

Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts

Findings Synthesis

Submitted to:

Dr. Andrew Richardson
Dean of Applied Arts Division
Yukon College
PO Box 2799
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 5K4

Submitted by:

Paul Kishchuk, MA

Vector Research

203 – 301 Hawkins Street
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1X5
www.vectorresearch.ca
paul@vectorresearch.ca
867.668.3164

Final Report
10 December 2014
18 December 2014 (SKAE)
08 February 2015 (SKAE)

Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts

Findings Synthesis

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Inputs to SOVA	2
SOVA Activities	4
SOVA Outputs	7
SOVA Short-term Outcomes	12
SOVA Long-term Outcomes	16
Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of SOVA Operations	18

Introduction

Yukon College's School of Visual Arts (SOVA) is now in its eighth year of operation in Dawson City, Yukon. The school is co-located with the Dawson City campus of Yukon College. The SOVA program is accredited through Yukon College. Students register through, and pay tuition fees to Yukon College. All faculty and staff in the program are Yukon College employees. SOVA is overseen by a tripartite Governance Council comprised of representatives from Yukon College, the Dawson City Arts Society and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

SOVA offers a dynamic visual arts education in the culturally vibrant environment of Dawson City. SOVA's mission is to provide a first-year undergraduate-level Bachelor of Fine Arts program as an introduction to a wide range of professional pursuits in the fine arts field. SOVA specializes in the instruction, promotion, and advancement of contemporary visual art practices. The Foundation Year program offers academic credit from Yukon College which may be transferred, as a block, into a second-year program via articulation agreements with the following post-secondary institutions:

- Emily Carr University of Art + Design;
- Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U);
- Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD University); and,
- Alberta College of Art + Design (ACAD).

SOVA students are also given academic credit for individual courses in undergraduate visual arts programs at the Thompson Rivers University and University of the Fraser Valley via an agreement between the BC Council on Admission and Transfer (BCCAT) and Yukon College.

The Foundation Year Program is an integrated fine arts curriculum model based on learner-centered philosophies. Students progress, within a collaborative learning environment, through three studio and two humanities courses in each of the two semesters. Up to 20 students can be enrolled in the two-term program offered from September to April of each year. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to explore and share creative processes in relation to historic and contemporary cultural movements in both Western European and Aboriginal North American contexts.

This report presents the findings of a summative evaluation of School of Visual Arts undertaken in the fall of 2014. The evaluation is focused on the effective delivery of SOVA's Foundation Year program and considers the extent to which the intended short-term and long-term outcomes for SOVA are being achieved. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for improving the effectiveness of SOVA operations.

Notwithstanding that an evaluation plan for the summative evaluation was prepared by SOVA in December 2013, the evaluation plan does not contain a logic model for SOVA. To ensure proper framing of the evaluation, a logic model for SOVA was designed and was based in part on the

Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts – Findings Synthesis

SOVA Strategic Plan (March 2012) as well as the Program Matrix included the evaluation plan. The logic model designed as part of this summative evaluation was reviewed and approved by the SOVA Governance Council in September 2014; the model is presented on page 3.

The School of Visual Arts operations were evaluated using multiple lines of evidence to assess the production of outputs and the extent to which its intended short-term and long-term outcomes are being achieved. The lines of evidence included:

- a review and analysis of administrative data and documents;
- a review and analysis of financial data for the program;
- a review and analysis of enrolment and completion data;
- a review of available student exit surveys;
- 12 face-to-face interviews with staff and former staff;
- five face-to-face interviews and seven web interviews with program graduates;
- face-to-face interviews with five Governance Council members;
- face-to-face interviews with two representatives of the funder, Yukon Advanced Education; and,
- one web interview with an articulation partner.

Inputs to SOVA

The Foundation Year program is delivered at SOVA by a complement of six Yukon College staff working at a variety of full-time equivalent intensities: one 1.0 FTE Program Director, one 0.8 FTE Administrative Officer, one 1.0 FTE instructor, one 0.6 FTE Studio Technician and two 0.5 FTE instructors. One part-time instructor and one part-time casual librarian also help deliver the Foundation Year program.

