

# Report of the 2020 Commission on Fine and Performing Arts

## INTRODUCTION: Creating a place where the arts will thrive

Fulfilling the recommendations of the fine and performing-arts commission would greatly transform cultural programs at the University of Virginia. Such an effort also would enable the arts to attain the same national prominence the University's existing centers of excellence have achieved.

This transformation would enrich the experience of students and faculty, expand the cultural resources for the University and surrounding community, and alter the physical environs where the arts currently are created and performed. These actions would add a critically important dimension to the character of UVa and greatly enhance its relationships with the public. It would develop the University's ability to shape and enrich national discourse and culture.

The University community would see abundant benefits with such a transformation. Students would have greater opportunities to develop their aural and visual sensibilities, their understanding of historic artistic achievements, and their appreciation of world cultures.

Making the arts not merely a part of their coursework but also a part of their lives would permit students to view the world in new and complex ways. It would give them continual pleasure in seeking out and recognizing works of art that have true merit.

For students making the arts their life's work, this new environment would enable them to discover and refine their talents, guided by faculty who themselves are deeply involved in the creative process. As they pursue their artistic training, students would be encouraged to explore the array of academic subjects that only an institution of UVa's breadth and stature could provide.

For faculty, the University could offer the time, tools and facilities necessary to produce art and scholarship of the highest order. Faculty also could teach exceptionally gifted students whose creativity is matched by an intellectual depth that inspires their work.

The University also has purely practical reasons to improve its fine and performing-arts programs. The arts play an increasingly significant role in the economy, especially in the entertainment field and in the Internet-based "new economy." A high level of visual and aural literacy would enhance graduates' abilities to succeed in this competitive arena.

The arts also are an effective medium for economic development. When urban planners and business leaders begin to revitalize distressed areas of inner cities, a common strategy is to pull in the arts. Studios, museums, galleries and concert venues serve as magnets for new publics and new businesses. From TriBeCa in New York to the Warehouse District of New Orleans, the arts help bring aging urban areas back to economic health.

Likewise, strengthening the arts at the University would provide a significant economic benefit to the Charlottesville area and would bridge gaps and ease tensions that naturally occur between UVa and its neighbors. Furthermore, an engaging arts scene would help the University continue to attract first-rate students, faculty and staff.<sup>1</sup>

The commission’s work has been guided by the following five broad principles:

- The arts are fundamental to a civilized society and an essential element of an educated person.
- To be a truly first-rate institution, the University must have strong programs in the arts and provide effective physical environments where the arts can thrive.
- The arts link the University with its key publics — the local community, visitors from around the country and abroad, and alumni and friends of the institution.
- The arts are an important component of the quality of life in the University community.
- The arts are an effective conduit to appreciating and understanding diverse peoples of the world.

In the course of its work, the commission studied several university arts programs around the United States to find specific elements worth emulating.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The following table of on-Grounds arts events and attendance estimates for 1999-2000 illustrates an active cultural scene. More details are available from Bill Sublette at the University Development Office, 804-924-1057 or [ws5a@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:ws5a@cms.mail.virginia.edu).

<b>Total Number of Arts Groups</b>	<b>52</b>
Student Organizations	44
University Departments	8
<b>Total Number of Arts Events/Performances</b>	<b>805</b>
Student Arts Events/Performances, 1999-2000	453
Departmental Events/Performances, 1999-2000	352
<b>Total Number of Attendees for 1999-2000</b>	<b>178,138</b>
Student Arts Events/Performances Attendees	82,829
Departmental Arts Events/Performances Attendees	95,309

<sup>2</sup>These programs are compared with corresponding UVa offerings in Appendix A: Benchmarking, available on the commission’s Website, <http://www.virginia.edu/virginia2020/finearts/finearts-docs1.htm>. Also on the Website are: Appendix C: Master Plan for the Arts Precinct, Appendix D: Missions and Goals (of

