



Strategic 2019- 2023 Plan





INTRODUCTION

Critique is a vital and challenging part of the educational experience in a college of art and design. Participating in this practice requires students to be open and vulnerable while they present their work for discussion and questioning, and to trust the transformative powers of the process in service of the work. Through the frequent repetition of this act of openness, students and faculty share and strengthen their humanity, empathy and kinship and their work evolves.

The next five years will be a period of significant change for School of Visual Arts, some of which is already underway. It is fitting then, as we begin this new stage of development, that we engage in our own critique on an institutional scale.

We began the process of preparing this plan by soliciting feedback from a broad cross-section of the SVA community, seeking and receiving, with the openness that thoughtful critique demands.



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Ultimately, the goals were threefold:

- To accurately represent who we are as an institution
- To appraise those characteristics so essential to our identity that we are committed to sustaining them in some form, regardless of changes of leadership and control or shifts in the creative professions and higher education, while also identifying those areas we seek to improve upon
- To determine the means by which to achieve these interlocking goals of preservation and progress

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORE VALUES

- Participation in the Global Creative Community
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Freedom of Expression
- Professionalism and Integrity

RECOGNIZED STRENGTHS

- Faculty of working professionals that provide students with access and opportunity
- Robust international student enrollment
- Flat organizational structure and autonomy afforded to chairs and faculty that allow for swift evolution and innovation in the curriculum
- New York City as campus

FUTURE CHALLENGES

- Demographic changes, market saturation, and need to diversify international student population
- Evolving modes of delivery and inclusive pedagogical approaches
- Growing regulatory obligations and obstacles
- Retirement of long-serving academic leadership and faculty
- Physical space; campus and administrative decentralization



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VISION

To be the best art and design school in the world.

MISSION

To educate future generations of global creative citizens to foster cultural and social change that promotes our core values through the pursuit and achievement of their professional goals.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Instilling a standard of excellence in our students through a dynamic and focused curriculum
- Maintaining and sustaining a faculty of working professionals active in their fields
- Recruiting and supporting a fully inclusive community of students, faculty, staff and alumni
- Encouraging discovery, experimentation, and the implementation of bold concepts that challenge convention
- Engaging with, and contributing to, the vibrant cultural and professional landscape of New York City

SUB-PLANS

To be composed by working groups over the 2018-2019 year and presented at the Fall 2019 board meeting:

- Continuity of Operations
- Curriculum and Academic Policy
- Development and Advancement
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Space Planning
- Student Support Services and Success



CORE VALUES

Our in-depth interviews with dozens of SVA stakeholders included members of the board, faculty and chairs from undergraduate and graduate programs, current students and alumni and representatives of every tier of administration and staff. We asked each person to identify the core values of the College. The following words and phrases emerged consistently:

PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Creative citizenship extends far beyond the borders of any one state or country. Citizenship, as we see it, demands participating with integrity in the exchange of ideas in one's community and the world at large. We must recognize our common humanity; listen to our fellow global citizens; respect a multiplicity of perspectives and experiences; engage in a meaningful exchange of ideas; and most critically at this moment in our history, we must have the clarity of purpose to speak out against injustice.

At SVA, the creative citizen then encompasses all of these ideals through their artistic practice.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We are a diverse community that voices a deep commitment to equality and accessibility. We strive to create an atmosphere of openness and inclusion.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The College has always protected the rights of every member of its community to share their views in a receptive space and to enjoy the autonomy necessary for risk-taking and innovation. SVA should remain an environment where both new ideas and contested ideas are welcomed and explored.

PROFESSIONALISM AND INTEGRITY

The word "professional" came up in a number of contexts during our conversations about SVA's strengths and values. In practical terms, our faculty of working professionals are actively engaged with the fields that they teach. They hold students to a professional standard in terms of their craft, focus, and general comportment; the curriculum of each major is built on a foundation of specialization and expertise. But our community spoke about professionalism with a sincerity and significance that implied far more than mere competence. Professionalism at SVA encompasses accountability, intellectual rigor, leadership, and, above all, integrity.



