

# Assessment Cycle

## Academic Year 2017 – 2018

### Program – Master of Arts in Art

**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.

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.

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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.

**Master of Arts in Art Program Mission Statement:** The Master of Arts in Art degree program offers the student an opportunity to study graduate level art courses either on campus or online. The curriculum allows the student to propose their vision for their studies that coincides with the vision for their personal art practice. Seminar and research-based courses will assist the student in personal research to expand their understanding of their own artistic context and methodology. These courses will culminate in the capstone experiences writing and presenting a creative research document and exhibition. The outcomes of these will propel the student into terminal degree studies or artistic and professional practice.

**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 and graduate coordinator;
- (2) They will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program graduate faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty if required (show cause);
- (5) The Program Chair and Graduate Coordinator will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

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#### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. Evaluate own artistic experience and formulate an advanced direction, voice, and momentum in the creation of personal artwork.**

**Measure:** Observable through projects, seminars, and by semester faculty and peer evaluations. Data will be collected through semester reviews. Benchmark reviews will be after the first semester and with the proposal of their creative research project. Advisor will collect data for the first benchmark. Graduate Coordinator will collect data for the proposals. Student and faculty (outcome and curriculum) will work together with the appropriate balance of direction and freedom in order for the student to build upon their artistic voice and style. Acceptable data would reflect 75% of the students actively evaluating their own artistic experience and formulating an advanced direction, voice, and momentum in the creation of personal artwork. Target data would show 95%.

**Findings:** Target data not met.

**Analysis:** In 2016-2017 the target was not met as 33 percent of our students were having a struggle actively evaluating their own artistic experience and formulating an advanced direction, voice, and momentum in the creation of personal artwork, therefore we did not meet the target. We were looser in our acceptance policies, relying mainly on the portfolio without much acknowledgment of transcripts and statement of purpose. We also did not follow recommended application deadlines. It was also noticed that the students working on their Creative Research Documents did not follow the published instructions on the Graduate School's website. These factors were all taken into consideration and a plan was formulated. The faculty decided to view the transcripts and statement of purpose as part of the initial review of the candidates. We also decided to be firmer with the application deadlines.

As a result, in AY 2017-2018, approximately 75 percent of students are actively evaluating their own artistic experience and formulating an advanced direction, voice, and momentum in the creation of personal artwork. The changes implemented as a result of AY 2016-2017 analysis have resulted in an increase (from 67% to 75%) in students achieving this student learning outcome. The target was still not met, but acceptable data was reached. From advisor reports, we found that this year approximately 25 percent of our students have struggles with writing and researching effectively. These issues have arisen in written class proposals, research papers, and in the creative research document drafts.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of 2017-2018 results where we saw improvement 8 percent improvement, we are going to keep tightening our application processes. As stated above, this year we began to enforce a more thorough application process. We also refused to pass unacceptable work particularly in the writing aspects of the curriculum. We required certain students to work with the campus Writing Center for

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assistance in their compositions. this coming year we will employ a closer scrutiny of new applicant information, portfolios, transcripts, and letters of intent under the direction of the Graduate Coordinator. We will also adhere to Graduate School application deadlines and seek to have our applicants fully admittible before we consider accepting them (GRE scores in place). This will be put to the Graduate Council for review. We did not put together a quiz, but our faculty in charge of reviewing and advising the CRD process is creating a quiz based upon information in the *General Guidelines for Preparing your Final Research Document at Northwestern State University* document from the Graduate School website. Graduate Student Reviews will address writing issues as well as their artwork.

#### **SLO 2. Synthesize the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals.**

**Measure:** Observable and testable through the curricular opportunity to take independent courses in specific areas. Students will submit a proposal for each class of what they will accomplish for the course. The students will present a cohesive body of artwork and a creative research paper at the end of their degree program. An alumni survey will be administered at one-year, three-year and five-year intervals. Data will be collected through individual courses, reviews of exhibition and paper, and through the administered surveys. The faculty will assess whether the students have accomplished the proposals for each class. Advisors and committees will assess the success or failure of the papers and exhibits. Faculty will administer the surveys and collect the data. Data will allow faculty to assess current and future curricular needs. Students will respond to curriculum and their own creative drive to build a research and object-based output for review that will propel them to the next level of our artistic and academic goals. Acceptable data would reflect 75% of the students synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals. Target data would show 95%.

