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From Script to Screen to Syllabus: The Path to Curriculum Design for Undergraduate Film Production Programs

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FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN TO SYLLABUS: THE PATH TO CURRICULUM
DESIGN FOR UNDERGRADUATE FILM PRODUCTION PROGRAMS

by

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FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN TO SYLLABUS: THE PATH TO CURRICULUM
DESIGN FOR UNDERGRADUATE FILM PRODUCTION PROGRAMS

Peter J. Muir, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2013

Nothing has impacted western society more than media. Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dali Lama, wrote that "film and television, newspapers, books and radio together have an influence over individuals that was unimagined a hundred years ago." The responsibility of creating these cultural artifacts, particularly within motion picture production, is a delicate balance between artistic vision and craft-oriented vocation; the contemplative *mind skills* of a wise citizen with the functional *hand skills* of a tradesperson. Undergraduate film production education provides the best avenue for development of this duality. However, within these programs, little is known regarding how curriculum is fashioned and the type of decisions that affect film production education.

Curriculum designers from ten institutions were interviewed regarding the process of academic planning in order to uncover any grounded theory of design. Using Charmaz' constructivist approach, emergent codes were identified for each institution and then clustered around common themes among all of the participants. This process revealed nine critical elements that had the greatest impact on the design process: departmental structure, location of the institution, institutional and departmental mission,

liberal arts outcomes, industry trends, resources, student demand, technology, and faculty beliefs. Lattuca and Stark's sociocultural model of curriculum design was used as a lens to establish a theoretical framework that describes the current state of the film curriculum design process. The case is made for recommended changes to the intentionality, consistency and accountability of film production curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The past 50 years have seen a dramatic shift in the focus of higher education.

Many liberal arts institutions whose *raison d'etre* is the education of the mind have been

supplanted, or diluted as purists would argue, by a more blended vocational approach; an

equal emphasis on education of the *hands*. A vast majority of colleges have had to adjust

their curriculum and degree offerings to attract students by distancing themselves from

the liberal arts to focus on career training and professional education (Magner, 1994).

Film production is a discipline whose arrival to the world of academia has

brought a barrage of tech-savvy artisans. In 2001, there were 650 colleges of motion

picture arts in the United States (Sabal, 2001) and current enrollment numbers suggest the

trend has not yet reached maturity. However, within the formal structures of the

academy, questions have surfaced regarding the academic rigor of film production and

how curriculum is formed or evolved within this applied discipline. Can film production

education embrace the required etiquette that warrants a place at the academic dinner

party, or is it best relegated to the downstairs children's table?

Importance of the Media

The construction of visual and sonic artifacts grants vast influential power to the

creators of the content. Speaking of this power, renowned filmmaker George Lucas said,

"I think of it not so much about who has access to what technology as about who knows

how to create and express themselves in the new language of the screen" (as cited in

Daly, 2004, para. 7). Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dali Lama, wrote that "film and television, newspapers, books and radio together have an influence over individuals that was unimagined a hundred years ago. This power confers great responsibility on all who work in the media" (Gyatso, 1999, p. 210). Given that media has such a significant role in molding cultural perceptions and societal view points, it would be logical to assume that the training of content creators would be a prestigious blend of academic rigor and aesthetic prowess. However, traditionally, this has not been the case.

Film Production Education

The initial conduit of production education was through on-the-job training and apprenticeships. In particular, the Hollywood system modeled an informal mentorship at all levels of the production process, from screenwriters through to film editors (Pawlak, 2011). As with other applied disciplines such as law and medicine that began life in this model, the need for a formalized training system has made this apprenticeship system obsolete.

Production education developed and evolved along three distinct tracks: the trade school, the film school and film program within undergraduate education. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is the preferable nomenclature for trade schools such as *Full Sail Academy* in Florida or *Compass Film Academy* in Michigan, whose mantra is real world instruction – professional rather than academic. Palmer and Gaunt (2007) noted that CTE institutions have traditionally been viewed in the academic community as the track for low-achieving, non college-bound students with low impact graduate outcomes. The influence of CTE programs in graduating students who will engage in the message

creation process is generally limited to more utilitarian and technical specializations within the lighting or camera department. These are secondary roles to the designers and artisans who cast and create the vision and, as such, CTE education is outside the scope of this inquiry.

