

ANNUAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Program: Graphic/Visual Design
Report prepared by: Theresa Ayotte

1) Please list the degree offerings:

- BS Graphic/Visual Design
- Graphic Design Certificate
- 3D Modeling and Motion Design Certificate
- User Experience Design Certificate

2) Progression /Graduation update (NECHE 8)

- *Please provide the progression and graduation rates of the program (Data found in the Department Activity reports [HERE](#))*

The Graphic/Visual Design program, now in its fifth year, has maintained steady enrollment growth. Since its inception in 2020 with 10 students, the program has expanded to consistently enroll between 35 and 39 students, with 39 enrolled for Fall 2024. In May 2025, the program's second cohort will graduate 11 students.

3) Program's Mission Statement (NECHE standard 1):

- *Please provide the program mission, and explain the alignment to the University Mission statement.*

Mission Statement: The Graphic/Visual Design Bachelor of Science degree program at Husson University's New England School of Communications is dedicated to preparing students for the graphic and visual design fields through experiential learning using current design tools and technology with a focus on emerging media and the creative process.

This mission statement aligns with the university mission statement by stating it prepares students for not only current fields but also those that are emerging. The inclusion of technology as well as the creative process illustrates that the program also focuses on the sciences and humanities.

4) Faculty updates (NECHE Standard 6)

- *Please provide any relevant updates on faculty. (Examples: Change of faculty, changes in levels of adjunct use, faculty publications/grants within the past year, etc.)*

The Graphic/Visual Design program continues to be led by a single full-time instructor, Theresa Ayotte, who has carried a course overload most semesters since the program's inception. Theresa Ayotte and Associate Professor Kathi Smith were invited to present at the national FATE Conference in Washington, D.C., in April 2025, representing the program on a national stage.

The program experienced a significant loss with the passing of Scott Traylor just days before the fall semester began. Scott was instrumental in teaching Design Thinking and Advanced UX Design, as well as several IT web and user experience courses required for GV students. His passing has left a notable gap in the program. In the fall, Lisa Sturgeon stepped in to teach Design Thinking; however, due to her own course load, she was unable to continue in the spring.

To address the need for an Advanced UX Design instructor for Spring 2025, a job posting was issued, but no local candidates applied. Upon identifying Kian Thornton, a Husson University

master's student with a bachelor's degree in UX Design, it was determined that his current industry knowledge and pedagogical approach would be valuable to the program. After a thorough interview process, he was found to have the industry knowledge to teach both Design Thinking and Advanced UX Design. Kian's hiring process, initiated in early October in collaboration with Edward Goguen, was rejected less than two weeks before the semester's start. This unexpected setback placed considerable strain on the program.

Fortunately, Mark Nason was able to take over the Design Thinking course, while Ed reached out to an Advanced UX Design applicant from Portland. The candidate was willing to drive up for a few in-person classes and conducted the remainder via Zoom. Due to time constraints, the hiring process could not be completed in time, resulting in the course being condensed into a seven-week format for the second half of the semester, which was disruptive for students.

The challenge of securing in-person adjunct instructors for the program's expanding and increasingly technical curriculum remains ongoing. Currently, the Graphic/Visual Design program employs five adjunct instructors to support its course offerings.

5) Program Goals / Strategic initiatives (NECHE Standard 2, 5):

- *Areas for goals should address such areas as graduation, progression, retention, changes in program/curriculum due to assessment findings, gaining additional professional expertise, recruitment, or another program/university/professional need.*

Goals from the previous year:	Met / Not Met	Assessment summary:	Action
Continue to grow the program and work on retention	Met	Enrollment remains steady with 12 incoming students for Fall 2025. Total program enrollment for the past three years has consistently remained between 36-39 students.	Began a dual enrollment course with UTC. Visited EMCC's Digital Graphic Design program and invited Brewer High School art students for a tour. Continued with extensive hands-on advising, especially with struggling students.
Find an instructor to design, develop and teach Information Design, a course that has yet to run	Met	GV 310 Information Design ran for the first time in Spring 2025.	Current adjunct instructor Armando Garma Fernandez was hired to design and teach the GV 310 Information Design course.
Continue to provide students with opportunities to interact with professionals in the industry	Met	Students met with a number of industry professionals this past year. They attended NESCom's Career Café, went on Agency and Marketing Pros field trips, and worked in the Agency.	Continued to announce and encourage students to attend events happening around campus.

Goals for the <u>upcoming</u> year:	Assessment planning:	Notes
Continue to grow the program	<p>Explore ways to facilitate transferring students' entry into the program. Getting listed as a transfer destination on community college websites.</p> <p>Explore additional strategies to market the program, including submitting student work to various organizations for awards as a way to increase visibility and recognition.</p> <p>Continue outreach to high schools, tech schools, and community colleges in New England.</p>	Have been working extensively on a Pathway Map with Kate Sibole from SMCC.
Work on retention	Maintain contact with advisees	
Need to replace Scott Traylor	Assessing the gap in the program left from Scott and planning how to move from triage to formal replacement.	Working with Director Knupp in SOTI.
Continue to provide students with opportunities to interact with professionals in the industry	<p>Expand pool of companies for which students can intern by five new organizations.</p> <p>Facilitate as much as possible with the NESCom Career Café by helping to grow the number of vendors.</p> <p>Continue providing opportunities for students to field trip to businesses related to the profession.</p>	

6) Curricular mapping / Outcome assessment (NECHE Standard 4, 8)

- Please review and update the current curricular mapping and ensure syllabi reflect the mapping found at the official Husson Mapping Site ([HERE](#))
- Please update the progress made on specific learning outcomes below. If specific external tools are used (i.e. Praxis, Peregrine, etc.) be sure to include them.

Student Learning Outcome	Courses mapped to SLO	Summary for the given academic year	Action
PO 1 – Design Literacy	BR 120 GV 145 GV 208 GV 245 GV 248 GV 257 GV 335	This is a foundational component of the GV program. Several of these courses are also required for the Graphic Design Certificate and are meant to expose students to the language of the profession.	Continue to incorporate new literacies, such as AI, as they become part of the profession.
PO 2 – Creative Process	BR 120 GV 208 GV 245 GV 257	This is a foundational component of the GV program. Several required foundational courses in the program are coordinated with Kathi Smith in	AI can now also be used as part of the creative process and will be introduced as a

	GV 329	Fine Arts where she strongly introduces students to the creative process. Close collaboration and shared projects this year bridged multiple courses.	new way to brainstorm ideas.
PO 3 – Critical Analysis	GV 145 GV 245 GV 248 GV 329 GV 335	Critical analysis continues to be one of the core “power skills” of the program. Students this year gained these skills not only in GV courses but also in the required MK Agency course.	Will continue to find ways to bring this critical component to the classroom in an engaging way that caters to diverse learning styles.
PO 4 – Technical Proficiency	BR 120 GV 208 GV 245 GV 248 GV 257 GV 329 GV 335	This is a core component of the GV program. As software gets updated, instructors have kept up with changes and passed the current technical skills along to the students.	Technical skills required for the profession evolve. The plan is to continue to stay relevant in our offerings.
PO 5 – Interdisciplinary Skills	GV 145 GV 335 GV 429	These courses provide a broad view of how the graphic/visual design profession relates to other disciplines. The requirement of the MK Agency course in the curriculum, however, has been the greatest developer of interdisciplinary “power skills” for students in the program.	Continue to create opportunities for students to collaborate with students and professionals in other disciplines.
PO 6 - Professional Practice	GV 257 GV 329 GV 429	Portfolio-building courses are critical to entering the workforce. Live interviews and portfolio presentations were added to GV 429 Design Portfolio course to prepare for the job-seeking process. The MK Agency course–also required–highly prepares students for the professional world.	Continue to expose students to new opportunities in preparation for this highly competitive field, as well as related fields.

7) Executive Summary:

- Please provide a summary of the major findings of the annual report.
- Be sure to address all that are applicable:
 - Significant achievements
 - Identified opportunities
 - Identified threats or challenges
 - Adequacy of resources
 - Budgetary considerations

The most significant achievement of the year was the renovation of Lab 102. All furnishings—which were over 20 years old—were replaced with modern tables and chairs, and the layout was completely reconfigured to support a more collaborative and flexible learning environment. This area, along with One Circle Agency next door, has become a showcase for the program.

The Design Portfolio course saw stronger portfolio submissions with the addition of the Agency Practicum to the curriculum. Opportunities for graphic design internships are not easy to find, so experiential learning with clients through the Agency has been able to fill that need.

Students who took advantage of free community college—now in its third year—are beginning to transfer into our program. Establishing seamless transfer agreements with community colleges has proven difficult, particularly compared to the success the UMaine system has had in this area. This year, we did begin dual enrollment for both the Graphic Design I and 3D Modeling courses with UTC. The goal is to establish similar dual enrollment opportunities with other high school training centers across the state.

Finding qualified adjuncts continues to be one of the most significant challenges for the program. This year the program lost two instructors – Scott Traylor and Michael Kasprzak. Mark Nason was able to take over one of Scott Traylor’s courses, but the program needed to hire an adjunct to fill the Advanced UX Design course which caused the program to go over budget. A new adjunct will be taking over the Animation and Motion Design course, which was taught by Michael Kasprzak who was deemed unqualified by the Provost. Both 3D Modeling I and II have remained consistent with adjunct instructors and are working well.