This is the first report of the new Department of Art assessment model. This report will provide a description of the data collection process, a summary of faculty reflection on those data, and a beginning list of objectives, goals, issues, and concerns for programs within the Department. Because of the assessment schedule (to be discussed later), all learning objectives cannot be listed at this point. A learning objectives matrix will develop as the assessment project continues.

This year's assessment looked at drawing courses (Art 20A, 20B, and 120) and collected data for the senior seminar course Art 192A. Data for 192A were captured by the time faculty reflected on student work but they were not uploaded to the server. The nature of 192A differs from the drawing courses and requires its own reflective discussion. That discussion has not yet occurred and faculty have indicated anticipation for that discussion.

Mission Statement

The Department of Art at Sacramento State introduces students (majors, minors, and non-majors) to the expressive world of the fine arts. A wide variety of approaches based on both Western and Non-Western cultures are integrated into courses that are oriented toward creativity, imagination and critical thinking. Students are able to explore art through courses in art education, art history, ceramics, electronic art, metalsmithing/jewelry, new media, painting, printmaking, photography, and sculpture.

Studio experiences develop the creative and artistic skill necessary for further study and preparation for a life in the visual arts.

Assessment Description

The assessment model was developed by Professors Sarah Flohr and John Driesbach as a response to the request for the development of an assessment model for General Education courses within the Department of Art. As faculty discussed the idea, it was believed more beneficial to develop a model for all Department courses. Classes are scheduled by area and within each area, classes are grouped by content (in studio this is by medium; in art history by course division; there are few enough courses for art education to be grouped as a whole). The schedule of courses will take six years for a complete assessment of all courses (there are 80 course; 23 lower division; 57 upper division) (see appendix 1).

As each group of courses proceeds through assessment, a matrix of goals and objectives will emerge (listed here are goals and objectives for the drawing courses and senior seminar) (see appendix 2). Although each course lists goals and
objectives on requisite syllabi, these may change as faculty have the opportunity to discuss the relationship of courses within an assessment group.

For AY 2008-2009, it was helpful to allow faculty to freely discuss what they believed they were supposed to be doing. This openness allowed faculty to discuss those things they found important in the context of the courses discussed and began to reveal a broader matrix of goals and objectives for the painting and drawing program. This format will likely continue with each assessment group. However, as one group is called to formal assessment, those groups that have already participated can continue discussion of their courses. Eventually, these individual groups may collapse into larger groups as similar more general issues become apparent.

The “Objective Matrix” (Appendix 2) was collected from the individual syllabi that faculty submitted for the AY 2008-2009. The chart shows an inconsistency in what objectives were stated for each section of a course. Yet, observation of the work revealed more similarities.

**Data Collection**

Sara Flohr developed the routine for the assessment (John Driesbach has retired and Sarah was on sabbatical for the Spring 2009 semester, Daniel Frye continued their work in the Spring semester by maintaining the organization for data collection and faculty reflection).

A student assistant, Bruce Mai, photographed all artwork (data). There were 3 data collection periods with 2 drop-off sites (see appendix 3). Faculty were to select the 5 best student works from one assignment within a collection period. Arrangements were made for oversized work that could not be transported. In addition to dropping the work off, faculty included an explanation about the assignments the work represented.

After capturing images, data were uploaded to an application called Final Cut Server. Data were codified by instructor, courses, and semester. During the reflection session, data were digitally projected on a screen in the conference room. Faculty were able to view 9 images at a time.

**Results**

The faculty reflection included all faculty who taught courses in the target group. One full-time member could not be present. In total, eight faculty, full- and part-time, were present to discuss the results. The discussion format was open. Faculty were directed to: make a comparative analysis between individual work and between class sections, distinguish commonalities, and discuss differences. A concern with whom the results would be shared suggested there might be different answers for different audiences. The faculty were told that although the results would be shared with administration, their comments were being collected to improve the program. The faculty appeared comfortable with the task, each other, and the quality of the discussion. Indeed, they became enthusiastic, made the chair take
copious notes, and wanted to continue their discussion beyond the 2-hour meeting time. There was a great deal of appreciation for entering into the discussion.

Faculty comments illuminated three general areas: curriculum; teaching support; and assessment process (see appendix 4). A comment was made that everyone appeared to “be on track” (a sign that everyone was competent in their teaching). With everyone on the mark, the discussion moved to curriculum and classroom management. As an initial foray, this opportunity provided faculty a sense of confidence in their own work and the work of their colleagues. What emerged was a sense of responsibility for delivering a cohesive curriculum. As conversations continue with this group, it is anticipated that more discreet issues will come to the surface.

