

Herron School of Art and Design

2009-2010 PRAC Report

Introduction

The Herron School of Art & Design is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, which prescribes learning outcomes for graduates from accredited programs. In most cases, these learning outcomes are congruent with IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate learning. Herron practices regular assessment activities, specific assessment activities in response to needs, and engages in ongoing faculty reflection on program strengths and weakness to facilitate continual improvements to our programs.

Regular assessment activities:

Herron's curricula include important assessment points. In keeping with the tradition of many schools of art and design, Herron's Fine Arts and Visual Communication Design programs include a major assessment after the sophomore year: students are reviewed individually by a panel of faculty who assess their art and design work as well as their speaking and writing about that work. Passing sophomore advancement review is prerequisite to enrolling in 300-level courses and proceeding in the major field of study.

1. Fine Arts Sophomore advancement reviews are conducted each December and May. Each student presents to a panel of faculty selected works of art in a range of media, a written artist's statement, and a prepared essay integrating a critical approach to art and the cultural and historical traditions to which contemporary art responds, and then responds to verbal questions from the panel. This facilitates assessment of the students written and oral communication (PUL 1), critical thinking (PUL 2), integration and application of knowledge and visual arts skills (PUL 3), understanding of society and culture (PUL5), and understanding of art (PUL 6). Results of the review are used to evaluate each student's individual progress, and aggregate results are used to evaluate the curriculum as a whole.

Fine Arts sophomore advancement review results, May 2010:

Passed-86 students

Probation-8 students

Denied- 0 students

2. Visual Communication Design majors also undergo a Sophomore Advancement Review, offered annually in May. Students present to the full VC faculty examples of their art and design work, a prepared written essay about the value of design, and answer verbal questions from the panel. Students are evaluated by a rubric used to measure communication, professional conduct, visual perception, visual concepts,

process, and mastery of tools & technology. As described above, the review allows faculty to assess students' progress according to the PULs and to learning outcomes prescribed by NASAD. Students receive verbal and written feedback from their VC faculty at midterm of the semester preceding review to help them prepare and assess their readiness.

VCD sophomore advancement review results, May 2010:

Passed—30 students

Denied—20 students*

*This is an unusually high rate of students being denied, up from less than 10% in recent years. As a result, administration is currently working with the department faculty to evaluate the relationship between review standards and preparatory coursework, and to review the department and school mission. Some of these denial decisions may be reversed as a result of discussions ongoing at the time of this report.

3. Art Education students are required by the State of Indiana to take the Praxis exam before entering the teaching profession. This exam assesses each student's readiness, and the overall success rate is used internally to evaluate the success of Herron's curriculum. The exam is required for 100% of the students completing the program. Results are reported through the IU School of Education. Data is always one year behind, since results are reported for students who have completed the program. In 2008-2009, 19 students took the exam; all passed.

4. Art History students follow a curriculum comparable to Liberal Arts students'. Each student's work culminates in a capstone project—usually a research paper. Faculty reflection on each year's capstone papers guides curricular decisions, as these reveal strengths and weaknesses in the students' learning. Changes to curriculum based on annual reflections are noted below.

5. All graduating students are encouraged to complete an exit survey about their education at Herron. The survey includes 22 questions directly correlated with the PULs, as well as free-response questions.

This May, 127 students completed the survey out of 152 graduates.

Averages per question, on a 5-point scale, ranged from 3.5 to 4.4. Highest scoring questions were those that asked about whether their Herron experience increased their ability to work creatively, and to develop tools and experience necessary for finding a job in their field. Lowest scoring questions were those associated with PUL 6, Values and Ethics. However, in the free response section, many students indicated that they felt they had arrived at IUPUI with values and ethics already developed, rather than developing them here. Some seem to have been offended by the question's implication that they lacked ethics upon entering college.

6. The MFA program in Visual Art and Public Life graduated its first ever class of students in May 2010. The students' curriculum involves a review with the students' faculty advisory panel after 30 hours of coursework, after 45 hours, and after 60 hours. The 60 hour review includes the thesis defense. Now that the first class has graduated, and based on reviews, the faculty are considering some minor changes to the curriculum involving distribution of elective credits and resequencing two required courses. No changes are being made immediately, but we are watching closely to see if these changes should be made after a second group has moved through the program. Changes are also being made to the student recruitment process and the allocation of fellowship awards.

7. Herron's Student Services staff track many areas of information provided on IUPUI's IMIR website, including the National Survey of Student Engagement.

8. Foundations students (first year students in Fine Arts and Visual Communication) are surveyed for their intended majors. These data are used to predict enrollment for class scheduling and also to help avail students of faculty advising earlier in their college careers.

