Annual Assessment Report  
June 2009  
Department of Design

Department of Design (DOD) Assessment Committee members: Professors Andrew Anker, John Forrest, and Sharmon Goff compiled this report. The Department of Design, within the College of Arts and Letters, offers a Bachelor of Arts in Photography and Interior Design, and a Bachelor of Science in Graphic Design. Faculty from each of the three major areas developed this Annual Assessment Report.

University, College and Department Review
Periodic reviews of faculty for retention and promotion pay close attention to instructor's course syllabi and instructional materials. The College of Arts & Letters' faculty development plan provides a forum for individual faculty to discuss their pedagogical role in assuring that students reach each program’s stated learning outcomes. Student course evaluations are also useful in assessing curriculum in individual courses.

External Review
Among the tools used for Department of Design assessment are external reviews by two accrediting organizations. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) accredits the Interior Design Program and The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) accredit all three of the programs in the department.

In May each program takes part in the Department of Design's Spring Show where projects from all upper division classes are displayed, accompanied by portfolios of graduating seniors. Faculty, local professionals from design fields and alumni review pieces for general continuity, quality of program curriculum, craft and presentation.

Admission to Degree Programs
Graphic Design
Students entering the Graphic Design program are initially classified as Pre-Graphic Design majors. Admission to the upper division program requires students to successfully complete lower division core courses with a C or better and to submit a portfolio of two and/or three-dimensional work from those courses. The entire full-time faculty, in the Graphics program, screen the portfolios. This provides an excellent method of measuring the learning outcomes of the lower division classes, as well as offering a base from which to measure the final portfolios of the graduating students.

Interior Design
Students entering the program are initially classified as Pre-Interior Design majors. After completing the required lower division prerequisites, students may apply for admission to the upper division program by declaring their concentration in either Interior Architecture or Interior Design Marketing. Admission to the Interior Architecture concentration is limited and controlled by an annual portfolio review. Students interested in this concentration must submit a supplementary application including a portfolio of work. Interior Architecture applicants are ranked based on cumulative GPA and the results of the juried portfolio review held each spring.
Photography

Students admitted to the university may select photography as their major; there are no separate admission requirements for a Photo major. As with many of the programs on campus, the majority of photography students have transferred from a community college. They arrive with differing levels of skills and knowledge. During orientation or advising sessions, full-time faculty interview students to determine: which courses may be transferred from previous institutions, areas where students may need review or further class work, and their readiness for upper division courses.

Graphic Design

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AYs 2008-2009?

Evaluation of the Graphic Design Program focused on four main areas:

a. The ability to demonstrate an understanding of the major trends, and recognize important historic work, from the graphic's field. Students are expected to apply critical techniques from art and design history to their and their contemporary's work.

b. The ability to produce creative, professional-quality work within project guidelines.

c. The ability to communicate aspects of both the designer's process and final work verbally, graphically and in writing.

d. The ability to control visual media, enabling the communication of information.

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered.

1. There is a formal review of pre-major's portfolios after the completion of their foundation courses. These portfolios are made up of work from art, photography and graphic design classes and are evaluated by each full-time faculty member in the Graphic Design Program.

2. As seniors, all graphic design majors are required to take a portfolio class in which they review and reassess assignments from previous classes with their professor. Faculty make note of any inconsistencies and issues in curriculum.

3. Each year the Graphic Design Program takes part in the Department of Design's Spring Show in which projects from all upper division classes are displayed, accompanied by portfolios of graduating seniors. Faculty, invited alumni and graphic design professionals review pieces for general continuity, quality of program curriculum, craft and presentation.

4. Full-time graphic design faculty meet for a day at the end of each academic year to review class work and course objectives. Last year's focus was on the establishment of new design classes, while this year involved a review of lower-division foundation courses.

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program's success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

As in the past, the core of the curriculum is generally strong, well rounded and succeeds in meeting goals and learning objectives. New classes have helped to improve the scope of the student's graphic vocabulary, expand their theoretical knowledge and further refine their skills in solving large multifaceted problems.
c. In what areas are students doing well and achieving expectations?

In reviewing graduating senior's portfolios, a significant improvement was noted in the student’s ability to analyze the functional and aesthetic components of a design proposal and synthesize these elements into comprehensive design solutions. Graduating seniors also exhibited a strong improvement in the ability to articulate, in both written and oral form, their process of analysis and outcomes of the final solution. Projects demonstrated the student's technical and craft skills and understanding of both print and time-based communication media. In all major areas of the program’s curriculum, students are meeting or exceeding expectations.

d. What areas are seen as needing improvement within your program?

