

Evaluation Report Form for Program Proposals

Institution: Rochester Institute of Technology

Program title: Media Arts and Technology

Degree: Master of Science in Media Arts and Technology

Date of evaluation: February 3, 2015

Evaluator Name:
(Please print)

Evaluator Title
and Institution:

Evaluator
Signature:

I. Program

1. Assess program purpose, structure, and requirements as well as formal mechanisms for program administration and monitoring.

I have addressed the program's purpose in section 2 of this report.

Regarding the program's structure...At first, I was concerned about the lack of a thesis requirement in the program. However, upon further investigation, it appears that the program will require sufficient writing by its students throughout their classes and in their capstone course. I am very pleased to see that full-time students can complete the program in one year. This makes the program especially desirable for those who live at a distance from RIT and who cannot afford to be "away from home" for an extended period of time. I also like the potential for interconnectedness between the MSMAAT program and other RIT programs, including the SMS's Two-Year Masters and others.

While reviewing the requirements of the program, I noted that there are really only four new courses in the program. I am very impressed with the course outlines as presented in the Proposal, and believe the content to be well considered and worthwhile. However, the remaining requirements are already in the RIT inventory and appear to have been developed for the existing print-centric curriculum. That is, of course, not a problem. But, having lived through the same sort of programmatic transformation as we evolved our Graphic Communications Technology B.S. Program into a B.S. in Digital Media, I know that using print-centric courses for a more global Media Arts/Digital Media program is wrought with challenges. In particular, I ardently advise the SMS faculty to expand the content of existing courses to meet the needs of *all* media. By way of explanation, I have used Ruggles' *Printing Estimating* book for decades to teach my estimating classes. Even through the latest version of the book addresses web design, video, photography, and other media, the mere **name** *Printing Estimating* results in negative feedback on course evaluations.

With regards to program administration, RIT's SMS is well known for its competent and forward-thinking administration. I foresee no problems in this regard.

Finally, I am quite sure, given their global reputations, that the RIT SMS faculty will do an excellent job monitoring their program. However, I am concerned that item "h" on page 9 of the Proposal indicates that there are no "external partners." Indeed, I searched the entire report for the phrase "advisory board" and all its components (advis, advisory, etc) and only encountered the membership of RIT faculty on *other* advisory boards. Programs such as this need *constant* input from Advisory Boards representing the industries they serve. Perhaps this is an oversight in the Proposal.

2. Comment on the special focus of this program, if any, as it relates to the discipline.

The purpose and focus of this program are particularly important given the rapid change from traditional print media to a "mix" of media that includes not only print, but mobile, desktop computers, video, animation, social media, and other digital media yet unknown. Traditional printers have had an extremely difficult time making the transition to digital media and need leaders who can think outside the box (or press sheet!). In addition, new companies that specialize in digital media need leaders, too, who can think in a trans-media sort of way...which includes print. In today's world, the message must be disseminated through multiple channels in order to deliver that message to the right person at the right time through the receiver's media of choice. This program is needed to help manage businesses in all forms of digital media. I particularly like the proposal's comment that the program addresses a continuing need: "The re-invention of graphic communications organizations."

3. Comment on the plans and expectations for continuing program development and self-assessment.

I have commented briefly on this already in the last paragraph of Question 1.

In addition to what I've already said, it appears that a great deal of thought was given to the *Program Level Outcomes Assessment Plan*. However, based upon the University of Houston's experience with both SACS and ACCGC Accreditation Agencies, it appears that the outcomes are a bit too complex (we have been told by both agencies to simplify our assessment plans, which originally resembled those presented in the MSMAAT proposal).

Second, I noted that the benchmark for all the assessments is a course grade. Again, SACS does *not* allow grades to be used as benchmarks.

Finally, I note that *all* the timelines begin with the phrase "The Course Professor..." It has been our experience with SACS and ACCGC that there needs to be *outside* confirmation of outcomes. Again, this substantiates the need for an Advisory Board.

Even though the assessment plan is certainly workable, I suggest that the SMS faculty consult the appropriate accrediting agencies for advice and adapt their assessment plan to the appropriate guidelines.

4. Assess available support from related programs.

I have briefly commented on this question in the third paragraph of Question 1.

However, I would also add that the range of courses provided by the SMS and available to the MSMAAT students, both as required courses and free electives, is very impressive. I am also pleased to note that MSMAAT students may choose from courses offered by other RIT programs, including sustainability, business, packaging, and quality control. All of these courses will be beneficial to the students enrolled in the program and will provide program graduates with invaluable tools to lead our industry through tumultuous change.

5. What is the evidence of **need** and **demand** for the program locally, in the State, and in the field at large? What is the extent of occupational demand for graduates? What is the evidence that demand will continue?

