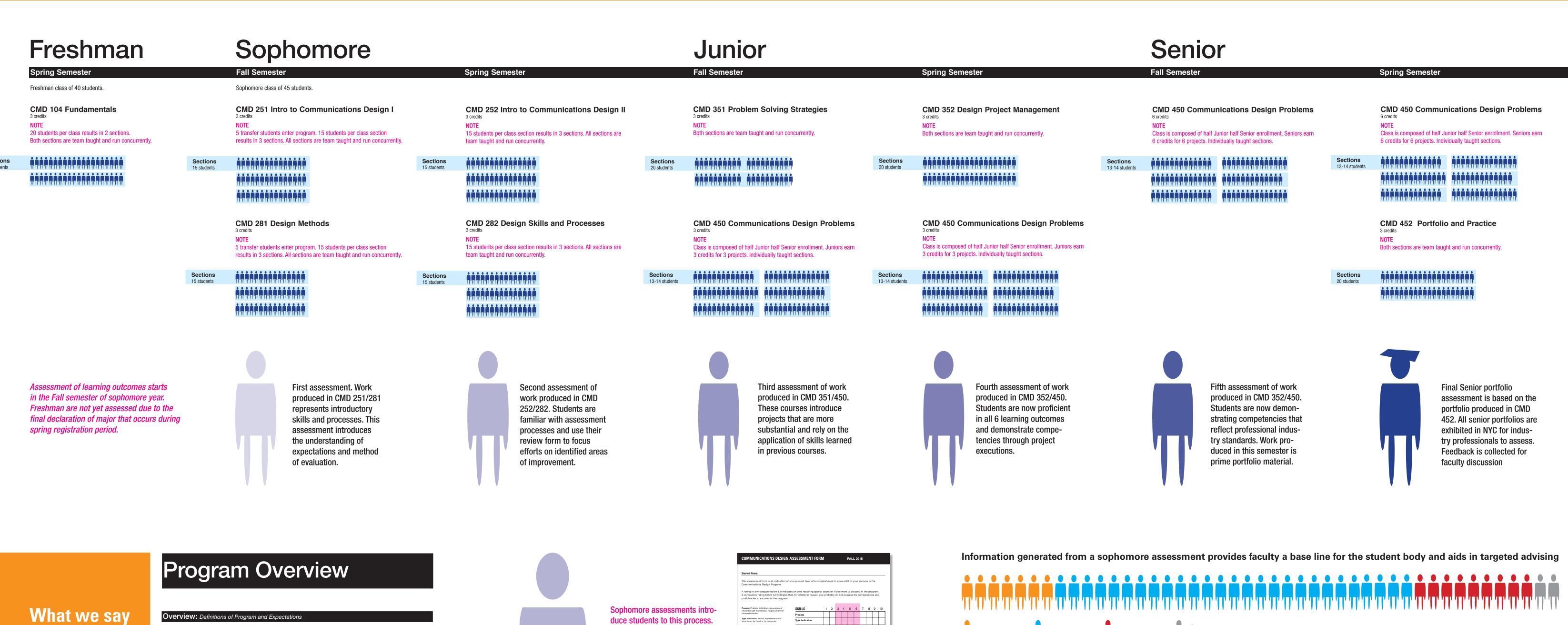# a program of assessment

snapshot

Communications Design Program

School of Design
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Syracuse University

Content and Design by Roderick Martinez
Associate Professor / Program Chair

Freshman

Spring Semester

Freshman class of 40 students.

CMD 104 Fundamentals
3 credits
NOTE
20 students per class results in 2 sections. Both sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
20 students

Assessment of learning outcomes starts in the Fall semester of sophomore year. Freshman are not yet assessed due to the final declaration of major that occurs during spring registration period.

First assessment. Work produced in CMD 251/281 represents introductory skills and processes. This assessment introduces the understanding of expectations and method of evaluation.

Sophomore

Fall Semester

Sophomore class of 45 students.

CMD 251 Intro to Communications Design I
3 credits
NOTE
5 transfer students enter program. 15 students per class section results in 3 sections. All sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
15 students

CMD 281 Design Methods
3 credits
NOTE
5 transfer students enter program. 15 students per class section results in 3 sections. All sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
15 students

Second assessment of work produced in CMD 252/282. Students are familiar with assessment processes and use their review form to focus efforts on identified areas of improvement.

Spring Semester

CMD 252 Intro to Communications Design II
3 credits
NOTE
15 students per class section results in 3 sections. All sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
15 students

CMD 282 Design Skills and Processes
3 credits
NOTE
15 students per class section results in 3 sections. All sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
15 students

Junior

Fall Semester

CMD 351 Problem Solving Strategies
3 credits
NOTE
Both sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
20 students

CMD 450 Communications Design Problems
3 credits
NOTE
Class is composed of half Junior half Senior enrollment. Juniors earn 3 credits for 3 projects. Individually taught sections.

