CREATING THE STRATEGIC GENERALIST
a proposed curricular model for graphic design education

by tyler galloway

Assistant Professor, Graphic Design
Kansas City Art Institute
Team player with strong collaborative skills.

- High level of interpersonal skills to work effectively with others
- Ability to interface and communicate effectively with internal and external team members in a positive manner

Expected to work across all segments of the business.

This position will also assist multiple state departments in their general communication.

Essential duties/responsibilities

* Works with diverse teams to create design solutions to public communication and outreach problems
THE INTEGRATION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

The teaching of graphic design focuses increasingly on collaborative efforts, a phenomenon that reflects the scale of contemporary problems, the reality of design offices, and the nature of projects that require expertise outside graphic design for their resolution. The spread of technical graphic design knowledge beyond the profession necessitates a shift in the function of designers.

– Andrew Blauvelt and Meredith Davis
DEFINING A T-SHAPED PERSON
DEFINING A T-SHAPED PERSON

A person who has a broad base of knowledge and experiences...
DEFINING A T-SHAPED PERSON

A person who has a broad base of knowledge and experiences...

coupled with one or more specialized areas of interest and skill.

– Tim Brown, Ideo
graphic design – specialist

- writing/criticism
- research

sub-specialties

- motion graphics
- environmental
- information
- interaction
- publication
- advertising

the world – generalist
DEFINING A T-SHAPED PERSON

depth of knowledge

interaction research environmental publication signage accounting
WHY T-SHAPED PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT
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multiple perspectives enhance teamwork
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- multiple perspectives enhance teamwork
- bridge gaps well
WHY T-SHAPED PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT

- multiple perspectives enhance teamwork
- bridge gaps well
- produce good, original insights
within it. My issue with specialization is that, in training students to go deep within one area, such depth of focus renders them unable to see the unity in things, or more simply put, to effectively participate in ‘big picture’ thinking and ultimately the design of solutions for big problems. I believe designers should be a part of teams that address problems of conflict, pollution and healthcare. Fritjof

– Terry Irwin
WHY T-SHAPED PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT

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WHY T-SHAPED PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT

- valued in the workplace
- meaningful specialization will occur in practice
- cross-disciplinary knowledge contributes to success
- essential for research, management, and writing
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

undergraduate

general ed  general ed  major  major  major

particularly:  linguistics
cognitive psych
anthropology
sociology
tion of our growth. In the past twenty-five years, graduate study has become recognized both by young designers and their potential employers as a valuable asset for professional practice. But the greater significance of graduate schools is their contribution of research and theoretical exploration. Whereas undergraduate schools must necessarily concentrate on a broad spectrum of fundamentals, graduate programs provide specialized focus and faculty resources. These graduate programs are developing much-needed theory that will, in turn, advance the level of graphic design’s professional practice and produce far better educators with advanced degrees.

– Katherine McCoy
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

graduate

elective | major studio | major seminar
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

PhD

- electives
- electives
- electives
- design research
- colloquia
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

professional practice

| general ed | general ed | major | major | major |

→ sub-specialized practice
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

professional practice

sub-specializations balanced by generalities in other areas

broad media coverage

audience focus
THE PATH TO SPECIALIZATION

professional practice

depth of knowledge

environmental
publication

signage

teaching
WHERE UNDERGRAD FITS IN:
A CASE STUDY
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A CASE STUDY

KANSAS CITY ART INSTITUTE
A four-year college of art and design
attract a particular type of student
rich visual arts culture
top-quality studio art electives
funding focused on design/art
creative professional life
specialized:

- cultural perspective
specialized:

- cultural perspective
- set of experiences
specialized:
  - cultural perspective
  - set of experiences
  - approach to problems
WEAKNESSES OF GENERALIZING
WEAKNESSES OF GENERALIZING

isolation
WEAKNESSES OF GENERALIZING

- isolation
- breadth and depth of liberal arts offerings
WEAKNESSES OF GENERALIZING

- isolation
- breadth and depth of liberal arts offerings
- limited library resources
WEAKNESSES OF GENERALIZING

- isolation
- breadth and depth of liberal arts offerings
- limited library resources
- tuition driven
A CURRICULUM TO CREATE T-SHAPED PEOPLE
A CURRICULUM TO CREATE T-SHAPED PEOPLE

\[ \text{priorities:} \]
simultaneous media approach
utilizing sub-specialists in the classroom
A CURRICULUM TO CREATE T-SHAPED PEOPLE

freshman

- fall:
  - liberal arts
  - design history
  - graphic design
  - fine arts / electives

- spring:
  - art history
  - art history

sophomores

- liberal arts
- graphic design
- fine arts / electives
- design history

juniors

- liberal arts
- graphic design
- fine arts / electives
- art history
- art history
A CURRICULUM TO CREATE T-SHAPED PEOPLE

seniors, fall semester: specialized studio predetermined set of issues allow for “problem finding”
A CURRICULUM TO CREATE T-SHAPED PEOPLE

seniors, spring semester:
  degree project (not a “thesis”)
  student-defined problem
  sub-specialty focused:
  design’s use, audience, media