

History OF THE DMACC COMMERCIAL ART /GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM

The original program title was Commercial and Advertising Art. The program started in the Fall of 1970 with 17 students. I was hired as the Program Chair. I was the only female Program Chair in the I & T Department for many years. Prior to this position at DMACC, I had been employed in the Commercial Art field for 13 years. My positions had been as Production Art Director for a full service company Arlo Roberts Direct Mail Advertising, as Art Director/Designer for the Marketing department of Northwestern Bell Telephone company and as a graphic designer for The Des Moines Register & Tribune. There was an early advisory committee who worked with me to determine the objectives and direction for the program. The first advisory committee Chair was Chris Christiansen who was a free-lance artist. The first program counselor was Joyce Brown. Joyce was with us for 27 years. The Career Education Director was Robert Eicher and his assistant was Carroll Bennett. The superintendent of the college was Paul Lowery. His assistant was Phil Langerman. The year I was hired, DMACC also added one-third new staff positions. Our first all staff meeting was held in the temporary buildings (now permanent) on the lower end of the campus.

LOCATIONS:

The program was originally housed in a converted grocery store on 54th and Vine Street in West Des Moines, Iowa. We moved in October of 1970 to the Medical Building on the Ankeny campus where the program shared space with the existing medical programs until the Fall of 1971. In 1971 the program moved to the Media Center building on the Ankeny campus where we shared space with the Media department staff. We were there until the summer of 1983 when we moved to one of the remodeled buildings on the “temporary” lower Ankeny campus. The building was designed specifically for the Commercial Art program and was directly next to the Printing program building where the communication between these two closely related programs improved immediately. In the Fall of 1990 the program moved to the Advanced Technology Center – 3W where we shared space with other computer based Industrial Technology programs. In 2009 the program moved to their present location on the lower campus in Building 15.

CURRICULUM:

The program has gone through many changes in curriculum. The original courses were based on the content of the Hawkeye Institute of Technology Commercial Art program that originated in 1967 in Waterloo, Iowa. The pre-program advisory committee had determined the list of courses although there were only course descriptions and no outlines at that time.

One of the first things to happen was a change of the courses and development of the outlines to fit the objectives of the Central Iowa industry. Meetings were held with the faculty at Hawkeye Institute of Technology and the DMACC Commercial Art advisory committee to determine the best direction to take in the development of the courses and content.

The first years of the program were divided into 4 quarters and students attended classes in blocks of time that varied from two-four hours a day. Some classes only met once a week. Students usually attended classes for 30 hours a week and earned about 16 credits per quarter. The early students received a diploma upon completion of the 7 quarter training program.

The program was changed to a degree program along with all of the college when we converted to the semester system in 1983. The students attended classes based on the credit hour system and received an Associate in Applied Art degree. 45 courses were combined to create 25 new courses under the semester system. Many courses were lost in the conversion such as Commercial Art Tools and Techniques, Creative Imagination, Paper Theory, Print-making, Color Theory, and Life Drawing. These courses became the brief content of other new courses and lost their original focus in the conversion. The Internship courses were added and became an important part of the new semester offerings for the program.

In 1992 the Associate in Applied Art degree was dropped by the college due to only 2 programs offering that degree. The students now receive an Associate in Applied Science degree.

MILESTONES:

1970 - Established the first student club which was named "Raw Bananas Studio". Students used green bananas as their logo and raised funds to take a field trip to Kansas City in May of the following year.

1971 - Jack Mastrofski joined the program staff as an instructor. Jack's expertise was in illustration, print making, photography and airbrush. They were the perfect combination to supplement the instruction.

1972 - Spring:

The first portfolio night was held in the Media Center Bldg. in the central atrium.

Students personally constructed their own displays. Family members attended a special reception on Sunday afternoon. The displays were exhibited for one week and the advisory committee and prospective employers were invited to attend and view the displays. We had two of the students stay with the displays at all times in order to protect the student work and to answer any questions.

1972 - Fall: A overloaded beginning class of 36 with only 24 available seats, led to the beginning of the 2 section program. We changed the name of the student club from "Raw Bananas Studio" to "The Artery" which is the name the club held until 2009 when the club changed its' name to DGDG (DMACC Graphic Design Group).

