

## **Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs**

School of Art+Design  
Nan Goggin, Interim Director  
05.09.08

### **Past Assessment Results**

The School has undergone significant administrative turnover since the original assessment plan was developed in 1999. Since that time, the School has seen the arrival and departure of one Interim Director and two Directors. The most recently appointed Director stepped down in the spring of 2007. The current administrative team was assembled in the summer and fall of 2007 and consists of an Interim Director, an Interim Executive Associate Director, and an Associate Director.

Due to this lack of continuity, the 1999 plan was neither utilized by, nor communicated to successive unit administrators. This does not, however, mean that plans for assessing and improving student learning has not taken place. The unit has been actively engaged in this process and the current administrative team has been intensely involved in this effort during the past academic year. The assessment plan outlined below does, however, represent something of a fresh start for the School.

### **Revised Assessment Plan**

Efforts to assess and improve student learning have been occurring for the past several years, have intensified during the past year, and can be organized into the following general categories:

#### *Curriculum revisions*

- This year the School completed a comprehensive update and revision of the curricula and official Programs of Study for all nine degree-granting undergraduate programs. This included revision of existing courses, revision of course sequencing, revision of program electives, deletion of outdated courses, addition of new courses, and addition of capstone courses.
- Creation of the New Media BFA degree, which received IBHE approval in 2007.
- Creation of a new PhD and two new MA degrees in the Art Education program.
- Ongoing development of new courses, particularly during the past year, to service non-majors from across campus.
- During the past year the School has begun preparation for its re-accreditation by the National Association of School of Art and Design (NASAD) during the 2009-2010 academic year.

#### *Student advising and communication*

- Hiring of a Specialist in Undergraduate Academic Affairs in 2006. This staff position provides essential dedicated advising to students and supports general oversight of all School curricula.

- Hiring a 50% time academic advisor for PhD students in Art History and Art Education.
- The current Interim Director has instituted a “Lunch with the Director” each semester. All students in the School are invited to an informal pizza lunch with School administrators and program chairs during which they are encouraged to talk about their concerns. Unit administrators also use this meeting to solicit student feedback on specific topics. This forum has also been used to encourage the formation of a grassroots Art+Design student organization.
- Student representation has been reinstated on selected unit committees, such as the Visiting Artist committee.
- An online graduating student exit interview was instituted in 2006 at both the undergraduate and graduate level, with the resulting data being stored in a cumulative database.

*Outreach, recruiting, sharing student outcomes and making them visible*

- In 2005 the School was reorganized into four academic divisions – studio, design/media, art history, art education – to promote more effective administration and oversight of programmatic curricula.
- In 2006 the School began partnering with the Krannert Art Museum to mount an annual exhibit of work by all students completing the BFA degree. This is an effective means of making student learning outcomes visible, and provides graduating students with a significant capstone experience. The School also produces an extensive catalog that reproduces student work and also contains information on all undergraduate degree-granting programs.
- The School continues its long-standing tradition of partnering with Krannert Art Museum to mounting a professional exhibition of work by graduating MFA students. Like the BFA show, this is an important capstone experience for students, and makes learning outcomes visible and celebrated. A web-based catalog is produced that features student work, and also contains a critical essay by an established art critic.
- A new School website was launched in fall 2007 that reproduces work by both undergraduate and graduate students. This site also contains current curricular information that has been significantly revised and updated. Additionally, students (and prospective students) can find information on programs, faculty, facilities, and upcoming events.

*Faculty communication, participation, and development*

- The current Interim Director has instituted yearly departmental meetings with faculty in each of the School’s ten programs. Data such as student enrollments in departmental courses, average grades across programs, and student exit survey results are presented and discussed. Each unit has been encouraged to develop a strategic plan and vision for the future of the program, and share that with both School administrators and colleagues in other programs.
- The School has added to staffing and diversity through the hiring of an Assistant Professor in Foundations/Sculpture, and the recruiting of a TOPS candidate as an Assistant Professor of Foundations/Ceramics.
- Following several years of administrative turmoil and sinking faculty morale, this past year seen an increase in faculty participation as measured by

- attendance at all-faculty meetings, attendance and participation at committee meetings, and increased participation in faculty governance elections.
- This year has seen closer monitoring of the ICES evaluation process, particularly with respect to achieving universal participation from all faculty, followed by comprehensive review and archiving of all results.