While learning from others, the commission's major objective was to establish the University's own identity in the arts by developing and strengthening programs reflecting UVa's core mission and values. These values and assumptions are:

- In addition to professional training, arts students should receive a broad liberal-arts education to benefit from the academic and intellectual breadth of the University.
- The arts departments should remain in the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences to ensure that the arts truly are a part of the University's academic life and to foster collaboration between the arts and other programs.
- Arts programs require flexible teaching approaches, ranging from one-on-one instruction to larger classes. Further, arts programs combine academic study with specialized training.
- Creating new work is a fundamental aspect of the arts programs at the University.
- Study of the arts at UVa must reach beyond the European tradition to embrace the multiple and diverse cultures throughout the world.
- Arts programs must help the University fulfill its commitment to serving the educational, cultural and economic needs of the community and the nation.
- Keeping such principles in mind, the commission recommends the following five major actions to raise the quality and visibility of the University's arts programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **Expand and improve the University's facilities for the arts**, providing students and faculty with the tools they need to create outstanding work, including works in digital media and other new technologies.

### 1.1 New and expanded facilities

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schools, departments and programs), Appendix E: Proposal for a Program in Dance and Movement Studies, Appendix F: Digital Arts Initiative, and Appendix G: Proposal for an ARTSEMS Happening at UVa.

This University, above all others, is keenly aware of the power of physical space to enrich the academic and student-life experience. The substandard facilities where the arts programs now are housed make a resounding declaration to students, faculty and especially potential applicants: the arts are not valued at the University of Virginia.

If UVa is sincere about its desire to become nationally distinguished in the arts, it must express in bricks and mortar its intent to bring the arts facilities to the level of other facilities on Grounds — such as the School of Law, the Darden School and athletics facilities.

This is not putting the cart before the horse. It is impossible to build strong programs within the current physical framework. Talented students and faculty members, no matter what other incentives UVa offers to bring them here, will always feel like second-class citizens if they are forced to work under current conditions.

Drama faculty sit three to an office; art history faculty work in trailers; the University's art museum can exhibit less than four percent of its collection at any one time; and the director of the Virginia Film Festival works in a former janitor's closet.

In the School of Architecture, 70 professors occupy a building designed 30 years ago for a faculty of 10. The miserably dilapidated offices and classrooms of Fayerweather Hall, the makeshift studios in Brooks Hall, the severely limited practice and performance spaces in Old Cabell Hall, the crowded shops and faculty offices in the drama building — all cast a pall over the arts at the University.

The commission applauds the decisive steps the University is taking to remedy these conditions and create the Arts Grounds on and around the Carr's Hill area.<sup>3</sup> Progress is being made on several fronts.

From state and private sources, planning funds are now available for every project envisioned for the Arts Grounds. The Virginia General Assembly has appropriated \$9 million for a new studio art building, and the University is mounting a major fund-raising effort to secure support for other facilities in the plan.

Until the University provides adequate rehearsal and performance spaces for musicians, until young sculptors and painters have a healthy environment in which to work, and until dancers have a place to practice and perform without injury -- until then, the University can never hope to become an equal with the nation's most respected arts programs.

Building the Arts Grounds would do more than remedy the current poor conditions. It would create a lively new center of University life where students and faculty could cross paths with community members and visitors who come to Charlottesville, not just to tour its historic sites, but also to sample the cultural attractions for which UVa would become known. Moreover, by bringing all the University's arts

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<sup>3</sup>For more details, see Appendix C: Master Plan for the Arts Precinct on the commission's Website.

programs into the same vicinity, the Arts Grounds would foster artistic and academic collaboration, which would be key to the University's ability to make new and distinct contributions to the arts.

Another pressing need, and one yet to be addressed in the Master Plan, is performance and rehearsal space for extracurricular arts organizations, such as dance clubs, the First-Year Players, the Virginia Gentlemen, and the 17 other student-led *a cappella* ensembles. The University must also work to meet this need.

