

# Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2016 - 2017

Department: The School of Art  
Director of the School of Art. Professor Vaughan Judge

Program(s):  
Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by the School of Art  
Bachelor of Art in Liberal Art  
Bachelor of Art in Art History  
Bachelor of Art in Art Education K-12  
Bachelor of Fine Art in Graphic Design  
Bachelor of Fine Art in Studio Art

Master of Fine Art in Art (MFA)  
Masters of Art in Art History (MA)

## What Was Done?

### Assessment Activities

#### Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Knowledge, skills, and abilities are assessed in the School of art by evaluations done in ARTH, ARTZ, GDSN-Senior Thesis. These evaluations are in the form of critiques of the student artist's final works of art and design; the assessment of the Senior Thesis Exhibition; assessment of the Senior Thesis paper (Art History majors); and assessment of the student artist's knowledge of a wide variety of basic studio skills and educational theories related to artistic experiences (Art Education).

#### Communication Skills

Communication skills are assessed by evaluating the student's ability to verbally express understanding of the art and design produced as well as the art and design produced by peers. This assessment takes place with one or more faculty in both individual and group formal critiques.

In the area of written communication, students are assessed with art history papers, journals in studio courses, and undergraduate thesis statements in the ARTZ/GDSN 499-Senior

Thesis course. Written communication skills develop an understanding of common art elements and vocabulary, place works of art in historical and stylistic context, and form and defend value judgments about art and design and art-related issues.

#### Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-solving skills are assessed by evaluating the student's competence in demonstrating the ability to communicate the origin and generation of ideas, and by evaluating the creative and technical skills appropriate to the particular studio such as color theory, painting, bronze casting, etc. Students must be able to break down the different levels of achievement in a composition, and discuss the thought process used to arrive at the final product. Evaluation is conducted by the studio instructor as well as student peers and outside reviewers.

Creative problem-solving is a basic skill for all art majors and is assessed at every level from freshman through senior year studio courses.

### Assessment Results

#### Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Students in the School of Art develop a high level of competencies in creating finished works of art and design. The quality of work in the BFA Graduation Exhibition demonstrates success and knowledge of art/design-making skills and abilities. Students win awards in exhibitions, are successful in seeking employment with their design portfolios, and have a high rate of acceptance into graduate programs across the country.

Finished works of art demonstrate competence in technical skills, and understanding of processes and materials. Some of the areas of strength in this category are drawing, three-dimensional skills and abilities, and graphic design concepts.

### **Communication Skills**

The level of communication skills in the form of written research papers are generally good. Art History majors have an especially high level of success in Undergraduate Scholars Conference, and success in graduate school acceptance. Studio art students need improvements in their ability to communicate and defend their statements during group and individual critiques. The School of Art needs to better prepare students to understand the theory of criticism both for individual understanding of one's own artwork, and to discuss the work of their peers. To this end The School of Art has made three significant changes to the Foundations Program. First, while keeping common course numbering and portability of credits in mind, and in an effort to bring the curriculum fully into the 21st century we began breaking down the walls between 2D and 3D foundations by using assignments which move from 3D to 2D or vice versa, and even to 4D sometimes.

The Montana State University (MSU) School of Art first year (foundations) art experience is branded as F.A.C.T.S.: Foundations Are Critical to Success. As the Foundations Coordinator Associate Professor Dean Adams is responsible for the three studio components of the curriculum, which are Visual Language: Drawing (ARTZ 105: 3 credits); Visual Language: 2D/3D Foundations (ARTZ 106: 4 credits); and Visual Language: Ideation and Creativity (ARTZ 108: 4 credits).

The mission statement for the MSU FACTS area is: "The Montana State University School of Art Foundations Program provides beginning students with the fundamental skills, knowledge and experiences essential to their development as visual arts professionals."

The guiding philosophy is: "Professional success in the visual arts requires knowledge of past and present accomplishments in the field, an ability to make interdisciplinary connections, and a strong sense of self-direction. In the Foundations Program, students will be encouraged to develop and enhance their technical skills, develop their critical judgment, refine their personal goals, and expand their understanding of art history and culture. The FACTS Friday lecture series will offer an introduction to a range of visual arts professions and practices, and will help prepare students to choose an undergraduate course of study."

Current curricular goals are: After successful completion of the foundations year, students will have achieved a professional disposition, as demonstrated by:

1. An ability to develop and solve visual problems using various strategies for idea generation;
2. An ability to creatively translate ideas into visual terms using a range of art media and design processes;
3. A capacity to think critically, and write and speak clearly about the visual arts;
4. An understanding of the wide range of contemporary and historical visual culture and its role in society;
5. A work ethic that reflects integrity, teamwork, dedication to professional growth, social responsibility and the confidence to take risks.

The Friday lecture is the recitation component of ARTZ 106 and 108. It is intended as an introduction to a range of visual arts professions and practices, and to help prepare students to choose an undergraduate course of study. Faculty, graduate and upper-level undergraduate students have been very generous with their time and knowledge by delivering lectures and workshops to foundations students during the Friday lecture as supplements to the regular lectures.

Generally, written material in journals and in written examinations demonstrates a solid but basic understanding of a student's own work and works of art in a historical and stylistic context.

### **Problem-solving Skills**

Student competencies in the area of problem-solving skills are high in the area of technical skills for studio majors, and above average in the ability to analyze works of art and evaluate them critically. Art and design students are generally confident in their decision of making skills as they relate to design concepts. Some levels of improvement are needed in criticism and analytical synthesis of creative problem solving in the first year of foundation studies.