RECOGNIZED STRENGTHS

Since its founding, SVA's greatest strength has been the ability to foster an environment and conditions where faculty and students feel empowered to do their best. We maintain a flat organizational structure and allow faculty considerable autonomy in the development of their courses. If someone has a good idea, the College has the nimbleness and flexibility to let them accomplish it.

Faculty in turn afford this same autonomy to their students. Students are encouraged to dig deeply and creatively into ideas, to risk failure and reach beyond the boundaries of their abilities and imaginations.

The students who thrive most readily in this context tend to be those who arrive with some idea of where they want their educational experience to take them. They are empowered to achieve career success through the opportunities afforded by the professional community of which the faculty are a part and through whom the students attain extraordinary access. With a robust international student population and New York City as our campus, we are able to foster the self-possession and drive of students and faculty to have impact both on the global stage and at the individual level.

Most broadly, SVA is a cultural and professional gateway for a pluralistic group of students and teachers across disciplines. We take great pride in producing graduates who are prepared to make an impact. They are innovative, self-reliant, professional and represent many cultures. In the best of cases, they are agents of change.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The challenges we face over the next five years are varied. Some are shared by colleges throughout the country; others are unique to SVA. Fundamentally, they all concern the essential quality of the student experience and the long-term value of an SVA education.

The climate for higher education institutions is troubling. We contend with the escalating cost of education and a perception of diminished return on investment. We must manage the complexities of effectively running an institution sustainably and ethically, particularly in light of growing regulatory obligations and obstacles. We have to adjust to the limitations of demographic shifts and market saturation.



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As the demographics change, so do the appropriate modes of delivery and pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, both the faculty themselves and subject-matter they address must become more inclusive and representative of an increasingly diverse SVA community.

Some concerns are specific to the particular context and characteristics of SVA. After many decades of consistent leadership, we are beginning to experience the retirement of long-serving academic leadership and faculty. And it is reasonable to anticipate that this trend will continue over the course of this five-year plan. This raises questions of succession and plans for developing the next generation of faculty and administrators and to fill the vacuum left by these key members of the SVA community.

We are an urban school. Although this provides students with countless benefits, the College must contend with the constraints that the New York City real estate market places upon our evolving physical space needs. This leads to campus decentralization which reinforces the sense that each department is a silo, and in turn can lead to duplicative use of resources.

Finally, the forthcoming conversion to 501(c)(3) status brings its own uncertainties and the path forward remains unclear.

VISION

Despite these concerns, SVA continues to be an ascendant institution by many measures, including the mounting accomplishments of members of the extended SVA community; favorable enrollment numbers; and exciting growth in new areas of practice and pedagogy. We continue to move forward in pursuit of the lofty vision that Board Chairman Milton Glaser established in the previous strategic plan: “To be the best art and design school in the world.”

While “best” is an expansive goal, this plan endeavors to establish more clearly our own particular and distinctive definition of “best.” Situated at the crossroads of international culture in New York City, we enjoy profoundly layered diversity. This multiplicity of local and global perspectives produces new means and modes of creative citizenship. The search for commonality is in itself transformative, and it moves us ever closer to our goal of “best.” Our vision, then, is to cultivate and train generations of creative citizens to work toward a greater understanding of our shared humanity and to invent new ways to embrace it.



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MISSION

In service of our vision and core values, we have revisited and restated our mission:

To educate future generations of creative citizens to foster cultural and social change that promotes our core values through the pursuit and achievement of their professional goals.