The Proposal is bi-polar when assessing the need and demand for the program locally, within New York, and nationally/internationally. On the one hand, Page 7 of the Proposal indicates that the entire printing field is expected to contract to 23,600 establishments nationwide in 2017 with a workforce of approximately 56% of the 2005 level. On the other hand, the Proposal suggests that 12 students will enroll in the program yearly (that assertion is substantiated by the RIT department of Graduate, International, and Part-time Enrollment Services). The primary reason for this prediction seems to rely primarily on the RIT brand.

Theoretically, I agree that there is a definite need for this program. I see the transformation of the printing industry, in particular, to a more digital-media business that will need the skills that the proposed program would provide. In fact, I would advise my alumni to take such a program because I really like it from both the macro and micro perspectives.

I firmly believe that the need for this program would be far greater than 12 per year *if* it were offered entirely online. Again, I would advise my graduates to take RIT's program...and have done so for years. However, during the past 22 years, only *one* of my students has matriculated to RIT *because of the distance* and because to take a full-time master's degree program in Rochester means leaving home, jobs, and family for an extended time. (It also means being cold, and Texans don't handle that too well!) I know that RIT faculty are well versed in online education because I first learned how to do online teaching of Graphic Communications from RIT professor Bob Chung.

The Proposal only provides anecdotal evidence of potential demand for graduates. Well-known and respected graphic communications "sage" Frank Romano mentions the global need for about 36,000 job openings in the printing industry due to retirements and other reasons. However, the number of managerial positions that would be filled by these graduates is not addressed. Similarly, letters from Eric Webber, Jon Budington, and Shauna Newcomb note the need for individuals who possess skills the proposed program will provide. However, the need expressed by these individuals is vague and unsubstantiated. I believe the Proposal would be much stronger if the potential demand for graduates was more fully addressed in an empirical way, perhaps through a statewide and/or nationwide survey of printers and other marketing services firms.

One mitigating factor is the overlap of the proposed program with RIT's existing programs. Since students from more than one program would enroll in the overlapped courses, enrollment in individual classes could be far more than 12. That's a very positive benefit.

II. Faculty

6. Evaluate the faculty, individually and collectively, in regard to training, experience, research and publication, professional service, and recognition in the field.

The faculty are eminently qualified to teach this program. However, it should be noted that, of the six individuals chosen to teach the program, three have their terminal degrees from RIT. If I were a member of an accrediting team, I would be concerned about potential "inbreeding."

Barbara Birkett (Note: the lack of dates on Dr. Birkett's vita makes answering these questions very difficult)

- *Training:* Dr. Birkett is well prepared in the areas of business management and accounting.
- *Experience:* Dr. Birkett lists graphic-communications-related experience at the management level, but the absence of dates on her vita makes it impossible to judge the extent of her graphic-related experience.
- *Research and Publication:* In addition to her dissertation, Dr. Birkett lists only one publication, which is a co-authored textbook. This is a minimal history of research and publication.
- *Professional Service:* Dr. Birkett lists membership on several RIT committees and her service as Graduate Coordinator and Program Chair in the School of Media Sciences. However, she does not indicate service to professional associations. Given the graphics-related professional associations and the leadership opportunities available in those groups, this is surprising.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Unable to comment.

Chris Bondy

- *Training:* Professor Bondy is well prepared to teach in the field of graphic communications. His Masters and earlier degrees are well suited to the field and his doctoral work in Computing and Information Sciences is quite appropriate.
- *Experience:* Professor Bondy has extensive teaching and industry experience that well prepares him to teach the MSMAAT program.
- *Research and Publication:* Professor Bondy lists several trade journal articles among his publications. He also notes that he was awarded two US patents. I am impressed with his patents, but am surprised that he has not had peer-reviewed publications.
- *Professional Service:* Professor Bondy notes that he has served RIT as the Administrative Chair in the School of Media Sciences. However, he does not list any service to the graphic communications teaching profession. Given the graphics-related professional associations and the leadership opportunities available in those groups, this is surprising.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Professor Bondy, having served in executive management positions in several international firms, is well known and respected in the graphic communications field.

Christine Heusner

- *Training:* Professor Heusner's educational background (MFA and BA) is highly appropriate for the artistic aspects of graphic communications. The courses she lists as having taught at RIT reflect this background. It appears as if she is well qualified for the MSMAAT program.

- *Experience:* Professor Heusner lists several professional jobs in the fields of photography and design. This experience will be useful for the MSMAAT program.
- *Research and Publication:* Although Professor Heusner does not list any refereed publications, she does list numerous solo, duo, and group exhibitions of her work. Given her background and expertise, these shows would count as an impressive publication record.
- *Professional Service:* Professor Heusner has served her profession by serving on or leading numerous panels and lectures. She also lists two professional memberships. I would advise her to take on leadership roles within these or other professional organizations.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Unable to comment.