A film school is generally described as a separate, predominately graduate-focused department within universities. Johnson (1991) argued that the physical resources available at a film school provide graduates with the key to employment: a portfolio or showreel that serves as the calling card to the industry. Statistics show this to be the case with an estimated 35% of first time directors transitioning through a film school in 1989, compared to 72% in 1992 (Hawkins, 1996). No doubt that number would be considerably higher today. Svitil (1990) asked various film industry personnel about their impression of film schools at that time and one filmmaker said, "I don't think it's to the point where it's as necessary as going to medical school is to being a doctor, but it's getting that way" (p. 39). However, due to their access to high level equipment, film schools are expensive and burden students with more debt stacked on to their undergraduate bills. Questions should be asked as to why graduate education is necessary in this discipline.

The third path is four-year institutions that offer a blend of traditional liberal arts classes alongside a practical, vocationally-focused major in what Berberet and Wong (1995) call *The New American College Model*. Sabal (2001) states that liberal arts outcomes are inherent in the media production process: outcomes such as communication, critical thinking and analysis, leadership, and management. Thus film

production is much more suited to this environment – superior to the apprenticeship or trade school system where liberal arts are absent and trades are emphasized, and superior to the film school model which adds extraneous stratums of time and money.

The Liberal Arts Tradition

Liberal arts, as opposed to the mechanical arts, originated in the middle ages as the summation of secular learning for the well-rounded student, and involved primarily the study of arts and sciences (Wagner, 1983). In the United States, it has evolved within the modern university to represent the notion of a generalized, transferable, set of courses that is the homogenization of an intellectual learning experience, irrespective of a specialized discipline.

This concept of a general education has become a lightning rod on many university campuses over the past 50 years as the dark clouds of specialization, accountability and work force training continue to brew over the humanities. The tension strikes at the core of the mission and purpose of higher education and what it means to grant a university degree in a consumer-driven environment (Breneman, 1994).

Film production provides a microcosm of the institutional debates regarding liberal arts versus professionalization, theory versus practice, and head skills versus hand skills. Heavily entrenched in the liberal arts tradition is the notion of film as theory or more accurately the textual critique of audio-visual artifacts more commonly referred to as *film studies*, *media literacy* or plain *media education* (Brown, 1998; Hobbs, 1998). Indeed there is a relative glut of information regarding semiotic analysis, narrative structures, character development and thematic message delivery within movies, and

organizations such as the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) actively promote the depth of academic studies in film criticism.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of job openings for film theorists and yet in many institutions, film production is looked upon as the unwanted stepchild to the more academically mature profile of film theory (Blanchard & Christ, 1993). While production has high employment potential, the perception of many in the academy is that the jobs are utilitarian and involve little intellectual engagement; the trade school view. This observation is fostered not only by the vocational focus, but also by the lack of academic discourse regarding film production education. Yet as MacDonald (2002) states, "without filmmakers there are no film scholars" (p. 204), and thus the understanding of film production education would provide more critical insight into more formal media literacy analysis.

Professionalizing Production

For film production to be recognized as a legitimate academic discipline, it must follow the path of professionalization forged by pioneering disciplines such as law and medicine. Each of these applied areas has a common origin story beginning within the apprentice model, progressing to professional schools, struggling with the tension of theory versus practice, seeing the advantage of a broader scope of education, and expanding to include undergraduate liberal arts experiences (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). This is a strikingly similar evolution to film production education. Both law and medicine garnered legitimacy and prestige in rapid fashion at the turn of the 20th century, due in large part to the introduction of professional associations that engaged in

programmatic accreditation and curriculum streamlining (Lagemann, 1983). This model

is also seen in journalism, a field more closely related to film production.

