

Visual Arts Department Annual Assessment Report

Submitted: January 2010



I. Executive Statement

The assessment report submitted by the Visual Arts department illustrates improvements and updates that have been made to reflect our commitment to excellence in teaching and student learning. The primary objective for this year's report was to create more precise learning objectives, outcomes and validations with measurable terms. In addition, a greater variety of assessment methods and validations were added to accurately reflect what is already being done in the department, especially for the Studio Arts concentration. To make these advancements, faculty meet on two occasions to discuss and concur on what was to be changed and better demonstrated in this year's report. For instance, several elements that comprise the Visual Arts department's mission statement were improved and three new declarations were added. Part of the process of improvement entailed conducting research that surveyed the learning objectives and validations of studio arts departments from a variety of American colleges and universities. This type of benchmarking fostered the creation of learning objectives, as well as streamlining previous ones, both of which are demonstrated throughout the assessment plan. In the end, the updated assessment plan represents a more cohesive, unified assessment plan for the Art History and Studio Arts concentrations that form the Visual Arts department.

II. Assessment Meetings

The Visual Art department met on December 2, 2009 for 1½ hours at which all four full-time faculty members of the department were present—Professor William Roberts, Professor Theodore Lossowski, Assistant Professor William Ganis and Visiting Assistant Professor Kate Dimitrova. The main objective of the meeting was to strengthen the learning objectives, outcomes and validations for the Studio Arts concentration of the department. Major topics discussed were the areas of weakness as identified by the Assessment Committee regarding the report submitted in Winter 2009. In response to the Assessment Committee's suggestions, a variety of changes have been made. For example, many of the learning objectives and outcomes have been re-written, using more accurate and precise wording. More learning objectives and outcomes specifically designed for the Studio Art concentration were created, as well as a more assessment measurements and validations for both Art History and Studio Arts. Other changes made include refinements to the mission statement of the Visual Arts major that more accurately reflect the problem-solving and critical thinking aspects of studio arts and art-making, as well as art history. The faculty also strove to clearly underscore the connection between linguistics (language and semiotics) and art; this aspect is now expressed in several of the learning objectives, outcomes and validations. A second meeting was held on December 9, 2009 for an hour among Professors Roberts, Lossowski and Dimitrova in which a discussion was held to outline some of the challenges involved in creating rubrics in Studio Arts (for more, see below in Plan for the Upcoming Year).

III. Plan for the Upcoming Year

The main objective for the department of Visual Arts in the upcoming year is to develop grading rubrics for the Studio Arts concentration. At the meeting on December 2, 2010, this issue was discussed. We have been investigating the use of grading rubrics for studio practice that have been developed by faculty outside of Wells College with the hope to find rubrics that suits the needs of our Studio Arts faculty. Sources that were consulted include: 1) *Evaluating and Assessing the Visual Arts Education*, ed. by Doug Boughton, Elliot W. Eisner, Johan Ligtvoet (1996); 2) *The Problem of Assessment in Art and Design*, ed. by Trevor Rayment (2007). As a potential model, we are studying the “Arts Propel Projects” (<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/research/propel.htm>), a pilot-project sponsored by Harvard University that has resulted in the creation of various curriculum modules and grading rubrics. Many Studio Arts faculty in the U.S. have explored the difficulties in reconciling the subjective and creative aspects of art-making with the objective and absolute standards of measurement. Since Studio Art classes often require different skills than art history classes, the rubrics created for Studio Art will focus on providing students feedback on the following elements: 1) greater awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses; 2) capacity to reflect accurately; 3) sensitivity to achieving developmental goals and milestones; 4) ability to build upon self-critique and make constructive use of others’ critiques; 5) evaluate, refine, modify work as it progresses, as well as successfully realize one’s intentions; 6) critically assess (in writing, orally and in art-making) art historical movements, specific works of arts and artists with a informed and specialized vocabulary; 7) ability to solve problems in a visual, tactile way that demonstrates technical skills and conceptual approaches. The Visual Arts department is committed to resolving the rubric issue in the next academic year; faculty will meet during the spring semester to continue this process.

IV. Updated Assessment Plan

An updated assessment plan is included as a separate document; please see “Visual Arts Department Student Learning Assessment Plan, January 2010.”

V. Summary of Data

The data provided in the section “Alignment of Goals, Objectives, Outcomes and Assessment Methods,” was drawn from grades from a variety of sources including, exams, quizzes, research papers, written assignments and exhibition critiques. The existing data provides a baseline for opportunities for further improvement in methodology.