During the formal review of pre-major’s portfolios, faculty continued to observe that the nature of the student’s skill sets were somewhat inconsistent. Analysis of the work showed a need for more emphasis on the processes of idea development, sketching, and mock-up as well as craftsmanship.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?  Yes.

a. If so, what are those changes?

A continued effort is being made to refine the curriculum of lower division foundation courses to improve consistency of subject matter between sections, ensuring that all students have equal exposure to fundamental principles of visual communication, balancing technical understanding and skills with the creative process. Steps are also being taken to improve retention of the knowledge base established in lower division for those that transition into the upper division sequence.

How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

Review of the pre-major portfolios will show if revisions made to the curriculum had a broad impact. Faculty observation in the first semester of upper-division coursework should reveal retention of knowledge from lower-division coursework. Senior portfolios presented in class and portfolios and assignments presented during the Spring Show should show greater consistency in secondary skill sets displayed and topics presented.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics or course alignment?

The Graphic Design Program has, over the course of the last five years, been reviewing and refining the course structure and alignment of the curriculum as faculty members have been added to the program. We plan to continue to review the interaction of courses and look for opportunities to align curriculum from both an accumulative viewpoint and looking at a single semester.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

The continuing use of pre-major portfolio reviews, senior portfolio reviews, public exhibitions and yearly faculty reviews.

Interior Design

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AY 2008-2009?

According to the Department of Design’s Assessment Plan, the following goals were examined:

1. Interior Design majors are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the major trends, and recognize important historic work, in the field of Interior Design. Students are expected to apply critical techniques from art and design history to their own work.

2. Interior Design majors are expected to create professional-quality work that responds creatively to project requirements.

3. Interior Design majors are expected to explain their work graphically, verbally and in writing.
2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered.

After completing the required lower division prerequisites, Pre-Interior Design majors apply for admission to the upper division Interior Architecture program by submitting a portfolio from lower division interiors courses for review. These portfolios provide a context and base for measure and assessment when compared with senior portfolios produced in INTD 181, the senior capstone course.

The capstone/portfolio course (INTD 181) is taken in the last semester of the senior year and results in a compilation of work that demonstrates the students’ skills, creativity and knowledge of their field. A senior portfolio typically consists of nine-twelve projects that range in size, scope and complexity. The portfolio is a collection of drawings, renderings, and models that communicate the students' accomplishments in the analysis and synthesis of residential, commercial and institutional design problems.

The Interior Design faculty uses the portfolio to assess the following learning objectives:

- Students are expected to apply critical techniques from art and design history to their own work.
- Interior Design majors are expected to create professional-quality work that responds creatively to project requirements. Interior Design majors are expected to explain their work graphically.

In their last semester, interior design students take a Senior Thesis Studio (INTD 183). During the first three weeks they research and write a project proposal; during the last twelve weeks they design their spaces. The semester culminates with a final review jury in which the students present their work to visiting professional designers and to design faculty from other universities who critique their work.

The Interior Design faculty uses the Senior Thesis Studio to assess the following learning objectives: Interior Design majors are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the major trends, and recognize important historic work, in the field of Interior Design. Interior Design majors are expected to create professional-quality work that responds creatively to project requirements. Interior Design majors are expected to explain their work verbally and in writing.

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

Interior Design faculty assessed ten randomly selected portfolios produced by graduating seniors during the spring 2009 semester and determined the following: In general, students’ work did not demonstrate sufficient ability to apply critical techniques from art and design history to their own work.

The senior portfolios showed that approximately 50% of our interior design students have learned to design projects that are both creative and respond to their clients’ technical requirements. The remaining students were divided more or less evenly among those that had developed some skill in this area but were not fully prepared to enter a professional working environment, and those who demonstrated significant weaknesses.

Work in the senior portfolios shows that, as a group, our graduating seniors have developed the manual and computer skills needed to explain their work graphically. Of the three learning objectives the senior portfolios were used to assess, this was the area in which the program was most successful.

