

**Central Washington University
Assessment of Student Learning
Department and Program Report**

Academic Year of Report: 20010–11

College: Interdisciplinary — College of Arts & Humanities

Department: Interdisciplinary Film & Video Studies

Program: FVS Major (Critical Studies & Production Specializations) & Minor(s)

1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

Consistent with the desired skills and learning outcomes identified by the Presidents' Council of the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board in the late-1990s (*i.e.*, critical thinking, writing, quantitative reasoning and information literacy), the Film & Video Studies (FVS) program has identified three (3) program goals tied to ten (10) student learning outcomes. Of the ten student learning outcomes, four (4) are shared between the two specializations (*Critical Studies* and *Production*) while each specialization has three (3) specific learning outcomes associated with their unique course of study within the FVS major. Because the FVS program draws its faculty and courses from eight different departments in two separate colleges, the FVS program faculty elected to review the compiled assessment data for all ten student learning outcomes annually in order to obtain a “grand overview” of the interdisciplinary program and to identify specific areas of excellence as well as improvement opportunities.

Programmatic Goals.

- (I) *Student will achieve visual literacy—the ability to appreciate, interpret, use, & create images using both conventional & digital media in ways that advance innovative learning, collaborative communication, critical thinking, & creative decision making.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Facilitate inter/disciplinary & integrative learning for creative inquiry,” and “Develop students’ intellectual & practical skills for lifelong learning” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).
- (II) *Students will demonstrate themselves to be informed viewers, critics, & consumers of visual information in its various forms & to recognize the cultural & social contexts that shape visual media in various historical periods, including issues of diversity & gender, American national identity, & international perspectives.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Improve students’ knowledge of human cultures & diversity for success in a global society,” and “Enhance students’ civic knowledge & engagement locally & globally for responsible citizenship” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus,” and Goal IV, “Build inclusive and diverse campus communities that promote intellectual inquiry and encourage civility, mutual respect, and cooperation” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).
- (III) *Students will demonstrate themselves to be knowledgeable designers, composers, & producers of visual information, in its various forms, which demonstrates sensitivity to the subject matter & authorial voice as well as mastery of industry standards in production techniques & aesthetics.* This program goal relates to the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) identified student learning goals of: “Develop students’ intellectual & practical skills for lifelong learning,” and “Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/~cah/mission.html>). Likewise, this program goal is consistent with the 2006-2011 CWU Strategic Plan’s Goal I, “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus,” and Goal IV, “Build inclusive and diverse campus communities that promote intellectual inquiry and encourage civility, mutual respect, and cooperation” (*c.f.*, <http://www.cwu.edu/president/archive/goals.html>).

Student Learning Outcomes. All students are held accountable for the four (4) shared learning outcomes and the three (3) specific learning outcomes relevant to their respective specialization. However, it is anticipated (but not required) that all students will likely demonstrate some level of minimum competencies in all ten (10) of the learning outcomes regardless of their major specialization.

Shared Student Learning Outcomes.

- (1) *Student demonstrates him/herself to be expressive, innovative visual thinker & successful problem solver.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal I and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (2) *Student demonstrates ability to analyze & interpret emotional, psychological, physiological & cognitive influences in perceptions of visual media.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (3) *Student demonstrates an understanding of American &/or International media industries.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (4) *Student demonstrates an understanding of film as a medium of culture & identifies, articulates, & critiques representations & treatments of race, gender & class.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

Critical Studies Specialization Specific Learning Outcomes:

- (5) *Student demonstrates knowledge & ability to apply different theoretical perspectives on role & power of media within society to influence social values, political beliefs, identities & behaviors.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (6) *Student demonstrates him/herself to be knowledgeable of theoretical approaches to cinema (genre, auteurism, structuralism & post-structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminist, & postcolonial theories).* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (7) *Student demonstrates an understanding of the theory of auteurship & an overview of the dominant stylistic, thematic, & ideological features of the works of select major American & international auteur directors.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & II and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

Production Specialization Specific Learning Outcomes:

- (8) *Student demonstrates a standard skills-set in production management, directing, cinematography & editing for both film & TV.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goal III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (9) *Student demonstrates an advanced understanding of the production elements & narrative structures employed in film & TV.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.
- (10) *Student is able to identify & effectively use the paradigmatic structure & features of a screenplay.* This learning outcome is tied to Program Goals I & III and the associated college and university goals as identified therein.