As devised by the Foundations Chair/Coordinator in consultation with Curriculum Committee, Student Consultation Committee for Foundations and the Director of the School; the most recent iteration of the spring portfolio review takes place over four days, allowing for more convenient timing for both students and faculty. Students mostly present their portfolios during their scheduled ARTZ 108 class. During the 2017 review all students were reviewed by a minimum of three people each. The reviewers consisted of tenure track and NTT faculty from all areas of the School of Art, all GTA's. Foundations students received formative and summative feedback and were scored assessed using the foundations assessment sheet. Including upper level students in the process allows for a recycling of the energy of our student community. Because the FACTS portfolio review does not represent a gate, it is appropriate to include the diverse group of reviewers. The review allows us to celebrate and acknowledge the hard work required of students participating in our program. It also permits the School to consider the effectiveness of GTA's and NTT faculty

through learner results. The review provides a window into the individual assignments and how they are being taught. Finally, prior to this change; students were required to present the exact same assignments. While this has the advantage of standardization, it does not necessarily allow students to put their best work forward. Current portfolio requirements are representative of learning outcomes, such as understanding of perspective, effective composition, ideation strategies, craftsmanship, and communication skills.

Transfer students and students who are off cycle and unable to participate in the FACTS portfolio review during the spring semester turn in a portfolio for evaluation just before classes begin in August or during finals week of fall semester. A small committee, including the Foundations Coordinator, reviews the work and students receive a short-written assessment of strengths and areas for improvement reflected in the portfolio. While students do not receive the same type of formative feedback as during the spring review, the process helps ensure these students are properly prepared to succeed in our program.

### **What Data Were Collected**

Assessment is a key part of communicating the success of students and curriculum to all parties involved in the process. The Chair of Foundations and Director of the School of Art regularly seek input from all School of Art faculty concerning the foundations curriculum. During the portfolio presentation, we ask reviewers to look for successful and less successful assignments. We seek feedback from upper-level students and ask them to recall what parts of the foundations curriculum stick out in their memory as relevant. GTA's provide critical evaluation of the assignments they are teaching. Finally, we use the Foundations Student Consultative Committee to listen to and act on needed improvements to the program or facilities.

Curricular assessment is concerned with all aspects of the program. First, to ensure our curriculum is designed to provide students with relevant and meaningful skillsets and knowledge appropriate to the classes we offer. Second, the curriculum must be deliverable by/with the allocated resources, including time and space. Third, the delivery of the content must facilitate learning and discovery. Finally, each assignment is designed with specific learning outcomes, which, when aggregated meet the curricular goals and mission and vision of MSU and comply with CORE 2.0 requirements. (<http://www.montana.edu/wwwcat/requirements/reqs4.html>)

Equally important is foundational curricular assessment by the faculty who teach beyond the freshman year. Since a foundations curriculum is irrelevant if the faculty teaching sophomores, juniors, and seniors are not building on the knowledge and skills learned in the freshman year, it is imperative that all faculty have input concerning the foundations curriculum. We continue to seek input from all School of Art faculty concerning the effectiveness of the foundations curriculum based on their experiences. Also, the Director of the School regularly assesses the curriculum, using his expertise in art and design education to help evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Since all of the MSU foundations art classes are CORE 2.0 *Ways of Knowing* courses, we also rely on the MSU CORE committee assessment of the curriculum in their re-assessment of MSU CORE 2.0 classes, as directed in Metric L.1.2 of the

academic strategic plan. Additionally, we evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching handbook in communicating the CORE 2.0 designation and ramifications to the people who deliver the curriculum

### **What Was Learned**

Through the self-assessment process involving faculty, students, the Directors office and NASAD accreditation self-study the area of primary concern that became evident is the required credits for graduation for the BFA in studio and Graphic Design. As the curriculum has evolved over the years we have been afflicted with 'credit creep' where now we have 117 mandated credits in a 120-credit program in graphic design for example. This exceedingly high requirement is a significant problem that directly affects class scheduling, graduation rate and timely four-year graduation. It is an area under review by the faculty for 2016/17. Looking to the future we will continue to foster a curriculum with the ideal 'collision of the digital and physical.' This juxtaposition of combining cutting edge ideas with traditional methods is only in its fifth year of implementation and has even more potential as a pedagogical model. There is additional possibility for this concept to yield unexpected outcomes. Other goals in the future include the continued improvement of the studio environment. This includes appropriate ventilation for a safe and healthy learning environment (a commitment of \$600,000 this coming summer to improve metalsmithing ventilation). It also includes the evolution of technological advancements in state of the art computer connectivity though wireless connections and the best implementation of resources to create active learning digital environments. The final goal will be to continue to improve career placement of graduates locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. With half our graduates staying in Montana and the other half leaving the state, we must always be mindful that our curriculum outcomes are in step with those in the creative and scholarly profession. This goal has far reaching implications at all levels of the BFA/BA curriculum and requires a team effort by both the faculty and administration to successfully be achieved. While the majority of the aspects on the scoring rubric scored at or above our threshold values, we identified a weakness in students' ability to research relevant contemporary art and design practices. Student competencies in the area of problem-solving skills are high in the area of technical skills for studio majors, and above average in the ability to analyze works of art and evaluate them critically. Art and design students are generally confident in their decision-making skills as they relate to design concepts. Some levels of improvement are needed in criticism and analytical synthesis of creative problem solving in the first year of foundation studies (Art 110 and 111) and across and sophomore classes.

### **How We Responded**

Additional emphasis on research of historical and contemporary art and design practices; and organization of student time management will be covered and integrated in our foundation and sophomore classes.

Our assessment indicated that no changes are needed regarding learning outcome and assessment criteria.

Faculty review will address the issue of more complicated questions being offered through the curriculum at junior and senior year within the graphic design program.