

What is the GFA Major?

The General Fine Arts major is a non-departmental option for students who seek a broad acquaintance with several disciplines of the College. This major is designed to provide a broad exposure to the fine arts and to create flexibility in accessing the programs that we currently offer at PNCA.

The General Fine Arts major is meant for students who wish to study as generalists, those who divide their interests among many areas. The GFA provides an opportunity to explore multiple interests or the opportunity to develop 2 distinct portfolios. The GFA major will especially appeal to those students who seek to enter a career in community arts work, arts administration, gallery and museum work, and secondary school art education.

Enrollment Services reports that there are many potential applicants to PNCA who express a desire for a GFA major and are currently turned away. The GFA major is meant to capture that enrollment potential. The GFA is an alternative for those students for whom our current majors are not attractive or are otherwise prohibitive. This program encourages students to see that PNCA welcomes exploration and experimentation.

Here are some of the benefits of the GFA program for PNCA students:

The GFA major provides a pathway for the type of student who wishes to engage in our curriculum as “generalists” rather than “specialists”. This is an appealing alternative for the student who may not wish to pursue a specific discipline, but may instead wish to encounter a broad range of teachers, disciplines, and media during their educational experience.

The GFA provides a “no penalty” option for many students who might wish to switch their major direction mid-way through the BFA program. This major allows the student to change educational directions without encountering the penalty of additional requirements or an extension of the planned graduation date.

The GFA provides ease of transfer credits for certain students. The flexibility of the GFA program allows some students to enter PNCA with a more beneficial distribution of their incoming credits.

The GFA provides a preferable pathway for the student whose graduate goal is a Master s Degree in Teaching. The GFA allows a student to acquire a broader skill base, and ultimately to bring these skills into the teaching environment.

The GFA MAJOR F.A.Q

Why is a GFA major emerging again as a plan for PNCA?

In the past, the GFA major attracted a larger pool of applicants to the college, and we believe it will do so again. The GFA major can expand the possible ways that students can put programs together at PNCA. Some students investigate the college but decline because our current programs do not provide the flexibility or the desired engagement that they want or need. Other students decline because their existing credits will not transfer easily into one of our current programs. Both sets of students may be very desirable candidates for us, but we cannot currently accommodate their needs.

Doesn't the GFA Major encourage students to be indecisive about their educational goals or under-prepared to reach those goals?

There is no evidence that the past GFA major appealed to or produced greater numbers of under-prepared or low performance students than any other PNCA major. We seem to have low, middle, and high performing students in all areas of the college. Fortunately, we now have mechanisms in place for students to provide departmental oversight and risk management that we did not have before, and we are in a better position to support, advise, and track student progress.

What makes the GFA major different from the Intermedia major?

The Intermedia major is designed to provide a hybrid pathway for the student who is interested in working in contemporary and cross-disciplinary ways. Intermedia students choose to specialize in combined studio practices. The GFA major is designed instead to appeal to the kind of student who wishes to emerge from art education with a broad range of experiences and skills - a generalist rather than a specialist. Many students who may have enrolled as GFA majors in the past now have the option of enrolling as Intermedia majors. Likewise, many students for whom the Intermedia major is not a viable option would now have an alternative pathway.

What are the costs associated with the initiation of a GFA program?

The initial costs are primarily for advertising the program through our marketing materials and our website. If we have a good deal of interest in the GFA major, we will need to consider how to best support the expanding needs for chairing, hosting, and advising these students. Meanwhile, the GFA major is essentially a no-cost solution to implement because students are engaging in classes that already exist at PNCA. We can currently absorb GFA majors with our existing classes, student support resources, and advising systems.

Who will Chair the GFA major, and isn't advising a very complex issue for these students?

If we get a good student response to the GFA major, then we will need to designate a Chairman to manage that program. Likewise, if we have lots of student interest in the program, then we will need to design and implement a different advising system for them. Meanwhile, in the early stages of the program, we can absorb these students through our current administrative support systems.

What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of the GFA major to the existing departments at PNCA?:

The greatest advantage of the GFA major for all of the college is the probability of increased student enrollment. All departments would then see benefits with expansions of their operating budgets. Smaller departments would benefit by increased numbers of students in those individual classes that now suffer from low enrollment. Every department would have the added pool of Freshmen from which to potentially attract students for their own programs. Increased enrollment in general would have a positive impact on budgets, salaries, resources, support services, equipment, facilities, speakers, residencies, etc. for every department.

A disadvantage may be the potential for a decline in the number of majors in an individual department in the event that large numbers of students choose the GFA major over existing majors. Although there is no evidence of this occurrence from the past GFA program, it is a concern expressed by some of the faculty.

In any case, however, increased numbers of students in the college translates to increased numbers of students engaging in classes in all departments.

GFA Proposal
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