

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

Delaware College of Art and Design

Wilmington, Delaware

by

a Team Representing the

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a Visit to the Campus on

February 17 – 18, 2011

The Members of the Team:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The team offers its sincere appreciation to Delaware College of Art and Design for hosting this monitoring report follow-up visit. We thank the members of the DCAD community for their honesty, openness, and commitment to the processes of self-appraisal and self-improvement.

The team would be remiss in not mentioning that the monitoring report did not do justice to the several administrative units that had plans with clear goals and metrics in place that had been completed on multiple levels over time and were being used for improvement. It was a disservice to the team and institution to receive plans only by request and after the monitoring report was filed.

The team was impressed with the passion and hard work of the directors, administration and faculty area coordinators. The faculty focus on students is commendable and the student work is strong.

## **REASONS FOR THE VISIT**

Delaware College of Art and Design undertook self-study and was granted initial accreditation in March 2008. At that time, the institution was asked for a monitoring report, addressing Standards 2, 7, and 14; and a small team visit followed in November 2009.

In March 2010, based on the findings of the small team, the Commission acted as follows:

To accept the monitoring report and to note the visit by the Commission's representatives. To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of a lack of evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal) and Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due February 1, 2011, documenting (1) implementation of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan and related plans that are linked to budgeting and decision-making and have measurable outcomes (Standard 2), and (2) implementation of a comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used in planning, decision-making, and the allocation of resources (Standard 7). In addition, to request (3) the establishment and assessment of measurable student learning goals at the program level that are appropriate to the mission of the institution, including evidence that student

learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). A visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To note that the next evaluation visit will be scheduled when warning is removed and accreditation is reaffirmed.

## **CONDUCT OF THE VISIT**

During their visit, the small team met with a number of individuals and groups, including:

Thorpe Moeckel, Chairman of the Board of Directors

Stuart Baron, President

Jeffrey Hoover, Dean and Director of Institutional Assessment

Traci Parman, Chief Administrative Officer

Elizabeth Gatti, Director of Admissions

Scott Straw, Director of Student Services

Krista Rothwell, Registrar and Research Coordinator

Jane Campbell, Director of Continuing Education

Jessica Sturgis, Director of Communications

Amelia Nelson, Library Director

Valerie Jermusyk, Director of Development

Teresa Haman, Director of Financial Aid

Area Coordinators:

John Breakey, Graphic Design

Ron Brignac, Photography

Catherine Drabkin, Fine Arts

Pahl Hluchan, Animation

Alexi, Natchev, Illustration

Connie Simon, Foundations

Christine Tate, Academic Studies

Ian Tornay, Interior Design

### **5 Alumni:**

Charles Harrigan

Kevin Bielicki

Thomas Mulford

Gabe Rothwell

Greg Truono

## **TEAM FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal)**

**Delaware College of Art and Design does meet this standard.**

The institution has developed and implemented a revised and focused Strategic Plan that was approved by the Board since the March 2010 small team report. The process to add measurable goals to the Strategic Plan was completed.

The Strategic Goal Committees appear to be continually monitoring the progress of meeting the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

### **Suggestions**

The team suggests that DCAD consider removing the distraction of the possibility of moving from a 2 to a 4 year BFA from the Strategic Plan at this time.

### **Recommendations**

The team also recommends that DCAD should consider working on the next reiteration of the Strategic Plan that looks ahead beyond 2013.

### **Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment)**

**Delaware College of Art and Design does not meet this standard.**

DCAD has made progress in implementing a process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness in the past year. Resources have been dedicated to meeting this standard including hiring a Dean and Director of Institutional Assessment. And it is evident that all constituents are clearly focused on assessment. However, there remain several significant disconnects that prevent DCAD's institutional assessment from being comprehensive, systematized and sustainable.

Assessment and rubric training for the Dean and Director of Institutional Assessment and for the faculty should be an urgent priority.

