

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

Multimedia Program Review June 2005

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

1. plan, research, design, write, and create interactive multimedia presentations and projects using a variety of methods and industry standard tools
2. discuss the most appropriate delivery medium for particular projects
3. prepare and present a multimedia portfolio containing hard copy and electronic media, that demonstrates multimedia and problem solving skills and includes a personal marketing plan
4. develop a focused skill set in a specialty area of multimedia, i.e., instructional design, writing, project management, graphic production, video production, audio production, 3D environments and animation, programming
5. discuss employment availability and trends in the multimedia industry
6. create and edit media elements (e.g., graphics, video, audio, animations) using industry standard software, optimized for quality, file size, and file format for delivery over appropriate media (e.g., the World Wide Web, disk delivery, CD-ROM, & DVD)
7. work effectively in group and team based multimedia project environments
8. evaluate interactive multimedia elements & projects, identifying areas for improvement; incorporate criticisms and critiques of projects to enhance their success & effectiveness
9. develop, enhance, and extend the features of multimedia projects using programming/scripting languages
10. describe the essential features of project management; focusing on scheduling, estimating, marketing, prototyping, budgeting, testing and QA, determining specifications, and developing proposals

CONNECTION TO PCC CORE OUTCOMES

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

A major theme of the Multimedia Program is to facilitate student's learning in a way that helps them develop the ability to "solve problems and sell solutions." The program strives to instill in students the ability to think and not just do. Our courses never utilize "cookbook" procedures. Rather, we focus on concepts and skill building methods that enable students to develop well thought out and creative solutions to the demanding problems that they encounter in the creation of content for clients in the industry.

Cultural Awareness

As previously stated, the Multimedia Program is very diverse, as is the Cascade Campus of Portland Community College. Multimedia students from a many different backgrounds work closely together in a variety of situations. These include assisting one another in class time and lab work, and learning to communicate and work productively together in team based projects. In a number

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

of cases, students have formed professional creative teams, of very diverse make up. The Multimedia Department strives to help educate creative professionals that can effectively communicate, cooperate, and appreciate peers and clients of diverse backgrounds.

Professional Competence

All Multimedia courses and activities focus on real world knowledge and skills. Courses primarily center on project development for identified clients with targeted needs. The Department's primary mission is to educate individuals to become capable of successfully entering the creative profession. We believe that successful employment is dependent upon competencies in creative problem solving, strategic thinking, and collaboration, as well as the discipline-specific, and "soft skills". Soft skills include: Teamwork, Creative Problem Solving, Presentation Skills, Self-starter, and Ability to Handle Criticism. The Multimedia Program is designed to address each of these skill sets.

Self-Reflection

A "star" in the creative, multimedia industry is one that:

- * "Can think, not just do"
- * Has a well-rounded education, with appropriate technical skills
- * Is self-assured and thick skinned, yet works well in a team
- * Can put their talent in the context of a business solution
- * Is personable and can communicate well

ASSESSMENT

Multimedia students understand the importance of incorporating "star" attributes, as this message is discussed and reinforced in many of the classes. In addition, students are routinely given constructive criticism, and are encouraged to make use of that criticism in the recreation and improvement of projects and assignments. Multimedia students/professionals are client focused, and understand that the "self" must often give way to the needs of the client.

The Multimedia industry's many dimensions includes positions such as motion graphics artists, video compositors and editors, 3D artists and animators, web designers, web content creation specialists, interface designers, multimedia programmers/authors/production artists, interactive/technical writers, production assistants, project managers, and more. The many possible employment opportunities in the creative industry necessitate that students appraise their own skills and abilities, and determine if their professional goals are matched to such. Self-reflection and assessment are stressed as important tools to master for successful professionals.

The Multimedia Department employs a variety of strategies and methodologies to facilitate student achievement of program and course outcomes that include: self examination (and "scoring guides"), group and team review/critique of student work and professional examples, written examinations, portfolios, formal and informal

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

presentations, logs/journals, classroom participation, individual and group projects, team/group work, classroom lectures and demonstrations, hands-on lab activities, real-world projects and time-lines, and industry-expert presentations, industry-expert panel review and criticism of advanced student project presentations.

