

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTFOLIO REVIEW FOR ADMISSION INTO THE GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM:

Portfolio Review

Portfolios are only reviewed once a year in March or April, to be accepted into the Graphic Design Program.

Qualifications

In order to apply to the Graphic Design Program you should have completed or are in the process of completing the first year studio program. This includes Art #2200, 2250, 2300, 2350, 2400.

Transfer Students

If you have had previous art courses at another university you may be able transfer directly into the Graphic Design Program, if you have previously been accepted into the University. Upon review of your portfolio you will be recommended to enter into Graphic Design or recommended to apply at the incoming freshman level and retake courses. Please include a copy of your transcripts with your portfolio submission.

Reviewers

Full time Graphic Design faculty, Ray Morales and Carol Sogard will review portfolios.

Work to Submit into the Portfolio

Submit no more than 12 portfolio pieces. If you plan to include 3-d samples, these pieces must be photographed and submitted in photographic print format. Portfolio pieces should include a diverse sampling of drawing and basic design exercises. If possible, try to include examples of perspective, line drawings, figure drawings and compositions that address spatial issues. In addition, there should be evidence of a basic knowledge of the following computer graphics programs: Adobe Illustrator, Adobe In-Design and Adobe Photoshop. Include no more than one or two samples that demonstrate this knowledge.

Some students incorrectly assume that they should submit primarily graphic design examples for review. However, the majority of the work submitted should consist of traditional mediums of fine art. The faculty looks for broad ranges of talent and assumes that talent can be transposed to the discipline of graphic design.

What NOT to Submit into the Portfolio

We are looking for students with strong technical ability, but more importantly we are looking for students who demonstrate high levels of creativity and understanding of the basic principles and elements of art.

Even if you think a piece of artwork is drawn or painted well, it would be better not to submit work which include content themes of cute animals, adorable babies and children, inspirational quotes superimposed over corresponding images, super hero characters, sentimental scenes—wedding portraiture, or drawings copied from photos of famous celebrities (religious leaders included). It would be better to submit work addressing more mature content themes and subject matter.

In addition, while the tool of graphic design is the computer, it is not the focus of our program. Please shy away from submitting work that includes lots of computer gimmickry and cliché. Success in the program depends on the student's ability to think and solve visual problems, not demonstrations of computer "gymnastics." Knowing software really well does not necessarily increase chances of being accepted. Furthermore, if you have professional design work, show only one or two examples to demonstrate computer knowledge. Professional experience also does not necessarily enhance chances of acceptance.

Criteria of Acceptance into the Graphic Design Program

Between 70 and 80 students apply each year for approximately 50 spots. Portfolios are judged on whether the student has put the appropriate work in their portfolio.

Portfolios are also judged on the following characteristics. Students should be confident in their use of drawing instruments. This will be evident in a line quality that demonstrates competent drawing agility. There should be an understanding of perspective drawing, as well as compositional abilities (arranging different elements in space). Students should exhibit an understanding of the basic principles and elements of design. Students should also demonstrate an understanding of proportion and scale in regards to anatomy and still life drawing. Criteria also includes the level of thought put into the portfolio selection and presentation of the work.

If Accepted into Graphic Design

If you are accepted into the Graphic Design Program there will be a list of classes placed in your portfolio, along with an acceptance letter. These classes need to be taken sequentially. It takes 6 semesters to finish the required work for Graphic Design. Classes are offered in the fall or spring semester only once a school year. If you do not register for the class during the semester that it is offered, you will not be able to take it until the following school year. No design classes are offered during the summer.