The Directors see the Milestone Department Goal Progress Assessment process as an effective tool in streamlining their focus on the Strategic Goals. Faculty appear to be marginally engaged with Institutional Assessment and the process seems to be more focused on the administrative side. It is also unclear how other constituents, when appropriate, are included in Institutional Assessment process.

As noted in the introduction, some units have clear goals and objectives and based on the Directors comprehensive verbal reports to the team, it appears that they are using the evidence to improve services and support to students and faculty, meet and/or exceed unit goals and support the Strategic Plan. However, the evidence of these assessment activities was not visible in the monitoring report or appendices. There were other units in which the Directors verbally reported to the team a clear and comprehensive understanding of their unit's plan, but they did not have a written plan. In some areas demonstrations of how evidence was being used did not appear to exist and in other areas there did not appear to be sufficient documentation.

There was a lack of evidence that DCAD had implemented a comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used in planning, decision-making and the allocation of resources. If this was in place it was not well documented.

The team noted that DCAD's website says nearly all students pursue transition to Pratt or Corcoran yet the Monitoring Report states that the transfer rates have increased from 43% to 58% over a four-year period. This contradiction did not appear to be intentional; however, DCAD may want to consider completing an audit of their web and printed materials in relationship to their institutional statistics for accuracy to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 2008.

Assessment needs to be useful to help faculty and staff to make appropriate decisions about improving programs and services, developing goals and plans and making resource allocations. The other 2-year colleges DCAD used to benchmark their graduation rates in the Monitoring Report do not appear to be the most useful measure of comparison.

The team was pleased by the support expressed by the Chairman of the Board of Directors in ensuring that these issues become a priority.

### **Commendations**

The communication that happens within the Directors Meetings appears to be very effective. The collegiality and teamwork of the staff and faculty are commendable and are a significant factor in making DCAD a special place.

### **Suggestions**

DCAD may want to consider having a small team prepare any future reports to MSCHE to ensure a broader perspective of how the Strategic Plan is rooted in and supported by unit assessment.

### **Recommendations**

DCAD is at a great disadvantage with not having a Recruitment Plan and should consider developing and implementing a plan.

## **Requirements**

As a matter of urgency, DCAD must come into full compliance with Standard 7, remembering that institutional assessment also includes student-learning assessment (Standard 14). The institution must develop and implement an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals, and that uses assessment results in planning and resource allocation and to improve teaching and learning at the College.

### **Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)**

**Delaware College of Art and Design does meet this standard.**

Although the institution appears to be in compliance with Standard 14, DCAD is marginally in compliance due to several issues.

On March 4, 2010, the Commission acted to request that DCAD accomplish the following:

“...the establishment and assessment of measurable student learning goals at the program level that are appropriate to the mission of the institution, including evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14).”

DCAD’s Monitoring Report of February 1, 2011, contained one appendix page (Appendix M-Course Assessment Reporting) that linked DCAD Mission Statement objectives to course objectives. The same format linking the Mission Statement to course objectives was repeated in the Course Objectives Outcomes Assessment Pilot Plan for spring 2011. The program goals and student learning outcomes are missing for these documents and are required to demonstrate the appropriate relationship with course objectives. Program goals for each DCAD program are listed on the website and in the EAP-Educational Assessment Plan-revised April 2010.

It is evident that the DCAD faculty understand the educational competencies they desire their students to achieve at the program level; however, the EAP still contains program competencies derived from the NASAD standards for baccalaureate institutions in at least four program areas: Photography, Interior Design, Graphic Design, and Illustration. The prior Middle States Small Team Report (November 2009) recommended that the faculty “undertake a thorough review of programmatic outcomes, articulating and assessing what students can reasonably be expected to accomplish in a two-year program of study.”

During the Team’s faculty interviews, one faculty member indicated he/she did not know they could write their own program competencies. This led the team to wonder how much access the faculty had to the previous Small Team Report.