## **1.2 Tools for creativity**

The advent of the microchip has brought a vast assortment of new media to the artist's palette. In the Virginia Center for Computer Music, students have a rich environment for creating new works using the most recent technologies. In the library's media center, they use digital systems to produce and edit videos.

In the studio-art program, faculty and students use computers, scanners and archival inkjet printers to stretch the boundaries of the printmaker's art. Photo manipulation programs are opening new creative horizons for photographers.

For architects and set designers, the computer has become an essential tool for modeling design concepts. In drama, computers are programmed to control complex changes in scenery and stage lighting. In art exhibitions, computers and other electronic equipment are used to display works encompassing new media.

To enable artists in all fields to work at the forefront of their disciplines, the University must give them access to the most advanced digital media. This is especially important to realize with the enormous potential of the Digital Arts Initiative (see Appendix F on the commission's website), which will draw on a wide range of disciplines to develop teaching, research and creative projects using new media.

Concurrently, the University must ensure that its artists have access to more time-honored tools: professional-quality musical instruments, safe and well-equipped shops and studios, and first-rate library collections and services. In addition to helping artists produce superior work, the high quality of equipment and services will send a strong message to prospective students and faculty -- that UVa is dedicated to excellence in the arts. This is vital to maintain that competitive edge in the University's effort to bring talented men and women into the community.

- 2) **Give departments the faculty they need to meet a greater share of student demand** for courses in the arts, to collaborate across disciplines, to foster professional development and to strengthen their programs. Give the arts libraries and

the University Art Museum the human resources necessary to achieve and sustain excellence.

## **2.1 Meet demand for courses**

Arts programs require a range of teaching styles and patterns. Some are best taught one-on-one, on the apprentice-master model. Others can be taught in large groups.

With the current limited faculty and facilities, many students wishing to take courses in the arts are turned away. For example, in spring 2000, nearly 1,400 students were denied entry into the introductory courses offered in art history, studio art, music, drama and creative writing. Programs must be staffed to enable more student participation.

Since the arts are such a vital part of the enrichment that comes with a college education, the University has an obligation to strengthen its capacity to meet student demand for arts courses. Increasing class sizes would diminish the quality of instruction, and increasing teaching loads would place an unfair burden on faculty who are expected to teach as well as be productive artists and scholars.

At its highest level, the creation of art forces students to think critically, take risks and confront themes and ideas of profound importance. Often in the process of taking an introductory art course, students discover talents and interests previously unknown to them.

More students deserve to benefit from such a fulfilling experience, one that will allow them to derive meaning and joy from the arts for the rest of their lives. If the University is committed to producing women and men who will make significant contributions to society and culture, it must provide sufficient opportunities for students to explore and understand the creative process.

## **2.2 Collaborate across disciplines**

Boundaries between art forms are becoming increasingly blurred. So should the walls between UVa's arts departments likewise be permeable and transparent.

One of the great benefits of this commission's work has been to bring members of the University's arts faculties together in unprecedented ways, engendering increased interest in collaboration across disciplines. Faculty members envision courses and projects combining such elements as music, dance and modern media, or poetry, theater and the visual arts. They also seek collaborations beyond the arts, e.g., bringing specialists in music, anthropology, and religious studies together to shed new light on world cultures.

Interdisciplinary collaboration, however, requires time and coordination. As they now stand, University arts programs are stretched beyond capacity. Enlarging the faculty and facilities in the arts beyond the level needed to meet student demand for arts courses would allow faculty members the time to pursue the innovative melding of art forms, enabling student and faculty artists to venture onto new creative terrain and produce work of startling freshness and originality.

An interdisciplinary task force, appointed by the commission, developed an imaginative proposal for Arts Seminars. Modeled after the University Seminars where entering students can take courses from distinguished scholars, the Arts Seminars would bring in faculty from all arts departments and from other fields to examine topics from multiple perspectives. Each seminar would culminate in a creative project involving a combination of art forms. An interdisciplinary arts lecture series also is being planned.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.3 Working in the profession**

In both the performing and visual arts, faculty artists not only are educators but also productive participants in the profession. The University must foster the faculty's engagement in the creative world.