Professional associations. Given the disparate skills of audio visual production

and the variety of genres involved in narrative storytelling, there is no single organization

that oversees production education. While there is a professional association for

television production, that is, the Broadcast Education Association (BEA), and for audio

production with the educational arm of the Audio Engineering Society (AES), the closest

fit to film production is the University Film and Video Association (UFVA). The UFVA

is an international organization that serves to develop and encourage film and video

production faculty and acts as a central resource on film and video instruction

(http://www.ufva.org/about/constitution). Apart from hosting an annual professional

conference predominately focused on critiquing the professional practice of its members,

the UFVA also publishes the *Journal of Film and Video*, the most erudite writing within

the body of film production scholars. While this organization serves to encourage and

support community amongst faculty, it is not involved in accreditation.

Accreditation. University accreditation exists at both institutional and

programmatic levels. Professional accreditation is usually enacted through associated

professional bodies who exercise quality control over an entire field of study (El-Khawas,

1998).

In arts education, some of the primary accrediting agencies are organizations such

as the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), schools of theatre (NAST) and

schools of art and design (NASAD). Both NAST and NASAD have accreditation

competencies that interface with film production; indeed the competencies are labeled *film and video production* and *film/video* respectively. However their distinctions between general education Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees and professional Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA) programs combined with their arbitrary quantitative requirements do not fit a true liberal arts blend (http://nasad.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/Handbook/NASAD_HANDBOOK_2012-13.pdf)

Curriculum Design

At the core of accreditation efforts is a concern for best practices and quality control over the inputs and outputs of the discipline. The most obvious element is the curriculum by which the knowledge, skills and attributes are transferred to those who will take up the mantle as the next generation of practitioners. Mentkowski and Associates (2000) encourage faculty to see the curriculum as a dynamic schema such that, "thinking through the curriculum is a continuing, essential activity where educators question what ought to happen and how to make it happen in practice" (p. 288).

From the inception of knowledge methodization in the middle ages, through the positivist approach inspired by the industrial revolution, to current post-modern, constructivist models, curriculum design has continued to evolve as scholars learn more about how learning works (Doll, 2008; Lattuca & Stark, 2009). A seminal movement in design has been the paradigm shift from a teacher-centric curriculum that focused on faculty expertise, to a learner-centric partnership with students as active learners and participants (Barr & Tagg, 1995). In conjunction with this shift, the emergence of learning outcomes or the outcomes assessment movement has sought to measure student

achievement against clear and stated goals and use the data to inform improvements (Ewell, 2002; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

While the use of learning outcomes has become common at the institutional level and the individual class level, there is a lack of attention at the program level; the department primarily responsible for facilitating the learning (Jones, 2002; Lattuca & Stark, 2009). In disciplines with professional accrediting agencies, these governing bodies have generally taken up the mantle of prescribing outcomes for majors, with varying degrees of success. For the discipline of film production, the outcomes required by NAST and NASAD appear insufficient since they are not purpose-built. Blanchard and Christ (1993) wrote, "if current outcomes are not deemed satisfactory and changes in them are desired, then the curricula will need to be changed to produce the desired outcomes" (p. 14).

As a result of this insubstantiality, the film production curriculum design process must be critically studied with particular attention given to how the decisions are made and enacted. Miller (2009) encourages faculty to examine their practices and strive for continual improvement because of the high stakes. Curriculum decisions have implications not only for the success of the film graduates as they seek to enter the workforce with marketable skills, but also in the context of those that will create and influence culture as the wise citizens of the twenty-first century.

The Problem

While production education aims to enable future content creators to play a salient role in shaping culture, the process of how this learning is shaped and framed is

unknown. Discussion and analysis of curriculum design theory within film production is conspicuously absent from the conversation. Liberal arts outcomes are inherent in the film production process, but the level of professionalization of the discipline within the traditional university system has remained unstudied.