2. How were they assessed?

Prior to admission to the FVS program, students must take two (2) “gateway” courses: COM 201 “Media and Culture” and FVS 250 “Introduction to Film & Video Studies.” Students must pass these courses with a combined “B” average or better and have an overall CWU GPA of 2.4 or higher to be admitted to the FVS program. Once admitted, students are required to meet quarterly with their assigned academic advisor to monitor their progress and to ensure they are on track—academically as well as in their respective specialization. In their final quarter at CWU, all FVS student learning outcomes are assessed as a component of the mandatory exit course taken by all graduating FVS seniors (FVS 489 “Senior Colloquium”). Those students pursuing a minor in FVS are not part of this assessment process.

During the required exit course—along with seminar discussions &/or workshop sessions on establishing careers in film and television production or preparing for graduate film programs—students are expected to produce several documents aimed at assessing student learning outcomes in relation to the FVS programmatic goals. The primary method of assessment is the student portfolio that must include representative samples of student work from their tenure in the FVS program used to demonstrate competencies in both the shared as well as their specialization specific learning outcomes. Unique to the Production Specialization, an important part of the portfolio is the student’s “sizzle” clip &/or “demo reel” presenting their production efforts in an industry standard format (online & DVD). Additionally, students are also required to complete a 9-12 page Exit Essay in which students are encouraged to be self-reflexive in reviewing their performance in the FVS program *vis-à-vis* student learning outcomes, to reflect upon specific courses they have taken and to cite specific works contained in their portfolio (or contained on their demo reel) that demonstrate competencies in the appropriate student learning outcomes.

During Finals Week each quarter, graduating seniors present their portfolios &/or demo reels to an open forum of FVS students and faculty and solicit informal feedback and field questions—frequently the result is the student making minor fixes &/or additions prior to submitting their materials for formal review. Several FVS faculty (along with the instructor for FVS 489) independently review the submitted portfolios and exit essays and provide feedback used to monitor the “state of the program.” Students are assessed on the completeness of their portfolio and the extent to which they have demonstrated meeting expected learning outcomes as well as the expectations of the FVS 489 course. A standardized form is employed for assessment purposes (see attached *Portfolio Assessment Form*) utilizing ordinal measurements for assessing student competencies in meeting learning outcomes and program goals (“does not meet,” “partially meets,” “meets,” or “exceeds”). Each of these ordinal categories is assigned a numeric value and the student’s “score” is computed (portfolio organization = 6 points possible, program goals = 9 points possible, and student learning outcomes = 30 points possible, for a total of 45 possible points). For purposes of program evaluation, a student must receive an overall score of 30 points or better with no single criteria rated zero to “pass” the assessment process and receive their “satisfactory” grade in the FVS 489 course.

3. What was learned?

The FVS program is one of the fastest growing majors on campus with over 60 majors as of Spring 2011. The strength of the program resides in the shared core and strong offerings in the respective specializations (critical studies & production). For the specific courses that make up the FVS core, the average GPA remains steady at around 3.0 and GPA in major remains steady at a “B-“ (as an aggregated average) to graduation. Likewise, students in the FVS major have exceeded the program criterion of achievement as reported in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan* (submitted in 2008)—“at least 90% of all portfolios &/or demo reels submitted for review are determined to ‘Meet’ or ‘Exceed’ expectations for graduation.”

Specifically, of the 13 students who submitted for graduation in the 2010-11 academic year (3 critical studies, 10 production), all successfully met expectations. This academic year five students received an evaluation indicating “exceeded” expectations (a score of 40 or above out of 45). However, most graduating seniors scored “exceeds” expectations in three or more of the ten student learning outcomes while no student scored “does not meet” expectations on any of the learning outcomes. One student scored “partially meets” expectations on more than one learning outcome (mostly due to lack of evidence in their portfolio). It also bears pointing out that several of the 13 seniors graduated with honors.

