

Illinois Wesleyan University Assessment Reports 2024-2025

BA in Art & Design

During the 2024–25 assessment cycle, the School of Art & Design assessed four student learning goals for BA students: (1) visual competency, (2) critical, creative, and conceptual thinking, (3) communication and collaboration, and (4) engagement in work and study. These goals were measured through evaluations of student progress folders and artwork submitted to the Spring 2025 juried student exhibition, using a standardized rubric. Seven students (4 seniors, 3 sophomores) were evaluated. The average scores were: Visual Impact (2.7), Conceptual Impact (2.4), Communication (3.4), and Engagement (3.3). Although our BA benchmarks require 65% of students to score 3 or higher and 100% to exceed a score of 2, only 2 of 7 students met the target in Goal 2 (Conceptual Impact). This indicates a significant area for improvement. Faculty evaluated the data collaboratively on March 26, 2025, using student folders and juried show submissions. The process reinforced the importance of the juried show as a unified assessment point. The evaluation revealed a need for greater emphasis on conceptual development. In response, the unit plans to enhance studio instruction in this area. With the hiring of a new tenure-track faculty member in Fall 2025, the department anticipates stronger instructional support to better achieve its learning outcomes.

BFA in Art & Design

The School of Art & Design assessed four learning goals during the 2024–25 assessment cycle: (1) creation of competent visual works, (2) critical, creative, and conceptual thinking, (3) effective communication and collaboration, and (4) engagement in work and study. Measures included evaluations of student folders containing academic and studio work, and their artwork submissions to the 2025 juried student exhibition. Three BFA seniors and seven BFA sophomores were assessed using a rubric aligned with these goals. Data revealed that while students performed near or above the target score of 3 (Advanced) in visual impact (2.9), communication (3.3), and engagement (3.5), they underperformed in conceptual impact (1.9), falling short of expectations. Only one student scored 3 or higher in Goal 2: critical, creative, and conceptual thinking. Faculty evaluated the data collaboratively, using both submitted work and classroom interactions. The results emphasized the need to strengthen conceptual development, particularly for transfer students and in light of reduced faculty staffing. In response, the program plans to prioritize conceptual instruction in studio practice and will benefit from a newly hired tenure-track professor in Fall 2025. Improved staffing is expected to enhance the program's capacity to meet its learning objectives and support student growth.

Computer Science

The Computer Science (CS) department administers a standardized test – the Major Field Test, developed by ETS (Educational Testing Services) – to all graduating seniors each year. This test provides an overall score for the department as well as subscores of three content areas that we

can compare to other departments who administered the test.

The learning goals for the Computer Science (CS) department are clustered into “Content,” “Skills,” and “Communication” (listed in detail in Appendix A). The CS department administers the Major Field Test (MFT) to graduating seniors to assess the first two of these clusters: Content and Skills. From our Yearly Action Plan: “The MFT is well-targeted, as the three areas it tests and for which it separately reports score information are directly related to our department’s student learning goals.”

Results of the test are reported in three ways:

1. individual students’ overall scores,
2. mean overall scores (across a cohort), and
3. mean scores (also cross-cohort) within each of the three subject areas that comprise the test.

All of these scores can be compared to results from students taking the same test nationwide to determine a percentile rank for each. It is with this comparative percentile data that we assess our students’ performance.

The last annual assessment report was submitted in 2021. However, data was gathered each year, so this report will give an update on the entire series. An important new development in 2025 was that the department was unsuccessful in convincing any students to participate in program assessment, and so the series ends in 2024.

Looking at the series as a whole, the most important takeaway is that scores have decreased over the course of the 13 years data has been collected.

Economics

Summary not provided.

Math

The math department implemented several direct measures and one indirect measure this year. Please see the next section for descriptions. All student learning goals were assessed by at least one measure. The student learning goals are listed at the end of this document.

The sophomore and senior assessment tests are taken by all math majors at two times during their years at IWU. Sophomore projects and capstones are completed during the second and fourth years by all math majors. Capstone projects were deleted from the math major requirements starting in 2025-26, but will continue to be offered until the class of 2028 graduates. All graduating seniors must complete the senior exit interview form. Students must opt into the Putnam exam. We typically see approximately 3 students take this exam each year. Thus, many of our assessment tools give class-wide longitudinal data.

