

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

### Program – Bachelor of Fine Arts

**College: Arts and Sciences**

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**College of Arts and Sciences' Mission.** College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequaled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

**Department of Fine and Graphic Arts.** The mission of the Art Unit within the School of Creative and Performing Arts operates under the mission of the university as a whole. This mission involves three primary goals: first, to provide quality instruction in a variety of disciplines; second, to encourage creative activity and scholarship, and third, to serve the college and surrounding community via the educational, cultural and economic opportunities provided by the university.

A broad range of educational offerings in fine and applied art and art history, in conjunction with the university's core curriculum, provides in-depth study for the professional major, as well as a body of knowledge associated with a liberal arts degree.

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

In addition to facilities, expertise and instruction regarding traditional media, the Art Unit has a strong commitment to technologically enhanced instruction and relevant technology curriculum. The availability of new technology and instruction is considered imperative by the faculty and administration.

The Art Unit is committed to an academic and professional environment, which encourages creative activities, scholarship, and research. Faculty development in the areas of personal research and creative growth, technological competencies and teaching is nourished by the department and the university as a whole. This emphasis on active professional competence promotes excellence in the learning environment while engaging the public in university activities.

The university serves a diverse cultural and economic audience encompassing not only the local area, but also the state, region and beyond. Students come from small communities as well as metropolitan areas. Through academic offerings, art exhibitions, and the contributions of students to the community and contributions of graduates to the work force, the Art Unit is deeply tied to the surrounding community. The unit is committed to an environment of mutual respect, in which academic and cultural opportunities are made available; helping to meet the educational, cultural, and professional needs of the community at large.

**Bachelor of Fine Arts Program Mission Statement:** Students in the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program will experience a thorough educational experience in the visual arts. They will learn a variety of foundational principles and mediums in art that will lead to upper level specificity and personal development. Each concentration will help the students reach their personal career and artistic goals by giving them opportunities through projects and class assignments to develop habits, style, and artistic voice. These class experiences will culminate with professional studies, business practices, and the capstone Senior Exhibition in order to provide the students with experience in planning, processing, and carrying out professional artistic and design practice. The students should graduate with the portfolio and experience to begin professional practice or graduate studies.

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the MA/MS program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program chair;
- (2) The program chair will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty if required (show cause);

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

(5) The Program Chair will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. Through directed studies in art and design, students secure an in-depth understanding and application of visual art techniques.**

**Measure:** Testable through projects, annual student reviews with faculty advising committees and class critiques. Data will be collected through curricular benchmarks, annual student review rubric forms, and course reports. Faculty advising committees will collect data at annual student reviews. Data collected will allow faculty to assess current and future curricular needs. Acceptable data would show overall 50% of students secure an in-depth understanding and application of visual art techniques, or a 3.5 or better on the review rubric. The target data would show 80%. Faculty and students (curriculum and outcomes) reach a competitive level of professional proficiency early in the students' studies.

**Findings:** Target data not met.

**Analysis:** In 2016-217 29.6 percent of our students secured an in-depth understanding and application of visual art techniques. We found that combined factors of limited student experience or access to the visual arts in lower educational levels, poor performance based on new student inattentiveness and neglect, and curricular demands seem to play a role in the low numbers of student proficiency. Based on the analysis of these results, in 2017-2018 we changed certain aspects of our curriculum. We decided to combine a foundations course, and try to take two other foundations courses and reduce their credits to offer them on a half-semester rotation.

From annual student reviews data, we are currently at 40% of students that reach 3.5 or better. At an over 10% increase from last year, our student performance is improving based on the changes implemented in AY2017-2018. In our Freshman review in the Fall of 2017, 19% were 3.5 or over. Our curriculum changes were helpful in some respects and detrimental in others. The combining of the classes eliminated unnecessary projects and focused the students on the fundamentals. The reduction of credits and meeting times for two of our other classes had the opposite effect. The students missed out on certain artistic process because of the limited time. Many expressed dissatisfaction with those changes, including the two professors in charge of the classes. Yet remains the combined factors of limited student experience or access to the visual arts in lower educational levels, poor performance based on new student inattentiveness and neglect, and curricular demands that still seem to play a role in the low numbers of student proficiency. As a faculty, we decided to be more forthright in

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

advising poorly performing students to consider changing their major within the university. This has led a few to heed the advice and move on.

**Decision:** In the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, the 10 percent increase is the result of the changes implemented. With the curricular changes and forthright advising, we have seen evidence of classroom bar-raising as the top students lead the way. Based on an analysis of the AY2017-2018 data, and to further drive student improvement in student understanding and application of visual art techniques, moving forward we will focus on our curricular offerings and further effective advising. Starting in Fall of 2018-2019, our curriculum has been revised, bringing back the credits of the reduced classes. We will assess our new freshman during that semester, and again in the spring of 2019 to evaluate our changes, and their actions in relation to them.