### **Student Outcomes**

The current School administration has worked this year to articulate a set of explicit skills, attitudes, and sensibilities that graduating students should possess. The next step will be to generate discussion and consensus among the faculty regarding these outcomes, and to determine how these goals apply to individual courses. This is a work in progress and is expected to undergo transformation in the coming year as the full faculty revises and refines the following objectives:

*On completion of a degree in the School of Art+Design, students should be able to demonstrate the following skills and attributes. These are also the criteria on which academic achievement will be assessed.*

#### *visual communication, literacy, and analysis*

The ability to employ visual elements in a masterful, intelligent, appropriate, and creative manner; to demonstrate articulate fluency in visual communication; the ability to inform, effect, influence, or convince audiences and users through the skillful creation of visual images and objects.

#### *critical thinking and reflection*

The ability to evaluate one's work, and the work of others, in a thoughtful, informed, and critical manner.

#### *production*

Mastery in the selection and use of appropriate materials in the making of visual images and objects.

#### *research*

The ability to select and fully utilize appropriate research and experimental methods; to access existing information sources or to generate new information; and to analyze findings and synthesize conclusions from research for future work in a rationale and innovative way.

#### *creativity, innovation, imagination, and synthesis*

The ability to identify opportunities or solve problems by using appropriate thinking, research, modeling and making strategies; the ability to find new approaches and solutions; the ability to experiment and to make new discoveries and surprising connections; the ability to understand and respond accordingly to particular audiences, users, or markets.

#### *collaboration*

The ability to work effectively and productively with others, accepting responsibility in a variety of roles, including the ability to form teams, work in groups, and lead others.

*organization*

The ability to plan and implement action at a professional level; identify problems, targets, and resources; manage oneself and others effectively.

*contextualization*

The ability to locate one's activity within the multiple contexts of art and design practice, including its historical, theoretical, critical, professional, cultural, environmental, and technological contexts.

*communication*

The ability to use various forms of communication, as appropriate, to express, explain, inform, persuade, and debate one's work, ideas, and values.

*intellectual flexibility, curiosity, and lifelong learning*

The desire to always know, understand, and gain more knowledge; the ability to carry out ongoing and independent learning as a basis for personal and professional development.

*historical consciousness*

The ability to view the present within the context of the past, appreciate tradition, and understand the critical historical forces that have influenced the way we think, feel, and act.

*global community and citizenship*

Involvement in the contemporary world -- by understanding the range of physical, geographic, economic, political, religious, and cultural realities influencing world events -- cultivates in students an informed sensitivity to global and environmental issues.

*ethics and social responsibility*

The ability to understand the ethical dimension of decisions one makes, both as an individual and a professional, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

*equality and diversity*

The ability to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community; the ability to understand, and celebrate, the culture and contributions of groups persistently marginalized because of race, ethnicity, gender, class, or sexuality.

**Measuring outcomes**

Student learning outcomes will be assessed and measured in the following ways:

- ICES data
- grades
- critiques
- written statements, papers, exams
- student exhibitions (i.e. exhibitions in the Link Gallery)
- capstone exhibitions: BFA and MFA Krannert exhibitions
- exit surveys and interviews
- alumni surveys

- NASAD accreditation review

#### **Plans for using results**

The assessment and learning outcomes data derived from the activities outlined above will be used at every level of operations in the School: mentoring and developing the skills of individual faculty, helping programs understand student needs and the vitality of their curricula, understanding how to make the activities of the school visible and how to communicate their value to the outside world, and providing the basis for the development and evolution of a responsive School-wide strategic vision at a time when student demographics and cultural dynamics are in rapid and constant flux.

#### **Timetable for implementation**

Most of the activities outlined above have already been implemented in some fashion. But these activities will undergo constant revision as new data provides a map for constant improvement and evolution.

The current School administration has, however, identified two specific goals for the next academic year that could yield a substantial boost in the quality of our educational programs. These goals are as follows:

- Opportunities to improve or extend the new School website. An area of particular interest is alumni relations, with the ability to collect and update survey data on graduates as they progress through their careers. This is an area of assessment that is currently underdeveloped. The School recruiting committee will be charged with developing a plan and timetable for this website expansion.
- Assessment of School-wide curricular structure. The current curricular structure, such as organizing majors by media such as painting and sculpture, has remained essentially unchanged for the past several decades. Some of the data recently analyzed, such as the distribution of students by major and the rising number of double-majors, suggests that these traditional organizational structures may no longer reflect current student needs and demographics. The School curriculum committee will be charged with the task of exploring these questions and making recommendations in a final report in spring '09.