Since the official inception of the Program in June 15, 2000, the above methods have evolved and been fine-tuned. Over the last several years, methods have focused more on student classroom presentations, group/team work, development of industry-standard portfolios, and critique and feedback of individual and group work. In addition, the incorporation of real-world, client-centered student projects with strict timelines, has added great value to the students and to the reputation of the Portland Community College Multimedia Program. And, we believe, that the incorporation of the industry-expert panel review and criticism of advanced student project presentations, has been one of the most important and useful exercises for students preparing to enter the extremely competitive and challenging creative industry.

Assessment of student mastery of the course outcomes is determined for each course by the particular instructor of record, and parallels the requirements indicated in the Multimedia SAC-developed course content and outcome guides. Each particular course syllabus indicates how assessment is to be addressed for the individual course experience.

These methods of assessment include: collections of student work (portfolios); internal and external review of student projects; externally reviewed internships; student work examples; and, alumni, employer and student surveys.

Additional examples of assessment include: exams, quizzes, projects reviews, critique of presentations, self-evaluations, student evaluations of courses and instructors, feedback from industry sponsored cooperative work experiences, review of student logs/journals, and the successful completion of certificate requirements.

Important evidence of determination of Multimedia student mastery of stated outcomes is noted by successful performance on the job, for those hired into creative industry positions. Documentation of this latter mechanism has proved difficult to verify, and is generally determined anecdotally through somewhat informal correspondence with Multimedia alumni.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE

The careful SAC review and assessment of student achievement of outcomes over the past several years has led to a number of teaching and learning innovations. This included the determination that the descriptions were not clearly delineated between the Multimedia and Computer Applications and Office Systems Web Certificate programs. We believe that this led to confusion for Certificate seeking students. Representatives of the two departments produced improved and enhanced descriptions, which serve as better educational guides to students. Additionally, Multimedia faculty found that students needed additional skills in Multimedia design, which led to the development of a new advanced course entitled Multimedia Design II.

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

In that regard, assessment of student work and their satisfaction of program and course outcomes, the Multimedia SAC put into place additional program enhancements. These activities culminated in the revision and curriculum approval of nearly all of the advanced Multimedia courses over the past two years.

Evaluation and assessment of the exit skills and abilities of students qualifying for the Certificate, led to the development of experimental Multimedia courses, which serve to enhance the student's video compositing and DVD authoring abilities.

The Multimedia website, located at <http://www.pccmm.com>, provides a complete Certificate section, which also delineates Certificate requirements. The website is advertised in the PCC schedule, faculty business cards, and posters in the Multimedia classroom.

The Department has also developed an advising tool. This is a single page handout that provides a check-off listing for required and elective courses needed for the Multimedia Certificate. This handout is made available in the Introduction to Multimedia course, in the Department office, and from the Computer Technologies Advisor/Tutor through the office of Student Services. All Multimedia students are advised to work with a Program advisor, if they are seeking a Multimedia Certificate or related degree.

Although all Multimedia faculty may, and routinely do, advise students, it is Department policy that students be directed to communicate with the Department Chair and/or Multimedia Coordinator who are the only full-time Multimedia employees. It is hoped that by focusing advising through these individuals, the most current and correct information will be given to advisees. Regular and consistent office hours are posted for these individuals and made available to students and potential students.

For those students focusing their interests in particular subsections of the creative profession, the Department provides educational tracks in Multimedia Graphics, Video, 2D animation, 3D Modeling and Animation, Design, and Programming/Scripting. Many advanced Multimedia classes are offered each Term, and all courses are offered at least every other Term. Departmental advising helps students prepare schedules that enable them to complete their course work in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The Multimedia Program supports the core outcomes, mission and values of PCC. A major theme of the Multimedia Program is to facilitate student's learning in a way that helps them develop the ability to "solve problems and sell solutions." The program strives to instill in students the ability to think and not just do. Our courses never utilize "cookbook" procedures. Rather, we focus on concepts and skill building methods that enable students to develop well thought out and creative solutions to the demanding problems that they encounter in the creation of content for clients in the industry.

Multimedia studies focus on a real world, client-centered approach to the educational process. Beginning with the Introduction to Multimedia course, and continuing in all

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

subsequent Multimedia classes, students are engaged in learning by incorporating examples of work actually encountered in the creative industry. Critique and implementation of suggestions for improvement are an integral part of the learning practice found in the PCC Multimedia educational experience.