Student learning assessment opportunities are available within each DCAD program and the Foundation courses, for example, the “WALKTHROUGHS” and portfolios. However, these forms of assessment are not adequately structured to yield student learning assessment information to improve teaching and learning, which is a fundamental element of Standard 14 and a requirement communicated by the Commission in March 2010. The “WALKTHROUGHS” are evaluated with an open-ended response form that does not accurately link evidence of student learning to program competencies. Additionally, no documented evidence of how the “WALKTHROUGHS” inform the teaching and learning process for improvement exists. There is an opportunity to restructure the assessment instrument and allow outside “experts” to evaluate the student work with an appropriate rubric. This process could lead to documented results and provide evidence for faculty to “close the assessment loop” by improving the teaching and learning process.

DCAD faculty members are extremely knowledgeable regarding program portfolios and assign them frequently. Each program handles their evaluation in their own manner. One professor indicated that he/she provided verbal feedback for the students’ portfolios. Even though this feedback was not documented, it led to a change in the program’s curriculum. Currently, faculty are working with basic-level rubrics to improve evaluation across all DCAD programs, but expressed frustration when they discovered the 1-5 evaluation scale was inconsistently applied by faculty (i.e., 1 in some cases would be excellent, and in other cases would be extremely poor). As a result one faculty member dropped the numbers from the rubric and referred to the new process as “subjective assessment.”

Grades are used as an assessment measure for Introduction to Academic Studies. This is not an appropriate assessment technique. Standard 14 requires “systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions and include direct evidence to student learning.”

The DCAD Area Coordinators demonstrated that they are engaged with the institution and the students. Alumni confirmed that faculty were supportive and helpful during their matriculation and after graduation. Faculty expressed a strong desire to improve the student learning assessment process and to participate in assessment training. The Dean and Director of Institutional Assessment have conducted individual faculty training; however, there appear to be limited opportunities for faculty to participate with outside professional training. A faculty member commented that last time he/she attended an assessment conference was in 2005. Professional training would provide faculty with the fundamentals for a “documented, organized, and sustained assessment process.” Additionally, there is a wealth of practical assessment literature available through Middle States and other resources available for faculty use.

DCAD has a limited amount of time remaining to demonstrate the ability to implement and document an “organized, systematized, and sustained” assessment process. The

Course Objectives Outcomes Assessment spring 2011 pilot is not appropriate to demonstrate these requirements in a cohesive and consistent manner. Possible options may be the following:

- Fully assess at least one major academic program, providing evidence of how assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning
- Assess the Foundation Program and Academic Studies (the equivalent of the general education competencies) and document the use of assessment results.
- In addition to one of these assessments, a regular rotation calendar is required for the assessment of DCAD programs and for all general education competencies.
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Faculty provided copies of several course syllabi for review. These syllabi contained course objectives or course goals; however, they did not specify course student learning outcomes. These outcomes are necessary to remain in compliance.

In addressing the outstanding issues with Standard 14, it needs to be clear that faculty are responsible for the curriculum and that all faculty, including adjunct faculty, need to be included in the assessment process of student learning.

### **Suggestions:**

Link the assessment instrument for the “WALKTHROUGHS” with program competencies via a series of comprehensive rubrics.

Train DCAD faculty to create consistent rubrics for portfolio assessment.

### **Recommendations:**

Develop and implement a comprehensive and consistent assessment plan to demonstrate a documented “organized, systematized, and sustained” assessment process. This should include the appropriate relationships between program and course goals and student learning outcomes. Additionally, evidence of student learning assessment information should be used to demonstrate improvements in teaching and learning.

DCAD should not continue to indicate that its students will accomplish the 4-year program competencies articulated by NASAD, and must revise its own program competencies (student learning outcomes) to reflect appropriate two-year educational competencies.

Implementing assessment training for faculty and the Dean and Director of Institutional Assessment should be a priority.

Student learning assessment outcomes for each course must be included on all syllabi.

## **CONCLUSION**

The team reminds the institution of the 2-year time period for resolution of all accreditation issues. DCAD does not have the luxury to get off track with coming into compliance with Standard 7, which includes Standard 14 because the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness.

The team again thanks the institution, and we hope that DCAD will be open to the ideas and recommendations contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.