When musicians or composers can collaborate with professional ensembles, when designers or directors are invited to work on a Broadway-bound production, or when painters or sculptors receive a major commission, UVa's arts faculty must have sufficient flexibility in their teaching schedules to pursue these ventures.

Such opportunities are vital to professional development as well as attracting and retaining artists of the highest caliber. Moreover, faculty participation in the profession raises the University's national visibility its arts programs and demonstrates to the arts community that UVa has an extraordinary reservoir of talent and ability.

### **2.4 Expand guest-artist programs**

The University's arts faculty includes creative, energetic women and men who are gifted teachers and highly productive artists. To complement their work, it is important to bring in guest artists who can add a creative edge to department activities. Whether they are on Grounds for a few weeks, a full semester, or a full academic year, distinguished guest artists bring fresh perspectives to departments and, through lectures and workshops, expose students to new directions in their disciplines.

Although the University's setting offers many charms, Charlottesville is far removed from the world's major arts centers. This makes it all the more important that the University bring in composers, musicians, painters, sculptors, photographers, actors,

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<sup>4</sup>For more details, see Appendix G: Proposal for an ARTSEMS Happening at UVa on the commission's Website.

designers, dancers, filmmakers, and other artists who are setting the pace in their specialties.

Over the past several years, the Office of the Vice President and Provost has provided funding for guest artists. This support should be sustained and expanded, and the University should continue its efforts to raise funds for endowed guest-artist positions.

## **2.5 Establish endowed professorships**

The quality of the University's arts programs can be no greater than that of its faculties. Across Grounds, UVa's most distinguished schools and programs have recruited and retained excellent faculty by awarding endowed professorships to eminent scholars. More such resources must be made available to the University's arts departments, which currently have only two faculty members with endowed professorships.

In the departments of History and English, roughly one in five faculty members holds an endowed professorship. In the department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, nearly one in three faculty members has been awarded an endowed professorship. To bring the University's arts departments to the level of such highly ranked programs, the University must create endowed chairs for recruiting and retaining distinguished faculty.

In addition to increasing the faculty member's compensation, a named, endowed professorship sends a powerful signal to the academic world that the holder is a highly esteemed member of the University community and a leader in his or her field. In its ongoing fundraising efforts, UVa must seek donor support for endowed professorships in the arts or for undesignated chairs that the dean can use as needed to strengthen the arts faculty.

## **2.6 Staff the libraries and art museum**

The Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library and the Music Library support teaching and research on art, architecture, music, drama, and other fields. Similarly, the University art museum enriches the study of the arts and the humanities and plays a prominent role in the cultural life of the community.

As part of the proposed Arts Grounds, the University intends to consolidate the collections and services of the fine arts and music libraries. Plans also call for an instructional effort to give students and faculty the skills necessary to locate, evaluate, and synthesize the information resources they need — including books, journals, reference materials, musical scores, compact discs, audio and video materials, slides, digital resources and databases.

As the University's arts programs grow and improve, the comprehensive arts library must keep pace. This requires enlarging the staff of professionals familiar with all library media and how best to make them accessible to students, faculty and the public.

Even with the best of libraries, nothing substitutes for studying works of art first-hand. With its collections of ethnographic art, prints of the old masters, art from the Age of Jefferson, Asian art, and art from the 20th century, the University art museum provides a window on the art of diverse cultures from ancient times to the present.

The museum is planning a new facility that will allow it to increase the depth and breadth of its exhibition, educational and outreach programs, while conserving the works in its collections. The museum also will need to enlarge its professional staff to manage these expanded activities.