Sections
13-14 students

Third assessment of work produced in CMD 351/450. These courses introduce projects that are more substantial and rely on the application of skills learned in previous courses.

Spring Semester

CMD 352 Design Project Management
3 credits
NOTE
Both sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
20 students

CMD 450 Communications Design Problems
3 credits
NOTE
Class is composed of half Junior half Senior enrollment. Juniors earn 3 credits for 3 projects. Individually taught sections.

Sections
13-14 students

Fourth assessment of work produced in CMD 352/450. Students are now proficient in all 6 learning outcomes and demonstrate competencies through project executions.

Senior

Fall Semester

CMD 450 Communications Design Problems
6 credits
NOTE
Class is composed of half Junior half Senior enrollment. Seniors earn 6 credits for 6 projects. Individually taught sections.

Sections
13-14 students

Fifth assessment of work produced in CMD 352/450. Students are more demonstrating competencies that reflect professional industry standards. Work produced in this semester is prime portfolio material.

Spring Semester

CMD 450 Communications Design Problems
6 credits
NOTE
Class is composed of half Junior half Senior enrollment. Seniors earn 6 credits for 6 projects. Individually taught sections.

Sections
13-14 students

CMD 452 Portfolio and Practice
3 credits
NOTE
Both sections are team taught and run concurrently.

Sections
20 students

Final Senior portfolio assessment is based on the portfolio produced in CMD 452. All senior portfolios are exhibited in NYC for industry professionals to assess. Feedback is collected for faculty discussion.

Program Overview

What we say you will learn

Overview: Definitions of Program and Expectations

[Course Catalog Purpose]

This B.F.A. degree program introduces a field offering almost unlimited options and professional opportunities. Its unique structure enables students to pursue either a broad range of interests or to specialize in one or two particular areas of communications design. Corporate graphics and identity systems, advertising, packaging, environmental graphics, exhibition design, direct mail and direct response marketing, magazine or book design, television and film graphics, and electronic and interactive media are some of the most common areas of study. The program is designed to accommodate almost any relevant interest.

[VPA Website Purpose]

Communications designers translate ideas and information through a variety of media. Their particular talent lies not only in the traditional skills of the hand, but also in their ability to think strategically in design and marketing terms.

[Program Guide]

Develop your ability to solve real-world problems along with a variety of skills in graphic media. Learn to think strategically through branding and self-created projects. Your coursework will explore the creative process, communications theory, design history, and project management. You'll be working individually and in various group collaborations. Projects incorporate advertising, marketing, packaging, publication, web and social media, and best business practices. Students also have the opportunity to study abroad in our London and Florence programs. Your hard work culminates in our annual two-day senior portfolio show in New York City, open to design professionals in the tri-state area. Our graduates work at many leading firms and organizations in the country.

What we plan to teach

Program Curriculum: Essential Competencies Relevant Competencies; Experiences.

The Communications Design Program seeks to introduce a broad based academic and studio arts curriculum with the highest standards of professional practices from the business world through project based learning. Students are prepared for careers in the field of communications design, either as specialists or generalists and advised about their ethical responsibilities as shapers of public opinion and behavior, and as citizens of the world. We encourage entrepreneurial thinking and creative problem solving in search of the big idea.

The program allows exploration into all aspects reflective of the wide array of opportunities in our professional industry: branding and graphic identity, advertising, packaging, retail, environmental and exhibition design, direct response marketing, publication design, interactive media and web design and all other related interests.

This does not mean the program tries to be all things to all people. Quite the contrary. We are known as one of the most pragmatic design programs in the country. We emphasize, above all else, the conceptual and strategic aspects of marketing and communication. We believe design is primarily a process of defining and solving problems – not a form of artistic expression. Those who are preoccupied with style and personal expression will be frustrated by our approach to design.

The curriculum approaches design inclusively; we don't split it up into specialized categories. For instance, we don't have specific classes teaching, writing or typography as special subjects even though they are important aspects of design. They are essential parts of every project and every class. Design, by its very nature, is inclusive.

Design is mostly about thinking and ideas and solving problems for a wide array of audiences while also demanding a high level of skill and aesthetic judgment. Six credits are normally devoted to design classes each semester but the additional six to nine elective credits, as well as extracurricular activities, are an important part of our program. Your choices should reflect the university's diversity and not a narrowly focused vocational point of view. These choices will ultimately determine the quality of your design education at Syracuse and your success in the "real world".