The Program was developed with industry input, and the Department consistently strives to match the curriculum with current standards demonstrated in the local creative industry. We believe that in order to provide quality education to students and also provide the industry with individuals well versed in relevant skills and knowledge, we must constantly work to improve and update our courses and methods of instruction and learning.

We believe the Multimedia Program provides for maximum accessibility for students, given the current environment and facilities. The Multimedia Program is based at the Cascade Campus, and currently has only one computer classroom/lab available. The department reserves the classroom on Friday afternoons and Saturdays for the 100 level courses. These courses are offered every Term of the year and generally begin the Friday before the official start of the Term and end on the Saturday following the completion of finals week.

The advanced courses are most commonly offered Mondays through Thursdays in late afternoon, and evening time slots. Many 200 level courses are scheduled in two times a week, five-week segments. They have been developed in this manner to make the most efficient use of available classroom space, and to emulate the rapid pace of the creative industry.

In addition, the same classroom provides for “open-lab” educational experiences when the room is not in use for official classes. Since many Multimedia classes require additional time logged during open-lab, an up to date lab schedule is provided for the students, and is available from the Department website, and as a handout in the classroom. The Multimedia Department was the first Department at the Cascade Campus to request that the classroom and therefore the Campus be open and available to students on Sundays. This request was granted and was originally funded out of the Department budget. When classes are not being held, the classroom is made available as open-lab learning opportunity, and is staffed by instructors and/or student lab assistants.

In preparing for the building construction and improvements for the College and Campus, made possible by the \$144 million bond measure that voters approved in November 2000, the lead architects from Youst-Grube-Hall determined that the Multimedia Classroom was the most utilized classroom space in the entire PCC District. The extremely high utilization of the Multimedia classroom has been a direct result of the Department’s focus on offering classes that students need and want, and at times most convenient for them.

Core tenets of the Multimedia Program include the focus on the ability to be able to provide educational practices that include relevant, industry standard, state of the art

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

equipment, skills, knowledge, and experience. The majority of the Multimedia faculty are part time educators and full time members of the creative industry. We believe that this balance is critical in our efforts to meet the goals and mission of the Program.

The Multimedia SAC has integrated a number of methods and practices that serve to increase student retention and minimize attrition. These include:

- real world, relevant educational experiences
- creation of student assignments and projects that demonstrate real world skills and knowledge and that may be added to and provide value to student portfolios
- instructors and staff that possess real world knowledge, skills, and experience
- state-of-the-art computers, applications, and related equipment
- offering of classes on weekends, evenings, and in student favored/requested times and in efficient blocks of time, e.g., twice weekly, five week sections
- obtaining the by-in and support for the unique needs of the Multimedia students and Department by the Division Dean of Business, Technology and Public Services, and the Cascade Campus Dean of Instruction, and Campus President
- active student advising and intervention by the Multimedia Coordinator, Department Chair, Program Faculty, and Computer Technologies Advisor/Tutor, and Dean of Student Services
- minimization of administrative and organizational roadblocks to students and faculty activities and development by the Multimedia Coordinator in conjunction with other College faculty, staff, and administrators

Things that have facilitated the success of the Multimedia Program include:

- recruitment and retention of Multimedia faculty and staff dedicated to the teaching and learning process
- the finest, state of the art computer-based educational facility in the State of Oregon
- PCC administration dedicated to the support of programs under their direction
- Passage of the bond measure which will serve to provide enhanced and expanded Multimedia classroom facilities, and opportunities for PCC students
- curriculum additions and revisions that serve to better provide for the needs of students and the creative industry
- opportunities to offer experimental courses that provide a timely and efficient bridge of delivery of state of the art instruction
- students and faculty creating content for the Campus and College, including the video taping of Campus and off-campus events, and editing the work into cohesive projects that are viewed during Inservice events and other occasions
- archiving historical materials for other departments of the College, including Medical Laboratory Technology, and the Cascade Library
- working collaboratively with other departments, such as the Art Department and Professional Music Program. Specific examples include the work of

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

Professional Music students under the supervision of instructors, creating musical score and sound effects for 3D animations