The sparseness of academic discourse is another signifier of an academically immature discipline. Limited studies have ranged from examining secondary teacher inputs at a regional level (McCoy, 2005) and instructional strategies (Norton & Hathaway, 2010), through instructional methodologies of teaching television lighting (Hoerner, 1998), to a limited quantitative analysis of employer perceptions of mass media graduates compared with those of existing employees (Sevening, 2006). To warrant a seat at the academic table and to help elevate the discipline beyond a mere trade, more significant research must take place.

More specifically, critical investigation into film production curriculum at higher education institutions is non-existent. This discipline has entered the world of academia somewhat under the radar, originally taught by faculty with professional backgrounds who are unaccustomed to the highly structured and accountability-focused education environment. There is no information on any form of curriculum design theory - what it would look like and how it could be implemented or how it is affected by a liberal arts context.

The Purpose

Among a sample of institutions that offer film production undergraduate programs, the study sought to discover if there is evidence of common critical elements; a

common disciplinary curriculum design theory that provides direction for the decisions that guide the program and the content of the courses. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine 10-15 higher education undergraduate film production programs for evidence and characteristics of an emerging curriculum design theory for this discipline.

Research Questions

1. How has the professional curriculum of film production been created and refined in this environment, and is there any evidence of a theoretical curriculum frame?

2. How does the curriculum of undergraduate film production programs relate to mission of the institutions that house them?

3. What are the critical features and elements of each of the film production programs studied and how are those features related across the programs?

4. Within any common critical features and elements of the programs studied, is there evidence of an emerging or fully formed curriculum theory?

The Research Significance

As the first study of film production in a higher education setting, this research is beneficial to faculty members and administrators to inform future curriculum design or revision, resource planning, and aid in faculty hire, promotion and tenure decisions. The beginning of a formal theory of curriculum design also provides a greater chance for benchmarking, simplifying the route for smaller institutions to plan and accelerate growth.

Accreditation is a seminal part of increasing the academic prestige of this discipline and aid in creating a culture of assessment and accountability. The

professional body of the UFVA could adopt a potential design theory as a basis of accreditation. This could provide guidelines in the United States where the research is centered, and also in all English-speaking cultures such as the three other major markets for media creation, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. So too, institutional accreditation and assessment continues in importance to colleges and universities that receive federal aid. A strong curriculum rooted in a design theory would aid institutions in addressing the growing level of accountability stipulated by various government agencies.

Standardization of curriculum aids film production students in achieving a holistic educational package. Cohesive degree programs allow for ease of transfer credits and equivalencies. In addition, employers will have confidence that standards are being set and met.

The result of the research also assists secondary school teachers as they formulate and manipulate media production courses in the K-12 system. Knowing the foundations for college level curriculum design means that the high school curriculum can more closely prepare students with better skill sets for tertiary integration.

Definition of Terms

Film production education refers to the applied study of the motion picture production process through all three phases of filmmaking: (a) pre-production, including screenwriting, producing, directing, and production design; (b) production, including cinematography and location camera and sound recording; and (c) post-production, including visual editing, sound design and product delivery.

It is important to note that film production does not refer to the production of audio visual content solely in the film format. The term *film* is used as a synonym for *movie* or *narrative* production or audio visual storytelling in any genre, although primarily fictional, rather than a declaration of a specific type of tactile medium such as 16mm, 35mm or 70mm media. The digital age has made the notion of film somewhat redundant. Some of the production programs in the study have the designation of *media production* but refer to the same core skills and competencies.

CHAPTER II

LIT   ERATURE REVIEW

Film studies courses have become ubiquitous within universities, expounding the role of motion pictures in depicting and influencing cultural values and norms (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2007). Yet the canvas for academic discourse on film production education remains primarily blank despite the next generation of filmmakers playing a significant role in shaping culture well into the twenty-first century. The oft-quoted line from the movie *Spiderman*, "with great power, comes great responsibility" (Spiderman, 2002) is a reminder that those creating content must have an informed worldview of their role in society.

