

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN
B.F.A. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT
Submitted January 2011, Assessment for AY 2009-10

I. Program's Mission

Offered by the College of Fine Arts (COFA) at Marshall University, the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree is the professional undergraduate degree for the visual and performing arts. The emphasis of the BFA in Art program in the Department of Art and Design is student preparation for advanced study and careers in visual art and design.

Accordingly, the goals for the BFA program in art and design are to:

- Provide students with a sequential skill building curriculum in art and design foundations that introduces them to the techniques, materials and concepts required for advanced study
- Broaden the context and criteria by which students measure their work in the world
- Foster rigorous and supportive learning conditions which inspire lucid visual, verbal and written expressions by students
- Graduate students with competitive dossiers suitable for entry into sought after graduate programs and/or careers in art and design

The BFA in Art supports the institution's mission by:

- Providing artistic and cultural programs that further the intellectual, artistic, and cultural life of the individual, community and region
- Facilitating learning through the preservation, discovery, synthesis, and dissemination of knowledge
- Enlisting faculty who actively engage and mentor students in scholarly, artistic, creative endeavors
- Engaging faculty, staff, and students in campus and community outreach service activities

- Challenging students to apply their knowledge, creativity, and skill to questions and everyday problems
- Fostering a climate that appreciates and cultivates diversity and values difference
- Preparing art and design students to be adaptive thinkers and producers that contribute to society
- Helping student's develop a competitive dossier that shows they are prepared for graduate studies or entry-level careers in art and design

II. Program's Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the BFA in Art and Design will:

- A. Adeptly use advanced design principles to create original art and design works using traditional and non-traditional media
- B. Clearly articulate themselves using appropriate art and design vocabulary when writing or speaking.
- C. Assemble high-quality dossiers that include digital portfolios suitable for advanced study or careers in the visual arts
- D. Evaluate one's own artistic output by organizing a public exhibition supported by a statement of one's creative intentions and/or establishes awareness of historical precedent

III. Assessment Activities

This document will examine **Student Learning Outcome D** (above) using the following two assessment measures.

- Assessment Measure 1: **Art 299 Portfolio Review is** a zero-credit course for visual art and art education students that generally occurs in students' fourth semester (after they complete 18 credits in hands-on studio courses but before they have completed 27 studio art credits). Students who transfer into the department and recurring students who are required to repeat all or a portion of the review will enroll in Art 299 as directed by the chair.

- **Assessment Measure 2: 499: Senior Capstone Project**
Reviews for 499 a one-credit course for visual art and art education students that generally occurs in students' last semester (art education and graphic design students are becoming exceptions) and are conducted in the Birke Art Gallery.

Assessment Measure 1: Art 299: Portfolio Review

The portfolio review is a gateway from the foundations courses to specialized upper-level studio emphasis areas. BFA visual art majors and art education students enroll in Art 299 after completing studio-based foundations courses (Art 214, 215, 217, 218 and 219 and one 300-level studio course). Foundations courses furnish students with core art and design vocabulary, techniques and skills. Desired competencies are illustrated in textbooks and used to describe and evaluate art and design projects. Standards are also determined by critical literature and current practices in the profession, coupled with the training, experience and expertise possessed by the collective departmental faculty.

Students participating in the portfolio review are expected to exhibit basic competencies in representational and abstract drawing and 2D design, traditional visual language and varied processes, show evidence of original exploration of concept and form in 3D design (and 3D virtual modeling) and overall competence and confidence as evidenced by a written essay and oral presentation. They present artwork for faculty review in three ways:

- Displaying representative work samples from all their foundations courses in the Birke Art Gallery
- Submitting a statement that reflects their intentions and influences
- Delivering a PowerPoint presentation that illustrates their perceived strengths and weaknesses and identifies goals for advanced study.

Faculty assess student projects from foundations courses in five competency areas (*a. Drawing skills, b. 2D Design skills, c. 3D Design skills, d. Display of work, and e. Oral presentation*), using a rating form with a 5-digit scale and space for narrative comments that expand on perceived strengths and weaknesses. Numerical values (4 =

high and 0 = low), mirror letter grades (4 = *Excellent* or "A" work), 3 = *Very Good* or "B" work, 2 *Satisfactory* or "C" work, 1 = *Poor* or "D" work and 0 = *Fail* or "F" work). With 25 total points possible, an aggregate score of 15 points (with a minimum score of 2 in each category) is required to pass. A specific rubric is written for each competency measured and the first example below (with rubric in *italics*) shows how outcomes are scored in each of the five categories:

- A. Drawing (Art 217 & Art 218): Emphasis on line and value, spatial depth, representational skills and perspective (5 points possible).