In support of this mission, the College is committed to:

- Instilling a standard of excellence in our students through a dynamic and focused curriculum
- Maintaining and sustaining a faculty of working professionals active in their fields
- Recruiting and supporting a fully inclusive community of students, faculty, staff and alumni
- Encouraging discovery, experimentation, and the implementation of bold concepts that challenge convention
- Engaging with, and contributing to, the vibrant cultural and professional landscape of New York City

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The revised mission statement is more than a reflection of who we are as a college. It underscores the areas that demand our attention as we move forward. The five principles of our mission statement provide a framework by which to structure the abundance of new and exciting ideas that we encountered in our interviews with the SVA community; a starting point for an ongoing dialogue that must continue throughout the college; and a guide to ensure that we are staying on track toward becoming the best version of who we already are.

Principally, we aim to cultivate an ongoing community-wide conversation that continues throughout the life of this plan and beyond. Over the course of this year, several working groups will convene to address particular areas of focus, culminating in the composition of six sub-plans proposed throughout this section. The implementation, ongoing assessment and regular amendment of the strategic plan and its sub-plans will be overseen by a Futures Committee, composed primarily of the chairs of each working group. This group will review our progress and adjust our goals accordingly, and apprise the SVA community annually of their work.



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These efforts toward increased cross-institutional dialogue and collaboration extend beyond the sub-plans as well. In addition to the working groups charged with composing the sub-plans enumerated below, the plan calls for a network of standing committees to meet regularly to discuss, ask questions and share insights around subjects of shared concern to each group. By creating spaces for ongoing dialogue across the institution, the strategic plan itself will be a living document, a functional though nonrestrictive roadmap subject to continuous consideration and review.

We will move toward our vision by:

1. INSTILLING A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE IN OUR STUDENTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND FOCUSED CURRICULUM

DYNAMIC AND FOCUSED CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is at the heart of our mission and we have long prided ourselves on our ability to adapt quickly and stay ahead of developments in the creative disciplines. That nimbleness must be sustained as we grow, while finding more opportunities for the sharing of good ideas across the institution. We propose:

- Establishing the BFA Animation department with a separate chair, and moving the program to the West Side to be in proximity with the Computer Arts programs
- Expanding online course offerings, with a particular focus on undergraduate humanities and sciences courses
- Establishing discipline-based working groups for ongoing exchange on developments in their field, sharing and collaborating on new ideas, and advising the President and Provost;
- Developing a coordinated system of learning outcomes at the course and program level to ensure consistency, clarity and effectiveness
- Facilitating increased collaboration between Continuing Education and the degree programs to offer courses addressing supplemental/remedial skills
- Considering new courses and degree offerings, including an MBA in Design Management; an M.Arch program; BFA offerings in product design and toys and games; the potential for dual degree programs linking VCS and Curatorial Practice; and additions to the H&S curriculum
- Developing pathways for BFA students to take graduate-level classes for credit
- Forming possible science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) partnerships with other institutions



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- Continuing the library's shift in focus from collections to services in support of the curriculum, requiring physical and digital space upgrades; including cataloging all departmental library holdings in the central library database

CURRICULUM SUB-PLAN

Some of these goals demand more centralized coordination among numerous departments. The Curriculum Working Group will determine the means by which we restructure the Foundation program to more effectively address the distinct needs of each BFA major department; evaluate the current Humanities and Sciences curriculum (including considering the inclusion of coding, brain science/psychology, big data, data science, engineering, and ethics) and develop substantial online H&S course offerings; review our online learning strategy; and review the current graduate program configuration and consider stacking approaches. Any potential new programs will also be evaluated by this group through a standardized process.

