

VERMONT COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS INTERIM GOVERNANCE POLICY

To be assessed for re-authorization by faculty, staff and trustees by April, 2009, after VCFA's first full year of independent operation.

Approved, Board of Trustees, January 12, 2008

POLICY

Vermont College of Fine Arts governs itself in a collaborative organizational environment that values responsibility, communication, and trust. Those responsible for decisions will have appropriate authority and receive appropriate input. Staff and faculty will be empowered to make decisions within their spheres of responsibility except those with substantial extra-program or college-wide impact. Matters that cross the boundaries of programs and administrative departments will receive the input of those affected through means that balance participation and efficiency and take account of the special challenges and opportunities of a low-residence college with a national faculty. Information about issues, proposed developments, and decisions will be communicated in a timely and helpful fashion to assure that all members of the college community are given an opportunity to provide input on matters affecting them.

FINAL RESPONSIBILITY

Vermont College of Fine Arts is governed by a Board of Trustees whose composition and activities are guided by its By-Laws, adopted February 26, 2007 and revised January 12, 2008. The Board of Trustees has final responsibility for the institution, and assures the institution's health by exercising its authority to: determine the mission of the College; hire, evaluate and retain the President of the College; approve the strategic plan; and set tuition and budget. The Trustees delegate operating authority to the President of the College to achieve the College mission and realize its strategic plan within the established budget.

MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

1. The **President of the College** is the chief executive officer of the College, operating within the policies and procedures of the Vermont College of Fine Arts. The President has final decision-making authority concerning internal affairs of the college, including the hiring of staff, and the hiring of new faculty as recommended by existing program faculty. The President will assure good communication between administration and faculty, including the availability of President and Academic Dean to meet with faculty and students during program residencies.
2. **Cabinet-Level Administrators** act as the departmental operating officers of the college and have broad responsibility delegated to them from the President for the planning, development, and administration of the full range of the college's activities to fulfill its mission. These administrators include the Academic Dean, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Marketing, Director of Development, Director of Physical Facilities, and others as the President determines necessary.
3. In the event of the absence or incapacity of the President, the following is the **order of succession** of the individual who will be temporarily responsible for final decision-making: Academic Dean, Chief Financial Officer.

4. VCFA assures faculty governance of academic programs and participation of faculty in college-wide governance. Each **Academic Program** operates with self-reliance and decision authority within its spheres of budget and educational activity – including curriculum; academic standards; faculty hiring, evaluation, and retention; and student-related policies and procedures. Faculty decisions in these areas are subject to the review of the Academic Dean in those matters with substantial extra-program or college-wide impact. The Academic Dean will take to the Academic Council those matters that cannot be resolved directly with the program. Program faculty, with the consultation of their Directors, may create their own program-specific governance arrangements, subject to review by the Academic Dean for matters of equity, consistency with College human resource policies, and other college-wide implications. Current descriptions of each program’s governance arrangements will be maintained in appropriate program handbooks.
5. **Program Directors** of the academic programs work in conjunction with their supervisor, the Academic Dean, to define appropriate areas of individual decision-making and accountability. In general, the Directors are encouraged to take responsibility for *administrative* decisions within the scope of their departments, while relying on **Program Chairs or Co-Chairs** representing program faculty to make *academic* decisions. Program Chairs or Co-Chairs are elected by program faculty. In addition to supervising the Program Directors, the Academic Dean supervises the Program Chairs, who in turn supervise program faculty. Both Program Directors and Program Chairs are encouraged to bring to the Academic Dean any issues that might go outside agreed-upon lines of decision authority or have broader implications beyond their departments.
6. The **Academic Council** meets at least once annually with the Academic Dean and/or President to assure cross-program input and recommendations on academic and administrative matters. It consists of the Co-Chairs of each academic program, or the program Chair and one other member to be chosen by program faculty; the Program Director of each program; and the Academic Dean, who is its convenor. The quorum required for doing official business will be the Dean and at least two representatives of each program, at least two of whom are program directors. Given the dispersed location of the Council’s members, its meetings may be held by conference call. This Council must make a timely recommendation to the President about any proposal for the creation, substantial modification or termination of academic programs, or any substantial matter of college-wide academic policy. Such recommendations may be developed through whatever timely review process the Council determines appropriate for each case. Decisions will be as much as possible by consensus, with voting when required in times of impasse. Minority views may be advanced to the President in the form of dissenting recommendations. Decisions of this group may be in the form of agreements on planning and operations within the academic division of the College, or in the form of recommendations to the President in matters with substantial new cross-program or College-wide impact. The Council also assures that appropriate information and questions travel from program faculty to the other academic programs and administrative departments of the College, and that administrative decision-makers have the benefit of faculty input in college-wide matters such as strategic planning; college-wide policy; budget; facilities and technology; marketing; and human resource issues. Faculty members of the Academic Council will be understood as representatives of their program

faculty as a whole, and will assure that the thinking of their program faculty is represented. Other individuals may be included in the Council's meetings and discussions at the Dean's invitation.

7. All Staff of the institution meet regularly at **Staff Meetings**. The staff meeting is not a decision-making body but a forum for communication among all staff about the affairs of the College including planning, budgeting, staffing, facilities, policy and other concerns of the college. While it is to be assumed that productive communication will normally proceed through supervisory channels, the President will keep an "open door" policy, assuring all members of the VCFA staff and faculty the ability to bring their concerns to her or him.
8. The **Student Advisory Council**, consisting of two student representatives from each academic program, provides student input on College affairs, including strategic planning, academic programs, and student services. Directors may nominate two students from their respective programs whom the President, Academic Dean, or other representative of the College administration or faculty will consult by telephone conference when issues arise requiring student consultation.
9. **Committees and Task Forces**: The President or the Academic Dean may appoint task forces or committees as needed. A task force will generally be convened to advise the President or Dean on a specifically-defined issue for a specific period of time. A committee will generally be convened to advise the President or Dean on a more generally defined issue or set of issues for an unspecified period of time. The President or Dean will define the charge to the task force or committee.
10. A separate **Grievance Policy** will be published in student, faculty and staff handbooks to assure the ability of these constituencies to appeal actions that they believe to be inappropriate.
11. As long as VCFA employees are affected by a **collective bargaining agreement**, VCFA will make managerial decisions that comply with National Labor Relations Board protections.