If Not Accepted into Graphic Design

If you are not accepted you may only apply once more, the following year at the same time. Keep in mind that the reviewers are limited to selecting only 1/2 of the portfolios submitted, due to limited faculty and lack of available space. As a result, reviewers have to be very selective. Non-acceptance may not necessarily reflect on lack of talent, rather, the limited number of spots available to the strongest portfolios submitted. Non-accepted students should obtain feedback from their foundation and drawing instructors in regards to how their portfolio can be improved for re-submission. These instructors can best evaluate the portfolio for weaknesses such as drawing skills, drawing agility, compositional awareness or grades. In some cases the portfolio contains inappropriate submissions (not enough first year studio work submitted, or too much professional work submitted). In this case, the students need to review the criteria listed on the front of this sheet and resubmit the following year.

Once Accepted: First Year of Program and Sophomore Portfolio Review

“Sophomore” is defined as a student who has finished all first year studio courses or transfer students that have been accepted and enrolled in the Graphic Design Program.

Once accepted into Graphic Design you will take a sequence of Design classes the first year (sophomore year). This year can be very rigorous. Keep this in mind when deciding to register for other classes, and making outside job commitments.

At the end of the first year, in the beginning of May, you will have an interview with the Full-time Graphic Design faculty. This interview will be approximately 15-20 minutes. You will sign up for an open time slot posted on the door of office #263 approximately two weeks prior to the review date. It is important that you arrive 15 minutes prior to appointment time. You should bring a portfolio of the work that you completed during this first year in the Graphic Design Program. Portfolio criteria is listed under “Presenting your work for the Sophomore portfolio review”.

Part-time Graphic Design Faculty are not usually present during this review, but are invited to provide written commentary about the students in their classes. Commentary could include work ethic, progress and commitment. Full-time Faculty will review the work, assess grades and evaluate your progress. Concerns will be mentioned and discussed. One of three recommendations will be made. These recommendations will be verbalized, as well as, mailed to the student within 2 weeks of review.

Recommendations include one of the following:

1. Continue into Junior Level Design Classes
2. Continue into Junior Level Design Classes on a probationary status. Progress and work ethic will be assessed during the first semester of the junior year. Faculty will verbalize any continuing concerns.
3. Retake the first year of the Graphic Design Program. This includes taking Introduction to Visual Communications 1 & 2. Students can then decide whether to change majors, or retake the year. We understand that you will be very disappointed, we are as well, however we encourage you to retake these classes to get a better understanding of the design concepts. For some students it takes a little longer to understand the intricacies of Graphic Design. If you receive this recommendation you are welcome to discuss the results with one of the three full-time Graphic Design faculty. We will discuss what the committee felt your weaknesses and strengths were and what your options are.

Presenting Work for the Sophomore Portfolio Review

Select only the best work from your classes for the review. You are encouraged to redo any work that could use improvement. Select not more than 12 pieces. The majority of these pieces should be assignments from the sophomore design classes. Additional pieces could include professional design work or special areas of interest, such as illustrations or life drawings.

Presentation is important. Be sure to have all work mounted on matte board. Appearance is also important. Dress like you would if you were applying for a job in a professional Graphic Design Studio.

Criteria in Evaluating the Portfolio at the Sophomore Review

A. Creativity—a student’s ability to think conceptually and critically about graphic design is paramount. Graphic designers address communication problems. They interpret ideas and represent them with images and words. Students are evaluated on those skills necessary for thinking and creating meaning with images, type and symbols. The ability to put a persuasive or informational perspective on an idea is also important. It is not about surface decoration and style—it is about concept, context and meaning.

Within the frame of creativity are three important components that are also evaluated.

- B. Strong typography
- C. Composition/layout design
- D. Sensitivity to materials (appropriateness)
- E. Craftsmanship

All disciplines in the visual arts consider aspects of craft. This can range from visual skill (how you put it all together) to your presentation skills.

Finally, you are evaluated on your work ethic, progress and commitment. Talent is only a small (but important) element of success—hard work and drive is extremely important—you must love graphic design and be willing to sacrifice for it in order to succeed. This is very important to the faculty—if you seem unwilling to work hard we would rather give the space to someone who has a good attitude and whom we believe will succeed.