1973 - Harry Watts of Wesley Day Advertising joined the advisory committee and became the chairman, a position that he held until December of 2001 when I retired. With the help of the Advisory Committee, the pre-program evaluation was designed for all incoming Commercial Art candidates. The program, entitled C.A.R.E. (Commercial Art Realities Experience), was organized to inform candidates about the career and evaluate their potential for success in the training program. The early C.A.R.E. days were held for groups of 15 students every Saturday in a full day workshop. The candidates would complete a number of projects designed to evaluate their career potential. Advisory committee members and program staff chaired the workshops. Each candidate was interviewed. They would show their portfolio samples and discuss the career field. After each Saturday, the packets would be scored and candidates would be sent a personal evaluation and recommendation for career potential. Although unable to prevent candidates from entering the program, this process helped to cut down on the rate of drop-outs as students came into the program with a good understanding of their potential for success and the demands of the career field.

1974 - Curriculum changes created the separation of Drawing and Design, established Typography, and Airbrush Techniques as courses. The Advertising Video Design, Design Choice, and Illustration II courses were dropped from the curriculum. The first major field trip was taken by the students and faculty to New Orleans, LA. The trip followed many months of fund-raising efforts by the students. Many benefits resulted from this trip and led to the following event.

1975 - An entire train car on Amtrak was rented and the Commercial Art students went to San Francisco for a nine day trip in May. Fund raising involved designing and printing of tee shirts for other student clubs on campus and for non-profit organizations such as the Iowa Campfire Girls. 43 students and two faculty members and their spouses boarded the train in Osceola to take the long but fascinating trip. Students and faculty were housed in a student hostel near Union Square in downtown San Francisco. Field trips were to San Francisco Academy of Art, Golden Gate Park, Muir Woods, Alcatraz, Coit Tower, Fisherman's Wharf, Giradelli Square and many art galleries and museums in the vicinity. Also in 1975 - Lee & Dee Johnson and Richard Seliger of Machine Shop drove a DMACC van with five students and all of their tools of trade to Washington D.C. for the national V.I.C.A. (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America) contest. We brought back 3 medals including a Silver (2nd Place) in Commercial Art, a Silver in Culinary Arts, and a Silver in Machine Shop.

1976 - We established the evening certificate courses in Production Art and Airbrush Art. These early course offerings were called extended day programs and students would attend classes four evenings a week from 6:00-10:00p for 12 weeks in order to receive training in a specialty area. Production Art instructors were Lant Elrod (Class of '72) and Tim Reilly of creative services studios in Des Moines. Airbrush Art was offered in the spring quarter and met for 12 weeks. The courses were taught by Jane Beyer, (Class of '74), who had her own free-lance airbrush illustration and photo retouching business.

1979 - With assistance of the advisory board, we received administrative approval to include live nude models in the Life Drawing classes. Originally the classes were taught at the Des Moines Art Center and later on moved to the Ankeny campus in the commercial art labs. Nude models are never used in the present Illustration classes.

1980 - In February the first official C.A.R.E. day was held which changed the previously advice only sessions to a session where all applicants were invited to attend in a large group to give them awareness of the career and to score their portfolios for admission into the program. The portfolio score became an official admission requirement. Advisory committee, professionals, faculty, and students were on hand to assist the 69 candidates who attended that first all day session. At that time we were admitting 40 students to the beginning class.

1981 - In April the advisory committee and program graduates met with the graduating class to discuss the career field, portfolios, job prospects, and to give general advice about what to expect after they graduated. This session became what is known today as "Meet The Grads." The students expressed that this session should have been held in the fall of their last year of training and so it was established that we would have this important meeting every year in the fall.

1983 - The program moved from the Media Center Building into building 16 on the lower end of the campus. The lab was designed by a student, Daniel Allen, and an advisory committee member, Linda Alberty. It was specially designed to meet the needs of the commercial art program. The building was complete with two art labs that had 20 student work stations on a 6"- 3 level riser layout which allowed all students the visibility of the instructor work station that was on the main level. In addition to this, there was a lecture classroom, a darkroom, student library and offices for two full time and part time instructors.