Political Science

Several years ago the political science faculty adopted a list of nine specific learning outcomes under the three broad headings of knowledge, values, and skills. Each year we have assessed our

students' mastery of one of these learning outcomes. Given how long it would take us to formally assess all 9 of these outcomes, we make no assumption that we will generate longitudinal data on all 9 categories. Instead, we discuss these learning outcomes at department meetings, and we assess one of them each year in a way that takes advantage of the assessable materials we have available (presentations, papers, etc.). See the end of this document for the complete list of outcomes. This year elected to assess whether our students "Know the processes, institutions, and contexts that shape politics at local, national, transnational, and international levels."

We used papers written in PSCI 210, our team-taught seminar on democracy. This seminar involves two papers: one that runs only a few pages, and the second (the one assessed here) that typically runs about 10-12 pages with multiple sources expected, drawing on scholarly literature. Students are asked to pick a country that went through a transition into or away from democratic practice and to explain that transition, situating it historically and within some of the theoretical literature we read in class. In total, the faculty read 10 of the papers this spring, focusing mainly on papers written by political science majors. Working in pairs, each pair read 5 papers, which allowed each of us to have a partner with whom to compare notes.

School of Music

As we review the comprehensive results from the assessment, it is clear that students are enjoying their experience and training within our program. Still, we are aware of the areas of growth within course offerings, class topics, and experiences that we can offer. As we review the outcomes in the early Fall faculty meetings, we will analyze the results while also thinking about how we might improve our plan, assessment strategies, and collection. Alignment within the different areas of our program might prove to be tricky, as instrumental and vocal areas do critique different things, but we can work to find similarities to find cohesion in our assessments. For our performance assessment year, the faculty will assess the categories within the performance assessment to see how we might better yield numerical results that still reflect the outcomes of our learning goals. Initial thoughts include scale/chromatic accuracy, sight-reading examples based on skill level, and informal discussion with students about how they might approach assigned music by touching on key musical concepts (phrasing, dynamics, articulation, etc.) and then have the student demonstrate this within their own playing/singing to assess skill level of creating said musical concepts. The full-time faculty will discuss the results of the comprehensive assessment to better cultivate a plan for performance-based review. Faculty will also be asked to connect with colleagues at peer institutions to better understand what common assessment practices are found elsewhere that might benefit our approach.

For the theoretical component, the intention to integrate more melodic and harmonic dictations and singing will improve the outcomes of student success in this area. We will be adding a virtual theory supplemental material for the incoming class to add a built-in resource that students can access and reiterate the material on their own. This, paired with continued tutoring options and more at-home assignments to practice ear-training

will improve the testing of theoretical concepts. The historical instruction is typically quite challenging since most information is new and requires a different approach than that of theory and performance. The School of Music will begin the first year student experience with a two-day music orientation where we discuss how to succeed as a music student and how to think about each area of their instruction uniquely and successfully. Through providing outlets like this in advance, it is our hope that students will walk in on day one with more confidence and a stronger idea of how to engage with the content of each area.

As is stated within our Year 3 assessment, we hope to integrate the following changes:

- Short Term:
- Cohesion within the theoretical training of incoming students with a detailed summer theory packet.
- A SoM pre-orientation orientation to go over fundamental skills that are unique to the study of music and artistic performance.
- Continued relationship-building with area schools and teachers.
- Curricular considerations to involve more ethnomusicological topics.
- Guest Artist plans within each instrument area
- Long Term:
- Marching Band Techniques course for MuEd degree plan.
- Evaluating History courses and how we offer them within a student's 4 years here.

As we return, the full-time faculty members will review our StrAP process and submit any proposed changes to the assessment committee. Our year one cycle will commence at the conclusion of the spring 2026 semester, providing us with ample time to make necessary changes and prepare for the yearly process. We are confident in the improvements we intend to make and will look forward to sharing the progress our program and students will make.

School of Nursing

Two direct measures of student learning used within the School of Nursing are the NCLX-RN® first time pass rates, and beginning the fall of 2022, evaluation scores from the Elsevier HESI Specialty Exams and Compass NCLEX-Prep programs. From 2010 through 2019, the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI) pre and post scores from first year to graduation were used in assessing critical thinking of the nursing students. The change to the specialty exam scores was made in response to the pandemic (requiring the CCTDI to be suspended indefinitely) and the ability to implement a new measure of critical thinking.