Myrtle Jones

- *Training:* Professor Jones' academic history, which includes a Master of Arts in Publishing Studies that emphasized the digital distribution of intellectual property, is very well suited to teaching in the MSMAAT program. The certificate programs she lists in her vita are also excellent preparation for this program.
- *Experience:* Professor Jones lists seven years of related work experience. The jobs she has held in industry provide excellent background for teaching in the MSMAAT program.
- *Research and Publication:* None listed in her vita. This is troubling.
- *Professional Service:* Professor Jones lists membership in several groups that related directly to the MSMAAT program. I would advise her to take on leadership roles within these or other professional organizations.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Unable to comment.

Bruce Leigh Myers

- *Training:* Dr. Myers' educational background, which spans from Associate to Doctoral degrees, is particularly appropriate for teaching in the MSMAAT program. His academic programs appear to have given him the ability to not only know "how" to accomplish graphic communications tasks, but also to understand the "impact" of those communications. Excellent background!
- *Experience:* Dr. Myers has extensive industrial experience, especially related to sales within the color-control field and the processes of color control themselves. His teaching experience is solid, too, having served as instructor and professor at both New York University and RIT.
- *Research and Publication:* Excellent. Of all the vitas I've reviewed for this Proposal, Dr. Myers' is the most impressive. Ranging from technical presentations at highly regarded symposiums to refereed journal articles, Dr. Myers has an enviable research and publication record.
- *Professional Service:* Dr. Myers' service record seems to be confined to roles within RIT. Given the graphics-related professional associations and the leadership opportunities available in those groups, this is surprising.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Dr. Myers is well known within the Graphic Communications field. This is exemplified by, among other things, his industry-wide awards and the over 500 LinkedIn members who are connected to him.

Michael Riordan

- *Training:* Professor Riordan's educational background is appropriate for his role as professor in the MSMAAT program.
- *Experience:* Based upon his vita, it appears that Professor Riordan has some industry-related experience, primarily as RIT Prepress Facilities Manager and as a consultant. I am impressed with his consultancy activities because working with real world companies

to solve real world problems keep him up to date in the field.

- *Research and Publication:* Like Dr. Myers, Professor Riordan has an impressive scholarship record. His publications range from the proceedings of prestigious symposia to juried photography exhibitions and articles in respected trade journals. He also has an impressive presentation record at national trade shows and respected conferences.
- *Professional Service:* Professor Riordan's service record seems to be confined to roles within RIT. Given the graphics-related professional associations and the leadership opportunities available in those groups, this is surprising.
- *Recognition in the Field:* Professor Riordan is extremely well known and respected in the graphic communications field. This is exemplified by the number of invited presentations in his record as well as LinkedIn site, which indicates he has over 500 followers.

7. Assess the faculty in terms of **size and **qualifications**. What are plans for future staffing?**

Given the projected enrollment of 12 students per year, the *size* of the faculty is more than adequate. However, as noted in the Proposal, the faculty will not be dedicated to the MSMAAT program alone, but will also teach students enrolled in other undergraduate and graduate courses.

I did not find projections for future staffing in the proposal.

8. Evaluate credentials and involvement of **adjunct and **support faculty**.**

I have already evaluated the vitas of all faculty members whose vitas appear in the Proposal. I am not aware of any adjunct or support faculty who will be teaching in the MSMAAT program.

III. Resources

9. Comment on the adequacy of physical **resources and **facilities**, e.g., library, computer, and laboratory facilities; practica and internship sites; and support services for the program, including use of resources outside the institution.**

Having visited RIT on several occasions and seeing the facilities first hand, I have no concern about the physical resources and facilities available to this program. This is especially true since the new MSMAAT program will share these extensive resources and facilities with existing programs. I noted that the Proposal indicates that no new resources will be necessary.

10. What is the **institution's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the operating budget, faculty salaries, and the number of faculty lines relative to student numbers and workload.**

Although I cannot comment on the entire institution's commitment, the commitment of the faculty of the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences is evident.

11. Describe the alignment of student support services with the nature of the proposed student body.

No basis for assessment.

IV. Summary Comments and Additional Observations

12. Summarize the **major strengths and weaknesses** of the program as proposed with particular attention to feasibility of implementation and appropriateness of objectives for the degree offered. Include any further observations important to the evaluation of this program proposal and provide any recommendations for the proposed program.

I believe that the *concept* of this program is extremely sound and that it is needed for both a national and international audience. I believe that RIT has sufficient resources to make it happen and that its faculty will do an excellent job delivering it.

However, I believe that this Proposal is weak. In particular, if I were a State of New York Higher Education Administrator, I would demand at least some empirical data showing the potential demand for the program. I believe, too, that the vitae, as presented by the faculty, do not provide a statewide reviewer with sufficient information as to make a reasonable decision to accept or deny the Proposal based upon the faculty qualifications. Lack of dates in some of the vitae is especially worrisome. Finally, lack of evidence of advisory board input into the new program and this Proposal is troublesome.

Readers should also be aware that I am a full professor in a Research One University. As such, my expectations for research and professional service may not be in line with that of RIT or other universities in New York. So, my comments should be tempered by this caveat.