5 = Consistently meets or exceeds expectations. Clearly excels in creativity, craftsmanship, and time management. Projects are turned in on time and illustrate a keen imagination, mastery of materials, and strong understanding of basic design materials, vocabulary and principles (line, value, color, and space, etc.).

4 = Often meets or exceeds most expectations. Shows above average creativity, organization, and craftsmanship. Projects display imagination, a solid understanding of basic design materials, vocabulary and principles (line, value, color, and space, etc.), and are usually turned in on time.

3 = Randomly meets but rarely exceeds expectations. Projects are adequate, although lacking in creativity and/or craftsmanship and not consistently turned in on time. Shows a general understanding of basic design vocabulary and principles (line, value, color, and space, etc.).

2 = Fails to meet many expectations and appears to be unfamiliar with fundamental materials, techniques and vocabulary. Projects lack creativity and/or attention to craftsmanship, are often unfinished, late and/or missing; and display a slim grasp of basic design principles (line, value, color, and space, etc.).

1 = Fails to meet most or all expectations and appears to be wholly unfamiliar with fundamental materials, techniques and vocabulary. Projects are frequently unfinished, late, and/or missing; show little or no creativity and/or attention to craftsmanship and

reflect an inadequate or absent grasp of basic design or principles (line, value, color, and space, etc.).

- B. Two-dimensional techniques (Art 214 and Art 219):
Emphasis is on critical thinking, problem solving, overall composition, elements and principles of design and basic computing skills (5 points possible).
- C. Three-dimensional techniques (Art 215 and 219):
Emphasis is on craftsmanship, media use, scale, spatial awareness, and movement (5 points possible).
- D. Display of Work (overall): Evidence of judgment, craftsmanship, professionalism, and planning (5 points possible).
- E. Presentation: Evidence of organization, ability to evaluate one's visual works and communicate this verbally, overall competence and confidence for advanced study (5 points possible).

Benchmarks:

It should not come as a surprise, given the subjective nature of art and design production, appreciation and valuation, that arts organizations affiliated with higher education like Foundations in Art: Theory and Education (FATE), The College Art Association (CAA), and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), have not established uniform benchmarks for student performance. Therefore, lacking external guidelines for establishing benchmarks for student achievement, the department is gathering and weighing data to guide internal benchmarking.

However, before setting marks for student performance the department addressed several shortcomings in how Art 299 was organized, taught, and evaluated to include:

- Setting a common syllabus for foundations courses with clearly stated rubrics and expectations that are used in the evaluation process to reduce inconsistencies in content delivery.
- Reducing our over-reliance on part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants by placing more full-time faculty in foundations courses; and providing more training for part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants teaching foundations courses that are not covered by full-time faculty.

- Impressing upon students the connection between their performance in the portfolio review and the tone this sets for advanced study, graduation, and their chosen professions.
- Conducting the review in the Birke Art Gallery has been well received by students, faculty and external reviewers (something that was not possible in the crowded hallways on the 6th floor of Smith Hall).
- Implementing a freshman 'success and survival skills' orientation (held each semester) to help students develop a better rapport with their advisors and acclimate to university life.
- Mitigating grade inflations and provide better feedback to students the portfolio review evaluation forms have been improved; and the faculty provide narrative comments that are more closely aligned with their numerical assessments.
- Tightening the feedback loop by having students meet with the foundations coordinator and/or chairman to receive/discuss numerical scores and narrative comments (e.g., strengths and areas for improvement).

Results/Analysis:

Using this 25-point evaluation system with rubrics for each of the five competencies measured, the available data for AY 2009-10 reveals a mean score of 3.45 with 38 students enrolled and 33 students (87%) passed (CR) with a score of 2 or better in all areas needed to pass. with 5 students (17%) who did not pass (NC) and had to resubmit. Of the 35 students enrolled in the review for the first time 30 (86%) passed. For the 3 students taking the review for the second time, 2 (66%) passed. Only one out of 38 students failed to earn credit.

In AY 2008-09 there were 38 students enrolled and 29 (66%) who passed. Of the 26 first time takers 16 (62%) passed while those students repeating the course passed at a rate of 10 out of 12 (83%). When viewed comparatively against the previous year, the aggregate pass rates this year are similar (although there were significantly more first-time takers who passed this year (86% vs. 62%). However, those ratios are roughly flipped when looking at second time takers with those from last year outperforming the current year (83% to 66%). Visual art students and art education

students who pass *Art 299: Portfolio Review* can enroll in upper division studio art courses. Students who do not pass but the faculty determined a portion of their portfolio was passable will be asked to rework and *resubmit* projects in one or more areas. However, students with significant deficiencies are identified in many or all areas in their portfolio review will *fail*. These students will be given a detailed improvement plan in writing and meet with the foundations coordinator and/or chair. In many cases, this discussion may include student advising goals, priorities, aptitude, attitude, and/or choice of a major, etc. We believe the issue of grade inflation has been mitigated (though not resolved) by having more full-time faculty teach foundations courses and by ensuring that faculty calibrate their numerical and narrative assessments.