### **2.7 Support other arts presenters**

The Heritage Repertory Theatre, with its summer-long season, offers students and faculty the opportunity to work with a professional company. Likewise, the Virginia Film Festival brings students and faculty in contact with film industry professionals. The festival has been especially effective at forging ties between UVa and its alumni working in film and television, including producers, special-effects artists, screenwriters, independent filmmakers and actors.<sup>5</sup>

The music department, which presents more than 100 concerts per year, urgently needs production and technical staffing. Its programs, which include performances by curricular and non-curricular groups and by outstanding guest artists, give students professional-level experiences, assist in community outreach, and create a vibrant musical scene at the University. The University must provide the human resources — actors, designers, technicians, managers and support staff — to ensure that these programs continue to enrich the cultural life of the University, the community and the world.

- 3) **Give greater weight to artistic ability in the admissions process** as part of an aggressive and sustained effort to recruit students with exceptional artistic talent as well as sound academic credentials. Also, to meet the needs of existing and proposed graduate programs in the arts, acquire the means to recruit superb graduate students.

### **3.1 Undergraduate recruitment**

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A: Benchmarking, on the commission's Website for a comparison of the Virginia and Telluride festivals.

The University's arts programs can only be as strong as the students they attract. The commission believes the current admissions process makes it difficult for some artistically gifted high school students to qualify for entry. It finds that students who have exceptional talent often must choose between refining their artistic gifts and taking advanced-placement courses in every subject.

If they choose the former, they are at a disadvantage when considered for admission, even though they may have the academic ability to succeed at UVa. Moreover, because the University never has been known for its arts programs, talented high school students may be unaware of the many opportunities for studying the arts here.

To address these issues, the commission recommends the following actions:

- (a) The University should create a scholarship program to attract and support undergraduates with extraordinary artistic ability. Achieving national distinction and visibility in the arts will not happen overnight. In the interim, arts scholarships would enable UVa to compete with well-established programs for students who possess artistic talent and sound academic credentials. Like the Jefferson Scholarships, the University's arts scholarships could be endowed and named by individual donors.
- (b) The Office of Admission should give special consideration to candidates with artistic talent, especially those recommended by the arts departments. It may be necessary to weigh such factors as SAT scores, advanced-placement credits and class rank differently for such applicants to ensure the University is enrolling the brightest and most talented students.
- (c) Of the nearly 3,000 students in each first-year class, the Office of Admission should strive to attract roughly 3 percent who have demonstrated ability in the arts. This would bring about 80 gifted young artists into the University each year. These new students could be apportioned to art, music, drama and dance (if a program is established).
- (d) Each year, the Office of Admission should obtain a list compiled by the College Board identifying students interested in the arts. These students should be sent promotional materials describing the arts programs available at the University. The Office of Admission should receive the staff and resources necessary to follow up with those who respond.
- (e) Each arts department should expand its efforts to identify and attract talented students be provided travel funds and staff to manage this process. This would allow faculty to visit high schools with the best arts programs and to recruit students who have both artistic talent and solid academic ability.

- (f) The University should establish an honors program for exceptional students in the arts modeled after elements of the Rodman Scholars Program in Engineering and the Echols Scholars Program in the College. Program participants would be selected from the entering class based on their superior artistic talent and their capacity to contribute to the cultural life of the University community. The honors program represents an attractive naming opportunity for a major donor to the arts at UVa.

### **3.2 Graduate student recruitment**

As in many other areas of the University, a dire need exists in the arts for more graduate fellowships, including travel fellowships. If the University intends to compete with the nation's best arts programs for the brightest and most talented graduate students, its arts departments must match the generous levels of graduate support many of these competitor programs can provide. The point was delivered strongly during the commission's retreat that graduate students are attracted not only by the reputation of a program but also by the available funding.<sup>6</sup>

First-rate graduate students enhance programs in many ways, in that they:

- Enable faculty to train the next generation of artists and scholars;
- Offer mentoring and assistance to undergraduates through their discussion sections and small tutorials, given in conjunction with faculty-led courses;
- Can be of invaluable assistance to faculty in their scholarship and in their artistic projects; and
- Are a source of new ideas that help spark creativity in our departments.