1983 - The "Flat Wheels" group was established as a part of the quality circles initiative to improve communication between programs. The focus of the group was to recommend changes to improve trust in the Technology & Industry department. The commercial art program, architectural drafting, mechanical drafting, diesel mechanics, and related course instructors made a presentation to Joe Borgen, president of the college, in order to recommend improvements. All recommendations were adopted. The Dean, Dr. Carl Rolfe, left DMACC to take the position as president of Northern Iowa Community College.

1984 – October: Harry Watts, Commercial Art advisory committee chair, represented the excellence of the Advisory committee's role at the First National Conference on Private Sector Involvement in Vocational Education in Washington, D.C. The Commercial Art advisory committee received an award as the Outstanding Advisory Committee in the State of Iowa.

1985 - Monte Ballard (Class of '74) joined the commercial art program as a full time computer graphics instructor. His objective was to plan and coordinate the training on computers and to design the curriculum for the courses that would be required. Along with Monte's planning we introduced the first computer training in the Typography 2 course. We had four P.C. computers which were housed in the Printing program building. Seven sections of 10-12 students were training on a program called Max Plus. Only four of the 12 students would actually be able to work on the computer during any one class period.

I was assigned to coordinate the Graphic Communications programs that included supervision of the Commercial Art and Printing programs. Monte Ballard acted as a liaison between the two programs and was appointed Program Chair of the Printing Program.

Penny Sullivan (Class of '82) joined the program as a full time instructor. Penny was originally hired to teach courses for both Commercial Art and Printing students as she was a replacement for Dick Garten in printing and an addition to our growing program staff.

1985- The Commercial Art and Printing programs combined to create the Graphic Communications core. Students were combined in four courses for the first semester of their training. Those courses were:

- GRPH 401 Graphic Arts Orientation
- GRPH 403 Communication Design 1
- GRPH 405 Typography 1
- GRPH 407 Production Art 1
- GRPH 409 Printing Processes

The printing and commercial art instructors team taught the Graphic Arts Orientation courses. The cored classes were taught by instructors who were specialists in typography and production art for either commercial art or printing.

The students were initially combined in all sections but soon separated by training program. Even though the course titles and outlines were alike, what was being actually taught was completely different.

The additional courses that were unique to each training program were Illustration 1 and Communication Design 1 for the Commercial Art students and Keyboarding and Communication Skills were required for the first semester Printing students.

In the second semester the students branched out into their own areas of training with only coring in the Production Art II and Typography II as cored classes. For the remainder of the program training, no coring was possible.

With the move of both programs to the Advanced Technology Center building, the cored classes and the introduction of training on P.C. computers the program seemed to meet the widest range of needs for incoming students. The Adobe Pagemaker program was installed on the P.C.s and thus became the program of choice for layout and design in the introductory desktop publishing course.

1988 - Jack Mastrofski retired after 17 years of service. An all class picnic was organized and held at the acreage of Advisory Committee member Mark Baty. Students attended from as far away as Seattle, Washington. All class years were represented. Doug Nicolet was hired to replace Jack and to teach the Illustration courses.

1989 - Curt Stahr was hired as a full-time photography instructor. Two courses in photography were required of all commercial art students. Curt also taught the elective courses for Arts & Sciences students and one required photography course for printing students. Photography eventually became a Humanities elective.

The coring of Commercial Art and Printing ended. It had been a great idea but it just did not work. The printing students did not want to draw or design. The commercial art students did not want to run printing presses. The decision was made to move the Printing Program to the lower campus and to move the CADD classes to the space previously occupied by Printing. The building was remodeled and an addition of the 3E wing was built to accommodate the Tool and Die Program and Mechanical Drafting. We shared the PC lab during that time period.

1990 - Through the efforts of Tom Nelson and a secure grant from the State of Iowa we were able to open the first 20 station Macintosh computer lab in the Advanced Technology Center - building 3W. Remodeling of the labs and offices made room for two labs of 21 work stations. It necessitated decreasing the size of the lab in 353 from 24 to a total of 21 work stations. This impacted the beginning class sizes as we had, to date, been accepting 2 sections of 24. Ultimately, this led to the increase in program size as a third section was offered in all first semester courses to accommodate the extra students. We were then admitting 60 students to the first year program.