Analysis/Planned Action:

We recognize that merit-based portfolio/performance reviews (like *Art 299*) conducted on a representative sampling of students should, when benchmarked, measured and assessed over time, reveal useful insights into overall student preparedness and identify programmatic strengths and specific areas where adjustments are warranted.

This year the faculty laid the groundwork for improving the foundations portfolio review by:

- Creating a new portfolio review course (*Art 298: Portfolio Review – BFA*) for art majors
- Agreeing to include external reviewers in our portfolio review process
- Discussing curricular reform at the foundations level

Next year we plan to expand data collection and analysis. The department will continue to measure aggregate total scores by semester/year, but beginning Fall 2011 we will:

- Compile/consider data according to how students scored in the aforementioned five rubric areas
- Compile/consider data by course as we will introduce *Art 298: Portfolio Review – BFA*, which is designed to determine if BFA majors are ready for advanced study and to reveal potential curricular deficiencies.

- Adjust the current portfolio review course (*Art 299*) to determine if art education majors are ready for the broad-based studio art experiences they will undergo in our program and face in their K-12 art classrooms
- Integrate external evaluators into student portfolio assessment and solicit feedback on perceived strengths and shortcomings in various emphasis areas.

Assessment Measure 2: Art 499: Senior Capstone Project

Prior to graduation, visual art majors and art education majors enroll in *Art 499: Senior Capstone Project* (a one-credit course graded CR/NC). Requirements include an articulate artist's statement, assembling a senior capstone exhibition and delivering a public presentation in the Birke Art Gallery, and submitting a dossier that chronicles their accomplishments during the semester. The department maintains visual and written records for each student.

Assessment Measures (Tools):

Beyond meeting the basic course requirements outlined in the syllabus for *Art 499: Senior Capstone Project* (e.g., attendance, participation and progress in class critiques, a short position paper on their work and support materials to include: a cover letter, resume, exhibit post card, etc.) student performance is assessed in two key areas:

- The quality and development of artwork presented in the gallery space and within the group show format
- Clarity and sense of purpose evident in the exhibition statement posted in the gallery.

Benchmarks:

Statistically, *Art 499*, like many capstone courses, often reveals a high pass rate, in part, because the class is comprised of talented and driven students who have successfully navigated most of the degree requirements leading to graduation. Likewise, similar to the aforementioned portfolio review, there are no established external benchmarks that have been universally adopted for gauging student performance at the senior capstone level. Consequently, the department is gathering data using internal measures to help set realistic benchmarks for first-time and repeat participants in the capstone class.

With (0 = low and 4 = high) a total of 20 points possible students must earn an aggregate score of 12 points or better (*with a minimum score of 2 in each category*) in order to pass. Using a similar five digit rating form that corresponds to the letter grade equivalents depicted in *Assessment Measure 1: Art 299: Portfolio Review* on pages 3-4), faculty assign numerical values (*4 Excellent, 3 Good, 2 Satisfactory, 1 Poor and 0 Fail*) to student work in four categories (*a. Quality of work presented, b. Quality of overall display, c. Clarity of the written statement, and d. Clarity of the oral presentation*) and submit narrative comments that delineate apparent strengths and weaknesses. The scores for each student are averaged and the narrative comments are compiled by the capstone professor and distributed to the student and his/her emphasis area mentor/advisor.

Results/Analysis:

AY 2009-10 shows 20 students enrolled in Art 499 with 19 students (95%) who passed and 1 student (5%) received an incomplete, that converted to an failing mark (NC) because the student did not complete the required work. All twenty students were taking Art 499 for the first time the same percentages passed/failed.

Viewed comparatively against the previous review period, the pass rates for the current year are comparable. AY 2008-09 shows 33 students enrolled with 32 students (96%) who received (CR) a passing mark and 1 student who received an incomplete. 32 students were taking Art 499 for the first time and 31 (97%) passed and one received an incomplete. The lone repeat student (100%) passed.

