Department: Design

Assessment Coordinator: Dr. Elsi Vassdal Ellis

Departmental Mission: In support of the mission of Western Washington University and the College of Fine and Performing Arts, the Design Program utilizes a curriculum that emphasizes the process of problem solving to direct students to make connections between culture and design and their role as responsible visual communicators. Students learn to combine personal expression and critical thinking as they create solutions that connect industry, individuals, and institutions to specific audiences and themselves to the world. Students develop adaptive learning strategies to sustain successful communication careers in a constantly changing world.

Departmental Student Learning Outcomes: Upon graduation, Design, BA majors will be able to:
1. Demonstrate functional competence with principles of visual organization, visual language and theory as applied to visual communication problems.
2. Understand and apply creative and abstract thinking skills to visual communication problems.
3. Produce creative, professional-quality work within project guidelines.
4. Understand, embrace and use current tools, software and technology as a vehicle of effective communication (conceive, design, produce, and create visual forms to successfully communicate ideas, opinions, concepts).
5. Demonstrate facility in visual communication practice, including written and verbal communication skills.

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<td>1 BFA 2016-2017 application portfolio review (conducted winter 2015)</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>The BFA application winter 2016 saw a 60% increase in the number of applicants for the degree option, resulting in a higher quality 2016-2017 BFA cohort. The review was also conducted with a more streamlined rubric. The review required less time to complete with the rubric. There was also less debate regarding identifying the last two applicants for the final two spots. Concerns were still raised that not all faculty members had worked with all applicants. This experience was considered important when assessing the ability of the applicants to work in teams and to meet deadlines. Until the seventh faculty position is filled it will continue to be necessary to have adjuncts teach one or two Foundation sections each year.</td>
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The typographic quality of student work continued to show improvement in Design 360. The application of assignments to create assets shared between Design 340 and 360 achieved the goal of reducing student workload. Faculty members recognized that the agreed-to deadlines for the shared assets must be maintained to ensure student success.

The physical quality of the application portfolios reinforced the value of the changes made to Design 351 with the inclusion of three weeks of binding experiences resulted in 100% elimination of portfolio construction as a factor in the review of student work for advancement to BFA candidacy.

Debriefs with Aquent and Filter interviewers were conducted on June 6 and June 7, 2016.

Aquent, with 20 interview spots spent 80% of their time with BA students; Filter, with 22 interview spots spent 86% of their time with BA students. Nine BA students signed up to interview with both agencies.

Overall, student portfolios were reported again to be stronger than the previous year with corresponding improvement in project presentation skills. Aquent saw increase in the level of contract work readiness. Our students continue to have the highest percentage of readiness compared to our academic competition within the I-5 corridor: more than 50% of our graduating seniors do not require any additional preparation before sending them out for their first design contract. There has also been 30% increase in the requests from hiring managers of various firms for graduates of our program. Forty-two percent of the BA students participated in at least one of the interview opportunities; one-third of the BFA students met with the interviewers.

Design majors are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5; student GPAs are monitored each quarter by the chair using the Student Success Collaborative system. If a student’s GPA does not meet the baseline criteria, a review of course success by quarter is made. In 2016 one student was placed on a one year hiatus – unable to register for Design courses at the upper division level because of a lack of failure to improve his GPA as well as meet with the chair to develop a plan to improve his academic status.

All students with GPA concerns were invited to meet with the chair to determine the nature of the academic problems as well as develop plans to improve academic performance. Students making steady progress in improving their GPA were also invited to meet with the chair to celebrate their success.

For a third year in a row we have experienced students failing an upper division course and/or dropping out of Western. This makes enrollment management a significant challenge, especially with the upper division core. Enrollment has fluctuated between less than 100% in the BA upper division core to some courses with students repeating a course or courses, thus requiring class sizes to be increased to accommodate them.

In the assessment meeting, two student behaviors were identified as contributing to the problem: inability to meet deadlines for assignments (either due to anxiety issues overall or a lack of commitment to the
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<td>4</td>
<td>External review of student work</td>
<td>As part of requirements for Design 385, students are required to submit projects to the Adobe Design Achievement Awards competition. Two BA students were selected as semi-finalists in poster and app design in the Adobe Design Achievement Awards. One of the student award winners was hired as a contract worker for Amazon and was retained by Amazon (not a standard practice) at the end of her contract.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>External Advisory Board</td>
<td>The Advisory Board meets on alternating years; there was no meeting spring 2016.</td>
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| 6 | BA Capstone Course | Brittany Schade presented to the Design faculty the results of Design 385 regarding assessment of writing and presentation skills and testing of content on the final exam. The primary debate by faculty was in defining "meet standards". One faculty member wanted the B grade to be the criterion for "meets standards" while others stated that a grade of C still "meets standards" because students do pass courses with a grade of C- or better in majors.

