

Meeting Notes Graphic Design Subcommittee September 10, 2008

Attending: Susie Antcliff, Chad Bennett, Constance Conklin, Diana Grinwis, Kathy Lookingland, Jim Redding, Brian Bishop

This was a brainstorming session in which we tried to envision where we want to be in an ideal world, within the boundary of a 2-year program. The intent is to identify skill sets and pedagogies that will best prepare students for a career in a constantly changing design environment. From this, student learning outcomes for the GD graduate will be developed, and from the outcomes we will back into course and curricula modification and/or creation. Our time line is now...we will implement changes as soon as identified and are possible within the College administrative structure.

It was generally agreed by the group that the purpose of the Graphic Design area is to provide a terminal degree, and to deliver employable skills and professional outcomes. We will work with transfer, but are primarily an occupational program.

Content will focus on issues and ideas as well as tasks and tools. Achieving a blend and balance of theory and practical applications within a broad skill range is the goal.

We do not wish to "teach software." We will teach students how to learn software, as this will be a constant learning event through their entire careers.

A paper that was presented by Meredith Davis [PDF, 12.9 MB], the head of PhD programs in graphic design at North Carolina State University, at an AIGA Design Educators Conference in Boston, in April 2008 was used as a point of departure for further discussion. <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/designer-of-2015-next-steps>

In her address she challenged some basic assumptions of design education. They are:

- Students learn best through experiences that move from simple to complex
- Every student should be doing the same thing at the same time
- Individual performance and control of outcomes are among the highest priorities
- The computer is an extension of traditional tools and media

The group saw her reasoning, which can be read at the above link, as valid. From our discussion we asked if we could do as the staff at NCSU did, and that was to see "what if we confront our students with the challenges of making things clear and meaningful, not making them simple, - with understanding and managing complexity, not reducing it - right from the beginning of their studies." (Davis, AIGA address). As Davis and her faculty found, "What was exportable ... was a way of thinking about design problems. We learned from these investigations that beginning students could both articulate sophisticated positions on the issues nested within complex systems and frame problem statements that drive their own work. Further, we could teach form within a context and while doing something else as well. In other words, there was nothing about their skills and insights that argued for beginning with the

simple or abstract and deferring the complex and applied." We, as a group, have determined to investigate pedagogical or systemic ways of including this philosophy within our curriculum.

We have admitted we cannot be all things to all people. An obstacle to a more rigorous design curriculum could be the one or two students usually found in a section disadvantaged by being challenged by particular software, or needing remedial design counseling. We would like to explore the use of ILF's or SI to help support these students.

We view the reestablishment of the Design Center to serve College clients as a priority. The center would include students from ADM, Photo, DMAC, and CIT. It could function in a workforce-retraining role. It will act as a bridge between all the programs in MAIT.

We began a discussion on the role of Drawing in the GD curriculum, and determined that the skills taught need to be more Process oriented than Product. We will continue this next meeting.

We adjourned, to continue this discussion next week, Weds. September 17, at 5:00 pm.