Film production education has not traditionally been acknowledged as having importance within the academy. Production education has similar roots to other professional disciplines; being conceived in the tradition of real world apprenticeships and evolving to a professional school system with applied courses. Since filmmakers have such an impact on culture, it seems evident they should have the best and broadest educational experience available: learning their profession within a liberal arts undergraduate institution.

The liberal arts have a long tradition of holistic education and serve as the bedrock for the modern university curriculum. The tradition of rigor and intellectualism aims to educate students with life skills as wise citizens of their society. However, film and media faculty have run afoul of their liberal arts colleagues, seen more as members of

a discordant tribe that is focused on occupations rather than education (Blanchard &

Christ, 1993).

Other applied disciplines also began life in the sheltered harbor of vocationalism

but weathered the storm of academic inquiry and discourse to earn their academic sea

legs. Historically, the disciplines of law, medicine and journalism have successfully

made the transition of professionalization, progressing through significant stages to be

relevant within the academy. They have each reached a level of academic legitimacy not

yet achieved by film production.

An integral part of the process of legitimacy is the notion of accreditation – a

measure of standards and accountability. Accreditation is a useful tool in establishing

benchmarks for resourcing programs, and there are already forays into film production

accreditation by related disciplines in art and design and theatre. However without an

examination of the current state of production curricula, it is difficult to know exactly

what to accredit. How can best practices of design be codified if there is no starting point

for what is currently transpiring in film production curricula?

Curriculum design theory provides a blueprint for the creation of educational

experiences. Perhaps the most commonly used plan in higher education focuses on the

backwards design model, that is, the creation of overall learning outcomes as the

beginning point of curriculum design, and working backwards to individual class design

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). However there is no information on learning outcomes

within film production. There has been no study into how learning experiences are

created, or any data on decisions within the curriculum design process that would impact the educational journey of the student.

The literature review traces the journey of film; its importance in culture and the pathways of production education; the dilemma of production education in the academy shown through the tension of liberal arts and professionalism; professional accreditation and curriculum design theories. Each piece of the literature review builds towards the case of why film production curriculum must be investigated.

Film as a Cultural Change Agent

The turn of the twentieth century saw some of the greatest change in the shape of western civilization. With the industrial revolution in full swing, new technologies began changing the way people spent their leisure time, perhaps none with such impact as motion pictures (Sklar, 1994). The Lumiere brothers' invention of perforated film combined with Thomas Edison's kinescope and phonograph to establish a new entertainment kingdom of the screen, overthrowing the theatre as the mainstay of leisure (Trav, 2006). So widespread was this revolution that by 1920 over 20,000 movie theatres dotted the United States landscape (http://www.filmsite.org/20sintro.html).

While entertainment was the mainstay of the blooming movie industry, filmmakers began to understand the power of the cinema over and above the written word. Films were unencumbered by the literacy level of the audience and could carry ideological and philosophical messages to the masses with the power to reflect or distort reality (Bazin, 2004).

Early filmmaker D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* is not only recognized as the first successful American feature length film, pioneering innovative storytelling and narrative techniques such as parallel editing, but the film is widely regarded as a rousing endorsement of the Klu Klux Klan (McEwan, 2007). Based on a book called *The Clansman*, *Birth of a Nation* misrepresented the period of reconstruction by presenting African American men as primarily driven by their desire to rape White women. The K.K.K. were seen as the heroes, redeeming the South from this alleged depravity. While the film played well in the southern states, it was banned in cities like Chicago and Denver and caused riots in places such as Boston and Philadelphia. In Lafayette Indiana, a White man killed a Black teenager in response to seeing the movie (Stokes, 2007). The cinema was beginning to flex its newly acquired muscles of social engagement and influence.