1991 - In order to accommodate all students in the introductory computer training class, the title of the course was changed to Desktop Publishing. Doug Nicolet was named to the position of Macintosh Lab Manager. This changed Doug's focus from teaching Illustration and computer classes to teaching all computer classes.

1992 - Monte Ballard resigned to take a full time missionary position with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Ann Francis joined the commercial art staff to finish out his contract.

1993 - Ann Francis Shuman (Class of '90) was hired to teach Production Art and computer graphics.

1996 - A major curriculum review changed the program to requiring more computer graphics courses, less illustration courses, and opened up the choices of many courses in the liberal arts area.

1997 - The first Comprehensive Program Evaluation was completed.

1999 - Doug Nicolet left to pursue mission work for his church. We were looking to hire someone to take over the Mac Lab manager's position and to teach in the computer software classes that were called Desktop Publishing, Computer Graphics 1, Computer Graphics II, and Electronic Photo Editing.

1999 - Steve Bendy, who had been Software Educator for Meredith Publishing, joined our staff as the full time Computer Graphics instructor. He had a Fine Arts background so he also wanted to teach the Illustration classes. He also introduced Web Design in the Electronic Photo Editing and Computer Graphics II courses. Most of the students took the Web Design class as one of their option classes because of its relevance to the new career demands for Web Designers.

2000 - The Telecommunications Program moved to the new West Lakes campus and that vacated their area to be utilized for our long needed expansion of lab space. These rooms eventually were remodeled to be spaces for the Journalism student run Campus Chronicle newspaper, the Illustration Lab, and a lecture room for general Commercial Art students.

2001 - I took early retirement and left as Program Chair. I had worked with Penny Sullivan for over one year to train her to take over this position. It was always my intent to continue to teach part time in the program as I did for another 7 years.

2002 – In January Penny Sullivan was appointed to the position of Commercial Art Program Chair.

2002 – Penny completed the second Program Evaluation

2002 – Melissa Farick was hired to teach full time in the program. She had been teaching for us as an adjunct instructor so she knew the curriculum and the department very well.

2008 – Penny Sullivan retired and (I) Dee Johnson left to take an active role in the DMACC Pioneers group.

2010 – The program, under the direction of Monte Ballard, continues to produce award winning and career ready students. The curriculum has changed to reflect the demands of industry and will be continually reviewed by the staff and advisory committee. They have gone through and demanded upgrades to our software and hardware and we are grateful to the administration of the college for their support. It is a constant effort to keep all of the staff current in the use of the new software. The Commercial Art Realities Experience (C.A.R.E.) Day was eliminated as a requirement for incoming students. Students are accepted on a first-come, first served basis. In the Fall of 2010 Jeff Gullion joined the department heading up the Web Development Program. At the end of their first semester, students now prepare a portfolio for staff evaluation. The new curriculum choices are Graphic Design, Graphic Technologies, Web Development or Web Design.

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Since 1970 when the program was established and again in 1984 - when our advisory committee was named as the most Outstanding Advisory Committee in the State of Iowa at the first National Leadership Conference on Private Sector Involvement in Vocational Education in Washington, D.C. we have held our advisory committee in high esteem and continue to involve them in the activities of the program. The role of our advisory committee in the past 38 years is one of involvement with students pre-enrollment to graduation. They plan and participate in C.A.R.E. Days, Career Panel in the Orientation Class, "Meet The Grads", Mock Interviews, Job Shadowing, Job Seeking Skills information sessions, Internship employment for third semester students, Second year students portfolio review day, State V.I.C.A. (Skills USA) contest, and graduating students Portfolio Day. They are also active in working with staff in the development of curriculum, equipment and facilities upgrades, and maintaining the quality of the training program.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Art Directors Association of Iowa (A.D.A.I.), Skills USA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (V.I.C.A.), Advertising Professionals of Iowa, Mac Users Group, Association of Illustrators & Graphic Artists (A.I.G.A.), Print Communications group, Internet Users Group, and Craftsman's Club are the most popular groups available to students in our program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF STUDENTS:

