Sept. 15, 2013

Department of Art Final Report
UCI Assessment Grant Program

During the 2012/2013, the UCI Department of Art completed all aspects of the activities outlined in our Academic Assessment Grant proposal funded July 30, 2012. Building on initial planning beginning in 2011, the department assembled an assessment team, consulted broadly with department faculty, developed rubrics and study instruments, collected classroom data, and additionally conducted a year-end survey of students in the Art Major. We also learned more about assessment in the process, revising our methodology and adding new components as the project unfolded. The resulting insights will be continued in the coming year as the department conducts an overall assessment and program review.

Activities of the past year's Academic Assessment Grant began in summer 2012, as team of three faculty comprising department chair David Trend and senior lecturers Mara Lonner and Deborah Oliver formulated two primary learning outcomes to visual art education at the undergraduate level: Outcome #1 - Learn the basic skills, vocabulary, and aesthetics of the discipline; Outcome #2 - Conceive, design, realize, and assess art works. Soon we recognized an overlap between the two outcomes in the vast majority of the department's "studio" courses (These comprise the majority of our classes, during which students make art works and then discuss them with faculty and each other). Outcome #1 *becomes manifest* through Outcome #2, as theoretical knowledge is put into creative works and thus becomes manifest. Hence we chose the build rubrics around Outcome #2. As the project progressed, the department also recognized the need to adjust and refine the its data collection methods. Hence, we later added what was initially seen as a supplementary evidence tool (portfolios of student artwork) to the primary assessment effort

We continued to refine our methodology as progressed through the year. When we began developing rubrics we saw four key learning measures: Technique, Knowledge, Creativity, and Effort. But as we began to implement measures to study these, we have recognized a need to further specificity. For this reason, we adopted a beginning/end scoring matrix in which faculty assigned a 1-5 value in five categories: Materials, Concepts, Work Habits, Presentation, and Other. The new rubrics were presented to the entire faculty at a Fall 2012 faculty meeting with unanimous approval. Faculty determined that the methodology would be tested in performance and painting/drawing courses to give us an indication of two quite different sets of pedagogical approaches and techniques—adding what we consider a novel, yet appropriate, dimension to the process. Midway through the quarter, a further modification to the rubrics was made for the specific needs of the performance classroom, resulting in the categories: Concept, Historical Understanding, Creativity, Effort, and Other.

In Winter 2013, Lonner and Oliver applied the revised rubrics in the two classes we had selected, producing scoring grids, as well as an explanatory narrative. While useful, the work only partially captures the scope and effectives of department pedagogy. For this reason a novel visual element was added to our assessment activities, with instructors photographing and/or making video recordings of student work at the beginning and end of term. Department colleagues concurred that rather than collecting student artwork as an adjunct activity, as a "visual" field of education our assessment should itself take a visual form. The consensus was that such an approach would give the assessment field-specific meaning that would be useful to art educators at UCI and elsewhere. While such documentation was more time consuming an effort for the instructors, we determined that having evidence to explain numbers would be extremely useful in the specific context of what our department actually does in its teaching.

Admittedly, interpretation of student progress in this pictorial data is less easy to quantify. Nevertheless, our operating premise was that art educators could readily make such evaluations. And this has proven to be the case as we have shared this material with department colleagues. An example of the visual documentation is attached to this report (See, "Basic Drawing II, Student #4"). Evident in the attached is the student's enhanced ability to render an image, consideration of the picture frame, as well as development in figure/ground recognition and context. Both quantitative and qualitative findings of the Art Department assessment activities were assembled and presented at the 2013 Assessment Forum in spring quarter 2013. In Spring 2013 the Department of Art Academic Assessment team administered a year-end questionnaire to selected classes to gauge student experience with the Art Major, as well as to solicit recommendations for improvements.

Funds of $10,000 were awarded to the department for the 2012/2013 Academic Assessment project. Initially the department anticipating distributing the $9,000 equally among the three faculty conducting the work in partial compensation of summer work. With the recent campus assignment of benefits costs to lecturer compensation, it became necessary to shift payments to the two lecturers (Lonner and Oliver) who received $4,500 each.

Further documentation of Department of Art assessment activities follows: a description of the year-end survey and a narrative interpretation of its results, a copy of the questionnaire, and a sample of the visual documentation of student Week 1/Week 10 classroom work.

Department of Art Undergraduate Student Survey, Spring 2013

At the end of the Spring 2013 quarter, the Department of Art administered a questionnaire (attached) to selected undergraduate courses to gauge student satisfaction with the major. Students were asked to rate on a numerical scale their experiences in courses, advising, and the major itself. The anonymously conducted survey also asked students to provide written

comments about their expectations, accomplishments, and plans, as well as to note what they thought might be added to the program.

Responses from 50 students (approximately 23% of the total number of students in the Art Major) were collected from five courses in painting, photography, and digital arts. Numerically ratings varied considerably. On a scale with 1=excellent and 5=poor, graduating seniors rated their "Overall experience with the Art Major" with a mean score of 2.7, "Quality of courses and instruction" as 3.0, and "Effectiveness of advising and mentoring" as 2.5. Undergraduates who were not seniors had similar impressions, rating overall experience as 2.8, quality of courses as 3.0, and advising as 2.9. Narrative comments varied somewhat by type of course.