Increased fellowship support will be critically important to existing graduate programs in the arts, including the M.F.A. program in drama, the English department's M.F.A. program in creative writing, the Ph.D. program in art history, and the new Ph.D. program in music. Fellowships also will be essential for proposed programs, such as a new M.F.A. program in studio art, an M.A. program in critical studies, and an M.F.A. program in theater directing.

Graduate students need travel fellowships to present their work at national conferences and to conduct research or pursue creative projects wherever necessary. Although the University's library holdings rank among the top 25 in North America, graduate students often must examine works of art and architecture, manuscripts or other primary source materials first-hand. For artists and designers at the graduate level, travel fellowships would allow them to pursue projects outside the University and to work with theater companies, musical ensembles or other arts professionals around the world.

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<sup>6</sup>See Appendix H: The Work of the Commission, available on the commission's Website.

**4) Establish an undergraduate program in dance; launch the Digital Arts Initiative; create new graduate programs that will enrich the study, performance and creation of the arts at the University; and establish new centers of excellence in the School of Architecture.**

**4.1 Program in dance and movement studies**

The absence of dance in the arts curriculum is one of the University's most glaring deficiencies. More than 350 students now study dance in makeshift spaces without faculty instruction. UVa should create faculty positions for a program in dance and movement studies, which would encompass ballet, jazz, tap, modern dance, choreography and the dance of world cultures.

Initially, members of the dance faculty could be housed in the drama department or could hold joint appointments in drama and music, but it is conceivable that in time they would form a new department. They would be instrumental in developing the collaborative teaching and creative initiatives the commission envisions, and they would foster cross-cultural explorations to greatly enrich the arts at UVa.<sup>7</sup>

At present, no facilities are available to support a dance program at UVa. As the Arts Grounds is developed, the University must install stages and rehearsal rooms with sprung floors to enable dancers to perform and rehearse without injury.

**4.2 The digital arts initiative**

Through research and curriculum development, this initiative promises to transform the role of digital arts at the University and beyond. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, the Digital Arts Initiative will focus on such topics as immersive environments, interactive dance controllers and the study of virtualized environments. (See Appendix F on the commission's website.)

**4.3 New graduate programs**

New and proposed graduate programs in key areas will make a profound impact on the arts at the University. Each year they will bring in new cohorts of talented artists and scholars infusing fresh ideas into UVa's departments and providing invaluable assistance to faculty in their teaching, research and creative endeavors. As they pursue

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<sup>7</sup>See Appendix E: Proposal for a Program in Dance and Movement Studies on the commission's Website.

successful artistic and academic careers, alumni of these programs will help to raise the visibility and stature of the arts at UVa.

Discussed in more detail elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> these programs include the new Ph.D. program in music and proposed programs such as M.F.A. in studio art, interdisciplinary M.A. program in critical studies, and M.F.A. in theatrical directing.

#### **4.4 Other new programs**

In their long-range goals, the arts departments envision several new courses and concentrations. Among these are a new program in museum studies, interdisciplinary programs in musical theater and opera, courses in new areas of ethnomusicology, and a new art history course in modern culture. In the School of Architecture, plans call for establishing centers of excellence in technology, international programs, environmental mediation and urbanism.

- 5) **Develop new and effective communications vehicles to promote the University's arts programs** to the community, to peer institutions, to alumni and friends, to current and potential donors and to prospective students, especially in the Commonwealth.

The University should promote its arts programs widely, ensuring its artistic achievements gain the public visibility they deserve, especially in the surrounding community and among Virginia residents.

At the urging of the commission, the University already is taking steps to fulfill this goal. The Office of News Services added a full-time arts communications officer. In addition to helping promote the University's arts programs to local, state and national news media, this person is helping the departments of art, music, and drama achieve consistency and timeliness in their communications with alumni and friends.