CURRICULUM SUMMARY - **First Year** – All School of Design first year students take a common design class structure. **Second Year** - Students are introduced to the history, essential skills, principles, and opportunities for a career in communications design. Students are immediately involved with a broad array of design projects purposely exposing them to the many aspects of this diverse field through individual assignments and several collaborative and team projects. During the **Third Year** - students master essential skills while exploring and identifying their individual strengths and professional interests with continued involvement in team and collaborative projects. During the **Fourth year** - students refine projects, learn professional practices, prepare their portfolio, resume' and plan career objectives.

How we plan to teach

Courses: Delivers the Criteria, Experiences and Learning Comprehension

Communications Design Problems **(CMD 450)**, modeled on professional practice, is the heart of our program and occupies half of the Communications Design curriculum. Intermediate and advanced students meet together in small classes sharing critical discussion and support. This has established a perpetual nurturing and tutorial process that contributes immensely to the effectiveness of the program. Students also work with different faculty each semester. The process insures that each student develops their individuality rather than a programmatic solution. This is evident in the unique qualities of our graduates' portfolios and the continued global success they enjoy across the profession. Students develop projects according to their own interests and needs, not the preference of faculty. Writing project briefs, research, marketing, scheduling, and presentation skills - as well as the time management required to complete the actual design work and meet your deadlines – are equally important aspects of these classes. The wide variety of projects discussed each week reinforces our inclusive approach and underlines the unifying principles of all communications design activity. Our variable credit system is unique. You must complete eighteen credits of this class overall. If you find yourself in over your head you can adjust the workload during the first half of any semester, turning potential disaster into success. Essentially, each credit accounts for a major design project. Since everyone does not develop or work at the same pace, some students may take additional semesters to complete the program.

All other Communication Design classes employ team teaching. Students begin working with the entire faculty from the very first day of class, and this continues through to graduation. Our sophomore year is very intensive and comprehensive. Introduction to Communications Design I & II **(CMD 251/252)** emphasize strategic thinking and the function of design in real world situations, as well as fundamental theory, and skills. Design Methods and Design Skills **(CMD 281/ 282)** offers solid practical preparation for upper level work. Other classes explore the creative process and communications theory Problem Solving Strategies **(CMD 351)**; organizing and managing complex design projects for community engagement Design Management - **(CMD 352)**; and career planning Portfolio and Practice - **(CMD 452)**.

What we plan to measure

CMD Learning Outcomes: Essential Competencies and Proficiencies

All CMD students will develop the knowledge and skills to demonstrate the following outcomes:

1. The ability to solve communication problems with a defined process.
2. The ability to demonstrate skills of indication, accuracy, and use of materials.
3. The ability to create/direct visual form/image in response to communication problems.
4. The ability to visually organize compositions/layouts including, image and typographic hierarchy.
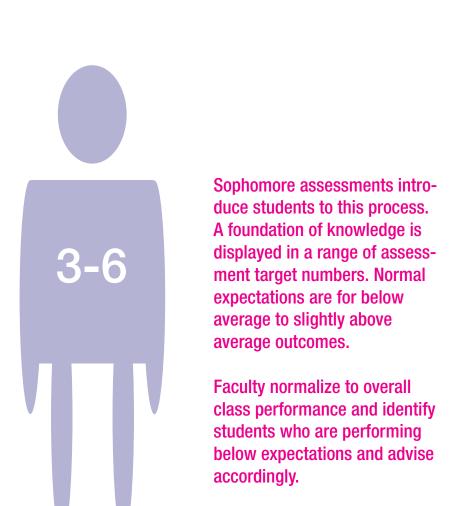5. The ability to describe and respond with clear and original design concept decisions, to the audiences and contexts which communication solutions must address.
6. An understanding of the professionalism of basic business practices.

How and when we plan to measure

Measurement of Learning Outcomes: Assessment Processes

All students enrolled and completing CMD courses will participate in the CMD Full Faculty assessments at the end of every semester. Failure to do so will result in the student not being able to continue to advance through the sequence of CMD courses. The assessment will cover 4 technical and 5 design skills that are rated from 1 – 10 (ten being the highest). Also there is a rating for student professionalism. The student will receive a copy of their assessment at the end of the event.

A review average of 5.0 or higher means that the student is holding their own or doing well within the major at this time. Having a review average below 5.0 means that there are some negative issues about the quality of their work and that students should use the assessment matrix to make improvements to their deficiencies in the following semester. The review is not a grade, it is the compilation of the full CMD faculty judging the quality of your work in all these Essential Competencies and Proficiencies. Your portfolio reflects your learning outcome.