9. Regular assessment of PUL attainment have begun, with all 100-level courses being evaluated this semester, along with upper level classes chosen by faculty on a voluntary basis.

Specific Assessment Activities and Changes made in 2009-2010

Changes Made in Response to Assessments described above, and to faculty reflection on program strengths and weaknesses.

1. One course, J400 "Practical Concerns in Studio Art," was removed from the requirement list for Fine Arts majors. This decision followed the collection of student opinions from previous years' exit surveys, and interviews with representative faculty from each Fine Arts studio area. It also responded to a request from the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs that Herron reduce its total number of required credit hours.

2. Art History faculty observed unevenness in the quality of students' capstone experiences, and in the amount of time faculty mentors were able to devote to capstone students. In response, next year a capstone writing workshop will be offered as a semester-long seminar, in order to consolidate the mentoring as part of the faculty's official teaching load, and to ensure that each student receives sufficient guidance.

3. Herron's Basile Center for Art, Design, and Public Life, which facilitates students' work on external projects and commissions, has served more students than ever, and has played an increasingly large role in the MFA curriculum. Assessment is built into the Basile Center process, since students compete regionally and

nationally for commissions and are mentored through the professional processes of presenting designs to clients, fabricating work, and installing it.

4. In response to student interest expressed in exit surveys, discussions are underway to create a joint major in Drawing and Painting, and a minor in Book Arts.

5. New study abroad courses are being developed that respond to campus missions, school missions, student interests, and students' curricular needs. These include two upper level studio art courses in Germany (May 2010) and Mexico (May 2011).

6. A new course, H221, a semester-length art history survey course was developed and offered in an online format to serve the elective credit needs of IUPUI students in other majors.

7. The X101 (Foundations) course now includes a visit from a representative from the Dean of Students' Office, and from the Dean of Herron, since students expressed that they were unclear about these administrative levels. The X101 curriculum now also includes pre-major advising for the studio majors.

8. After a review of curriculum in relation to campus and school missions, the Art History program has added more elective offerings in world art. In 2009-2010, courses were offered on the art of China, Japan, colonial Latin America (including Pre-Columbian), and African art. Courses also addressed race and identity in American art.

9. More skill-based classes were offered to serve the needs of Studio Art students, as noted on exit surveys and through informal student requests. These include slip-based ceramic casting, paper engineering, anatomy, digital photography, and computer aided design for furniture design. Existing courses in metalsmithing and jewelry design were recoded in order to count for the Fine Arts majors.

10. More external feedback from campus became available due to increased use of the campus Cultural Arts Gallery for student exhibitions. The student Ceramics Sale was also moved to the campus center to broaden the audience and provide more indirect feedback for students.

11. In response to a campus initiative, Herron raised its standards for Math courses that can count for the majors; we now accept no math courses lower than M118.

12. Changes were made to four Elective Arts courses. A261-course content updated to include issues related to digital imagery such as appropriation, authenticity, and authorship, and part time faculty were encouraged to adjust class attendance rules and ways of evaluating student work. E101—after review of student work by the program director, instructors were encouraged to develop lesson plans for dealing with deep space, such as linear and aerial perspective and isometric projection; instructors were given sample syllabi to encourage consistency between sections.

E109—Discussions occurred between the elective arts program director and the chairperson of Interior Design to discuss approaches to teaching the color wheel, especially regarding differences between CMYK wheel and the more traditional Albers-Itten model.

E209—Class now includes color drawing and drawings for presentation to better prepare students for professional practice classes.

13. The Visual Communication Design department has made major efforts to integrate PUL assessment into the curriculum, particularly in the required capstone design studio course. The PUL assessment was built into the course to help facilitate student reflection upon what they had learned. Each student is asked to create a visual matrix that aligns the work that they have done in the major with the PULs that are demonstrated through the work. Students must reflect on the meaning of their work and connect that work to broad competency statements in an effort to reflect on their learning over the course of the major. The matrices that students create provide a tangible visual record of understanding and synthesis. As a result of this work faculty in the Visual Communication department have been able to refine courses at the junior and sophomore level in order to respond to perceived needs. Improvements the department has made include refinements to the sophomore advancement process, adding or changing course content, and adjusting how some content is delivered.

The VC faculty have reflected that student understanding as a whole seems to be increasing and that over the last 2-3 years students seem to have a more sophisticated, integrated understanding of the content delivered within their major.

14. Foundations faculty William Potter and Sherry Stone applied for a PRAC Grant for conducting a curriculum review. Not funded.