Response

Although faculty do talk with one another and at times even about curricular issues, this group of faculty remarked that they have never had a formal opportunity to discuss the curriculum. They were very happy to do so and needed encouragement to leave once the meeting was ended. It is noted that though full-time faculty do formally meet to discuss curricular issues, it is not with part-time faculty. In allowing such a dialogue, common concerns arose, strategies were shared, and a sense of faculty achievement was felt. In this sense, then, one of the more successful efforts toward achieving student success was providing both full-and part-time faculty an opportunity to view their student work along side of other faculty’s student work, listen to critical dialogue that was both supportive and directional, and exchange ideas about how to engage students.

For instance, the discussion about developing student independence through homework made clear to everyone the importance of giving homework assignments. And these assignments were not to be relegated to a simple” √+” or “√-“ in the grade book. In contrast, these assignments were viewed as significant enough to warrant either a class or one-on-one critique.

If the Department views the “studio experience” as a means to “develop the creative and artistic skill necessary for further study and preparation for a life in the visual arts” then it must find ways of engaging the student in defining or setting individual aesthetic problems. As illustrated in the “Discussion Chart” (appendix 4), students enjoy solving aesthetic problems. But a measure of maturation in the visual arts is to develop one’s own capacity in framing the question. Students are not so keen on this aspect of creating art.

The concern for increasing student independence and self-motivation was central to the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 Assessment Reports. Last year’s Report used the Annual Student Art Awards Show to illustrate a percentage of students who are moving in this direction. To encourage student independence and self-motivation in the studio area, students are expected to “participate in an exhibition of BA candidates” (stated in curriculum flow sheet). Students are also expected to enroll in a 3-unit independent study course during their final semesters.

One comment made during the reflection meeting raised concern for the size of Kadema 266. All faculty who taught there stated that it was impossible to teach
more than 20 students in that room. Faculty sited proximity issues between the objects in still life set-ups and students. Students who sat too close to the still life tended to draw the objects too large which prevented the student from gaining the point of the exercise. Capacity for courses in that room has been lowered to 20.

Data for the studio culminating seminar, Art 192A, were not uploaded to the server at the time of the scheduled faculty reflection meeting. Yet, cursory comments made about it by various faculty who have taught it over the years warrant a careful assessment. It is agreed that the course aims to reveal a student’s individual aesthetic ability (to make, to discuss, to research, to report, to discern, etc.) upon completing the program while at the same time measures the attributes and functions of the program. However, a comprehensive means of accomplishing such a broad task for all of the mediums within a given semester is elusive. Many factors play out in such an assessment such as the inherent qualities of the medium, the preparedness of transfer students, and physical accommodations of classrooms.

Looking Ahead

Next year, the sculpture (Fall 2009), digital art, and printmaking (both Spring 2010) courses will be assessed. We anticipate using the same format of gathering, analyzing, and discussing data. If the discussion is similar to this year’s discussion, then our measurement apparatus may need little tweaking. However, it is expected that a different set of issues may arise. The three periods of data collection may work for lower division courses but may not allow for the completion of advanced level work. Often times the complexity of advanced work necessitates longer periods of time in order to complete. Our student assistant has experience photographing 2D work but there are different complexities in photographing 3D work. And because we are now operating with one end-of-the-academic-year reflective discussion, it may prove difficult to discuss three different mediums at one time. It is likely that there will be three different discussion sessions to reveal the specifics of each medium. If we move in this direction, it would be appropriate to hold a meeting for all participants to discuss similar issues affecting the courses and overall program.

Although an object matrix was built from objectives stated in the participants’ syllabi, the discussion revealed broader over-arching objectives or goals that faculty appeared to teach toward. The stated objectives seem appropriate for a course but do not completely speak to the overall experience and understanding that a student should receive upon completion of the program. The goals that seemed apparent in this year’s discussion were:

1. students will gain confidence in discussing their work
2. students will independently frame aesthetic problems to solve
3. students will evidence self-motivation in the research production, and exhibition of their work
4. students will articulate the content of their work
As stated earlier, this is an initial foray into the assessment process. Faculty seemed to find it beneficial. Yet, the participants will change for each end-of-the-year reflective discussion for the next 6 years. This will make it difficult to formally check on the progress of each group of courses being assessed each year. A solution could be to hold interim formal meetings with each group each year once the group has passed the initial meeting. Eventually, we will want to consider the overall goals that appear to be emerging from the reflective discussion.