Interior Design faculty attended the final review juries of all graduating seniors (thirty-three in spring 2009) in the Senior Thesis Studio and determined the following: In general, students’ work did not demonstrate sufficient ability to apply critical techniques from art and design history to their own work. The senior thesis juries showed that approximately 50% of our interior design students have learned to design projects that are both creative and respond to their clients’ technical requirements. The remaining students were divided more or less evenly among those that had developed some skill in this area but were not fully prepared to enter a professional working environment, and those who demonstrated significant weaknesses.
The juries demonstrated that approximately two thirds of graduating seniors are able to explain their work verbally. Looking more closely, the faculty determined that as a group our students are very good at explaining the functional aspects of their designs but significantly weaker at explaining conceptual aspects of their projects. Project research booklets produced by the students indicate a deficiency in writing ability.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?  
   a. If so, what are those changes?  
      No major program changes will be implemented this year. There are two reasons we will maintain the current program at this time: 1) We made major program changes in response to the last accreditation visit by CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation) and we have not had enough time (or graduating students) to determine the new program’s strengths and weaknesses. In spring 2009 we graduated our first group of students who completed the new program. 2) CIDA is making its next visit in fall 2010 and we to show them the results of a well tested curriculum.

   b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results? NA

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics or course alignment?
   As a result of working toward meeting both CIDA’s and the University’s assessment requirements, Interior Design faculty developed a course content matrix which matches specific CIDA standards and guidelines to the DOD’s learning objectives and outcomes. The Interior Design Program is studio-based; students take a series of five interior design studios and five graphics studios. In all studios, students present their work to visiting professionals and to the interior design faculty. While no formal assessment results from these juries (other than in the Senior Thesis Studio discussed above), the interior design faculty use the juries to monitor student progress and to adjust studio curriculum based on observation of student performance.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?
   The Interior Design program has been fully accredited since 1991 by the Council on Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) and is scheduled for a re-accreditation review in one year. The first phase of the re-accreditation process is the submission of a self-study report (to be written in the spring 2010); the second phase of the re-accreditation process is a site visit the following semester. An important element of CIDA accreditation is program assessment. All interior design faculty will be involved in preparing assessment materials and the self study in preparation for the CIDA site visit.
Photography

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AYs 2008-2009?

The Photography Program is continuing to focus attention on objective number one of the Department of Design's Assessment Plan: Students are expected to create professional-quality work, which shows a clearly articulated concept, creative energy, technical mastery of tools and techniques, and imaginative concepts.

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered.

1. Most Photography Program assessment takes place in specific courses through group and individual critiques of student portfolios, exams, papers, exhibitions and participation in classroom discussions. Course rubrics reflect attributes associated with image quality such as the photograph's: emotional impact and/or imaginative quality, technical quality, organization of space and forms and overall presentation. These traits are based on course objectives listed in course syllabi and discussed in course lectures and critiques. Faculty assess learning outcomes with these methods reinforcing conceptual, organization and technical skills developed in earlier courses.

2. The Photography Program is collecting representative samples of student work to create a digital program portfolio. Photographic images were selected from the entry level course (Photo 40, Basic Techniques) and two senior level courses (Photo 150, Senior Portfolio and Photo 148, Studio Lighting). Faculty evaluate this portfolio looking for inconsistencies or indications that there is a need for alteration to the overall curriculum, as well as problems with individual course content or objectives.

3. In spring 2009 the Photography Program completed its first Senior Exit Survey. The intent of the survey was to measure the student's final evaluation of the major curriculum and the success of the program's learning objectives. The respondents remained anonymous; the questions were both open-ended and closed-ended. Students were given ample time to complete the survey and adequate space to provide narrative responses.

4. Photography internships with state agencies, publications, commercial and portrait studios are an elective option for majors (Photo 195). Internships give students experience working directly with a professional in the discipline. The intern's professional supervisor provides a written assessment of the intern's proficiency and familiarity with equipment and software, technical skills, and overall photographic knowledge. Students are required to write a brief essay describing their internship experience and to evaluate the value of the internship in terms of knowledge gained, as well as an honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the particular employer/internship provider. In addition to providing a source for assessment from professionals in the field, this out-of-classroom experience provides the individual student with an immediate and very concrete analysis of their preparedness for the professional arena.

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program's success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

c. In what areas are students doing well and achieving expectations?

The photography major’s work continues to show improvement in the area of creative thinking and the development of clearly articulated concepts, particularly as applied to the ability to create a series of photographs that are conceptually coherent. This improvement was most evident in reviewing: portfolios from the senior portfolio course, the graduating senior’s exhibition which is held at a private gallery in Sacramento, the Department of Design Spring Show and the Honored Senior’s Solo Exhibition. The work presented demonstrated the student’s ability to think creatively, independently and to develop their individual vision as artists.
d. What areas are seen as needing improvement within your program?