3-6
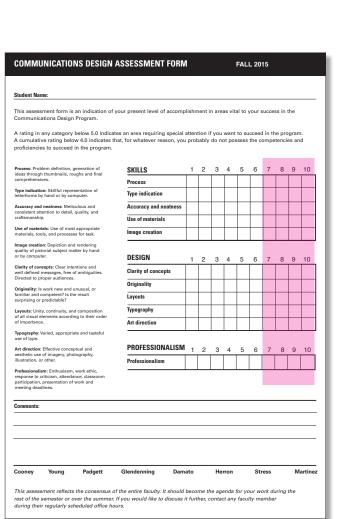
Sophomore assessments introduce students to this process. A foundation of knowledge is displayed in a range of assessment target numbers. Normal expectations are for below average to slightly above average outcomes.

Faculty normalize to overall class performance and identify students who are performing below expectations and advise accordingly.

5-8

Junior assessments contain a higher outcome expectation. Assessment target numbers are normally average to above average.

Faculty identify students who are performing below expectations and advise accordingly.

7-10

Senior assessments warrant the highest outcome expectation. Seniors are more proficient and possess the ability to demonstrate good to exceptional target numbers.

Faculty normalize to the overall senior class performance. This final cumulative view represents the effectiveness of the entire curriculum.
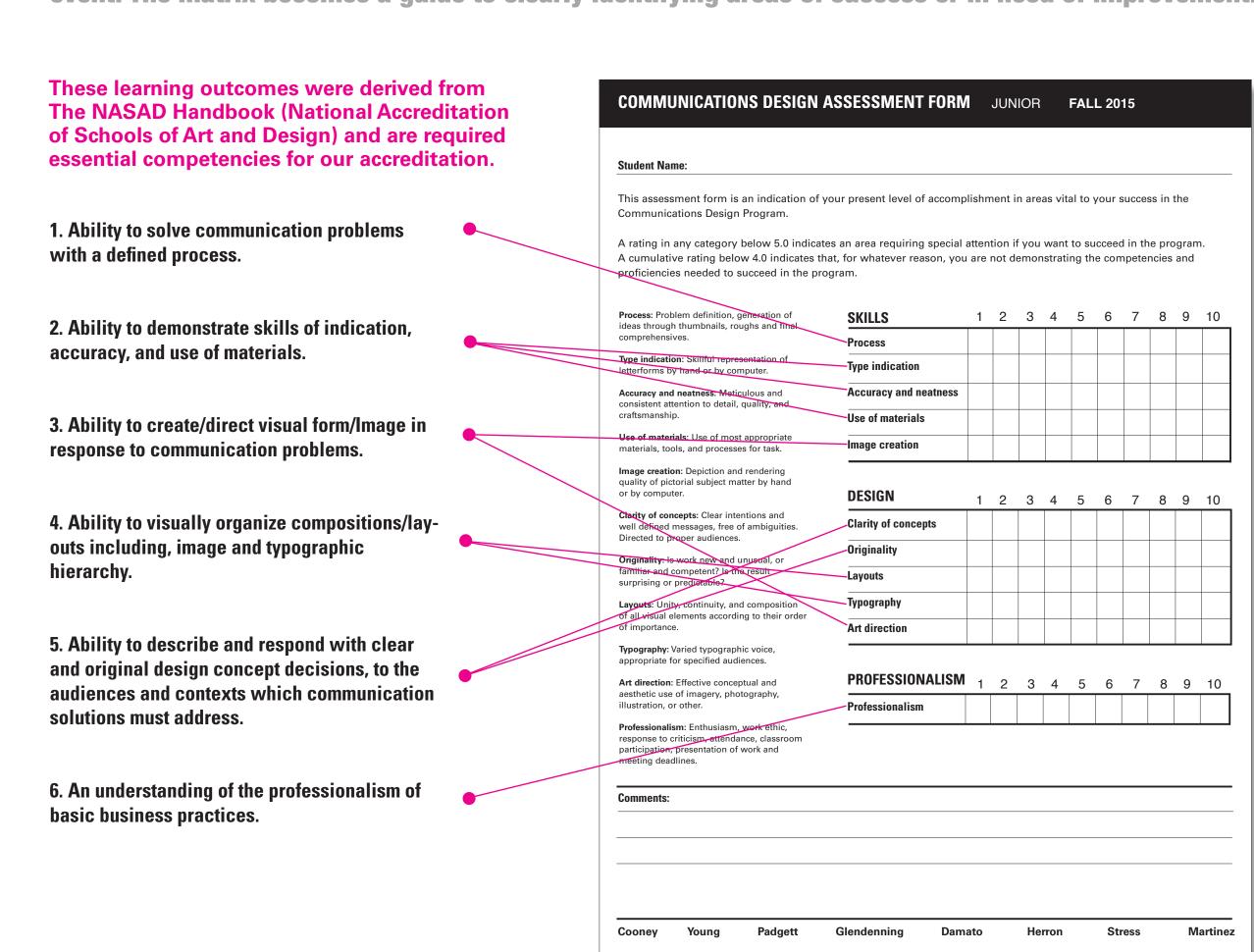