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

We demand excellence from our students, and hold ourselves to the same standard. This means continuing our efforts to recruit exceptional candidates for our student body while retaining this exceptional student body by optimizing and integrating support services designed to promote student success and minimizing obstacles to student achievement. This includes:

- Improving the hand-off from Admissions to Academic Advisors as the primary and consistent point of contact for ongoing one-on-one engagement throughout the students' time at SVA
- Refocusing and refining the academic advisement system by raising the visibility of academic advisors in the community; empowering advisors to operate broadly as the primary touchpoint for students; formalizing a training and shadowing period for new advisors; converting processes to fully paperless system; and establishing regular meetings as a group and with other administrators and faculty
- Reconsidering transfer credit policies to ease the pathway for transfer students and experienced workers re-entering education
- Creating a parent portal (including translations for parents of international students) to offer information tailored to parental concerns
- Increasing cultural orientation support for international students
- Increasing support/coordination services for off-campus housing for international students; dedicated graduate housing



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- Promoting a greater awareness of the Academic Integrity Policy and Code of Conduct through an ongoing college-wide discussion of the ethical and moral standards we expect of all members of the SVA community
- Establishing a task force on marketing and enrollment management; embarking on a marketing campaign that highlights and burnishes our academic reputation.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AND SUCCESS SUB-PLAN

The Student Services Working Group will ensure that the same individualized attention that applicants receive during the recruitment process continues throughout a student's time at SVA. This group will evaluate our transfer credit policies to maximize opportunity and review the academic advisement processes, including the implementation of updated digital services, to give advisors the ability to develop an engaged, collaborative partnership with each of their advisees. The group will also address best practices to bridge communication among Financial Aid, Housing, Health and Counseling, and Academic Advisement to enable the College to best assist students in contemplation of withdrawal and find solutions to ensure greater student success.

2. MAINTAINING AND SUSTAINING A FACULTY OF WORKING PROFESSIONALS ACTIVE IN THEIR FIELDS

FACULTY OF WORKING PROFESSIONALS

Our faculty remains our greatest asset at SVA. We will continue to attract and retain a faculty of accomplished practitioners by preserving our flat organizational structure and streamlining administrative responsibilities while simultaneously building up our faculty support and development. As the educational landscape becomes increasingly complex, it is the responsibility of the College to provide our faculty with practical information and pedagogical development opportunities. While we must not overburden our adjunct faculty, and must respect their outside professional commitments, it is critical that they be included in the conversation as their insight and experience are enormously valuable. Proposed initiatives include:

- Providing ongoing faculty development programming, in the form of workshops and online materials, as well as expanded required training for new faculty
- Establishing formal emeritus programs for long-serving faculty and chairs to ensure their continued connection to the institution



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- Creating more opportunities for faculty feedback and participation (end of term evaluations; representation in working groups)
- Supporting faculty presence throughout the institution—including appointing paid faculty advisors to selected student organizations and clubs
- Developing a faculty commons

3. RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING A FULLY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OF STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF AND ALUMNI

RECRUITING AND ADMISSIONS

Access to the SVA community necessarily begins with admissions and recruitment. We plan to expand and enhance the student community through the following initiatives:

- Continuing our targeted approach to recruitment of highly qualified domestic freshman
- Exploring new global markets, further diversifying international student population
- Increasing funding for scholarship opportunities for New York City high school students
- Reviewing the transfer credit policy
- Developing a collective and centralized strategy for graduate program recruiting and marketing

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Diversity and inclusion is a core principle of the College. SVA enjoys a student body that represents a significant number of historically underrepresented communities, ethnic and religious backgrounds, gender identities, diverse abilities, and foreign countries. However, the mere presence of a diverse student body is no accomplishment if those students do not feel fully included in the classroom and community at large. Therefore, we plan to place a major emphasis on the following measures over the next five years:

- Initiatives to expand diverse representation on the faculty
- Initiatives to ensure that the curriculum includes historically underrepresented communities and global perspectives
- Initiatives to encourage a range of pedagogical approaches that accommodate diverse learning abilities
- Initiatives to reduce cost of attendance and methods for creating access for more low-income students



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- Faculty diversity and inclusion training, as well as regular Safe Zone and Social Justice workshops and events open to the full community
- Disability accessibility audit of the SVA campus
- Reviewing and augmenting Grad Level ESL and cultural literacy offerings
- Offering an English language and acculturation pre-program for graduate students
- Developing online resources for international students and faculty teaching international students
- The appointment of an Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator to oversee the above and liaise with the Student Affairs team to develop additional support services

