally, ARTS 4303 (Advanced Painting), a senior-level undergraduate course, has been offered at this site. Also, art workshops are occasionally held at the Islander
Art Gallery. However, only graduate students in the painting concentrations in the MA and MFA in Studio Art programs receive a significant percentage of their coursework at this location.

The Hamlin site includes an art gallery where professional artists display their work and where graduate students can display their final MA and MFA art projects. It is a teaching and learning environment that complements the art facilities on campus. For example, courses in gallery and museum practices (ARTS 5399; ARTS 4390), which are offered on campus, may include field trips to the Islander Art Gallery, the Art Museum of South Texas, and other sites. Visits to the Islander Art Gallery enable students to receive training in the presentation of art work. Additionally, reviews of art work contribute to their educational experience.

Although the Islander Art Gallery at the Hamlin Center is a rented space, it is considered a university facility. The institution includes the site in the facilities inventory report that it submits annually to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The 2009 report identifies the Hamlin Center facility as a rented facility with two defined areas. The use code for the larger area is 11 (general academic instructions, degree-related), and the code for the smaller area is 42 (museums and galleries).

Typically, when the institution offers courses at an off-campus site, the purpose is to serve a different group of students from the regular campus students. This is not the case with the Hamlin facility. Students attending classes at the Islander Art Gallery are our regular graduate art students. The Department of Art uses this site for graduate courses in studio painting because it offers a better, safer educational environment than is available on campus for graduate students. The space for undergraduate painting classes on campus has been upgraded, but it is not large enough to accommodate graduate students. Although the graduate painting students complete 50% or more of their coursework at the Hamlin Center, they also take courses on campus, such as art history, art seminars, and studio courses in concentrations other than painting. There is no separate faculty for the Islander Art Gallery; regular art faculty members teach at that location. Professor Bruno Andrade, a tenured full professor and prominent artist, is the primary faculty member teaching at the Hamlin site.

Eventually the university hopes to provide expanded space on campus for the entire art program. In the meantime, the use of the Islander Art Gallery enables the institution to provide excellent support for its MA and MFA students. Undergraduate art students also benefit from the site because they can receive training in gallery presentation and can attend occasional workshops. We will be happy to provide any additional information that is needed about the use of this site.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Plavius C. Killebrew
President/CEO

/icc

cc: Dr. Anantha Babbili
     Dr. David Billeaux
     Dr. Jack Gron
     Dr. Robert Nelsen
     Dr. Paul Orser
     Dr. Kelly Quintanilla
     Ms. Christine Shupala

bcc: Ms. Kathy Winston ✓