January 4, 2007

TO: Sandra Gonzales, Curriculum Office

FROM: Maurice Sevigny, Dean, College of Fine Arts
       Albert D. Tucci, Head, Department of Media Arts

SUBJECT: Renaming of Existing Organizational Unit
          Name Change from Department of Media Arts to School of Media Arts

This memorandum is a formal request endorsed by the Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Head of the Department of Media Arts on behalf of the faculty of that department to rename the Department of Media Arts to the School of Media Arts. The change of name is part of the College of Fine Arts strategic initiative to be a college of five professional schools. Currently the College is comprised of four schools: Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre Arts with professionally oriented conservatory-like curricula leading to initial and terminal professional degrees, and in most schools liberal arts degrees as well. Arts programs in the United States have been accredited since 1924. All five of the arts disciplines in the College of Fine Arts are accredited by National Arts Accrediting Association of Schools, and the BFA degree in Media Arts is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. All of the arts units in the college must meet comprehensive and rigid national standards to retain accreditation.

All of the arts units in the college are highly competitive nationally for undergraduate and graduate students and are often competing with programs where school is in the title. In arts training and educational programs the term school is more prestigious and reflects arts specialties within the disciplines such as sculpture, graphic design, and fiber arts, or music education, choral studies, or a single instrument interest such as harp, or film and video production, media producing, and media aesthetics and criticism. Recently the College of Fine Arts has underscored themes such as conservatory-like training in a research extensive educational environment with five intersecting schools involved in traditional approaches to training and education while seeking innovative and creative methods that reflect changes in technology and society. In the last two decades four departments in the college have changed their title to school to reflect changes in their ability to offer more professionally oriented programs (BFA, MFA) with a greater variety of specificity in the art discipline.

Media arts is the newest and most dynamic component of the arts disciplines using or combining film, video or computers with a diverse array of artistic work including, but not limited to narrative, documentary, experimental that more often places a premium on innovation and experimentation where creation and distribution rely on a greater extent on emerging information technologies. In 2003 the faculty in the Department of Media Arts developed a strong strategic plan to encompass the latest trends in media arts.
technologies in order to offer professional education in the discipline to meet the rapidly changing demands of the field. The strategic plan, often referred to as the Action Plan, provided a redesigned BA with two options and a strengthened BFA, and led to a revised MA program as well. The changes in the mission of the unit, coupled with vital well-articulated curricular areas naturally led to the revision of the structure of the department into three divisions: Aesthetics and Criticism, Producing, and Production. The faculty is assigned membership in a division based on curricular demand and expertise in the field. This change mirrors the curricular and governance structure of the four other schools in the College of Fine Arts. In anticipation of moving to a school structure, and needing to be seamless in governance, personnel policies and procedures, and operations with other units in the college the department has diligently and with great care redesigned itself. The unit has already been relocated to the Marshall Building and upgraded it’s production and editing labs and professional classrooms. It recently completed and built a professional sound stage for increased professional training. Thus, the only change necessary is in title from department to school, and change of titles from Department Head to Director and Associate Department Head to Associate Director, and the incidental costs in signage and printing. There are no changes to current curriculum, administration, finances, facilities, faculty, and staff. There are no changes to governance documents or to policies or procedures other than school title.

Furthermore, a seven million dollar gift that established and funds the Jack and Vivian Hanson Arizona Film Institute has already implemented a mission to develop and enhance both the artistic production and industry studies components of the various Media Arts degree specializations. Visiting filmmaker and producer residencies and lecture/ships now establish the connections to Industry standards of professional practice. And a professional internship program (see listing of internship placement) has been fully implemented as a noteworthy senior capstone opportunity. Thus, the significance of this title change is important to the positioning of the program nationally (see list of other schools of media arts and film), regionally (Arizona State University recently restructured the Department of Theatre to the School of Theatre and Film) and locally (meeting College of Fine Arts strategic goal to establish five professional schools). In order to provide even more sophisticated internship options the program needs to have the name school to raise its profile and keep its programs competitive. The change in title is symbolic of the changes that have evolved for two decades and underscores a common approach and language understood in professional arts education circles and appropriate to a Research institution.