Despite the similarities in the quantitative data, the art and design faculty agree that the capstone exhibitions have improved qualitatively and grade inflation has been mitigated because:

- Expectations are clearly delineated to students
- The same full-time faculty member has taught the course consecutively for several years
- Students are consulting their content area mentors
- Faculty scores and comments are more closely aligned
- Consistency in the gallery director's position

Analysis/Planned Action:

Next year we will expand our data collection and analysis. The department will continue to measure aggregate total scores by semester/year, but beginning Fall 2011 we will:

- Compile/consider data according to how students scored in the aforementioned five rubric areas
- Compile/consider data according to how students scored by course as we introduce a new three-credit capstone course (Art 498) next year that is specifically designed to prepare BFA majors for graduate school and/or careers in art and design.
- The current one-credit capstone course (Art 499) will be tailored to better prepare art education majors for teaching positions that require broad-based studio and critical thinking skills.
- Integrate external reviewers into our assessment events. This will furnish students with an external read on their strengths and areas where they could improve and do much the same for us at the unit level.
- Solicit input from student leaders (like the *Art & Design Student Ambassadors*) to assist us with several curricular, assessment and recruitment/retention initiatives.
- Identify additional instruments/approaches to gauge program quality

While these adjustments may yield useful insights, the data needs to be gathered and analyzed over several years before any meaningful conclusions can be drawn.

IV: Overview of changes implemented in your program this past year based on results and planned action specified in last year's report.

Art 298: Portfolio Review – BFA was created in response to conclusions drawn from departmental assessment data and furthered by the interest generated by college-level and campus-wide curricular discussions. Graded A-F, this new one-credit portfolio course for BFA visual art majors will reveal possible curricular deficiencies and/or determine if students are ready for advanced courses in one of our

emphasis areas. The university curriculum committee approved Art 298 last year. It will be offered Fall 2010.

Art 299: Portfolio Review (zero credits and scored CR/NC) will establish when art education majors are ready to move from a foundations curriculum into more specialized studio and art history courses. We created separate portfolio review courses because, while art and design majors and art education majors share many of the same basic foundations courses, they often have different goals, aptitudes, and expectations. These differences are reflected in the curriculum check sheets for both majors which show, among other things, that visual art majors are required to take more studio art courses (especially at the advanced level) than art education students. Plus, the art education degree is housed in another college (COEHS), even though most of their content work comes from COFA. Asking them to add credits to their students' study plans would contradict previous concerns about bloated credits and involve numerous discussions and negotiations.

Art 498: Senior Capstone Project – BFA was created in response to departmental assessment data and college-level and campus-wide curricular discussions. Graded A-F, this new three-credit portfolio course for BFA visual art majors is designed to showcase their considerable talents and demonstrate what they have learned in the varied courses that comprise our studio-based program. The course is also geared toward helping them prepare dossiers suitable for graduate school and/or careers in visual art. Art 498 was approved by the university curriculum committee last year and will be introduced Fall 2010.

Art 499: Senior Capstone Project (one-credit and scored CR/NC) performance in the capstone course by art education majors will demonstrate what they have learned in the varied courses that comprise our studio-based program.

In both cases where we added a new foundations and capstone review, the department needs to collect data separately for several years (since some BFA majors have the option of enrolling in Art 298/299 or Art 498/499 depending on their catalog year).

Because we saw improvements in student satisfaction and performance this year, we again placed an emphasis on having full-time faculty teaching studio foundations courses. Informal measures like student complaints about

inconsistent teaching methods, course rigor and content, grading, and overall attention from instructors dropped markedly. To what degree, if any, that can be attributed to improved course rubrics, better student recruitment or advising practices, new full-time faculty hires, placing more full-time faculty in foundations courses, or some other factor or combination of factors, will require additional data collection and analysis.

Conversely, one new change that threatens to counteract the progress we see in our assessment data is the way Academic Affairs devised First Year Seminar (FYS) and Honor's College teaching assignments. The assessment data revealed that BFA students who took a majority of their foundations classes with part-time faculty or graduate teaching assistants: a) experienced troublesome inconsistencies on basic content delivery, b) received less individual attention at a critical stage in their academic and creative development, c) were subject to grade inflation which set up false expectations, d) were less likely to participate in art activities outside of class, e) showed lower satisfaction and pride in our department, f) were less well prepared for advanced courses, and f) were less likely to stay in the major or at Marshall.

While the merit of the new core or those university-wide programs is not in question, making assignments uniformly based on anticipated sections and full-time faculty head count by college appears quite flawed. For example, demand for (post-Marshall Plan) general education courses dropped dramatically in some units when the new core was introduced (because more general education courses were required from some colleges/departments under the old curriculum). However, in COFA the demand for general education courses rose sharply (and we anticipate having to staff as many as 40% more sections of Art 112 than previously) because in the new curriculum art appreciation is a university-wide requirement. It was not universally required previously.