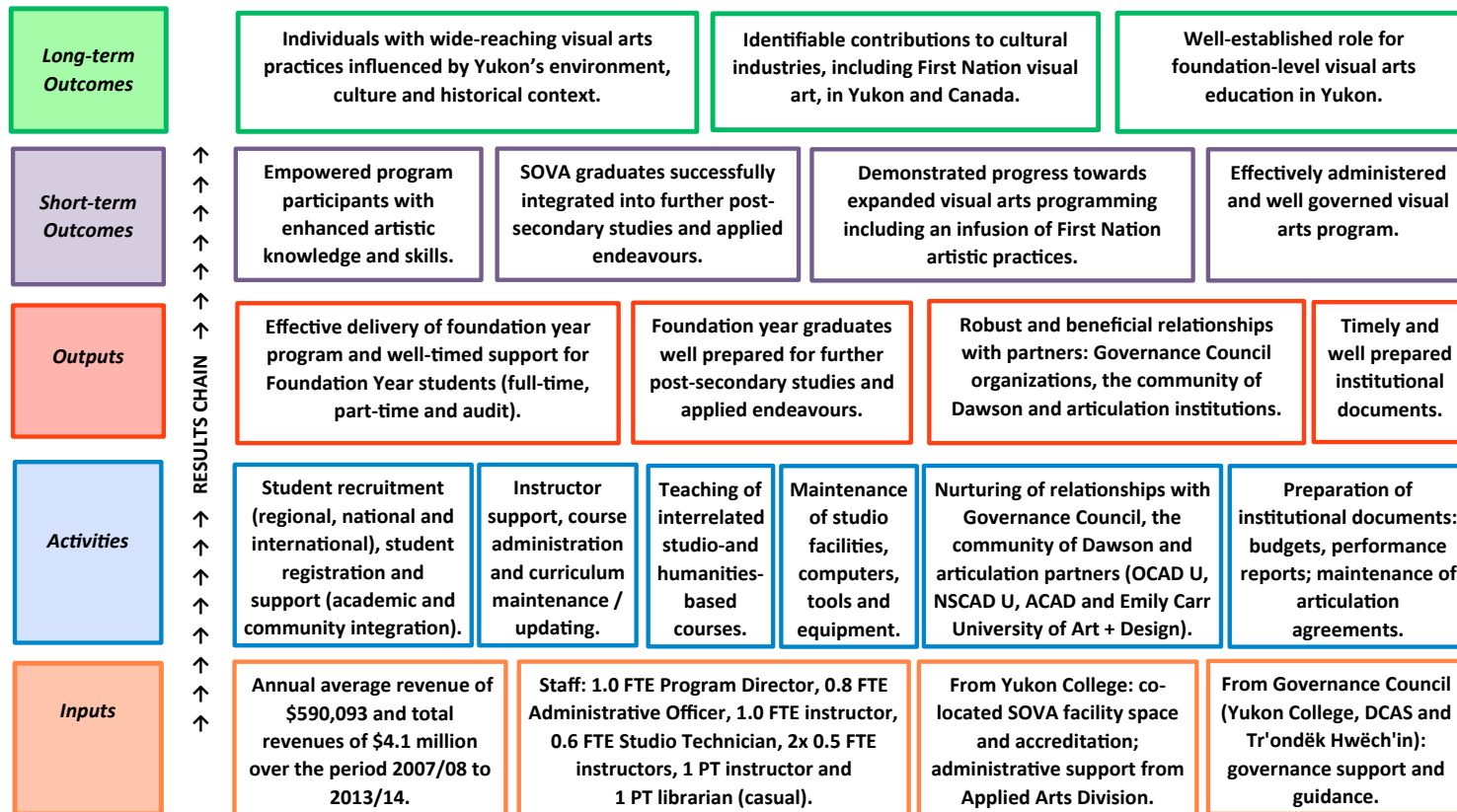
As shown in the table to the right, SOVA revenues totaled \$4,130,648 over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period. On an annual basis, SOVA revenues averaged \$590,093 over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period. The Transfer Payment Agreement currently in place between Advanced Education and Yukon College will expire on June 30, 2015. The School of Visual Arts is co-located at the Tr'odëk Hätr'unohtän Zho (Klondike Learning House), the Dawson City Campus of Yukon College, in a heritage building owned and maintained by the Yukon Government.

SOVA Revenues 2007/08 to 2013/14	
2013/14	\$565,869
2012/13	\$535,304
2011/12	\$634,480
2010/11	\$561,825
2009/10	\$666,867
2008/09	\$499,563
2007/08	\$666,741
Total	\$4,130,648
Average	\$590,093

Source: Yukon Government and Yukon College.

The School of Visual Arts receives administrative support (registration and financial systems, human resources services) from the Applied Arts Division of Yukon College in Whitehorse. Governance support and guidance is received from the Governance Council comprised of two representatives each from Yukon College, the Dawson City Arts Society and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture, a division of the Dawson City Arts Society, provides two opportunities per year to SOVA to select visiting artists for its Artist in Residence Program.

School of Visual Arts – Logic Model



Note: the focus of the 2014 SOVA Evaluation is on

Outputs

, **Short-term Outcomes**

and

Long-term Outcomes.

SOVA Activities

As shown in the table below, a total of 125 students have enrolled in SOVA’s Foundation Year program since the program was launched in the 2007/08 school year. Eighty-six percent of students enrolled on a full-time basis with the remaining 17% on a part-time basis. On average over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period, 15 full-time students have been enrolled each school year. As the SOVA facilities were designed to accommodate 20 full-time students in the Foundation Year program, the Foundation Year program uptake rate over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period is 75%. Note, however, that the Foundation Year program has not so far had as many as 20 full-time enrollees in a single school year. As such, it has not yet been ascertained that 20 students can actually be accommodated in the Foundation Year program on a functional basis in the existing SOVA facility.

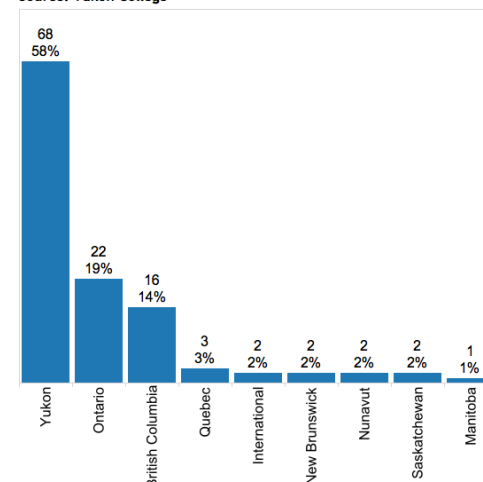
Full and Part-time Headcount Enrolments in SOVA, 2007/08 to 2013/14

Year	Full-time	Part-time	Total
2013/14	16	0	16
2012/13	15	6	21
2011/12	17	0	17
2010/11	15	3	18
2009/10	15	3	18
2008/09	11	2	13
2007/08	19	3	22
Total	108	17	125
Average	15	2	18

Source: Yukon College

As can be seen from the chart to the right, which was derived from Yukon College data, slightly more than half (58%) of students who enrolled in the foundation year program provided a permanent address in Yukon. Almost one-fifth (19%) of SOVA students listed an Ontario permanent address and 14% listed an Alberta permanent address. Of the remaining 12% of students, 10% noted a permanent address in either Quebec, New Brunswick, Nunavut Saskatchewan and Manitoba and 2% noted a permanent address outside of Canada. It should be noted that, on the basis of anecdotal evidence, the proportion of students who actually hail from the Yukon is much lower than indicated by the permanent address counts.

Location of Permanent Address for SOVA Students - 2008/09 to 2013/14
Number and Percentage of Students
Source: Yukon College



As would be expected with a first-year post-secondary program, full-time Foundation Year students are relatively young. The average age of full-time students over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period was 23 and the corresponding median age was 21. Fifteen percent of full-time students self-identified as being of First Nation ancestry. On the basis of self-reported data, over the seven year period, approximately 67% of full-time Foundation Year students were female and 28% were male.