The class was composed of 36 BA students and 12 newly admitted BFA candidates. Students in this course included first generation college students as well as students with English as a second language.

**Writing**: This course has been offered as writing proficiency for two years. It was changed to include this requirement due to the lack of relevant design business and technical writing offered in other WP courses. Writing projects in this course included three 750-word essays: case study of a design project, a reflection paper of the correlation between students' individual major and minor coursework, and a reflection paper about a design event that they recently attended. In addition, students were required to write content for their own self-promotion including descriptions for portfolio websites, cover letter, resume, a multi-page design proposal, and invoice. The evaluation of these assignments was depth of content and analysis; ability to observe, analyze and make original conclusions; quality of technical writing and ability to meet length requirement.

For the essay component of the grade, 37.5% exceeded standards (A), 43.75% met standards (B), 12.5% completed the component earning a C; 6.25% failed to meet the standards (2 Ds, 1F).

For the self-promotion component of the grade, 8.33% exceeded standards (A), 25% met standards (B), 43.75% completed the component earning a C; 23% did not meet standards for this component (8 Ds, 3 Fs).
**Presentation:** Presentation skills were assessed by the ability to showcase students’ work in an online portfolio, a design proposal, and a resume and cover letter. The portfolio must have 5-8 projects including a written case study and personal bio, and should visually conform to the students’ creative identity. The design proposal demonstrated the students’ capacity to acquire new clients, while the cover letter and resume also must be presentable, outlining the students’ qualities in a presentable manner. These projects combined demonstrate passive presentation skills and a deeper level of thinking about one’s own goals and philosophies. The evaluation of these assignments was quality of technical writing and representation of work; presentation and effectiveness of information and design aesthetic.

For the **presentation** component of the grade, 8.33% exceeded standards (A), 25% met standards (B), 43.75% completed the component earning a C; 23% failed the meet the standards for this component (8 Ds, 3 F).

**Final Exam:** The final exam consisted of 25 questions worth 2 points that included multiple choice and fill in the blank questions which were sampled from the lecture-only materials from the course. Topics included: ethics, pricing and legal rights. Performance on the final exam: 51.2% exceeded standards (A); 25% met the standards (B); 10.4 completed the component earning a C; 8.3% failed to meet standards (1 D, 3 F).

The final grades for the course are as follows: 29.2% exceeded standards (A); 54.1% met the standards (B); 12.5 completed the component earning a C; one student failed the course; 1 student took an incomplete due to on-going health problems; one student withdrew from Western.

The faculty discussed the challenges of spring quarter for the BA students with two 5-credit project-based portfolio courses as well as the professional practices capstone course. Given the objective of a two-year BA degree to meet the time-to-degree goal of the institution for transfer students there seemed to be no scheduling options available to improve student performance in this capstone. The students who failed the course also lost grade-changing points through lack of attendance (more than two excused absences) and inability or choice to not turn deliverables in on deadline. The syllabus is clear regarding expectations and consequences for these two expected professional behaviors.

**Senior portfolio exhibit & online portfolio**

The BA and BFA students presented work in the annual spring show at Western.

Making the branding, organization and implementation of the senior show a part of the Design 385 course requirements reduced the burden on the faculty as well as provided invaluable practical experience for the various design teams. The show went up more quickly than in the previous year, demonstrated a strong brand, was better organized. The faculty member noted that a stronger critique of the branding section was needed next year.
The senior exhibit speaker, Chad Brown, was an excellent choice for this year's exhibition. His presentation was inspiring as well as a veteran, risk-taker, business entrepreneur and African-American.

Program Changes Based on Assessment Data
No program changes were deemed necessary for 2016-2017. The faculty noted that there was a need to gather an additional year of data to determine the full impact of the programmatic changes implemented in 2014 and 2015. With the coming retirement of the faculty member responsible for teaching all sections of Design 351, the hiring of a new faculty member would most likely require flexibility in the content and assignments of the course.