Finally, in reviewing the student portfolios it was demonstrated that of the 13 graduating students, nine had presented at least one of their works at a student conference (mostly at SOURCE 2011) while three submitted their works to student film/video festival competitions (one student had multiple submissions). Of the works submitted, one received “best of festival” at the *48-Hour Film Slam* and one student’s presentation received the CAH Best Oral Presentation award while another student received a CAH Honorable Mention for creative expression at SOURCE. This equates to nearly 70% of graduating seniors and more than doubles the expected level of achievement as reported in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan*—“At least 30% of senior majors present their work at a local, regional or national conference or film festival.” This is exclusive of the other seven submissions to the *48-Hour Film Slam* (juried competition) and the eight short films screened at the *Apple Pie Film Festival*. Both of these events are held annually on campus for FVS students. Although these are not “seniors only” competitions, if student participation in these local events is factored into the equation, then the program has greatly exceeded expected minimums.

Although greatly improved over last year, the challenge in coordinating course offerings from eight departments in two colleges continues to present scheduling difficulties for students. Problems with getting into required courses that had overlapping schedules was mentioned by some students as the cause of their frustration as they worked their way through the program. Most of the graduating seniors stated that they had, at one time or another, experienced difficulty in getting the courses they needed.

With only one exception, all expressed confidence that their education adequately prepared them for employment in the film/television industry—or, in the case of Critical Studies student, prepared them for graduate school. Representative of sentiments expressed by many students, one individual wrote in their exit essay that, “My overall experience with the Film and Video Studies Major has been enjoyable. I have learned more about film and television than I ever thought I would and experienced [a] hands on environment that is worth more than what I paid for.” Others echo this sentiment with statements like, “The biggest strength of this program is definitely the hands on approach it takes towards filmmaking... Students get to learn every aspect from preproduction to the actual production to post-production and we are given projects that ask us to utilize the skills we’ve learned...” Another common theme in student feedback was somewhat surprising; namely, the desire to be critiqued harder and to be held to professional standards. As one student put it, “[students need] assignments that challenge the students *realistically*... students should always be pushed to push *themselves*, and excel in what they’re doing.” A few commented on the “Lazy Student” and a desire for tighter admission standards for the major. Other common themes in student feedback stressed a desire for expanded course offerings in screenplay writing, advanced editing, animation and cinematography. Without exception, all students desired a closer connection between the “critical studies” courses and “production” courses. Mostly, this was expressed as a need for critical studies courses to be more closely related/applied to production and in so doing, afford students a deeper understanding of how film history, theory, aesthetics and critique affect the making of movies. Equally sought-after were “dedicated” film courses as distinctly separate from broadcast journalism courses currently shared between FVS and COM

Those majoring in Critical Studies saw things a bit differently. Whereas the common core afforded opportunities for students in the two specializations to mix, there was the desire for a closer connection to bridge the “rift” between the specializations—especially after students get into their specific specialization courses. Like the production students, the critical studies students held out high praise for the core faculty of their specialization and the breadth of course offerings. What was particularly appreciated was the ability to take course that afforded critical studies students a chance to “...gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of what happens on the other side of the film industry.” As one critical studies student opined, “I cannot imagine being as versed and knowledgeable as I am without the other communication classes to broaden [my understanding of] the effects of cinema on our country and psyches.”

What is becoming a perennial issue— equipment, or more specifically, the lack thereof—was the focus of some comment. Whereas, improvements in the quality and quantity of equipment was acknowledged by most, demand for the production equipment (*e.g.*, cameras, lighting, audio, etc.) and access to post-production facilities (*e.g.*, the convergent media lab) created bottlenecks in the check-out process and restricted student access to the film editing facilities. Several students stated that the FVS program desperately needed skilled technicians to check out/in the production equipment (rather than the existing Work Study students) with the knowledge necessary to keep said equipment in good repair and be available to assist students in post-production during evening hours when students are editing their assignments in the lab and instructional faculty are not available.