Demographic Characteristics of Full-time SOVA Students, 2007/08 to 2013/14

Year	Average Age	Median Age	Percentage Who Identified as First Nation	Percentage Who Identified as Female	Percentage Who Identified as Male
2013/14	20	20	0%	81%	13%
2012/13	27	22	20%	60%	40%
2011/12	22	20	18%	53%	41%
2010/11	25	24	20%	80%	20%
2009/10	23	20	20%	60%	20%
2008/09	23	19	18%	64%	36%
2007/08	22	20	11%	74%	26%
Average	23	21	15%	67%	28%

Source: Yukon College

Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts – Findings Synthesis

The Foundation Year Arts Program offers its graduates block transfer agreements to the following institutions:

- Alberta College of Art + Design (ACAD);
- Emily Carr University of Art + Design;
- Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD University); and,
- Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U).

Transfer credit for individual courses may also be granted via an agreement between the BC Council on Admission and Transfer (BCCAT) and Yukon College for undergraduate visual arts programs at the Thompson Rivers University and University of the Fraser Valley.

For the articulation agreements to remain in place year after year, the same block of ten courses are offered each year. Five types of courses are delivered, with each type of course delivered at an introductory level in Term 1 (September to December) and a more advanced or expanded level in Term 2 (January to April). The ten courses delivered in the Foundation Year program include:

- 2 Dimensional Studies 101: Principles & Practices of Drawing, Paper & Printmaking
- 2 Dimensional Studio 102: Principles & Practices of Drawing, Colour & Painting
- 3 Dimensional Studio 101: Exploring Sculptural Forms & Objects
- 3 Dimensional Studio 102: Exploring Sculptural Space & Environments
- 4 Dimensional Studio 101: Introduction to New and Time-Based Media
- 4 Dimensional Studies 102: Experiments in New and Time-Based Media
- English 120: Reading/Writing/Creating
- English 121: Artwords
- Intro to Visual Studies I: Historical Context
- Intro to Visual Culture Studies II: Ideas & Issues

All SOVA course curricula have been approved by Yukon College’s Academic Council.

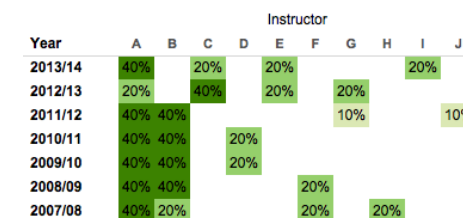
As shown in the table above, all ten courses have been delivered in each of the first seven years of SOVA operations. A total of 70 courses have been delivered during the first seven years of SOVA operations. The 70 courses have been delivered by a total of 10 different instructors over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 time period. As shown in the chart to the right, most of the instructor course load was carried by two of the ten instructors over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 time period.

Number of Foundation Year Courses Delivered, 2007/08 to 2013/14

Year	Term 1	Term 2	Total
2013/14	5	5	10
2012/13	5	5	10
2011/12	5	5	10
2010/11	5	5	10
2009/10	5	5	10
2008/09	5	5	10
2007/08	5	5	10
Total	35	35	70

Source: Yukon College

SOVA Foundation Year Instructor Course Load
Source: School of Visual Arts



Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts – Findings Synthesis

In terms of administrative staff, the Program Director position experienced a high degree of turnover between August 2009 and December 2012 with four different individuals appointed to the position. The current Program Director, who is also cross-appointed as Chair of the School of Visual Arts within the Yukon College organizational hierarchy, has held the position since January 2013. Two individuals have occupied the Administrative Officer position since the Foundation Year Program launched in the 2007/08. The first individual occupied the Administrative Officer position from August 2007 to January 2011, and the second, current occupier has been in the position since February 2011.

The building within which the Foundation Year program is delivered is owned by the Yukon Government and is maintained by the Property Management Branch of the Department of Highways and Public Works. Costs associated with the occupation and maintenance of SOVA facilities are not recovered and are borne by the Yukon Government. The computers, tools, machinery, software and equipment used to deliver the Foundation Year program is owned by Yukon College and the Dawson City Arts Society. Premiums for insurance coverage on machinery and equipment owned by the Dawson City Arts Society are paid for by the Society.

SOVA Governance Council meetings are held on a monthly basis. Proceedings of the meetings are recorded by SOVA's Administrative Officer and minutes are circulated for review. As Dawson is a small community, informal discussions between representatives of the Governance Council organizations frequently occur on an *ad hoc* basis.

SOVA financial operations are tightly integrated with the Applied Arts Division as Yukon College's computerized financial system is used to record all revenues and expenses. Ongoing oversight of SOVA operations is carried out by the Whitehorse-based Dean of the Applied Arts Division. As core funding for SOVA is provided by Yukon Education's Advanced Education Branch, a Labour Market Development Officer prepares, on the basis of an annual site visit to SOVA, an On-site Activity Monitoring Report. The most recent site visit was undertaken in February 2014. Under terms of the current transfer payment agreement, any additional financial assistance received by SOVA, such as for example, funds raised through corporate sponsorship, are subject to offset from the transfer payment. The current Transfer Payment Agreement which spans the period 01 July 2012 to 30 June 2015 contains schedules for the delivery of Financial Reports (three interim and one final) as well as Projects Reports (three interim and one final).

SOVA Outputs

Effective delivery of the foundation year program

SOVA has successfully delivered the Foundation Year program for seven years running. The table to the right presents the number of students granted passing grades in the five types of courses that make up the Foundation Year program. Over the seven year period, the total number of course completions was highest in the 2011/12 school year at 167 and lowest in the 2008/09 school year at 74.

By all accounts, the Foundation Year program is being delivered in an effective manner. SOVA students interviewed for the evaluation indicated a good match exists between the first-year visual arts program they expected to complete and what was actually delivered at SOVA.

