

2013-2014 Millikin University Fine Arts Assessment Report
Student Learning in the Fine Arts Requirement (University Studies)

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The Fine Arts Requirement (FAR) is one of several non-sequential University Studies requirements that all Millikin University students must take to graduate. Students must earn three hours of Fine Arts credit in order to satisfy the requirement. The requirement can be taken at any time during a student's four-year experience, either as a single three-credit course or as multiple one- or two-credit courses.

This non-sequential requirement can be met with any fine arts course that blends experiential, theoretical, and reflective approaches. Examples include Art 101 and 107, Music History 100 and 101, and Theatre 103 and 107, among many others. Three combined credits of Applied Music, Music Organizations, or Dance—or a combination thereof—also satisfies this requirement.

In fine arts courses, students appreciate the intellectual and aesthetic contributions that the visual, dramatic, and/or performing arts make to their ability to understand themselves and others and to their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products. Students develop an understanding of themselves and the ability to reflect on and express their thoughts and feelings responsibly.

The following learning outcome goals are delivered by all courses designated as meeting the Fine Arts Requirement.

Students will:

1. Demonstrate engagement in/with the creative process.
2. Respond to and reflect on the aesthetic experience of the arts.
3. Make connections between aesthetic experiences and the larger cultural context of creation.

These learning goals complement the university-wide mission in the following ways. Engaging in the arts sharpens the diagnostic/critical thinking skills necessary for professional success. Recent literature has, for instance, made claim to the fact that pre-med students who have taken courses in art appreciation are better diagnosticians. By studying the arts, including nonwestern art forms, students become better global citizens. And, of course, studying and performing art aids in the understanding of our own humanity, thereby helping to create a personal life of meaning and value.

Curriculum Revision

During the 2013-14 academic year, as part of ongoing fiscally-driven discussions of Millikin's University Studies curriculum, the university faculty—led by the Planning Team

on Curriculum Structure and University Studies (CSUS) and the Council on Curriculum (COC)—explored alterations to the Fine Arts Requirement. On May 1, 2014, the Council on Curriculum formally proposed the following:

Rename the Fine Arts requirement to the Creative Arts requirement. Revise university-wide learning goal, course description, and course learning goals associated with this requirement.

The CSUS team and COC recommended that the university wide learning goal be changed from,

Students will appreciate the intellectual and aesthetic contributions that the visual, dramatic, and/or performing arts make to their ability to understand themselves and others and to their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products,

to,

Students will critically engaged in and/or analyze a creative, intellectual, and aesthetic process within the visual, dramatic, literary, and/or performing arts and reflect on that process to increase their ability to understand themselves and others and to enhance their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products.

Furthermore, the CSUS team and COC recommend that the course description be revised from,

In fine arts courses students appreciate the intellectual and aesthetic contributions that the visual, dramatic, and/or performing arts make to their ability to understand themselves and others and to their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products,

to,

In creative arts courses students will engage in and/or analyze a creative, intellectual, and aesthetic process within the visual, dramatic, literary, and/or performing arts and reflect on that process to increase their ability to understand themselves and others and to enhance their capacity to enjoy their own and others' creative processes and products.

These recommendations, after being approved by COC, were put to the full university faculty for a vote on May 16, 2014, where they were approved. Millikin's Fine Arts Requirement now becomes a Creative Arts Requirement (CAR), with revised learning goals, descriptions, and objectives.

In light of these changes it seems inefficient to assess learning goals for a program that the university has so significantly altered. Assessment work will resume in AY 2014-15 with evaluation of the new CAR.

Improvement Plans

Put simply, assessment will not succeed unless faculty members across the university commit to it. Another reason for this report's brevity and lack of genuine data analysis lies in faculty members' unwillingness to cooperate with assessment practices. We have tried numerous mechanisms to get faculty support for assessment work, and none have succeeded.

As a second point, now that the learning goals of this element of the University Studies curriculum have changed, we will need to completely refigure assessment practices and prompts. I hope to collaborate with a member of the English Department faculty this summer to make these revisions.