**Findings:** Target data not met.

**Analysis:** In AY2016-2017, data was 33 percent of our students have struggles with synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals. As mentioned above, we found that approximately 25 percent of our students have struggles with writing and researching effectively. These issues have arisen in written class proposals, research papers, and in the creative research document drafts. Therefore, for AY17-18, the faculty decided to view the transcripts and statement of purpose as part of the initial review of the candidates. We also decided to be more firm with the application deadlines. The graduate critique organization and the graduate exhibition has led to more accountability and interaction in our students. The faculty and students are invited to three formal critique times a semester. The graduate student present their work to the faculty and each other. This process has become for systematic and organized since last year. The graduate student exhibition has included not only our on-campus students, but also some of our online students. The opportunity

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to put together a formal exhibit has also led our students to more fully realize their professional and creative goals. As a result of the changes implemented in AY2017-2018, this year we found that approximately 80 percent were synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals. This is a 17 percent increase from the year before.

The capstone exhibition quality has risen further this year. This is as a result of regular graduate critiques and graduate group exhibitions. One of our graduate students created a portrait of Dr. Randall Webb for the dedication of the WRAC fitness center in honor of his years as president of the university. Our Alumni Survey was not effective. We had no responses.

The committee work is effective in helping monitor and maintain quality student output, although there are some faculty not communicating well. Utilizing surveymonkey.com alone for our surveys was ineffective. More effective ways to reach out to a greater number of alumni will be discussed at our first faculty meeting in Fall 2018.

**Decision:** Between AY2016-2017 and AY2017-2018 there was a 17 percent increase in student performance in synthesizing the curricular experience to meet their professional and creative goals as a result of the changes made implemented this past academic year. We feel continued graduate-focused critiques and exhibitions are critical, and to further drive student improvement the reorganization of graduate committees will allow for more effective monitoring of the students. In our Fall 2018-2019 faculty meetings, the issue of the surveys will be brought up to discuss better deployment and reach.

### **SLO 3. 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 in national, international juried exhibitions, and in the graduate student exhibition opportunities. Also observable through teaching assistant opportunities. Data will be collected by generating lists of the percentage of graduate students attending the various class and departmental trips. Also in reviews, faculty will report independent trips the students have initiated, and their participation in student and other exhibitions. Data will also be received through reports of the Graduate Assistants' level of participation and professional candor in various assignments. Faculty will collect the data for student exhibition participation. Faculty will collect the date for student trip attendance. Advisors and committee members will collect the data for individual assignments in the Assistantships. Data will allow faculty to assess frequency and effectiveness of exhibitions and trips. Students will independently seek after life-long learning not based solely upon curricular experience. Acceptable data would reflect 75% of the students actively participating in experiences that encourage

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familiarity with a broad variety of work in various specializations and media. Target data would show 95%.

**Findings:** Target data not met.

**Analysis:** In 2016-2017 approximately 45 percent of our students entered regional, national, or international art competitions. Five graduate students, about 30 percent, participated in a departmental field trip. There were only minor changes in our process for organizing field trips in 2017-2018. That may be part of the reason for the decline. In 2017-2018 approximately 65 percent of our students entered regional, national, or international art competitions. One of our students won Best of Show in an exhibit she entered. Five graduate students, about 30 percent, participated in a departmental field trip. One student initiated and oversaw a weekly after-hours life drawing class throughout the semester. Students participating in Graduate Assistantships effectively taught or assisted in courses, maintained facilities and lab hours, and many other things throughout the department. The Graduate Student Exhibition was a success with our on-campus and online students participating. The Graduate Coordinator has been invaluable in helping to organize many of these events and experiences. Although discussions did not happen about requiring graduate students to enter juried exhibitions, the plan we made at the end of last year is showing forth successful fruits that we will continue to build on.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 result our discussion will begin at the first faculty meeting in the Fall of 2018-2019 about requiring graduate students to enter juried exhibitions, and encouragement to create collaborative field trips among themselves.

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

As a result of the analysis of AY2016-2017 data, the following changes were implemented in AY2017-2018:

- Graduate admission process and standards raised and tightened.
- Close monitoring of writing classes and projects with organized and in-depth feedback.
- Implementation of regular graduate critiques and group exhibition.

### Plan of action moving forward

As our target data were not met and, in an effort, to drive improvement in student, we have discussed certain changes in the application process that may help cull the students without the ability to succeed in this degree program. We will initiate

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discussions for the requirement of graduate students entering juried art exhibitions. The Art Department Graduate Coordinator has allowed a more developed process for retaining, advising, and graduating these students.