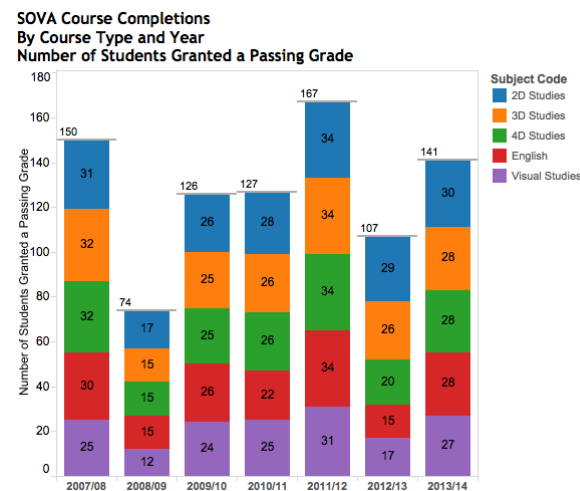
Both student and staff respondents noted that the small class sizes, and the corresponding degree of attention received by students from SOVA instructors and staff, contributes significantly to student success. The teaching facilities at SOVA are seen to be top-notch with accessibility of tools and equipment exceptional for a first-year program. Notwithstanding that the SOVA facility is open until midnight during the week, several student respondents suggested the program could be improved by providing student access to the SOVA facility beyond midnight and additional access during weekends and holidays.

Well-timed support for Foundation Year students

Academic support received by SOVA students is generally regarded as comprehensive and timely. As noted by a student respondent:

The teachers at SOVA were highly supportive, and the program was a good start to my academic training. I never felt as though anything was lacking from the SOVA program. Small class size in a small town mean that you get to know your instructors very well. Your class becomes your family and I really felt that the instructors wanted us to do well.

Environmental factors, such as deep cold, limited sunlight and certain social influences were noted by some students and staff as potential contributors to struggles with emotional and mental health. As SOVA is a very small institution, a student support services position does not exist. Students are, however, proactively assisted by SOVA administration and faculty members who noted that, with such a small student population, it is readily apparent when students are struggling with academic and personal issues. Many examples of how students were assisted, including seeking the involvement of community-based organizations such as Many Rivers Counseling, were cited. Readiness to



Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts – Findings Synthesis

provide assistance to students in apparent need is of great importance given Dawson’s remote location and the fact that there are no alternate options, such as other first-year programs or different institutions, into which a struggling SOVA student could potentially transfer.

The lack of suitable housing for SOVA students was a topic of mention in almost every single interview with students, staff and Governance Council members. Suitability manifests itself in different ways including availability, quality, safety and cost. Many respondents also indicated that the housing situation ‘always somehow takes care of itself’ by mid-October with the diligent assistance of SOVA staff as the housing needs of tourist industry workers ceases to overlap with the housing needs of SOVA students. While SOVA may pride itself on being unique among foundation year visual arts programs in Canada, the existence of an annual six-week housing crisis for students, many of whom are still teenagers, is not a positive element of its uniqueness. Given that some amount of program recruitment is taking place between students by word of mouth, the housing situation may in fact be limiting applications to the Foundation Year program.

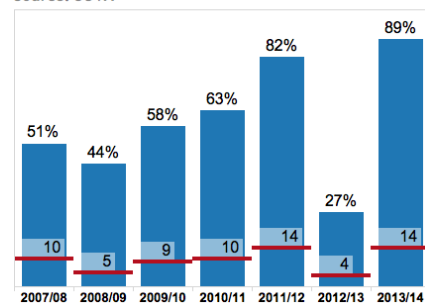
Several student respondents noted they found it hard to believe that housing options were not available though an online resource, such as Kijiji. As revealed by one respondent, however, local landlords are not interested in making local housing availability too transparent as they do not wish to receive rental inquiries from people they do not know and, in some cases, people they know too well. To be fair, it must be noted that Dawson’s deeply rooted housing issues are not specific to SOVA students nor to SOVA itself. Workers and employers in all industries in Dawson face similar housing-related issues.

In terms of potential solutions to the chronic suitable housing issue, several respondents suggested that SOVA should provide residence-type accommodation similar to what is provided to first-year students in other post-secondary institutions. It was, however, noted by more than one respondent that SOVA already tried a residence-type approach, not deemed a success, when it block-booked the White Ram Bed and Breakfast for a school year. As there was no requirement for students to stay at the White Ram through the full school year, the endeavor suffered attrition as students left the White Ram for alternate accommodation as it became available in Dawson further into the winter, leaving SOVA on the hook for rental costs. Many interview respondents noted that the last thing they would want after spending a full day attending classes and then socializing with a small cohort of students would be to have the same small cohort of students as roommates.

Foundation Year graduates

The chart to the right illustrates the Foundation Year graduation rate and number of graduates over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period. The graduation rate was calculated by dividing the total number of individuals receiving a Foundation Year certificate by the average number of first-term students in the same school year. As can be seen from the chart, the graduation rate was 51% in the inaugural year when 10 students graduated. The graduation rate fell to 44% in the 2008/09 school year and then climbed in successive years, reaching 82% in the 2011/12 school year when 14 students received Foundation Year certificates. The annual Foundation Year graduation rate averaged 59% over the seven year period.

SOVA Foundation Year
Graduation Rate (%) and Number of Graduates
Source: SOVA



While the graduation rate over the seven year evaluation time frame features a generally steady increase, the 2012/13 school year does stand out for its low graduation rate of 27% and number of graduating students (4). When queried as to whether the low rate was the result of a reporting error, SOVA staff noted that several students dropped a particular course in the second semester of the 2012/13 school year. As successful completion of all 10 Foundation Year courses is required to be granted a certificate, the dropping of one course directly affects the achievement of a course certificate. The highest graduation rate (89%) was achieved in the 2013/14 school year when 14 students received Foundation Year certificates. A total of 66 students have graduated with Foundation Year certificates since SOVA was established in 2007.

Graduates well prepared for further post-secondary studies and applied endeavors

SOVA is just now working on a system to track the progression of Foundation Year graduates through to further post-secondary studies. Thus, complete counts of the number of students who have gone on to further post-secondary studies at SOVA's articulation partner institutions are not available for reporting as part of this evaluation.