For departments like art and design that are basically one full-time person deep in major content areas (other than graphic design); covering more general education courses in Core I (FYS) and Core II (Art 112) and contributing to team-taught courses in the Honors College is problematic. We are essentially faced with either watering down our foundations instruction (by replacing full-time faculty with part-timers or graduate teaching assistants) which contradicts data driven assessment decisions we made that

showed art and design student satisfaction, performance, and retention improved when full-time faculty taught foundations art courses. Or, we offer fewer upper division choices in key emphasis areas when a full-time faculty member is on reassignment. This makes it difficult for students to graduate in four years because BFA students need multiple semesters with more than one upper-level studio class within an emphasis area (e.g., printmaking, sculpture, etc.) in for several consecutive semesters in order to graduate on time.

Correspondingly, our ability to reassign larger numbers of full-time faculty from key content area positions is challenging because studio art faculty are specialists. While not unique to our unit, in many cases we can't replace full-time faculty with part-time hires because the region does not support a sufficient pool of qualified candidates. Moreover, aside from graphic design where we have three full-time faculty and there is more commonality, studio art faculty are less interchangeable (i.e., a fibers teacher can't cover for a reassigned ceramics faculty or a photographer is not trained to teach oil painting, etc.).

Likewise, while some units may be able to increase (lecture or online) class sizes to make up for reassigned full-time faculty on the residential campus, that approach does not work in the studio arts classroom due to the hands-on nature of our work, which often require smaller student-teacher ratios (15 to 1 is customary). Smaller class sizes also help to ensure students are properly trained and supervised when using power tools or hazardous materials. Moreover, as students move into upper division courses the nature of visual arts instruction shifts from small group assignments to a more self-directed plan of study comprised primarily of one-to-one independent meetings and periodic group critiques.

V: Specify any changes/modifications made to your program based specifically on data obtained during Assessment Day

Several years ago we were encouraged to develop informal assessment measures to complement the direct measures we were using. We designed and distributed a 130-question survey asking students to comment on advising, the curriculum, extra curricular opportunities, faculty, facilities, etc. However, at that time the survey was conducted during Assessment Day and required students to sit down and fill out a hard copy survey. The first-year

we did not have a representative sample (with only 18 respondents). We concluded that we needed to do a better job of advertising the importance of participation in these surveys to our students. We also determined we needed to make it more readily available to students.

Last year, with the help of the Office of Assessment, we distributed the survey electronically and our respondent pool nearly tripled. While the data we collected, is, in fairness, inconclusive without context, it is not without meaning. In fact, the survey excerpts below from three categories (advising, curriculum and faculty) reflect correspondingly to what many of us have been feeling, seeing, and hearing in recent years: that art and design students view their program in a favorable light (that seems more positive and prevalent than in recent years).

Advising:

- 43 out of 51 (84%) art and design majors know who their art advisors are
- 39 out of 52 (75%) feel their advisors understand the curriculum and provide adequate advice
- 43 out of 52 (83%) feel their advisors use electronic and paper resources adequately

Curriculum:

- 42 out of 48 (87%) art and design majors felt courses are structured to encourage creativity
- 43 out of 47 (91%) art and design majors felt courses are structured to encourage intellectual engagement and critical thinking
- 39 out of 47 (83%) art and design majors felt courses are structured to encourage reading, writing and talking about art

Faculty:

- 47 out of 49 (96%) art and design majors feel the faculty attend gallery talks, opening receptions and related extra curricular events
- 46 out of 49 (94%) art and design majors feel the faculty demonstrate a genuine interest in the welfare of students
- 45 out of 48 (92%) art and design majors feel the faculty visibly contribute to the intellectual life of the university

We plan to use the same survey and distribution method several years to see if any trends emerge that we can act on. However, in order to determine if this will have any affect on retention or performance, the department needs to collect and analyze more data, over time, in order to consider the data reliable and something we can act upon.

VI: Assistance Needed with Assessment:

Last year we asked for funds to bring in an individual or assessment team to campus to conduct an assessment workshop for our program. Our report evaluator endorsed our request to bring someone in to help us develop better assessment tools to work on our reviews and exhibitions. Somehow we let this fall through the cracks. What is the protocol for converting an approved request into a sponsored tangible assessment event? How does one find the right fit? How is it booked/paid for?

Submitted by _____ Date: 1/29/11
Byron D. Clercx, Chair, Department of Art and Design