

2015 Associated Students

AS Productions VU Gallery

AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee



Introduction:

AS Productions VU Gallery presented to the AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee in February, 2014. The currently approved statement of purpose for AS Productions VU Gallery is:

The Viking Union Gallery is a student-curated exhibition space that contributes to the artistic culture of Western's community by hosting diverse exhibitions primarily of student and local artwork, but also works of national and international artists. The VU Gallery is dedicated to Western students enhancing their educational experience by taking the time to reflect on the messages and meanings of the art exhibited, as well as by gaining greater understanding of the various kinds of expression and artistic mediums that may constitute art. The VU Gallery also assists student artists with learning how to successfully and professionally present their artwork in a gallery space.

Program/Services Provided:

- Contribute to the artistic culture of Western's community by hosting diverse exhibitions primarily of student and local artwork but also, on occasion, the work of nationally recognized artists.
- Provide a sounding board for the ideas, concepts, and proposals of many student artists.
- Creating an unintimidating gallery space where all feel welcome and can thus reflect freely upon the body of work being displayed.
- Assisting student artists to professionally present their exhibition ideas to galleries, communicate successfully with galleries, and finally hang their work in galleries.
- Exhibiting both diverse and controversial works which provide new avenues for discussion and the expression of ideas.

SCOT Chart:

Section 7: SCOT Analysis



		HELPFUL	HARMFUL
		(S) Strengths	(C) Challenges
INTERNAL		The Gallery contributes to the overarching visual culture of Western's student body through exposure to physical manifestations of complex ideas. These physical embodiments give students, and community members, the tools to talk about heavy, controversial, or otherwise taboo topics.	The Gallery's location is somewhat challenging. Being tucked away on the fifth floor of the VU is something that Gallery Directors have been trying to work around for the past few years. I have heard it said that many people just don't know that the gallery exists.
		Friendly and knowledgeable staff who help to transform the gallery from an intimidating space into one that is more inviting or safe.	Another challenge is the fact that the information we collect via our pin board is somewhat unhelpful. It gives us a very general idea about the demographic of our patronage but yields very little other information.
		The fact that the Gallery's staff alternates every year helps to keep the exhibits, or themes, from stagnating. There are always fresh and original exhibits in the VU Gallery.	
		(O) Opportunities	(T) Threats
EXTERNAL		Something we would like to see more of in the gallery is more nationally recognized artists. One way to do this would be fundraising.	Art is often one of the first things to go. Some view it as insubstantial, unimportant, or even undesirable because of this, in the past, the gallery space has been moved.
		On the pin board many people indicate that they heard about the gallery via "other." I would like to figure out just what "other" is and utilize this form of publicity to further promote the VU Gallery.	We have a consistent number of patrons but the it would be nice if our patronage grew from year to year.
		Also, more off campus promotions.	
		I feel there is a lot of opportunity to work with other organizations here on campus, whether it be clubs or AS offices, this collaboration has the potential to yield higher attendance at events and would be a good way to cross promote events	

Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:

The following are the Structure and Program Advisory committee's recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

1. *Identify and utilize methods of data collection and analysis which will more accurately determine the demographic of the VU Gallery's patronage.*

The method currently used to collect demographic data within the VU Gallery is, at best, unreliable. During both closing and opening receptions AS Productions has begun to use tablets that allow patrons to tell us a little more about themselves but sample sizes are incredibly small and skewed differently based on the show that is currently on exhibit. We have discussed having a tablet permanently placed within the VU Gallery to allow for a larger and more varied sample size but this is still in early discussion. The problem with this is that we would be using one of the tablets on reserve for AS use, which would only leave four for the rest of the AS. Another option would be purchasing a tablet specifically for VU Gallery use.

2. *Develop a way to gauge the response of the VU Gallery's patrons to exhibitions.*

Students give us initial insight into what they would like to see in the VU Gallery during the Taste Test survey at the beginning of the year but the appeal of art, and specifically new exhibitions, is that the subject matter is foreign or unexpected. Because of this we have no way to gauge the reaction of our patrons in the moment. It's much easier to decide what shows to bring next when we have fresh, relevant, and of the moment feedback. A simple solution would be to place a comment book within the VU Gallery.

3. *Explore ways to acquire and implement more effective signage for the VU Gallery.*

The VU Gallery is tucked away and comparatively remote. Because of this the VU Gallery needs more signage to direct people to the gallery space. I suggest that the VU Gallery get sandwich boards specifically for promotional use. These boards could be moved across campus to better reach a wide audience who may not be receptive to hand billing. Also, additional signage within the VU to direct the flow of foot traffic would be incredibly beneficial. Another option would be to label the fifth floor buttons of the Viking union with "VU Gallery".

4. *The Viking Union Gallery and its affiliates need to become more involved in discussions surrounding the use of space within the Viking Union.*

Unfortunately, all galleries on Western's campus are tucked away and out of sight. In the past this was not the case. Once the VU Gallery occupied a prominent space on the sixth floor of the Viking Union. But, when remodeling began the VU Gallery was moved down to the fifth floor and away from the casual glance of passersby and Western's student body in general. The VU Gallery no longer benefits from foot traffic but is instead mainly visited by those with express intent or those who happen on it by chance. Despite this, the VU Gallery is a wonderful space ideal for the exhibition of art and I believe it is important that as remodeling continues the VU Gallery has representation within the discussions surrounding space within the Viking Union.