- working closely with industry groups, such as the DevGroup NW, which is a forum for creative developers to share knowledge and network; and the Creative Services Alliance
- creating a showcase for Multimedia students in the College's annual Art Beat celebration. This involves hundreds of hours of student volunteer work, under the direction of the Multimedia Coordinator. This also involved one of our industry partners, Clarity Visual, who provided the presentation kiosk, at no expense
- facilitating the growth of the Department's lab assistants and work study students, who under the direction of the Multimedia Coordinator, are given many opportunities for expanded responsibilities and enhancement of their professional skills and knowledge
- encouraging students in all Multimedia classes to network, meet fellow classmates, and become involved in peer-to-peer mentoring
- seeing students hired into the profession, and in turn, hiring classmates
- working closely with the Computer Technologies advisors, and the Job Service Specialists, and the CASE Program
- working with representatives from Portland State University to try and develop an educational bridge opportunity for PCC Multimedia students
- always striving to promote the Program
- maintaining, and advancing the Program's reputation

CHALLENGES

The Faculty workload for the one FT faculty in the Department does not leave much time for professional growth and development. Release time, and additional budget for professional development would serve to improve the skills and knowledge of both FT and PT faculty and therefore improve the mission and goals of the college.

Conferences and continuing educational experiences are available locally, regionally, and nationally for the creative industry. However insufficient release time and budgetary constraints make it extremely difficult to take advantage of such opportunities.

Primary educational needs for our faculty center on attending conferences, trade shows, and professional/technical seminars. Additionally, due to the complexity and prior funding priorities, many College FT faculty no longer pursue these avenues, and many PT faculty are unaware of the process and support possible. Even when funds are available, the time needed to take advantage of such events, away from the day-to-day classroom and faculty duties, is in extremely short supply. The potential for Sabbatical

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

leave is nearly impossible to consider for faculty in Departments such as Multimedia that consist of only one full-time faculty member.

If and when funding for the College is improved and made stable, it is imperative that the department budgetary line items related to continuing education opportunities, such as conferences and seminars, be greatly expanded. Department budgets should allow for at least one faculty member the opportunity to attend at least one educational opportunity each year. Make the Staff Development and Instructional Improvement Grant processes more user-friendly, and more supportive of all faculty requested needs.

The delicate balance of creative industry employment opportunities is one of the primary limiting factors in determining the number of PCC Multimedia Certificate graduates moving into the industry each year. In addition, the majority of the Multimedia classes require that students have individual access to computer workstations. Due to the unique computer applications employed by the creative industry and therefore the Multimedia Department, the twenty-seat Multimedia classroom is the only available classroom in the College able to provide such high-end computers, and software applications.

The following issues have presented considerable challenge to the Multimedia Program's success:

- inadequate funding from the State of Oregon
- inadequate funding of continuing education opportunities
- burdensome faculty-administrative responsibilities that are magnified in small department SACs
- discontinuation of the printing and widespread distribution of the PCC Schedule of Classes, which has served as the primary advertising mechanism for Professional/Technical programs, such as Multimedia
- minimum class size restrictions, requiring at least 16 students to be enrolled to be able to offer a class. If scheduled classes are cancelled, there is a domino effect that negatively effects students and the Department's ability to offer future classes
- inadequate technology infrastructure for the Department's special need, e.g., gigabit network to the desktop

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

One of the most important experiences that would help provide better direct evidence of student learning, would be the addition of cooperative leaning opportunities for advanced Multimedia students. Real world experiences and the evaluation of those experiences are the key components in determining the successful mastery of course and program outcomes. Although we have seen a fair increase in cooperative work experiences in the past year, we believe that, at this point in time, additional experiential opportunities are essential and currently not sufficient to meet student demand.

MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM REVIEW

Additionally, better tracking of those that complete the Certificate, and those who enter the creative industry would be beneficial in showing the program's impact.

We are convinced that as the industry's job market conditions improve, so will the opportunities for increased and enhanced cooperative work experiences. No additional PCC recourses are anticipated for the satisfaction of this need. We plan to work with the PCC Institutional Resources Department to facilitate improved tracking of Multimedia alumni.

The Multimedia classroom facilities will be substantially increased with the opening of the new Moriarty Arts and Humanities Building, scheduled to open for classes in the Fall of 2005.

Current efforts are underway to establish PCC Cascade/Multimedia as "the" Apple Professional Training Center for the Portland metropolitan area. This may bring needed resources to improve the program equipment and other resources.

In response to industry and student feedback, planning and implementation is under way to secure approval of a Multimedia AAS Degree. We have also begun discussion regarding the development of a transfer agreement with PSU for the MM AAS degree.