School of Theatre Arts

The jury process for the 2024-2025 academic year underwent significant adjustments due to the appointment of a new program head for Music Theatre. These changes were implemented after a lengthy discussion and evaluation process that included input from students, full time faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff. It was determined that the previous jury process was duplicative with

other assessment opportunities in SoTA (including pre-screen auditions, seasonal auditions, final project deliverables in voice lessons and acting classes, etc). Student and faculty sustainability was a large consideration in the refinement of this process. The shift toward a more intentional and direct process of assessment based on student goal setting as the foundation provided a more functional and organic feedback process at the conclusion of the juries. In the weeks after our juries, which took place before the start of classes on our Mirza Stage and in the CNS large dance studio, students were encouraged to have in person conversations with the faculty in attendance to discuss the written feedback that was provided.

In summary, our new Music Theatre jury requirements included:

1. All students will present 2 songs that are new for you in the Fall semester. These songs should be full songs, but should not exceed 5 minutes. The overall requirements are the same for all four classes. The material choices should be in line with the guidance in the student handbook about which class is working on what genre in lessons/coachings.
2. Responses to the following questions prior to the jury:
 - a. “What are the challenges of these pieces for you (technique and artistic)? Please describe a technical and artistic challenge for each of your pieces.”
 - b. “How have you been working to address those challenges? Please describe your process for each of the challenges mentioned above.”
 - c. “What is your artistic purpose statement for this jury? In answering this question some things to think about include: why you chose these songs, what is your intention as an artist in telling these stories, what is your artistic process in approaching material and how does that relate to this jury, how does this jury relate to your overall goals of the training journey, etc.”
3. A 90 minute dance jury that will include the learning of a brand new dance combination in the style of a traditional Broadway musical theatre production number. In addition to the new MT jury requirements, it was determined that a new BFA in MT Benchmark Rubric should be implemented. The previous Rubric used for assessment was created in 2012 and several aspects no longer reflected current pedagogical thought about musical theatre training assessment. The SoTA Mission Statement includes the phrase: “We embrace the power of storytelling and lead with integrity and kindness.” With this in mind the learning goal of “Storytelling” was chosen from the Rubric to provide the data set for this assessment.

As listed in the rubric, “Storytelling” is defined as “The ability to synthesize current skill sets with perspective and preparation in service of the character and story, commands attention, creates the ‘lean in’ effect, and has performance sparkle.” This learning goal is listed under the “Artistic Potential” umbrella and encompasses the synthesis of acting, vocal, and movement skills in the performance of Musical Theatre. The students were scored on a scale of 1 to 6+ (6.5), with the average score listed below by year along with a few overall observations.

In general, the assessment results point to skill development and integration at an appropriate level for the training benchmarks. In some cases there is an above average level of skill apparent. Improvements could be made across the board in the physical aspect of “Storytelling” that connects an awareness of physical presence to an expression of journey and character that is focused, specific, and appropriate for the style of material.

There is a concerning lack of work ethic and commitment to training that is apparent in the current Junior and especially the Senior classes. It should be noted that last academic year was disruptive with the departure of the Head of the BFA in MT Program midway through the Fall semester. There is still an emotional hangover that the students in general seem reluctant to move on from. The amount of pushback and reticence to engage in new processes and perspectives is visible and in some cases has been verbally expressed directly to faculty. New faculty have, to the best of their ability, been transparent and open with their process in an attempt to rebuild the culture of the program along the lines of the mission statement. The Freshman and Sophomore classes have mostly embraced the shift in culture, but leadership at the student level comes from the top. Overall, the Senior class falls below the stated SoTA Mission to “...lead with integrity and kindness.” As the year transitions into academic year 2025-2026, there is guarded optimism among the faculty that the culture of the MT Program within SoTA will steadily improve into a healthier and appropriate level in order for all students to achieve their highest potential. In order to develop a consistent sense of assessment, next year we will once again use “Storytelling” from the “Artistic Potential” Category in the Benchmark Assessment Rubric.

World Languages Literatures and Cultures

Given that we are assessing only majors, and there was only one Hispanic Studies major in the course, the summary is very limited. Thus, it is not a representative sample. The sole major, 1 student out of 12 students in the course, received a holistic score of 2.5 out of 4. Since a score of 2-3 is considered to achieve Milestones, it appears that we reached our goal of developing students’ critical thinking in the complexity and diversity of concepts of literature of Spanish-speaking countries. However, we need more data, from more students, specifically all enrolled in the course, to have a reasonable understanding of attainment of our goal. We will need to repeat the data collection for another year to get a better assessment. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Hispanic Studies Program assessed critical thinking of students in one literature course using the AAC&U Critical Thinking direct measure. Preliminary results show that our students are meeting our goals. Hispanic Studies is planning to address our curriculum and the low enrollments during our Self-study in order to have more students and more accurately assess our goals.