### **SLO 2. Students acquire valuable production experience that is reflected in their own independent achievements.**

**Measure:** Observable through projects and academic patterns by regular faculty evaluations and review of sketchbook work. Data will be collected through annual student review rubric forms and curricular benchmarks. Faculty advising committees will collect data at annual student reviews. Data will allow faculty to assess current and future curricular needs, as well as frequency and quality of evaluation processes. Faculty and students (curriculum and outcomes) increase in the level of expectation and professional output. Students are expected and deliver a qualitative and quantitative level of involvement and production. Acceptable data would show overall 50% of students exhibiting high levels of production in their individual artistic achievements, or a 3.5 or better on the review rubric. The target data would show 80%.

**Findings:** Target data not quite met. From annual student reviews data, currently we are at 49% of students that reach 3.5 or better. This is nearly acceptable.

**Analysis:** From last year's annual student reviews data, we were at 42% of students that reached 3.5 or better. We felt that one reason the target was not met was because students may be spending too much time learning the foundations, and not enough curricular time using foundational tools to find their own artistic direction. As a result of our analysis of the data, starting in Fall of 2017-2018, our curriculum was revised, combining some of our foundations courses and adding others to rethink our methodology. We assessed our upper level students in the spring of 2018 to evaluate our changes, and their actions in relation to them. This process will allowed us to evaluate future curricular changes.

As a result, in 2017-218 there was a 7% increase from 2016-2017 showing an improvement as a result of the changes implemented in AY2017-2018. This was evident in the level of skill and creativity in the Annual Student Art Exhibition. In my time at NSU,

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

I have noticed students demonstrating lower levels of creativity as the years pass. This has to do with several factors, most of which were mentioned in SLO 1. Another factor is that classroom participation and discussion is down with increased phone usage and dependency.

**Decision:** Changes implemented in AY2017-2018 resulted in a 7% increase in student individual artistic achievements over the AY2016-2017 data. Based on an analysis of the AY2018-2018 data, and to further drive student improvement, starting in Fall of 2018-2019, our curriculum has been revised. Discussion about the capstone courses will begin earlier. Emphasis on personal vision and reflection will be added to all levels. The capstone courses will be weighted heavier credit-wise, an artist talk is now a requirement for the students, and they will provide a reflection document following their capstone experience. We will assess our upper level students in the spring of 2019 to evaluate our changes, and their actions in relation to them. The reflection documents will be assessed as they are received. This process will allow us to evaluate future curricular changes.

### **SLO 3. Students synthesize the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals.**

**Measure:** Observable and testable through the curricular opportunity to take upper-level courses in specific areas and the presentation of a cohesive body of artwork at the end of their degree program. Testable through an alumni survey that will be administered at one-year, three-year and five-year intervals. Data will be collected through annual student review rubric forms, curricular benchmarks, reviews of exhibition, and through the administered surveys. Students will submit a proposal for their senior exhibition. Advisors and committees will assess the success or failure of the exhibits. Faculty will administer the surveys and collect the data. Data will allow faculty to assess current and future curricular needs. Faculty and students (curriculum and outcomes) work together to develop and foster their individual voice and style of the student in preparation for professional work. Acceptable data would show overall 50% of students synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals, or a 3.5 or better on the review rubric. The target data would show 80%.

**Findings:** Target data not met. From student reviews data, currently we are at 23% of students that reach 3.5 or better.

**Analysis:** From last year's student reviews data, we were at 20% of students that reach 3.5 or better. Last year's participation in surveys jumped from 1 response to 9. Based on an analysis of the AY 2016-2017 data we felt that we sometimes lower the bar to accommodate untalented or unmotivated students. A few of our students continually

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

pass their classes without doing the work in order to keep them in school and encouraged. In a faculty meeting and in private conversations, we discussed keeping grade inflation from passing students through even if they are not performing.

Based on those changes, we are at 23% of students that reach 3.5 or better. The quality of our graduating seniors' capstone exhibitions and the work in the Annual Student Art Exhibition are clear evidence that our efforts are working. The artwork was thoughtful, skillfully executed, and cohesive. Our faculty meeting discussion went well. The topic of raising student expectation has been an area of inter-office conversation as well. We are mostly in agreement to not just pass through students to get them to finish. Several of the faculty shared with me experiences where they didn't just pass through a student who was not performing to the expected level. A couple students have been talked to about changing their major. We only had one respondent to the survey this year. They studied here 2009-2013 and are employed in the field of graphic design. It was 100% positive.

