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Donald H. DeHayes  
Provost and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Green Hall, URI, Kingston 02881

Dear Provost DeHayes,

My name is Kristina Cinquegrana and I am a 2007 Alumni from URI. I am also the 2007 Presidents' Excellence Award Winner for Art Studio. I received my BFA in Art Studio and am currently a Graphic Designer and freelance artist. I am writing to you in outrage because you have decided as of June 3, 2008 to terminate Judith Tolnick Champa and the Fine Arts Center Galleries.

I came across an article from the Summer 2001 volume of Quadrangles and was actually saddened to read the optimism in the article, which celebrated Judith's 10th anniversary of being the Director and commended her for what she's done for the Galleries. Now I am infuriated, along with countless others, to know that 7 years later the Galleries have been eliminated.

How does a University get rid of one of its biggest cultural centers? It is stated within the online "Greetings from the President" that "Together, URI's faculty, staff and administrators are striving to bring focus to our vast array of programs, create closer working relationships between students and faculty, replace large lectures with integrated seminars that blend the teaching of theory with the learning of life skills, **and provide students with a rich culture which will foster their learning.**" I do believe, Provost DeHayes, that this cut destroys that "rich culture" which is supposed to foster the learning of URI's students. As noted in Quadrangles, Judith brought in "a generous helping of faculty exhibits, year-end student shows, and exhibits coordinated with other activities on campus, such as the 1999 exhibit, "The War in Vietnam: Aftermaths and Afterimages," which was mounted in conjunction with the University's Honors Colloquium on the war." In Spring 2008, she collaborated with native Slovakian artist Viera Levitt on, "*CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: Central European Video Art from the Czech and Slovak Republics, Poland and Hungary*". Part of this show was also exhibited at the Kingston Train Station where thousands of travelers pass through. This exhibition generated immense public interest and I believe it was to the entire University's benefit that it helped to drive people to the campus in order to view the Main Gallery component. The most recent show "*Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945, A traveling exhibition produced by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC,*" played an integral part in the education of history and art students alike, and directly related to events held by URI Hillel, an important division on campus. The University is losing an integral part of students' learning. It is not just art majors losing something essential to their 4-6 years on campus- it's history majors, textile and fashion majors, communications majors, computer science and film majors alike that are losing the ability to stretch their enrichment across cultures and mediums.

One of the most outstanding points about Judith and the Galleries is that it gave students the opportunity to do an internship in order to gain real-world experience pertaining to their major. This Internship is actually listed in the 2008-2009 Course Catalog and reads "300 Art Gallery Internship (3) Curatorial responsibilities taught through hands-on experience in exhibition programs including exhibition research, production of interpretive texts and lectures, art object preparation, registration, and installation." With the elimination of the Galleries, you are eliminating 3 to 6 credits from a student's course selection and disabling them from gaining this invaluable experience on campus. I happen to be one of her former interns, and if it weren't for Judith giving me an opportunity to be one of her interns, I would not be where I am today. While an Intern, I co-designed the poster for the 2006 Annual Juried Student Show in conjunction with Martha Langer, owner of Pear Ink Design (East Greenwich, RI). Stemming from this Gallery poster design was a Graphic Design Internship with Martha where I discovered my career path.

The University is also effectively eliminating a free and local venue, which is advertised throughout New England, for students and professors to showcase their artwork. Every Spring, the Annual Juried Student show is held where students can submit up to 3 art pieces. Outside jurors are invited to choose the best works. Excellence and Honorable Mention Awards are made and a special Dean's Award is also decided in addition to an Award made by Fidelity Investments, a major sponsor of the Galleries year after year. I was a 2007 Excellence Award winner for my piece "Emerging" (2006). This gave me a tremendous addition to my resume for which I have been commended several times. The Galleries perfectly complement the curricula of the Art and Art History Departments and truly serve as a culmination point for Seniors just about to venture into the working world.

Provost DeHayes, the Galleries not only served the University, but it enhanced South County, RI, and New England. I recently designed the Ad for "What is it Worth?", a public fundraising event held Saturday, May 31, 2008 at the Galleries. I participated in the organization of the event where I witnessed first-hand, the outpouring of community that came to have their objects appraised by well-known professionals from Skinner, Inc. as seen on Antique Roadshow on PBS. Their donations were gracious and their feedback on the Gallery, Judith, and what she's done for cultural events in South County was immense. The number of people that the Galleries reach is far and wide, and I assure you that this is not being taken well by any of them.

I truly hope that you reconsider the elimination of the Galleries, as they are one of the most important facets to your campus's culture and vitality. Please speak with President Carothers, as I have written to him as well.

Cordially,

Kristina M. Cinquegrana