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION SUB-PLAN

The demands on this Working Group are vast in scope. The plan will address diversity, equity and inclusion broadly throughout the institution, as well as focusing specifically on initiatives and proposals relating to the needs of our significant international/ESL students. Beyond the immediate goal of composing this sub-plan, the working group will continue to meet regularly to foster an atmosphere of openness and maintain an ongoing discussion throughout the SVA community on diversity, inclusivity, equity and belonging.

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY ACCESS

The spaces that our community occupies, both physical and digital, are fundamental to our ability to cultivate dialogue and interaction. Our priority over the next five years will be the creation of shared spaces that encourage interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration in both a formal academic setting and through an informal social exchange of ideas. Initiatives include:

- A fabrication lab accessible to all undergraduate students on par with the VFL
- Additional lounge/work/dining spaces open to all members of the SVA community
- Renovation of 209 lobby, raising it to a standard warranted by our flagship building
- Acquisition of additional 50–100k sq. ft. for classrooms and studios
- Additional street level gallery space



SPACE PLANNING SUB-PLAN

The constraints of the New York City real estate market impose severe limitations on our goals for the campus. The Space Planning Working Group will produce a plan to ensure that we are prepared to act decisively when appropriate opportunities present themselves. The plan will identify and prioritize additional space needs for the campus and determine ideal location, neighborhoods and characteristics for each. Central to the plan will be the goal of co-locating kindred programs to the extent possible (for instance, moving BFA Animation to West 21st Street, alongside the Computer Arts programs).

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS SUB-PLAN

The Emergency Management Committee will be responsible for an updated continuity of operations plan, now underway, that addresses physical relocation of academic and administrative operations in the case of catastrophic events, including potential reciprocity agreements for contingency space.

4. ENCOURAGING DISCOVERY, EXPERIMENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF BOLD CONCEPTS THAT CHALLENGE CONVENTIONS

EXPERIMENTATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As the practices of art and design continue to evolve, so too must the pathways available to our students to experiment, fail, innovate and ultimately realize their unique creative visions. We will continue to invest in physical and virtual spaces for experimentation, collaboration, and fabrication and dismantle obstacles to interdisciplinary study at SVA and abroad. Project-based and client-based projects – both in and out of the classroom – allow interdepartmental interaction to flourish. Toward these goals we plan on:

- Building a Maker Space available for use by all undergraduate students
- Developing opportunities for project-based and client-based interdisciplinary learning, beginning with a pilot “Design Clinic” program housed within the Visual Arts Press for supervised student work both paid and pro-bono
- Removing barriers to interdisciplinary study, including conceiving a new department fee system and developing a shared animation and computer art foundation year to facilitate ease of transfer between the two programs
- Increasing support for interdepartmental graduate symposia
- Reducing constraints on opportunities to study abroad
- Further developing our incubator and founder labs ventures



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SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

Milton Glaser encourages his students to ask at the beginning of any project: “Will this do harm?” Whatever answer the student comes to, this acknowledgment of the existence of the ethical question and consciousness of the potential social meaning and impact of the work, is an essential stage of the creative process at SVA. We aim to develop students’ sense of civic engagement through a more structured emphasis within the curriculum, as well as in students’ lives outside of the classroom.