Strengths in the program reflect the quality, experience and dedication of the faculty in the FVS program. Quoting from one student’s essay, “I’d have to say that one of the major assets to the program and one of the strongest points of the program are the film and video studies professors...” Frequently, students held high praise for the program and faculty, one student stated, “[a]long with the professors, the diversity of the classes allows the FVS students [*sic*] the ability to find what they want to do in the industry.” About half of the students stated that they felt the required production management course was valuable (but, challenging!) and a necessary course in the production sequence and that the directing class should be offered more frequently (if not made a requirement). Several students also stated that the introduction to studio production class should be offered more frequently and a student practicum project or “thesis film” should be a requirement for graduation. Likewise, most students spoke highly of the depth and breadth of knowledge of the FVS faculty and the confidence they had in their degree in helping them to get a job or go on to graduate school. Praise was also offered for the regular email communications to majors informing students about film festivals, scholarships and internship opportunities. However, critical studies student wished for more information forwarded that appealed to their interests in film criticism, history and film theory.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

Evaluating the student portfolios in juxtaposition to the program's student learning outcomes, it is readily apparent that students display the necessary skills sets that match the learning outcomes and meet industry expectations. However, the FVS faculty will continue to monitor the relevance of the program's goals and student learning outcomes should programmatic adjustments be necessary.

As a result of student feedback, the FVS will continue to monitor course offerings and scheduling to, hopefully, mitigate conflicts that might adversely affect student time to degree before problems emerge.

After much discussion, it was also determined that a new major specialization in scriptwriting should be developed. Student desire for more courses in screen writing, and a possible concentration in this field, were seen as a "low cost" way of expanding the program and meeting student demand. Expansion of course offerings into other areas—like storyboarding, animation, and cinematography— or offer more advanced courses on existing topics, are program options held "hostage" to staffing issues. The existing instructional staff, especially in the production specialization, is presently "near capacity" and as student majors grow with the reputation of the FVS program, lack of faculty will likely be a primary obstacle to continued programmatic growth.

Although last year the FVS program received a grant that allowed the program to "catch-up" with industry standards, additional resources are needed to keep pace with student demand and to expand the capability of the new equipment to provide students with the full "digital cinema" experience that will compliment the skills sets necessary to gain employment in the film and television industries.

5. What did the department or program do in response to last year's assessment information?

To address the issues of course offerings, a revised 2-year course rotation was worked out with the chairs of the English and Theatre departments (two of the three "anchor" departments supporting the major along with Communication) in order to guide a more closely coordinated scheduling of courses by quarter (the new 2-year schedule is now on the FVS website). Prior to the submission of each successive quarter's departmental schedule, the FVS director coordinates with the chairs of Communication, English and Theatre to avoid (if possible) the overlap of required courses.

In response to overwhelming student demand, a new course in the aesthetics and techniques of film and video editing (COM 431) was introduced and is now in the normal rotation as a Winter quarter offering.

Due to very low enrollment (1 student in 4 years), FVS faculty voted to discontinue the Visual Literacy minor. Concern was expressed at the dwindling number of Critical Studies majors and an ad hoc committee was appointed with the charge of exploring outreach and marketing options to boost student enrollment in this specialization.

Finally, in response to student requests for more "skills" oriented courses focused on production software and equipment (more sections of which were desired by students this year), FVS and the Communication Department introduced a sequence of practical COM 315 courses (1-credit) each taught over one or two weekends. Specific to the FVS program, we have designed offerings in basic Video Editing, Adobe Photoshop, After Effects, Apple Motion and Movie Magic Budgeting & Scheduling. There is also talk of developing COM 315 courses in field production equipment (both a beginning and more advanced class) and in support of the studio equipment certification process.

6. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University:

As was the case last year, it has proven difficult to find a consistent, coherent and meaningful (at least to this process) university mission or goal statement(s). I have found at least three (3) different renditions of such statements on CWU's website most of which have had to be "stretched" to find any relevance to the assessment of student learning outcomes process. For this exercise to have any usefulness or meaning beyond the program level, we need to have a single set of identified learning goals at the university level broad enough to be applied across the colleges, departments and programs and shared with all for use in this process. Like last year, I was forced to go with what was initially reported in the *FVS Department/Program Assessment Plan Preparation Form* submitted in 2008.