The evidence suggests that even though the percentage of students reaching an expected level of success did not significantly increase from last year, there is improvement in the quality of work and we as a faculty are in agreement to help raise the level of expectation for our students. The Annual Student Exhibition and graduating seniors' capstone exhibitions showed us a new level of proficiency in participation, skill and creativity.

**Decision:** Between AY2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, there was a modest increase in students achieving the learning outcome. We are in discussion of ways to collectively and individually raise the bar for our student expectations. Based on an analysis of this data and to further drive improvement in student synthesis of the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals, beginning in Fall 2018, our final capstone course, ART 4990, will have a reflection document required after the Senior Art Exhibit experience is finished. This process will allow us to evaluate future curricular changes. We will continue our student review process as it is. We did use Survey Monkey for our alumni survey again this year, but we did not try to distribute it differently. We will discuss this in our first faculty meeting of Fall 2018-2019.

**SLO 4. Students participate in experiences that encourage familiarity with a broad variety of work in various specializations and media.**

**Measure:** Observable through participation in departmental or class field trips to museums, galleries and design centers, and participation in student exhibitions and organizations. Keep track of percentage of majors attending major semester field trips, entering annual the student exhibition. Data will be collected by generating lists of the percentage of students attending the various class and departmental trips. Also, in annual student reviews, faculty will report independent trips the students have initiated,

## AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment

and their participation in student and other exhibitions. Faculty will collect the data for student exhibition participation, and the data for student trip attendance. Data will allow faculty to assess frequency and effectiveness of exhibitions and trips. Faculty and students (curriculum and outcome) will foster an atmosphere of learning through participation in gallery and extra-curricular experiences. Acceptable data would show overall 50% of students participating in enrichment experiences, or a 3.5 or better on the review rubric. The target data would show 80%.

**Findings:** Target data not met.

**Analysis:** From last year's student reviews data, we were at 20% of students that reached 3.5 or better. In AY 2016-2017, 91 students participated in field trips last year. This number was up from the year before. Over 4,000 people signed our guest books in the galleries. This number was up from the year before. Based on an analysis of this data, for AY 2017-2018, we decided to make a few more trips available, and to travel to a different city, rotating to create interest.

From student reviews data, currently we are at 30% of students that reach 3.5 or better which is a 10% jump from last year. 79 students participated in field trips this year. There are many overlaps, in that some students attended several of the trips. There were a greater variety of trips this year, just less students participating. This number is down from last year. Over 4,000 people signed our guest books in the galleries.

There is a core of students that are consistent participators. We have tried to encourage this by offering a greater variety of quality, inexpensive trips. The students respond, and then attend more. Many of our students come from out of town or work heavily to support themselves thereby making the expense of the trips unavailable to them. The gallery has offered particularly interesting and high quality exhibits this year. Our Art Historian has continued to make it a requirement for all her students to attend the receptions, sign in, and get a selfie with the artist (or a faculty member if the artist isn't available). This has increased our attendance for the students.

**Decision:** Between AY2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018, there was a 10% increase in students achieving the learning outcome. Based on an analysis of this data and to further drive improvement in students experiencing a broad variety of work in various specializations and media, we will seek for new ways to travel but keep up the opportunities for our students. This will be a topic of discussion at our second faculty meeting in the Fall of 2018-2019. Next year's gallery schedule is a continuation of the quality and interest of this year.

### Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results

As a result of our analysis of the AY 2016-2017 data, we implemented the following changes in AY 2017-2018:

## **AY 2017 – 2018 Assessment**

- Curricular changes began in Fall 2017, combining some of our foundations courses and adding others resulting in a 10% increase in the learning outcome of students securing an in-depth understanding and application of visual art techniques and a 7% increase in the learning outcome of students acquiring valuable production experience that is reflected in their own independent achievements.
- More forthright advising and less lowering of the bar for the purpose of passing through students not performing well, resulting in a 3% increase in student achievement in synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals.
- Offered more field trips for the department and individual classes, and rotated cities to create interest, leading to a 10% increase in student experiences that encourage familiarity with a broad variety of work in various specializations and media

### **Plan of action moving forward**

An analysis of the AY 2017-2018 data shows improvement in all measures. As none of our target data were met however, we are correct in revising our curriculum and assessing our effectiveness as instructors in raising the bar for the students. These changes will be the main topic of discussion as they are experienced this coming academic year. Further curricular changes will take effect in the Fall 2018. These will further allow our students and ourselves to reflect on their abilities and progress as artists and designers. As it is ineffective to set goals based solely upon the actions of others, we can focus on what we are doing as individuals and as a department. The students will then be given the opportunity to act and react.