- “Writing Across the Curriculum”: Required cross-cohort 1st and 3rd year humanities course on key issues in contemporary society, civic engagement and social innovation for all BFA students
- Developing shared lecture series for all graduate students on ethics and civic engagement
- Considering creation of Civic Engagement and the Arts concentration
- Student Clubs and Activities: reassessing funding policies to allocate financial support based on the relative degree of activity and community impact; encouraging and structuring faculty advisement; encouraging club leadership to draft policies/bylaws for clubs; considering methods to increase club participation/make more accessible to commuter students
- Increasing engagement and collaboration with peer institutions globally in service of social impact

5. ENGAGING WITH AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE VIBRANT CULTURAL AND PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE OF NEW YORK CITY

ALUMNI AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The SVA community extends beyond graduation, as the substantial number of alumni on our faculty can attest. Many alumni who stay in the New York City area remain a vital part of the conversation in other capacities as well. Our alumni community continues to grow and expand beyond the city and we must find new means by which to cultivate these relationships with both local and international alumni.

- Increasing capacity of Career Development and Alumni Affairs Offices to provide counseling, education, and workshops to enrolled students, and lifelong career services support to alumni; and begin to plan for expanded development and advancement responsibilities following eventual transition to non-profit status
- Empowering Alumni Affairs to facilitate and coordinate increased alumni involvement and mentoring of future generations of SVA students



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- Engaging faculty in alumni outreach, develop shared resource for faculty to contribute information to
- Working with International Outreach office to maintain and enhance ongoing contact with alumni who have returned to countries of origin
- Sponsoring alumni weekend and regular networking events to keep alumni connected to the College and to each other
- Cultivating a tradition of alumni giving founded on the principal of ongoing responsibility to the community and subsequent generations of SVA students

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our relationship with the community outside our doors is by no means limited to our alumni. Our College is a community within the larger community of New York City and within the global community. We have an obligation to the New York City community and beyond. Key areas of focus will include:

- Strategic Partnerships; collaborating with peer institutions and arts organizations locally and globally
- Expanding the range of institutional memberships to include smaller, more diverse organizations
- Developing initiatives that promote SVA as a content platform coordinated between the Office of Communication, the Visual Arts Press, Academic Affairs, and the Office of Learning Technologies
- Reassessing the goals and structure of our continuing education programming
- Fostering greater community engagement with the SVA Galleries through a variety of initiatives including an updated exhibition calendar; collaboration with departments, Academic Affairs, and the SVA Archives to encourage greater use by faculty of the galleries as a pedagogical tool; consider creation of a substantial street-level gallery space located centrally to campus

DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT SUB-PLAN

This sub-plan will consider how our needs as an institution will change once the College transitions to 501(c)(3) status, and what measures we can begin to take to ensure our sustainability and continuity in advance of the formal change. It will take many years beyond the life of this strategic plan to see the returns of a fully functional endowment; but the benefits of such efforts are imperative to our long-term ability to provide access to exceptional students regardless of their socioeconomic status. If being the best means cultivating citizens through a robust community dialogue, it is imperative that we build more pathways to access that conversation.



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NEXT STEPS

Following Board approval, the full plan will be distributed within the SVA community, and the executive summary will be made available publicly. The Visual Arts Press is developing a website that will be updated regularly to track the progress of the plan. The Futures Committee will oversee the creation of Working Groups, who will begin meeting in November 2018 toward the ultimate goal of producing sub-plans for review at the Fall 2019 SVA Board Meeting.

PERSONNEL

Futures Committee: Christopher Cyphers and Emily Ross, Co-chairs

Continuity of Operations Sub-plan: Joyce Rutter Kaye, Chair

Curriculum and Academic Policy Sub-plan: Christopher Cyphers, Chair

Development and Advancement Sub-plan: Jane Nuzzo, Chair

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Sub-plan: Laurel Christy and
Vennette Jones, Co-chairs

Space Planning Sub-plan: Jason Koth, Chair

Student Support Services and Success Sub-Plan: Matthew Farina, Chair

TIMELINE

Fall 2018 Board Meeting: Plan Submitted for Approval by Board

November 2018: First meetings of Working Groups

August 2019: First Annual Futures Committee Plan Update at All-Staff Meeting

Fall 2019 Board Meeting: Sub-plans Submitted for Approval by Board