COMMUNICATIONS DESIGN ASSESSMENT FORM — FALL 2015

Information generated from a sophomore assessment provides faculty a base line for the student body and aids in targeted advising
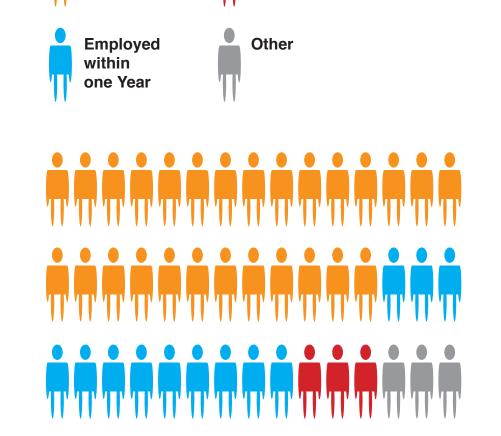
Above expectations
Targeted expectations
Below expectations
Other

The program of Communications Design (CMD) has conducted student portfolio assessments for more than a quarter of a century. The program's commitment to assessment produced more than 7,800 individual reviews in it's history. All current students enrolled and completing courses participate in the CMD Full Faculty Assessments at the end of every semester sophomore through senior years. Failure to do so results in the student not being able to continue to advance through the sequence of CMD courses. The assessment covers technical and design skills that are considered overall program standard learning outcomes. Data is collected and analyzed within this assessment ranking system and matrix. Each student receives a copy of this assessment matrix at the end of each assessment event. The matrix becomes a guide to clearly identifying areas of success or in need of improvement.

These learning outcomes were derived from The NASAD Handbook (National Accreditation of Schools of Art and Design) and are required essential competencies for our accreditation.

1. Ability to solve communication problems with a defined process.

2. Ability to demonstrate skills of indication, accuracy, and use of materials.

3. Ability to create/direct visual form/Image in response to communication problems.

4. Ability to visually organize compositions/layouts including, image and typographic hierarchy.

5. Ability to describe and respond with clear and original design concept decisions, to the audiences and contexts which communication solutions must address.

6. An understanding of the professionalism of basic business practices.

COMMUNICATIONS DESIGN ASSESSMENT FORM — JUNIOR FALL 2015

Student Name:

This assessment form is an indication of your present level of accomplishment in areas vital to your success in the Communications Design Program.

A rating in any category below 5.0 indicates an area requiring special attention if you want to succeed in the program. A cumulative rating below 4.0 indicates that, for whatever reason, you are not demonstrating the competencies and proficiencies needed to succeed in the program.

SKILLS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Process										
Type indication										
Accuracy and neatness										
Use of materials										
Image creation										

DESIGN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Clarity of concepts										
Originality										
Layouts										
Typography										
Art direction										

PROFESSIONALISM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Professionalism										

Comments:

Cooney   Young   Padgett   Glendenning   Damato   Herron   Stress   Martinez

This assessment reflects the consensus of the entire faculty. It should become the agenda for your work during the rest of the semester or over the summer. If you would like to discuss it further, contact any faculty member during their regularly scheduled office hours.

Information generated from Alumni reflects the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning process

Employed within six Months
Graduate School
Employed within one Year
Other

COMMUNICATIONS DESIGN ALUMNI EMPLOYMENT RECORD

This list represents an on-going collection of professional organizations who hire our students. It should be noted, that many Alumni working professionally seek to hire from the program when in the position to do so. This list is an internal record collected by faculty over time and is not entirely complete. This data is ever-changing and difficult to often track. We work to keep this list updated each year and share it with our students to encourage networking and employment research.

Graduating seniors will participate in our annual NYC Portfolio show in May, days prior to graduation. This event provides graduating seniors an opportunity to gather feedback from hundreds of industry professionals. This professional assessment is direct reflective of teaching and learning effectiveness. Many students obtain job interviews and professional contacts that result in placement and/or networking assets. Patrons at the event are questioned as to the preparedness of the senior class portfolios. The results are shared with faculty and analyzed for areas of improvement.

The following list represents some of the firms that have employed our graduates: