There are very few people in this country who understand theoretical design or the sequencing of exercises and who can teach an effective introductory program. It is entirely possible that the number of individuals can be counted on the fingers. Not long ago, an acquaintance of mine reported a conversation with the Dean of the School of Art at The University of Michigan. The Dean mentioned that the School would no longer make basic design a required course, but instead would offer it as an elective. When asked why, he stated that none of the graduate students understood basic design well enough to teach it, and for that matter, neither did any of the faculty.

My comments are based on personal experience and observations, and they are not to be construed as definitive descriptions for all programs and practices. I would surmise that there was considerable variance among programs throughout the period from World War II until now, and there are undoubtedly many with which I am not familiar. Although first year program were listed under a variety of names, I am using the word foundations as a generic term for all entry level programs.

**Foundations, Basic Design or Core Program**

The introductory studies for the visual arts were perhaps best defined by those who first created them as a separate program of study.

To my knowledge, the Bauhaus was the first educational institution to conceive of a single, general program for students as preparation for entering a variety of disciplines. The program focused on those studies that were in common to all disciplines in visual arts such as painting, sculpture, design, architecture, photography, etc. Early curriculum centered mainly around two- and three-dimensional design, color and drawing. All courses were taught as perceptual, theoretical exercises.

The problem of structuring and teaching the introductory studies in visual arts have been approached differently by various institutions at different times.
In evaluating the various programs, it is understood that there are numerous variables ranging from instructional abilities, to credibility of program content, administrative enlightenment, resources and facilities and so forth. The abilities of individual students are another factor when identifying educational effectiveness. The most talented students tend to survive and do well regardless of their education. Therefore, comments are general and point a direction rather than toward a specific point.

How the variables are approached by the institution is often revealing as to whether the emphasis is on educational quality (faculty concern) or operational efficiency (administrative concern).

The Most Significant Variables: Faculty
Josef Albers strongly advocated only the most experienced and best teachers working at the entry level. His rationale was that it was in the first year where students developed work habits, commitment and laid the foundation for later studies. American educational institutions tend to do just the opposite, they assign the less experienced or weaker teachers to the first year and reserve what they consider to be the best teachers for upper division classes.

It is extremely important that faculty in Foundations share a common educational philosophy and that there is consistency in objectives, standards and criteria. Students greatly benefit from a cohesive faculty that is constantly interacting among themselves. A faculty that is divided never achieves its potential. The overall effectiveness of Foundations is greatly enhanced if faculty from the upper division courses reinforce what is taught during the first year.

Within my experience, the most effective entry level instructors are those who are graduates from programs with a strong pedagogical base. They better understand structure (sequence), theory principles and vocabulary. It is of interest that programs taught by Josef Albers and Armin Hofmann, two of the most influential teachers in the last fifty years, graduated large numbers of teachers who impacted strongly on the profession and education.

Pedagogy
The most effective education relies on exercises that are focused on theoretical, perceptual, and often, abstract content that is in common with all art disciplines. Exercises should be sequential and build one on another. There should not be rigid deadlines and students should be encouraged to refine and to refine again. Hand skills are emphasized in connection with doing exercises. The development of a design vocabulary is extremely important. A unified and sequential program of study is critical to student learning.

Program Structure
The most ideal program structure promotes a consistent educational experience for all students as this is most advantageous for both students and the program. This can be best accomplished by restricting enrollment to two sections with the same teacher for both sections; a team taught program where all students are taught as a single group or a program where students are rotated through courses. All of these structures require limited enrollment which ideally ranges from fifty to one hundred students.
Observations Based on Personal Experience

Within my educational and teaching experience, I encountered a variety of programs. Also, through consulting and lecturing at other institutions, I became familiar with additional ones.

Prerequisites

I began my education at the University of Nebraska in 1946. My major was advertising design. Art was relatively new at the university, and there was no general introductory program. Educational sequence was controlled through a system of prerequisites.

I was permitted to enroll in only one three-credit studio course per semester in the first year, and my instructor was a painter.

With prerequisites, the institution controls enrollment through assignment of personnel and the number of classes. Unfortunately, the demand is often greater than the availability of courses, and many students have to spend extended periods of time to get into required classes. The prerequisite requirement can add as much as two years to the time a student must spend to earn an undergraduate degree. When students cannot enroll in the desired class, they generally sign up for other classes. This benefits the institution through added tuition income, while at the same time, the students are still listed as departmental majors inflating the enrollment figures for art and design.

Because of the interrupted program and lack of consistency resulting from different teachers in several sections, the educational effectiveness is relatively low. The fragmented program also denies students the value of the collective educational experience where students move through the program as a group. Multi-use space is operationally efficient but it detracts from the educational quality as students do not have a home base. Attending university can be like going to school in a bus station and living out of a locker. Controlling enrollment and sequencing of courses through prerequisites tends to favor the institution much more than it does the student.

Rotation

During 1948, I transferred to the Minneapolis School of Art and was enrolled as an advertising design major at the sophomore level. The introductory studies program was for two years, and it was based on painting, sculpture, basic design and drawing.

This was at the time when the number of students under the GI BilI peaked, and the school was over-subscribed. A number of WPA artists were hired as teachers to handle the influx of students. My recollection of the introductory studies program is somewhat hazy. However, teachers from every department were assigned to the program and each taught what was considered basic to their discipline. Painters worked with values, and assignments were limited to painting still-lifes in black, white and shades of gray. Sculptors worked with clay and plaster.
Basic design was borrowed from Bauhaus imagery and drawing was based entirely on life drawing from a model with charcoal on newsprint. I think a class in calligraphy was also required. My memory is that sections were rotated through the program in semester units rather than having multiple sections. However, drawing was taught in sections by several instructors. I believe that two-year programs for introductory studies were commonplace in visual art programs throughout the country at that time. Even to this day, assignment of faculty to the first year is often influenced by older notions of reserving what is perceived as the best teachers for upper level students. Teachers who are young and inexperienced, those near retirement and believed to be out of date, those considered to be weak instructors or even teachers being punished by administration are frequently assigned to foundations.

The program was fragmented both in content and instructional philosophy. While the educational content was often of dubious quality, the educational experience for students was reasonably consistent. There was institutional restraint in enrollment which was commendable.

**Team Teaching**

As a result of the Albers’ program at Yale University during the 1950s, a few schools adopted a new concept for introductory studies. A faculty of four to six full-time faculty were recruited to teach only in the Foundations program. If I am not mistaken, I think this was when the term *Foundations* was coined. A large space that would accommodate one hundred plus students was allocated to the program. This was fixed-use space and students had access every day including weekends until midnight. The faculty team taught the entire group as one class. Drawing, color, two- and three-dimensional design with some visiting lecturers were the mainstay of the program. All work was based in perceptual theory. This was a period when most schools put a great deal of emphasis on *interdisciplinary* studies.

Team teaching required a very close working relationship among faculty, and there was constant interaction among faculty members regarding program development and student progress. Because faculty involvement was limited to Foundations, teachers had no particular vested interests in where students would go after completing the program.

The principal advantages of this system was the unbiased relationship with students. One of the drawbacks to the earlier practice of drawing teachers from each of the disciplines was the constant pressure on students from teachers attempting to recruit the best ones into their program. Also, because of the singular assignment to Foundations, faculty did not have to cope with a divided commitment. Team teaching the students as one class insured every student of having exactly the same educational experience. Perhaps one of the more significant changes was reducing introductory studies to one year.

The programs were very effective with all students having consistent educational experiences. The interrelationship of the different courses was better understood by students because of how the program was conceived.
The Kansas City Art Institute and the Minneapolis School of Art were the two principal advocates for this type of Foundations program. Very few institutions adopted this type of program because operationally it was not cost effective compared to other concepts. It locked up space, it limited tuition income because of restricted enrollment to one hundred to one hundred twenty-five students. Instructional costs were higher than most other institutions because of reliance on all tenure track faculty. There was a greater investment in facilities with a larger operating budget. This mode of instruction clearly favored students and educational quality over operational costs.

Open Enrollment and Multi-Sections

Between 1955 and 1965, there was a growing proliferation of visual art programs at universities, and especially so in public institutions. The first Fine Arts program within the university was at Yale University around the middle of the nineteenth century. Painting, sculpture and drawing were first brought into universities as a liberal arts experience, and later they became separate programs of study. During the 1930s and the arrival of the Arts and Crafts movement into America, a number of craft programs in ceramics and weaving were introduced into curriculums. Industrial design was first taught at Carnegie Institute during these same years. After World War II, some combination of photography, printmaking, industrial and advertising design (after 1965 it became graphic design), fashion, ceramics, wood-working, glass-blowing and jewelry design were added to the Fine Arts program at most universities.

Universities tend to allow open enrollment into the Foundations program. The majority of students enroll to elect as preparation for an art major but a number of enrollees take Foundations as a liberal arts elective. Enrollments at the entry level range from one to four hundred students at most universities.

Some programs have one full-time person who serves as the coordinator for introductory studies. One or two full-time instructors from the disciplines might be assigned to one or more sections, and the balance of instruction is handled by graduate students and part-time instructors. Students are divided into sections of 20 to 30 students per section. In many programs, there are eight to eighteen sections for drawing, design and color.

Visual art programs in universities tend to be dominated by Fine Arts personnel and philosophies. This still holds true although enrollment in design generally is larger than Fine Arts.

Most university entry programs are little more than a one-year indoctrination to the institution. There are limited benefits from the experience of doing, and the introduction to materials and media, but the overall learning experience tends to be minimal. There are too many students, too many sections and instruction is generally poor to fair making the educational experience between sections extremely uneven. All too often, pedagogy is weak with misplaced emphasis and little to no relationship between sequence of exercises and courses. Unfortunately, those basic programs with too many sections, overreliance on graduate students and ineffective programs of study are educational disaster areas.

To some extent or another, education consists of teachers asking and students responding. The quality of education is determined more so by what is asked than it is by the level of response.
The university open enrollment and multi-section foundation program is blatantly oriented toward operational interests. At universities, funds are frequently allocated on the basis of enrollment, and more than one administrator has been heard to say that larger classes with more students and less teachers were needed, or that studio programs would do better to create some lecture courses to increase enrollment figures.

While enrollment figures are excessively high, instructional costs are minimal because of reliance on graduate students and part-time faculty with lower salaries and no benefits. Multiuse space for instruction is extremely efficient. Operating budgets and facility requirements are minor or nonexistent. Students are cheated of the education they believe they are receiving, and the multi-sections foundations program should be a subject for guilt and shame by the university.

Foundations Within Schools
With the advent of Schools as divisions within the college, occasionally foundations is divided between Fine Arts and Design with either having its own program. In my opinion, design programs do a better job teaching basic design within the major than do the fine arts. Schools are comprised of related disciplines. Design is more pedagogically oriented than fine arts, but when the design foundations serves several different disciplines such as industrial, fashion, graphic, etc., it can suffer from many of the same problems as entry level fine art programs in terms of uneven instruction, too many students, too many sections, weak instruction, lack of program, etc.

However, if the proper variables are in place, it can be done effectively. There generally are fewer students and design faculty tend to be methodical in sequencing courses and program content is based in pedagogy of one kind or another.

Foundations Within the Discipline
Beginning in the 1950s, schools relied on two-year preliminary general program of studies, allowing the last two years for concentration in a major. During the 1960s, general interdisciplinary studies were reduced to one year. To a great extent, because of the weakness of first year Foundations, most programs relied on a second year of theoretical studies within the discipline. So there were still only two years left for practical education in the major. By moving the first year program into the major, it is conceivable to add one additional year to practical studies. However, to be effective there must be restricted enrollment, ideally two sections, experienced faculty who share a common educational philosophy and a sound program of study. This is perhaps the most ideal solution for design programs.

There are a few institutions that accept students into the major in the Freshman year. Perhaps the best known is the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University. The School accepts about forty-five students each year into the Freshman design program where they are divided into two sections.
At the time I was there (1977–1983), the program was divided into drawing, two- and three-dimensional design, color with a one hour orientation class. Color sections rotated at the end of the first semester and all other courses continued. All instructors were full-time tenured or tenure track faculty. There was fixed space allocated to the program. The program was highly effective and added another year to practical studies in design. I would expect the program has changed by now.

Entry Into the Major
Most majors conduct a second year of basic studies within the context of the discipline. It is at this point that screening occurs and enrollment is limited at many, but certainly not at all, institutions. The criteria for screening applicants into the major varies greatly from program to program. Some rely entirely on SAT scores or class ranking, others on some combination of portfolios, reviews, testing, and one even requires a four hundred word essay on why they should be admitted.

Many programs rely on a relatively open enrollment and selective retention, and perhaps this is the single most reliable process for identifying students suitable for the program. The composition of accepted students is not based on any intrinsic abilities of students, but rather it is shaped by the values of the people making the selection. Consequently, a student accepted into one program might be rejected by another one.

I have tried all the above mentioned procedures for evaluating students and none of them were any more reliable than another. My best clue as to who would be a good student was to find work in the portfolio that took a great deal of time and effort to do. My favorite was a large crow-quill pen and ink drawing. To find a quantity of work in the portfolio done outside of school was usually an indication of student commitment.
Survey
A short survey was made of twenty eight students in the current Sophomore Visual Communications class. They had gone through a multi-section entry level foundations program in the School of Design At Arizona State University. A rough approximation is that there were 8 to 10 sections with 20 students in a section. The program was a general foundations for Industrial, Graphic and Interior Design. It was taught by a combination of instructors and graduate students from the three different disciplines.

While there is nothing from the survey that can be considered definitive, it is revealing as to how students perceive their educational experience in the Freshman year. At the end of the year, roughly 90 students from Foundations applied to the Visual Communications program and 38 were accepted. They submitted a test and portfolio.

One faculty member from Visual Communications assigned to Foundations was perhaps the most experienced and capable instructor on the foundations faculty. It is interesting to note that of the twenty six students from the class surveyed, 57% were from that teacher’s section. Because of the high number of students from that section, it will be reflected in the overall percentage of responses to survey questions.

This begs the question that in accepting students into the major, is it possible that students with lesser ability coming from a strong section might look better than a student with more ability coming from a weak section?

Results of the Survey
1 How would you rate what and how much you learned in the Foundations program on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being high?
   1 - 4       25%
   5          7%
   6-10       68%

2 Within a multi-section design program, was it your experience/observation that the educational quality for sections was:
   extremely unequal       44%
   reasonably equal        54%
   equal                   1%

3 Where do you feel instructors placed emphasis?
   problem objectives      39%
   what it looked like      32%
   work done on time        28%

4 What do you feel contributes most to learning?
   program of study         7%
   quality of teachers      89%
   space/facilities         3%

* Percentages were not carried out to the decimal point.

Learning can be spontaneous but education is planned and structured

Pedagogy
Summary of Student Comments on How to Improve Foundations

1. Foundations by discipline rather than a general program for Industrial, Interior and Graphic Design. (13)
2. No graduate student teachers.
3. Better quality of teachers. (2)
4. More emphasis on process (rather than end product)
5. Computer instruction. (2)
6. Fewer projects with more emphasis on objectives.
7. Program for Sophomore level should be taught at Freshman level.
8. Better organization.
9. More interaction between teachers and students.
10. Fixed work space.
11. Two-hour classes did not allow enough time in the studio.

Conclusions
- The single most important factor for an effective educational program is the faculty, and this includes all the conditions related to, or determined by them.
- Program of study is the second most important factor to achieving educational effectiveness.
- Quality of students accepted into the program is established by the quality of teachers making the selection.
- Quality of program is determined more by what is taught than by who is taught.
- A cohesive faculty that interacts is vastly more effective than a divided faculty.

Allocation of office space seems to have a great deal to do with encouraging a cohesive faculty that interacts. Within my own experience, faculty studios were always clustered or as in one instance at Kansas City, faculty shared one large studio.

Another factor in space allocation relates to students. If students have fixed workspace, it strengthens the interaction within the entire class, promotes working on projects outside of class, and leads to additional interaction with faculty.

With the greater number of sections there will be a corresponding diminishment of program quality and the educational experience for students differs from section to section. There are distinct advantages to keeping sections limited to two, even though there might be more students in each section than normally allowed.
I have always judged Ken Hiebert’s program in graphic design at the University for the Arts to consistently be one of the best in the country, and over a long period of time (1965 -)

In collecting information for this paper, I was surprised to learn that the program has to accept every student who applies following a one-year general Foundations. Graphic design has four sections in the Sophomore year, three in the Junior year and two in the Senior year. Teachers and graduates are widely represented as some of the finest, and most successful, designers of the last forty plus years.

The facts seem to contradict much of what has been observed, stated and recommended in the paper. However, there are significant circumstances connected to the program at the University for the Arts that actually reinforce the findings.

The faculty share a common educational philosophy and pedagogical background that had its origins with Armin Hofmann at Basel, Switzerland. The faculty are cohesive and work as a team. They have a well-defined program of study. They have an exceptionally well-qualified faculty. There is fixed workspace for upper division students.

I think this is a clear indication of where priorities should be in graphic design programs, and it demonstrates the possibility for a quality program even though there are negative factors such as over enrollment and too many sections, multi-use space.

**Recommendations**

1. That Graphic Design program have its own foundations. We should be teaching in the Freshman year what we are currently teaching in the Sophomore year.

2. What we are teaching at the Sophomore level cannot be taught as effectively in a multi-section program (more than two sections.) Enrollment should be limited to two sections of twenty-five students.

3. Curriculum include basic design*, letterform, design orientation lecture course, drawing and introductory course for computers (technical.)

4. Fixed workspace for foundations.

5. Reconsideration for location of faculty studios. Structured interaction of faculty on a weekly basis.

* Basic design would meet three times a week and include minicourses in color and design principles. Color and Principles could be taught in alternate semesters.