Web / telephone interviews were attempted with all four articulation partners. Only one complete response was received at the time of report writing. Since the 2008/09 school year, a total of 13 students have articulated into a second-year program at this school and no SOVA students have so far graduated from the school. The articulation partner noted that, with one exception *"all the students seem to be doing fairly well in their course work."* The only concern raised in response to a query about how well the articulation agreement is functioning was to note that, on one occasion, a student appeared to have been given advice by a SOVA faculty member which resulted in an application portfolio being submitted that *"did not show us evidence of skills learned at SOVA, but was focused more on conceptual final pieces."*

On the basis of anecdotal evidence, SOVA staff are clearly of the view that Foundation Year students who go on to pursue second-year fine arts studies are well-prepared, again noting that high degree of attention SOVA students receive in a small first-year cohort with excellent access to studio space, equipment and tools. Students who choose to pursue further studies receive extensive assistance with preparing applications and portfolios from staff and faculty. And as noted by one staff respondent, articulation partner institutions are glad to have SOVA Foundation Year students enter their programs in second year as it helps counter first-year level attrition at their own institutions.

Students who went on to pursue further post-secondary had this to say:

SOVA was good preparation for my further post secondary studies, although my workload did expand upon transferring to Emily Carr University. However, my instructors at SOVA did make me aware that the workload at other fine arts schools would be greater, so I was prepared for the increase.

A good metaphor is first year felt like I was in a batting cage knocking at balls as they came, and through this I was set up to gain confidence in my abilities as I kept hitting the balls. Although at times challenging, you understand that the teachers truly have your best interests at heart and are setting you up for the next level.

I feel very comfortable at NSCAD in all my classes. The workload is no more overwhelming than at SOVA, and I feel like I have gotten better with my time management. SOVA also made me very comfortable with pushing boundaries with my art and confidently facing a challenging assignment or how to successfully communicate a difficult idea.

One faculty member described the Foundation Year program as "... a really supportive boot camp."

A couple of student respondents noted, however, that as good as the SOVA facilities might be, the labs do not currently support art forms that involve welding, jewelry-making or film photography. Another respondent noted that living in Dawson after completing the Foundation Year program *has 'really forced them to think about creating art in unconventional ways, there is no giant Opus [Art Supply Store] here, and that makes you better as an artist. Imagine running a print studio with no running water and no electricity, you learn different things about a medium when you have to work that way.'*

With regard to applied endeavors, it is true that not all students who apply to the Foundation Year program, or any first-year program for that matter, have a firm intent to carry on with further second-year studies. Comprehensive follow-up data on where SOVA students who do not pursue further studies end up is not available. On the basis of anecdotal evidence here also, SOVA graduates appear well-prepared to take on applied endeavors in subsequent years. Several examples of Dawson-based endeavors launched by SOVA graduates were noted by interview respondents.

Robust and beneficial relationships with partners

The success of SOVA, and the Foundation Year program, relies on an array of relationships with its partners who include Governance Council members (Yukon College, the Dawson City Arts Society and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in), the community of Dawson and the four articulation partners. All of SOVA's partnerships appear to be generally robust at the current time.

While several interview respondents indicated that SOVA expended energy in its early days chafing at perceived institutional constraints placed upon them by Yukon College, the relationship between SOVA and Yukon College now appears to have matured. As described by one respondent, 'far fewer phone calls are now being made to try and figure out how to undo an action by SOVA so the operational requirements of Yukon College can be met'.

Faculty and staff at SOVA are keenly aware that the articulation agreements now in place could not have been negotiated in the absence of Yukon College's institutional credentials. The increased number of SOVA positions which have transitioned from part-time arrangements to fractional full-time equivalents, which come with access to benefits and a pension, also confirms the interest on the part of faculty and staff in being part of a larger organization.

Many interview respondents noted that the Dawson City Arts Society, as the conceptual and organizational 'parent' of SOVA, has without fail demonstrated a strong and visionary commitment to the success of SOVA and the Foundation Year program.

In the context of robust and beneficial partnerships, SOVA's relationship with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is seen to be very solid and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's role within the Governance Council is continuing to evolve. Yukon College has an education-focused role and DCAS has a Western arts-focused role. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's role on the Governance Council is both education-focused and First Nation arts-focused.

The extent to which the School of Visual Arts and its students have been welcomed into the broader community of Dawson appears to have evolved over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period. Respondents noted that while SOVA does not have the same high profile in the Dawson community as does the Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture, Dawson residents have become very welcoming of SOVA students as the residents have come to understand what the Foundation Year program is about.

The articulation agreements are for the block transfer of ALL 10 Foundation Year credits. In other words, what is articulated is a student's whole Foundation Year as opposed to 10 individual credits. Once an articulation agreement is in place, it operates in quite a rigid and mechanical fashion. Course substitutions may not be made on either end of the arrangement without opening up the articulation agreement. While such an arrangement does provide certainty for both parties, that certainty can be at the expense of innovation and adaptation to new fields of art. All four articulation agreements have been reconfirmed within the past year.

Timely and well prepared institutional documents

Under terms of its Transfer Payment Agreement with Yukon Education, SOVA is required to produce a Financial Report and a Project Report on an annual basis. As SOVA uses Yukon College's financial systems on a daily basis, SOVA's financial reporting is integrated with Yukon College's financial reporting and SOVA in turn makes use of financial reports prepared on its behalf by Yukon College. SOVA is in good standing in terms of its obligation to prepare project and financial reports.

Outside of the production of project and financial reports, SOVA also maintains articulation agreements with four post-secondary institutions: (Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U), Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD University) and the Alberta College of Art + Design (ACAD). As the articulation agreements are static in nature, little maintenance or updating is required. A requirement for periodic review of how the agreements are functioning does not appear to be a feature of the articulation agreements.

A provision for tracking of SOVA graduates who make use of the articulation arrangements also would also appear to be missing as SOVA does not currently have data in hand which confirms where students are ending up after completing the Foundation Year program.

SOVA Short-term Outcomes

Empowered program participants with enhanced artistic knowledge and skills

A strong consensus was evident among staff and student interview participants that SOVA students graduate from the program empowered with not only enhanced artistic knowledge and skills but also enhanced life skills. In terms of artistic knowledge and skills, SOVA staff are generally of the view that while students are expected to work diligently and consistently through both Foundation Year terms, students are very well supported at an artistic and technical level. As noted by student respondents:

The beautiful thing about SOVA is the class sizes. You have these wonderful, artist teachers who are able to work one on one. My artistic abilities were definitely honed because of this, in every class.

