



Art | 2015-2016 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year. This can be in any form you feel is appropriate, such as a table, a short narrative of results, statistical analysis, highlighting findings that were of particular interest, etc.

Art chose to assess evidence of critical thinking by creating an additional measurement instrument applied specifically to the statements that the students wrote for their Senior Shows. The Senior Show is an optional professional development exercise and provides us the best cross-section of students working in all studios, and these are generally the top students in the program. The instrument was intended for use only with the statement, not the artwork, submitted for the show, and assessed five aspects of the statement. Professor Emmons developed the instrument for approval in Fall semester before her retirement in January.

On a 1-5 scale each faculty member assessed each student's statement. Consequently, each student was scored with a possible high score of 25. Of those assessed, 5 got perfect scores. The lowest score was a 12. Unfortunately, one of the students was scored by two faculty with a perfect 25 and one faculty with the low score of 12.

We discovered that 1) our instrument was flawed and 2) the faculty are not in agreement on the function or form of the statements submitted for the senior shows. These are addressed below.

- 1) Instrument Flaws: The 1-5 formatted form bears too much resemblance to the regular "all purpose" form used to assess the senior shows as a whole, and is not specific enough to determine real information about critical thinking as evidenced by the statements. This could be a result of Prof. Emmons inexperience with assessment instruments, faculty apathy at the time of approval, or the fact that we didn't notice the similarity because we did not compare the two instruments side by side. The form also was sent electronically from one faculty during the same week as the regular assessment that everyone was expecting was sent from another faculty: this led some to believe they were duplicates. There was confusion on the part of at least one faculty member about when her forms were due. We can assess this as evidence of internal issues in Art affecting the success of the student assessment, however, in looking only at the five sets that did get turned in (with the sixth faculty member not submitting before the final meeting) we felt we had enough evidence to determine that our actual instrument was also a problem, and it was not simply bad attitudes or lost email that resulted in the kind of situation where a student could earn both multiple perfect scores as well as the single lowest score of the group.

2) While an artist's statement can take many acceptable forms (as evidenced by any past faculty show where one can see the vast differences between the faculty's own statements about their artwork) there did not seem to be an overriding sense of what "success" looks like in a student artist's statement. The areas in which the faculty seemed to struggle were:

- Disagreement over the function of the statement: is it to "tell the viewer what you did and why you did it"? Or is it to show evidence that the artist has read and understands criticism in the discipline? Or is it to show the viewer the artist has anticipated informed critique? All students did score well on basic writing skills, (which it bears pointing out, is significant in the Art program, where commonly students express themselves with vastly more comfort in the visual rather than verbal realm).
- Disagreements in the areas of content: Some examples of content which sparked dissension amongst the faculty were: personal biography (how much a student should reference their own lived experience), listing influences (if I'm not a painter, do the names of painters listed as influences mean anything to me as the viewer?), "art speak" (does a student really exhibit understanding when they use specialized vocabulary specific to the field?) and inclusion of quotations from sources like poets or philosophers.
- Difficulty separating statement from artwork: There seemed to be an issue with looking at the art, rather than the statement alone, for this assessment; because the instrument was for the statements alone, and the artwork is assessed in the more familiar document, the similarity in the instruments again seems to be a problem, or, the manner in which the individual professors chose to handle the procedure of filling out the forms could have come into play. Some did both assessments together in the gallery, others used the electronic statements provided to do the critical thinking assessment in their offices without the art in front of them, keeping the two procedures separate.

2. How will you use what you've learned from the data that was collected?

We have decided to reassess our assessment instrument: streamline and put better controls on the way the statements are assessed i.e. Making sure every faculty does the assessment in the same way, with clear deadlines, using an instrument that looks significantly different than the other tool we're used to using. We also decided it would be a good idea to collect examples of a variety of kinds of successful statements to make available to the Senior Show students on the website (creating a modified embedded assessment if you will) because this will have the effect of helping the students but also guiding faculty into a healthier consensus about the range of issues professional artists can and will acceptably address in their statements.