Students have won many awards in the student division of A.D.A. I. (Art Directors Association of Iowa) over the years. Each year students have the opportunity to win a \$700.00 student award for the most outstanding student portfolio in their class. Students are selected by the Commercial Art advisory committee in the annual second year portfolio review which is held in December of every year at the end of their next to last semester of training in the program. All students in the Portfolio Preparation course submit portfolios and receive personal evaluations and interviews. Students may also submit their best designs for judging in the Spring of their graduation year. Students have won many awards and been selected as best in this contest many years. The idea for creation of the student division originated here at DMACC in 1972.

Students have won 24 National medals in the V.I.C.A.(Skills USA) Advertising Design contest since 1975. This competition is the most valid measurement of our program against other training programs in the United States. The three day competition attracts contestants from all 50 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Students are given problems to solve using their creativity and talent. Working under time constraints as well as under strict observation, students complete actual live assignments and are judged according to their ability to meet specifications. Students have also won national medals in the leadership contests. Traditionally, the first year program students compete in the leadership contests and the second year students compete in the Advertising Design contest. All students compete in the Local contests. From the local contest, students will compete at the State level. In the state contest, students have been winning most of the leadership and Advertising Design medals for the past 38 years. We are extremely proud of our student success in this highly recognized student leadership and skills competition.

Students also enter other art contests throughout the year. Many awards have been won for design excellence in logos, illustrations, and publications such as the many awards granted for the DMACC publication, Expressions, which is a student talent publication featuring the best in writing, photography, and illustration. The art direction and production is done by our students. We also get involved in the graphic designs for the International Year materials, the President's annual Christmas card, and print design for promotion of The Culinary Institute and other programs as requested. .

CURRICULUM CHANGES

The curriculum is continually being changed to meet the needs of the job market. The revised program requires students to take more computer graphics courses as is reflected by the needs of industry. The Program Name was changed from Commercial Art to Graphic Design so that it would be easier for students to identify in this changing market. The course content is being upgraded every year. We are proposing the addition of a Web Design requirement in the next curriculum change. We rely heavily on the advice of our clients and the commercial art advisory committee for direction in the changing of the program offerings and for course content.

ARTICULATION:

Courses presently approved for articulation are Illustration I, Desktop Publishing, and Principles of Photography. We are currently working with the School To Work program and actively involved with high school training programs with similar course content to continue to encourage these students to enroll in our training program and receive advanced placement based on their portfolio and demonstrated competencies. Although we have no official articulation agreements with any colleges and universities our students have portfolios which will allow them to be evaluated and receive advanced placement at any college where they might choose to transfer. Our students have found success at Grandview college and Drake University in Des Moines, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Kansas City Art Institute, Iowa State University College of Design, Chicago Institute of Art and Philadelphia College of Art and Design just to name a few. Typically students transferring to a 4 year university will receive about 3 semesters of credit for their portfolios and students transferring to art schools will receive a full 2 years of credit.

PLACEMENT:

Students in this program are able to seek employment anywhere in America. It is a misunderstanding that all students will graduate with the AAS degree. Some of our finest students left the program and were hired by large agencies and studios because of their portfolios and interview skills. The Placement Department records only those students who graduate so the figures are inaccurate as to the employment success. The Program Chair keeps an accurate record of the student success in the career field. There is an ongoing effort to communicate with our Placement office about our students who leave the program.

IN SUMMARY:

The Graphic Design Program has a long tradition of excellence. The pride is shared by the alumni, students, Advisory Board, and the instructors. We have spend countless hours making certain that our curriculum, software, and hardware are State of The Art. To summarize the accomplishments, changes, and impact on the community of a small Commercial and Advertising Art Program that started in a grocery store in West Des Moines, Iowa has been a definite labor of love. The success of our program is shared globally as our students go out into the design world using skills learned here at Des Moines Area Community College.

Sincerely,



Reviewed and edited by Monte Ballard, Chair, Visual Communications. August 2011

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