SOVA encouraged me to think and see in different ways. I feel that having done the foundation program, I can think more critically about art and life. This lets me build ideas into more than just aesthetically pleasing pieces.

And to paraphrase another student respondent: SOVA students are a captive audience through the cold and dark Dawson winter, and for the ones that make it through the Foundation Year program, they can't help but be transformed. In term of life skills, several students noted that the rigor of the Foundation Year program has had positive effects on their organizational and time management skills.

SOVA graduates successfully integrated into further post-secondary studies and applied endeavours

Most interview respondents perceive that SOVA students are successfully integrating into second-year visual arts programs at the four articulation partner institutions.

I felt that I merged nicely into second year. At NSCAD they also have a foundation year so there were many other students in the same situation as myself.

SOVA gave me the confidence to work as an artist, and to pursue and make art using any means possible. Living in Dawson also introduces you to many traveling artists as part of the residency program. Once you've graduated from SOVA you are part of the network of artists associated with Dawson, and its a very supportive community.

A couple of respondents noted that Yukon-raised students have had a more difficult time with the transition to a larger institution than their southern peers: *"its been difficult for some of the regional students to move on to the big city."*

Unfortunately, in the absence of complete graduate tracking data, it is not currently possible to gauge the extent to which Foundation Year graduates are going on to pursue further post-secondary training or applied endeavors.

Demonstrated progress towards expanded visual arts programming including an infusion of First Nation artistic practices

The School of Visual Arts, and the Foundation Year program, were born of very visionary thinking. And from the beginning, some of that thinking has included a vision of SOVA expanding over time to become a four-year visual arts program leading to a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree. While an understanding of the practical reality of hosting a full four-year undergraduate degree program in a remote northern community with a population of 2,000 has settled in for most involved, interest remains high in continuing to refine and expand the offerings at SOVA. Ideas for expanded visual arts programming mentioned by interview respondents included:

- Foundation Year and second-year program visual arts program (i.e., first half of a four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree);
- double Foundation Year cohort (i.e., two classes of 15-20 students in each of Term 1 and Term 2);
- Foundation Year program plus one-year graduate-level independent study program (i.e., students who have graduated from visual arts programs at southern post-secondary institutions who articulate *into SOVA*);
- summer courses either delivered by SOVA or delivered by another visual arts program (i.e., Thompson Rivers University approach tried in 2009);
- community-college level courses based on local interest that make use of SOVA's tools and equipment (some of which are perceived to be sitting idle).
- separate indigenous visual studies Foundation Year with articulation into a different set of second-year programs in southern institutions; and,
- hybrid indigenous visual studies program that overlaps with the existing Foundation Year program (for example, the four humanities courses – English 120 and 121, Visual Studies I and II – could be common to both Foundation Year programs).

As noted by one respondent, 'while there have been many expansion ideas over the years, just which idea to pursue has changed repeatedly with successive Program Directors.' And as noted earlier, the high degree of turnover in the Program Director position has meant that none of the expansion ideas has gained much momentum.

Under the leadership of the current Program Director, however, consensus does seem to be building among Governance Council members, faculty and staff around some type of expansion that involves some form of an indigenous visual studies program. Several interview respondents were also quick to note that any form of expansion will need to recognize SOVA's current facility space and budget constraints as well as existing staff and faculty levels.

Several interview respondents confirmed that the launch of the Foundation Year program was a compromise between having no foundation year program and a two-to-four year visual arts program. The challenge laid down by the funder is understood to have been: show us that you can walk, before we can fund you to run. With a Foundation Year program uptake rate over the 2007/08 to 2013/14 period of only 75%, it will be hard for SOVA to argue that sufficient demand exists to justify additional funding for an expanded visual arts program at SOVA.

Evaluation of the School of Visual Arts – Findings Synthesis

It would be far easier for SOVA to make a case for expansion funding if it could demonstrate that the Foundation Year program was oversubscribed and applicants were being turned away. And with funding from other sources offset from the Yukon Education Transfer Payment, SOVA is constrained in seeking out alternative revenue sources (e.g., sponsorships or direct funding from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in). Thus, any potential expansion in programming, however funded, needs to also result in a 25% increase in the program uptake rate for the Foundation Year program.

In terms of demonstrated progress towards an expanded infusion of First Nation artistic practices, uncertainty around just what exactly expanded First Nation visual arts content could involve was expressed by several respondents. This suggests that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as a Governance Council member, could take the lead on defining what expanded indigenous visual art content might be comprised of. Should the path of expanded First Nation visual arts content be followed, instructors will need to have a comfortable understanding of the subject material, since as it was phrased by one respondent "instructors can't pretend to teach something they don't know." If Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is to lead in this area, but requires support to do so, that circumstance needs to be acknowledged at the Governance Council level.

On the question of whether the Foundation Year program is currently infused with enough First Nation content and artistic practices, Foundation Year graduates were of mixed views:

I thought that SOVA's foundation program had a solid amount of First Nations content. I appreciated learning about the perspectives and practices of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and found the presentations of the visiting aboriginal artists to be interesting and insightful.

I feel that I learned more than I could have ever hoped for about First Nations culture, practices of making and lifestyles. I feel that a lot of First Nations ideologies were displayed clearly in the way that the school operated. The instruction I received catered to the community's desire to share First Nations history and current situation and I feel satiated both as a student who attended the program and with my own desire to collect more knowledge on First Nations culture.

It could use a larger First Nation content which I understand they are working on now, although as a shorter session (2 or 3 weeks) or as an elective/optional area of study would be fair and on an even playing level with all the other history, mediums and classes that are being offered in the first year.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is a huge contributor to Yukon SOVA and wasn't represented as much as it should have been.

At the end of the day, it needs to be recognized that the Foundation Year is an articulated program and, as such, SOVA is contractually bound to deliver Foundation Year content that can block transfer into second-year programs at the four articulation partner institutions. Within this framework, one respondent suggested, however, "there is all kinds of wiggle room that would permit the expansion of First Nation elements within the existing Foundation Year curriculum."