Assessment goal for 2017-2018: Because of the failed search for the seventh position (2015-2016) and the two faculty searches and one instructional technician search that will take place in 2016-2017, the assessment of Design 220 course content and assignment changes will most likely take place in 2017-2018 with the return of Kent Smith following his year-long professional leave.
Department of Design: Assessment and Improvement of BFA, 2015

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5. Demonstrate facility in visual communication practice, including written and verbal communication skills

6. Identify, analyze, interpret, translate and manage complex communication problems into effective visual communication solutions.

7. Demonstrate integration of print, web, interactive media in complex visual communication solutions.

8. Work collaboratively and manage design projects to effective completion.

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<td>1 BFA Portfolio Exhibits</td>
<td>6, 7, 8</td>
<td>The BFA seniors presented their work in two exhibits: Flutter Studios in Seattle (June 9) and Western (June 10). Overall, 100% of the portfolios achieved the objectives of the BFA degree option in terms of professionalism and development of collaborative skills. The portfolios demonstrated a stronger balance of individual and team projects as well as an increased level of professionalism in the projects that were selected for their portfolios. This venue was an improvement over last year’s space with a larger turn-out of professionals and alumni to the show.</td>
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<td>2 BFA spring review</td>
<td>The fall quarter goal of improving presentation and process skills was achieved with students presenting their team work to “clients” as well as during Design Days. The winter quarter format was continued for a second year involving the shift from a service learning focus to design research and quick turnaround projects. The students had more work to select for their final portfolios and their design brief writing skills and time management skills were stronger than the previous year’s cohort. No changes were made to the spring quarter seminar as it involves individual portfolio development.</td>
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<td>3 Presentations as part of Design Days and classes</td>
<td>The BFA candidates were expected to take the lead on the Design Days student presentation series for a second year. Session attendance demonstrated improvement over the previous year’s events. The students made effective use of the presentation media and were well prepared to speak to their audiences. Faculty will remind presenters to test the facilities ahead of time to ensure optimum color application for projection size and control over room lighting. The team presenting their app and user experience data on casual microaggression and professionally responded to challenging questions posed by the audience related to issues of diversity (LGBT).</td>
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<td>4 External Advisory Board</td>
<td>The Advisory Board meets on alternate years. Because of the two faculty new hires in the program (retirement replacement + new position), the External Advisory Board will meet in spring 2017 when the new faculty have adjusted to life at Western.</td>
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<td>4 External review of student work</td>
<td>Four BFA candidates were recognized spring/summer quarters by Adobe in their Design Achievement Awards competition. Amelia Barlow and Zach Becker were semi-finalists in the Social Impact Web/App/Game category for Pedal; Amelia received two semi-finalist awards in Print/Graphic/Illustration for her Little Lava Park identity and Wonderland Trail editorial layout; Sean Williams received three semi-finalist awards for his art direction and design of Jeopardy (student art/literature publication), Racial Disparity Editorial, and his illustrated limited edition book Gone. The Design program was identified by David Miller of Artefact in an interview for fastcodesign.com: “A Complete Guide to Getting A Design Job In 2030” as one of the ten schools training for the design challenges of the future. Included on the list are: University of Washington, California College of Arts, Art Center, University of Cincinnati, Carnegie Mellon University, College of Creative Studies (CCS), Rhode Island School of Design, School of Visual Arts, and Parsons School of Design. Artefact hired Amelia Barlow as a full-time designer. She was one of 160 applicants for the position.</td>
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<td>5 Professional interviews/portfolio reviews of seniors</td>
<td>Not all BFA students participated again in the interviews with Aquent and Filter with 8 of the 12 seniors taking advantage of the experience. Aquent and Filter requested the opportunity to schedule interviews earlier in the quarter for BFA students since many of them had already signed contracts for employment immediately after graduation and they wanted to have a chance to hire them.</td>
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Program Changes Based on Assessment Data

No changes were recommended in 2016-2017. It was determined at least two years of data should be collected regarding the impact of changes to the BFA Seminar assignments and activities.

Professional practices:
The renumbering of the two professional practices courses has significantly reduced confusion on the part of BA students regarding which course to take and when to take it. The newly admitted BFA candidates have a challenging spring quarter completing their BA requirements while preparing for their summer internships with the second typography course. The project-based courses do not seem to suffer as much in terms of project completion as does Design 385.