The new staff member also is collaborating with the director of communications for Arts & Sciences to publish a yearly supplement to the Arts & Sciences alumni magazine devoted to the arts. The Office of University Development is developing new communications vehicles to support the Arts Grounds campaign and has compiled a comprehensive mailing list of all arts alumni and donors. The University's Webmaster maintains an excellent Website ([www.virginia.edu/arts/html](http://www.virginia.edu/arts/html)) on upcoming arts events.

More needs to be done. The commission recommends that the University provide staffing and funding for a new publication — either a magazine or a high-quality newsletter — devoted to the arts. In addition to being sent to alumni and friends of the University's arts programs and to current and prospective benefactors, the proposed

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<sup>8</sup>See Appendix D: Missions and Goals on the commission's Website.

magazine should be circulated among arts programs at other institutions to raise awareness among peers and among prospective graduate students that the arts at Virginia are making great strides.

To support efforts to recruit talented undergraduates, the publication also should be mailed to all high schools in Virginia and to high schools outside the Commonwealth that have recognized strengths in the arts. Other student recruiting materials, including posters and brochures, need to be created and distributed, and the website welcoming potential applicants should include links to a lively and inviting page on opportunities to study the arts at UVa.

## **OUTCOMES**

### **Bringing about a cultural transformation at the University of Virginia**

**Enacting these five recommendations will transform the University, ensuring that by 2020:**

- a) Mention of the University of Virginia calls to mind the arts as one of UVa's great strengths, and the quality of its programs makes it a top choice among schools.
- b) The University is a model of interdisciplinary collaboration in the arts, a leader in the study of world cultures, a pioneer in the use of new technology for creative expression and research, and among the nation's most productive and innovative sources of new works.
- c) The University is regarded as an important arts destination. Visitors come to Charlottesville not only to tour Monticello and the Lawn but also to sample UVa's cultural riches.
- d) The University is known far and wide for its flourishing arts scene, whose attractions yield significant cultural and economic benefits for both UVa and the surrounding community.

To ensure that its work continues, the commission proposes appointing a University-wide Committee for the Arts. Comprised of faculty and student members, the committee would foster the development of interdisciplinary programs and encourage continued communication not only within the arts departments but also among the arts and other schools and departments around Grounds. The committee also could help coordinate student arts activities, such as those presented by University Union.

During the past 20 months, a swift and exhilarating movement toward transforming the cultural life of this University has taken hold. Each arts program has developed clear goals for the future. Working with the commission, they have jointly crafted an overarching vision to create a thriving arts scene at UVa.

The University must sustain this momentum and make clear to state legislators, to current and prospective benefactors, and to other publics that investment in the arts at the University that this will reap abundant benefits for the institution, for the community and for the Commonwealth.

## **The Work of the Arts Commission**

The Fine and Performing Arts Commission comprises a broad cross-section of University and community citizens, among them representatives of the University's arts programs, faculty and staff from other departments around the Grounds, undergraduate and graduate students, and community leaders.

The commission's task was to determine how to address UVa's serious shortcomings and elevate the arts at Virginia to national distinction. To help in this regard, the commission identified successful arts programs at other institutions that provide models worthy of emulation.

During a retreat in fall 1999, the commission hosted representatives from highly regarded programs at Harvard University (studio art), The Ohio State University (studio art), New York University (performance studies), the University of California/Santa Barbara (music), the University of California/Irvine (drama), the University of Georgia (museums), the University of Washington (music), the University of Minnesota (museums), Cornell University (media arts) and the University of Illinois/Urba-Champaign (drama).

It became clear that these programs flourished because they had solid support and respect from the top administration, first-rate facilities, productive and highly motivated faculty, and sufficient funding for their programs. It also was abundantly evident that a rich and rewarding cultural life was as important to these institutions as academic excellence and success in athletics.

The commission was heartened by the awareness that the arts are now a top priority at the University of Virginia. The president, provost and dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences appear to agree that the University must build superb programs in the arts. It will be vital to have their continued support if the cultural transformation envisioned by the commission is to be achieved.