Effectively administered and well governed visual arts program

Perhaps a reflection of the small population size of the town in which SOVA operates, interview respondents were generally quite cryptic in their responses to queries about whether SOVA's Foundation Year program has been effectively administered and well governed. While some respondents hinted at "administrative turmoil" and "rough patches" in earlier years of SOVA operations, such concerns appear to have subsided over the last two school years. The calmer sentiment was expressed by interview respondents as:

For a small school, SOVA does a remarkable job of holding it all together.

Whitehorse and Dawson are now supporting one another.

Its all about relationships and SOVA's relationships are good right now.

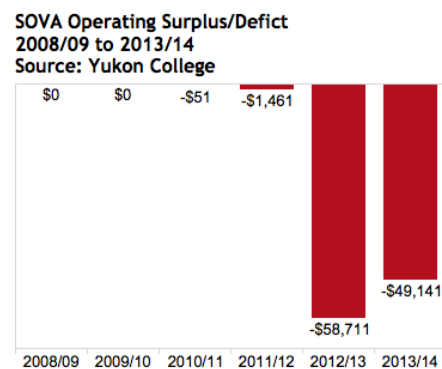
It is important to note, notwithstanding any operational turbulence that may have been present, it was obvious through discussions with many interview participants that SOVA staff upheld the best interests of students at all times. A review of available end-of-year student exit surveys did not surface indications of students being adversely affected by operational circumstances in earlier years of SOVA operations.

Also worth noting is that a lingering consequence of high turnover in leadership positions can be a blurring in the lines of responsibility for long-serving staff not involved in the turnover. Such long-serving staff may take on additional program delivery responsibilities in the interests of ensuring effective program delivery and may do so both consciously and unconsciously. Interviews with faculty and staff indicate that the organizational lines of responsibility at SOVA are gradually coming more clearly into focus.

SOVA has, over its first seven years of existence, delivered 70 courses to a total of 125 enrollees with a relatively small staff complement. Since 2007/08, a total of 66 students (almost ten per year) have graduated from the Foundation Year program with certificates qualifying them for block transfer into second-year fine arts programs at the four articulation partner institutions. In summary, SOVA is currently on a good path for an effectively administered and well governed visual arts program.

The chart to the right shows illustrates net revenues for the School of Visual Arts over the 2008/09 to 2013/14 period. As shown in the chart, SOVA's budget was essentially balanced in each of the 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 school years as the operating deficit over those four year totaled \$1,512. Significant operating deficits were incurred in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years (\$58,711 and \$49,141, respectively).

The spike in operating deficits in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years appears to be driven in part by the appearance of a new category of expense in those years, which is listed in SOVA's financial accounts, as 'Internal Admin Fees' (Account 7395). Internal Admin Fees totaled \$41,191 in 2012/13 and



\$24,415 in 2013/14, accounting for 70% and 50% of the operating deficit in those years, respectively. A 40% increase in Internal Corporate Overhead expenses from \$14,709 to \$20,619 between the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years added another 10% to the operating deficit in the 2012/13 school year.

While it may appear from SOVA's financial records that the imposition of the internal admin fee arose out of the blue, Yukon College has advised it is simply implementing terms of the Letter of Understanding (LOU) on Administrative Fees signed by Yukon College and the Yukon Government in 2010. The LOU provides for the levying of a 15% administration fee on third-party funding contributions. Notwithstanding the veracity of the internal admin fee levy, it does not appear that current Transfer Payment Agreement has taken the Internal Admin Fee into account. As such, the significant size of SOVA's operating deficits in 2012/13 and 2013/14 should serve as a warning that the continued effectiveness of SOVA operations may be at risk unless SOVA's operating budget is rebalanced in the current and subsequent school years.

SOVA Long-term Outcomes

The logic model presented on page 3 illustrates the results chain for the School of Visual Arts and is comprised of inputs, activities, outputs and the intended short-term and long-term outcomes of SOVA operations. The long-term outcomes can also be described as the desired impacts of the program. As we move along the results chain from activities to outputs to outcomes, two factors become more relevant.

The first factor is time, specifically the length of time over which it is reasonable to expect that a program can begin to exhibit the desired impacts. While there are early signs that SOVA's expected long-term outcomes being achieved, it needs to be recognized that the long-term outcomes are more likely to be influenced by SOVA graduates who have gone on to complete further post-secondary studies at an articulation partner institution. Since the Foundation Year program has only been delivered for seven years, and three further years of study are required to complete a visual arts degree, it is perhaps a bit too soon to expect to see much in the way of measurable impacts of SOVA operations in the broader Yukon and national arts communities.

The second factor is attribution, which refers to the extent to which it is reasonable to attribute a change in a long-term outcome to the program's production of outputs. As wryly observed by one interview respondent, you "can't always measure art *outputs*, let alone art *outcomes*." Thus, measurement of the extent to which SOVA is achieving its long-term outcomes is especially challenging given the arts-based nature of SOVA operations.

Individuals with wide-reaching visual arts practices influenced by Yukon’s environment, culture and historical context

Of the three long-term outcomes in SOVA’s logic model, this first one is the most challenging to measure, both in terms of the length of time over which it is reasonable to expect SOVA operations to begin to exhibit the desired impacts, and the extent to which it is reasonable to attribute a change in a long-term outcome to the program’s production of outputs. Students who went on to pursue further studies noted:

My art practice is heavily influenced by the Yukon's environment and culture - the drawings I am making currently are directly inspired by the landscape, flora, and fauna of the Yukon Territory.

My lifestyle and First Nations heritage is a very important part of my arts practice and I feel the Yukon life and culture is parallel with how I operate artistically. Spending time in the Yukon, in nature and within a small community of likeminded folks is inherent in the Yukon and inspires me to make art.

I feel supported as an artist in the Yukon. It is inspirational and liberating to be in and from the Yukon. Yukon's untouched wilderness, cultural diversity of interesting characters, and history all are important subject matter in any artistic work I engage in.