During the formative years of cinema, it could be argued that American cinema lapsed behind its European counterparts in both technology and technique. By the early 1920's Russian filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein had created his watershed film *Battleship Potemkin*. As with Griffith's work, Eisenstein had fashioned a new cinema aesthetic in montage editing (LoBrutto, 2005). Also aligned with Griffith, Eisenstein's films were politically charged; he wore his Communist/Bolshevik ideology clearly on his sleeve (Oatley, 2010). One of the most seminal moments in film history is his Odessa Step sequence in which Czarist troupes open fire on the innocents. Film critic Roger Ebert writes, "it is ironic that he did it so well that today, the bloodshed on the Odessa Steps is often referred to as if it really happened" (Ebert, 1998).

With such widespread appeal and impact, it did not take long for film to move from a seditious tool of subverting government policy to a more activist champion of the party line. This is evident particularly during World War II, a period known as the golden age of propaganda filmmaking (Bennett, 2002). German and Allied forces used movies to instill patriotism and incite nationalistic fervor, both in non-fiction or documentary material and in fictional screenplays of the time. Even a classic drama such as *Casablanca* can be read as simply a propaganda film disguised as a love story (Sennett, 2009).

During the past 50 years, film as a cultural text has had a profound effect on the moral and ethical fabric of western culture: no more greatly evidenced than in the United States. Gone is the puritan, primarily Judeo-Christian philosophy that permeated society in the pre-teen revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. Consider the top grossing films of the 1950s that ranged from Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* and *Peter Pan* through to the biblical epics *Ben Hur* and the *Ten Commandments* (http://www.filmsite.org/boxoffice2.html). In contrast, films of the twenty-first century depict a decidedly different culture. From the time the Hays code, a set of puritan guidelines for motion picture content, was abolished in 1968, films have reflected themes that are more humanistic and less constrained by the shackles of moralism in their use of language, in their depictions of violence, and in their sexual imagery (Yagoda, 1980). The tolerance and acceptance of taboos within society has changed and, wardrobe malfunctions notwithstanding, so has the acceptance of what can be shown on screen.

Whether life imitates art or art imitates life is a rhetorical debate, but it is clear that film is a mirror to society – sometimes reflecting and sometimes distorting (Sparks, 2006). Filmmakers have a unique role as literal image bearers as they replicate or influence public opinions and attitudes. It is a select few who have this power and responsibility and thus it would be prudent to study their educational pathways to understand the systems that shape these culture makers.

Beginning of Film Education

The film industry is a complex machine. Each artisan uses their skills to serve the story, making their individual contributions to the art form as invisible as possible, similar to that of an orchestra where each instruments blends into the whole (Shyles, 2007). The audience is unaware of the reality that they are watching different light waves flicker on a screen 24 times per second. Rather, this reality is replaced by the essence of the narrative; the story and the primary cinematic identification with characters and their struggles (Metz, 1986).

A motion picture artifact typically travels through a three phase process beginning with ideation and design known as *pre-production,* moving to the collection of visual and sonic elements that make up *production*, and concluding with the arrangement into a story ready for viewing and distribution commonly termed *post-production* (Owens & Millerson, 2011). A film may have only the singular fingerprints of a multi-skilled auteur, primarily seen in documentary or experimental filmmaking. More commonly in feature film production and dependent on the scope of the specific project, there could be hundreds of roles as impactful as the writers who create the message, through to the

gaffer whose only role is to turn the smoke machines on or off. It is perhaps due to this plethora of production roles that there is no set entry point to film education (Hawkins, 1996).

The academic study of film began shortly after its initial popularization. The first foray into film theory originated with the establishment of the Moscow film school in 1919 (Stam, 2000). A decade later, the United States followed with the University of Southern California (USC) offering some of the first courses in film studies, culminating in 1932 with the first Bachelor of Arts in Cinema (Edgar & Kelly, 2007). The classes at USC were taught almost exclusively by industry personnel such as D.W. Griffith and Douglas Fairbanks and differed from their Russian counterparts in the addition of some practical elements. Despite this distinction, the content was primarily theory based until 1958 when the USC program split into the two strands of *production* and *critical studies* (http://cinema.usc.edu/about/history/index.cfm).