1. During the Department of Design’s Spring Show, when full and part-time faculty review both continuing student’s images and the graduating senior’s portfolios, work was noticeably improved technically and more sophisticated in content and focused intent. However, the Spring Show and the Photography Program Portfolio revealed a need for increased emphasis on final presentation techniques. The impact of increasing sophistication of student images and their technical competence is diminished by inattention to the overall presentation quality. While this needs to be further addressed in senior-level courses, a better foundation for understanding the importance of work presentation will also be addressed in prerequisite courses. This is vital to students planning to enter either a Master of Fine Arts program or a professional field.

2. As a result of faculty assessment of the student portfolios, in both the upper division lighting course (Photo 148) and senior portfolio (Photo 150), it was determined that students need more experience with advanced techniques associated with digital photography, particularly in the area of print output. While progress has been made in this area, further work is needed in this admittedly difficult aspect of digital imaging. Students noted this area of need in the Senior Exit Survey, as well.

3. A large percentage of students (76%) responding to the Senior Exit Survey felt the need for additional course work in commercial studio and lighting techniques, as well as advanced digital techniques. The senior’s comments and responses mirror faculty concerns about these areas of the curriculum.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?

a. If so, what are those changes?

1. The newly required Photo 111, Intermediate Digital (mentioned in last year’s assessment report) is helping to fill the need for more digital experience for photography students. Many of those seniors completing the exit survey did not take the class since their catalog rights exempted them from this requirement. As new students enter the program and complete this course, digital experience will be increased. However, due to the number of learning objectives in the class, course curriculum is not able to address all of the needed instruction in print output. More emphasis on digital print output will be addressed in both Senior Portfolio (Photo 150) and Advanced Photography (Photo 155).

2. Faculty recognize that a single artificial lighting course is insufficient for those students entering the commercial/advertising field. While lighting is covered in some prerequisite courses its application to advertising photography is limited. It is clear in the current budget climate that no classes can be added to the curriculum. However it may be possible to shift course content and perhaps substitute a new class for an existing required course to answer this need.

b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

The success of these curriculum changes in helping the program meet its student learning outcomes will be measured using established program assessment techniques such as: group and individual critiques of student work, exams, papers, exhibitions, the Program’s portfolio of student images, the Senior Exit Survey and through formal feedback from internship sponsors.

4. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

1. The Photography Program plans to continue the senior survey process. While information gleaned by the student’s responses revealed a number of areas that must be addressed, it was determined that the actual survey needs further refinement to better measure the student’s final evaluation of the curriculum and program objectives. Results will be easier to measure if closed-end questions are ordinal, where possible, so that answers can be rank ordered and an accurate analysis can be done more efficiently.
2. While an anonymous senior survey is useful in garnering actual student perceptions about the program, faculty are also discussing the possibility of hosting an annual graduating senior and faculty meeting where students can participate in a dialog about the program and what might assist future students in meeting their career and academic goals.

3. As discussed earlier, the Photography Program has been selecting student work to create a digital portfolio for assessment and accreditation purposes. Photographic images are collected from the entry-level course (Photo 40, Basic Techniques) and two senior level courses (Senior Portfolio and Studio Lighting). While it was the intent to compare representative work from these two groups, this process has proved inadequate to accurately measure student learning through the program.

Course enrollment data clearly indicates why the program must broaden image collection samples when comparing entry-level work with that of graduating seniors. Most (76%) of the students in the senior portfolio classes are transfer students, who completed their entry-level course (Photo 40) at other institutions. Inversely there are a large numbers of students who enroll in the Photo 40 each year who are not photo majors. Some students are from other Sacramento State programs that require or suggest completing photography courses, others are undeclared majors and some are students who are just interested in the subject. In spring '09 fewer than 20% of students in the beginning photography course were declared photo majors.

During the next academic year work will be gathered from Photo 141, Intermediate Photography and added to the Photography Program Portfolio. This additional work will serve as a better measure of the program’s success in meeting the major’s stated learning outcomes. Unlike the basic techniques class, which most of the students complete at a community college, all photography majors must complete Photo 141 at Sacramento State. Using this course, instead of Photo 40, as a base for measurement should provide more insight into the success of this institution’s curriculum.

4. The Photography faculty will continue to hold regular meetings to discuss both the curriculum and the degree program’s effectiveness.