Identifiable contributions to cultural industries, including First Nation visual art, in Yukon and Canada

The economy of Dawson City has broadened in recent years to include a vibrant arts sector in addition to the longer-established mining and tourism sectors. While the Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture, the flagship program of the Dawson City Arts Society, is the most visible organization in Dawson’s arts community, the School of Visual Arts, and its Foundation Year students, also appear to be making a contribution to the arts sector in Dawson. Interview respondents noted the following examples of how SOVA students are making contributions to cultural industries in Dawson:

Projects:	League of Lady Wrestlers, Riverside Arts Festival, camera obscura festival
Businesses:	The Klondike Drawing Company, Dawson Christmas Craft Sale
Employment:	KIAC (several opportunities), Dawson Youth Centre

Contributions involving First Nation visual art, and contributions which extend beyond the Yukon, are less apparent at the present time.

Well-established role for foundation-level visual arts education in Yukon

Seven years in, the School of Visual Arts has firmly established a role for itself in Dawson. As noted by an interview respondent, “...the community would feel a huge loss if SOVA was gone.” Another noted that “...there has been change in the community, people have embraced SOVA and its students.”

In terms of SOVA’s role in the broader Yukon arts education community, it was noted that the Foundation Year program’s place among other arts education programs in the Yukon is not well understood. For example, the relationship between the Foundation Year at SOVA and the

Multimedia Communications certificate program offered at the Whitehorse campus of Yukon College is not clear. As structural changes at Yukon College continue to focus on reducing the number of program “silos”, proactive consideration of how SOVA may integrate part of its 30 credit program with Whitehorse-based programs, and vice versa, may be prudent.

Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of SOVA Operations

Overall, the findings of this evaluation indicate that the School of visual Arts is effectively achieving its short-term outcomes and to a lesser extent, its long-term outcomes. The twelve recommendations outlined below are intended to help improve the effectiveness of SOVA operations as SOVA continues to work towards the achievement of its short-term and long-term outcomes:

1\ Based on a design capacity of 20 full-time students, SOVA’s Foundation Year program has been undersubscribed by, on average, 25% over the last seven years. While it is understood that SOVA has intensified recruitment efforts over the last 12 months, the importance of maximizing enrolment in the Foundation Year program cannot be overstated. In addition to recent recruiting efforts in the United States, further recruitment efforts could include reaching into markets not previously identified, such as Europe and Asia. Increased use of student testimonials combined with social media should also be explored. The SOVA website should be market-tested in a third-party focus group setting to identify weaknesses in the current website from a recruiting perspective.

2\ The six-week student housing crisis that arises every year as a result of an overlap between the housing needs of tourist industry workers and the housing needs of SOVA students may be constraining SOVA enrollment. SOVA should design a bridging measure, “bankable” with parents, that guarantees all students enrolled in the Foundation Year suitable housing for the first six weeks of the program. Suitable housing is housing that is of reasonable quality, safe, and fairly priced. For example, preferred rates could be negotiated with local hotels experiencing lower occupancy rates in the shoulder season. Visually communicate to prospective students and their families the existence and substance of the SOVA six-week housing guarantee.

3\ Foundation Year students appear to be receiving very good academic and personal support (i.e., housing arrangements, emotional and mental well-being) from SOVA faculty and staff. As the Whitehorse arm of Yukon College does not appear to be fully aware that SOVA is providing student support-type services, Yukon College’s Student Support Services Unit should reach out to SOVA staff and faculty to begin discussions about how the Student Support Services Unit can assist and support SOVA faculty and staff in providing support services to its students.

4\ As the size of the Foundation Year program does not likely warrant the creation of a student services position in Dawson, a written protocol should be developed, in collaboration with the Student Support Services Unit, that delineates how to effectively assist SOVA students in need of personal support (i.e., housing arrangements, emotional and mental well-being) that is consistent with current best practices.

5\ In response to feedback received from an articulation partner institution, develop detailed portfolio preparation guidelines that describe the requirements for an application to a second-year program at articulation partner institutions. To help ensure completeness of the student portfolios, introduce SOVA students to the preparation guidelines in September of each school year.

6\ Data collection and reporting needs to be improved in several areas including: a) more accurate counts of the jurisdictions where students are coming to the Yukon from, b) better tracking of where SOVA graduates are going after completing the Foundation Year (both further studies and applied endeavours) and c) clear delineation of which students are actually graduating from the program (i.e., receiving Foundation Year certificates). One approach that has been used with some success in the Yukon is to maintain a Christmas card mailing list. When Christmas cards come back as undeliverable, follow up through other methods (e.g., email, social media) to ensure contact is maintained. Permission needs to be sought as part of the 'staying in touch' process for graduates to be contacted by an evaluator at a later date. Staying in touch with SOVA graduates will be crucial to being able to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of SOVA's long-term outcomes in future program evaluations.

7\ Among Governance Council members, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in presumably holds the lead role for determining what modified or new indigenous curriculum content might look like. To support Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in this role, initiate a facilitated process to assist with providing direction to other Governance Council members on how to enhance, modify or introduce new indigenous curriculum such that SOVA students are further exposed to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in culture and practices.

8\ While interviews with faculty and staff indicate that the organizational lines of responsibility at SOVA are gradually coming more clearly into focus, Yukon College should continue, in its role of employer, to closely monitor progress towards complete clarity in organizational lines of responsibility.

9\ While the articulation agreements currently in place are key to the successful achievement of SOVA's short-term and long-term outcomes, there appears to be no mechanism in place to monitor the effectiveness of the agreements on an annual basis. To correct for this oversight, it is recommended that SOVA design a reporting instrument to be used to "check in" with the four articulation partners on an annual basis (the interview guide used in this evaluation can be used as a starting point for design of the instrument).

10\ The sudden arrival and significant size of SOVA's operating deficits in 2012/13 and 2013/14 should serve as a warning that the continued effectiveness of SOVA operations may be at risk. To mitigate this risk, explore options with the third-party funder and Yukon College for how SOVA can absorb the new expense charges and maintain the same level of service delivery effectiveness.

11\ Under terms of the current Transfer Payment Agreement, funding from fourth-parties (e.g., corporate sponsors, other governments) is offset from the Yukon Education transfer payment. To facilitate the continued exploration of expanded visual arts programming, including an infusion of First Nation artistic practices, modify subsequent Transfer Payment Agreements to allow for fourth-party funding for specific aspects of SOVA programming.

12\ In recognition of ongoing efforts at Yukon College to reduce the number of program 'silos', proactively explore how Yukon College and SOVA may potentially develop visual arts program partnerships.