Practical education in filmmaking was born through an apprenticeship model within the movie studio systems where 90% of world's film production is generated (Diamond, 1989). Both in the mecca of the 1920's Hollywood system and in the European studios, would-be filmmakers progressed from entry level positions to more influential roles. Alfred Hitchcock is a key example, beginning his career as a card holder and progressing up the hierarchy to distinguish himself as an innovative director in both storytelling and technical aspects of film production (Gottlieb, 2003).

As the seemingly omnipotent Hollywood studio system began to crack under legislative pressure in the 1950s, so too the studio apprenticeship system collapsed,

turning students towards universities and professional film schools (Sheffield, 2001). By the 1960s, film production education had progressed beyond the pure technical skills of a trade school, and the musings of film theorists, to be embraced in graduate education.

This movement was the initial step of marrying film education and *legitimate* education, given the popular view in the academy was that true professions such as engineering, medicine, and law belonged in graduate schools (Sine, 2009). Film schools at New York University and Columbia University joined those already in existence in southern California, forming what is known as the *big five* (Johnson, 1991; Jones & DeFillippi, 1996). This period from the 1960's onwards also represents the greatest successes of these institutions, churning out distinguished film makers such as Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, and Martin Scorsese.

Even with such luminaries, the usefulness of film schools has long been a topic of debate. Johnson (1991) stated that the benefit of film schools such as USC is not the caliber of faculty or the depth of their studies in critical analysis, but rather the connections in the industry. In particular, the screenings of graduate work attract Hollywood talent scouts, agents, and studio executives, eager to discover the next big thing (Diamond, 1989; Hawkins, 1996).

By far the greatest criticism of film schools is the cost versus return. It is estimated the average graduate spends eight years and over $100,000 on their education (Sheffield, 2001). No doubt that figure has significantly increased as higher education costs continue to spiral upwards. While the lucrative rewards of a film career can balance the extravagant expense of film schools, it also comes with a markedly low guarantee of

graduate employment (Jones & DeFillippi 1996). Unlike Svitil's (1990) medical school analogy where graduates would have the promise of residency, Johnson (1991) paints a more cynical picture of film school outcomes as containing little more than the pleasure of watching obscure art house films; repeatedly.

Producer/Director and President of Concorde Pictures Roger Corwin makes a telling point. "My only criticism of film school graduates is that their education has been so wholly centered on film that you wish they'd learned a little more about history or English literature" (Svitil, 1990, p. 38). Jones and DeFillippi (1996) also advocate for a wider educational experience than simply studies in film with the integration of transferrable communication skills in a liberal arts tradition. It is these liberal arts outcomes that Sabal (2001) argues are naturally inherent in the film production process. Yet post-graduate film schools do not teach liberal arts classes nor generally require an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts as a pre-requisite. It seems confusing that relatively few film production programs are integrated at the undergraduate level within liberal arts colleges and universities.

A Liberal Arts Education

A residential liberal arts education is widely regarded as being the highest quality undergraduate experience in the country (Delucchi, 2002), and continues to be highly desirable within the job market. Indeed, a 2009 survey by the Association of American College and Universities found more than 75% of the nation's employers recommend that college bound students should pursue a liberal education (Ungar, 2010). Given the importance of the media in shaping culture, it seems natural for media production

education to occur within the highest caliber educational institutions. However, professional disciplines like film production have traditionally struggled for academic legitimacy in liberal arts colleges and universities due to competing notions of the purpose of higher education (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005). An examination of liberal arts philosophy illuminates this tension and the roadblocks of integration.

History of Liberal Arts

Stemming from the Latin *artes liberals*, the liberal arts nomenclature carries no politically liberal agenda but rather refers to the *skills of the citizen elite* which developed in the middle ages, representing the classic seven liberal arts; the trivium – grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and the quadrivium – math, geometry, music, and astronomy (Lind, 2006; Wagner, 1983). These were the skills deemed necessary to undertake a significant role in society; the skills needed for trade or debate, and general skills to engage and enhance wisdom and virtue. Of note are two distinctions from the modern notion of liberal arts: the absence of studies in philosophy which was considered mere mental gymnastics rather than actual education, and the happy marriage of vocational and intellectual goals (Lind, 2006).