What did you expect when choosing to be an Art Major at UCI
Painting students generally expected a breadth of technical and conceptual instruction. Photography students similarly sought exposure to diverse practices and to get help increasing their existing photographic skills, referencing analogue and digital interests. Digital arts students seemed less focused in their interests, with some expressing a general interest in the arts and others expressing a desire to find a direction while pursuing the Arts Major.

What do you feel you learned while here?
Painting students valued lessons about technique and being exposed to diverse forms of practice. Photography students often foregrounded the "conceptual" lessons of courses, with some mentioning the value of "hands-on" learning. Digital arts students also often mentioned learning theory and history, while also referencing a variety of specific skills in both computer arts and areas like drawing, photography, and video.

What was your best experience?
Painting student voiced diverse opinions, with some citing painting courses themselves and others an appreciation of individual professors. Photographers also often noted specific instructors, with many simply stating that they were pleased to have enhanced existing skills. Digital arts students appreciated "hands-on" learning and group projects in digital arts offerings, while also listing courses in drawing, painting, and photography.

What do you feel is missing from our program
Painting students most commonly expressed an unmet interest in digital arts and animation. Photography students often said they wanted more technical rigor, while also mentioning a need for more digital and graphic arts learning opportunities. Digital artists seemed the most critical of the program's conceptual orientation, with many wanting more technique and a more "real world" commercial orientation.

What do you plan to do with your degree, (employment, grad school, etc.)?
Many painting students expressed no plans, with some anticipating further study in grad school and others pursuing non-art careers. A high number of photographers said they planned to attend graduate school in the arts, with a smaller number saying they would directly enter the employment market. Digital art students most commonly said they wanted jobs, with some specifying graphic design or game industries.

Interpretation of questionnaire findings
In quantitative and qualitative terms, the response of undergraduate students in assessing their experience in the UCI Art Major is not unexpected. Because admission to the major does not have a portfolio requirement, students in program manifest a broad spectrum of orientations and skills. This is reflected in survey results in which students were alternately highly satisfied with the program or they were disappointed, with a large number somewhere in the middle. Clearly, some students enter the program with a clear understanding of the conceptual character of the contemporary art field—and are very pleased with what they find at UCI. Others would be better served by a program with less rigor or a more commercial orientation. It is apparent from the

survey that students who seem cognizant of the department's orientation (or who gain that appreciation while here) appear to thrive and to develop an interest in graduate studies. It's also worth noting that while some students expressed ambivalence about with the specific *content* of courses, almost no criticism was made of the manner or style of instruction, class size, department facilities, or department culture. Indeed, the only references to individual professors were quite positive.

The survey findings suggest there is work to be done by the department to improve the undergraduate experience of our majors. In upcoming faculty and undergraduate committee meetings, the department will discuss ways to better align the program with student expectations. The most obvious means of doing this would appear to lie in the areas of program description and admissions to the major itself. It is possible that while the department's catalogue description and course listings repeatedly stress the "conceptual" and "contemporary art" orientation of the program, published renderings of the program as "diverse" and "wide-ranging" may give some students the impression that every conceivable definition of art is represented. With this in mind, we may revise our published materials.

This leaves the question of recruitment, admissions, considerations and the imposition of more focused requirements for entering the Art Major. Historically, the department has used an "open" process that maximizes student access, which it still favors. Our current thinking is that rather than approaching admissions by adding a "subtractive" filter such as a portfolio requirement, we will work in a more "additive" manner in enhanced recruitment and promotion of the program. Discussions are ongoing about ways to improve our outreach to high schools and community colleges, as well as more targets promotional efforts. Some of this work has begun already through the department's high school "Summer Academy" programs, which give prospective students a preview of what a UCI Art Department experience be like. In 2014 we plan to double the size of this enterprise.

UCI Department of Art Undergraduate Questionnaire for Art Majors

Please indicate your year in the program (circle appropriate number)

1. First year   2. Sophomore   3. Junior   4. Senior

Please rate your overall impressions to the following (1=excellent to 5= poor)

1. How would you rate your overall experience as an Art Major?

1   2   3   4   5

2. How would you rate the quality of courses and instruction?

1   2   3   4   5

3. How effective were advisors and/or mentors in your studies?

1   2   3   4   5

Please tell us about your experience as an Art Major

4. What did you expect when choosing to be an Art Major at UCI
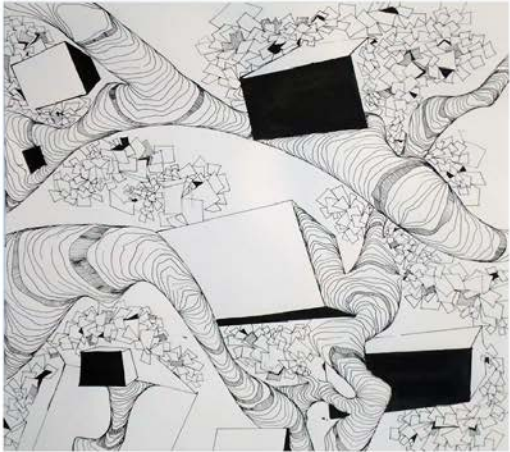
5. What do you feel you learned while you have been here?

6. What was your best academic experience?

7. What do you feel is missing in our program?

8. What do you plan to do with your degree (employment grad school, etc.)?

WEEK 10: ASSIGNMENTS
REPRESENTING QUARTER'S DEVELOPMENT