From its medieval origins, the liberal arts spread to colonial America and informed the creation of the first colleges. These early institutions were fashioned with the specific vocational intent of providing training for the pastorate (Cremin, 1970). Thus the early colleges of the United States were at inception, primarily professional or vocational schools within a general or liberal education context (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

It was not until the antebellum colleges that the liberal arts separated from specific career-related outcomes and began to incorporate a more philosophical Socratic approach to education (Eckel & King, 2006). The key distinction was that knowledge and learning were purposed for intellectual enrichment rather than professional preparation. Hawkins (1999) described how this ideology came to represent the unique attributes of the American liberal arts system; one that prepared a student for living, not for making a living.

The land grant movement and the infiltration of the German research philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century furthered the chasm between intellectualism and professionalism. With this new focus on research, many universities marginalized the liberal arts to mere coursework within the schools of humanities, creating a dichotomized stratum – research universities as distinct from liberal arts colleges (Lind, 2006).

During the latter half of the 1900s, a swathe of academic discussions centered on redefining liberal arts, culminating in a seminal report from the University of Michigan - *Strengthening the Ties that Bind: Integrating Undergraduate liberal and professional study* (Stark & Lowther, 1988). This report debunked two myths; firstly that professional education must be the antithesis of liberal education, and secondly that these two should be kept separate and isolated from each other. The recommendations stressed a balanced approach of integration.

In light of this report, it is somewhat ironic that in 1995, the University of Michigan reorganized its communication department and banished the journalism

program for being too vocational (Cage, 1994). "The issue was whether or not a vocational program had a home in the arts and sciences," said Michael Traugott, the chairman of the Department of Communication Studies (Mencher, 2002). Considering journalism had been a part of the department since its inception in 1921 as the *Department of Rhetoric and Journalism* (http://www.lsa.umich.edu/comm/aboutus), it seems there was no balanced approach to be found.

Much of the internal struggle within universities focused on the evolution of liberal arts away from the study of *the great books* and *the great thinkers*. Using the case study of a western civilization class at Stanford University, Pratt (1992) lamented how liberal arts have struggled to reconcile the countermovement of multiculturalism with its Socratic roots, resulting in internal bickering and power plays. The debate over the inclusion of multiculturalism further isolated the liberal arts as a tradition unto itself in higher education (Kimball, 2010).

The modern American liberal arts experience then is described by Brint, Riddle, Turk-Bicakci, and Levy (2005) as studies centered both on the artistic forms of expression such as language and literature, and also on the sciences that deal with philosophy and cultural development. Strauss (2004) posits that this form of liberal education is the antidote to counter the poisonous tendency to produce nothing but specialists without spirit or vision that he considers as the inherent pitfall of professionalism. This view highlights the uniquely American tension between the cultural idealism of the liberal arts, and market based utilitarianism of the more practical arts (Moten & Harney, 2004).

Pope (2008) argues that far from being anti-vocational, liberal arts colleges can offer skills in analysis, writing, and argument formation that are ideal for any profession. These tangible skills, both general and transferable, are extremely salient to employers; 89% look for effective communication in oral and writing, and 70% seek creative and critical thinking (Ungar, 2010). Thus a liberal arts education is more than a major in the humanities but rather an education that emphasizes the application of classroom curricula to a variety of real-world situations (Blumenstyk, 2010).

In this rationale is a return to the original intent of liberal arts – *civitas* or the creation of wise citizens who can critically engage the culture, irrespective of their specialist professional studies or lack thereof (Campbell, 2010; Lind, 2006; Ungar, 2010). Questions of civitas strike at the heart of the modern university and the intentions of modern higher education. Is it to prepare students to *be someone* or to prepare them to *do something*? Are these two ideals exclusive or compatible and perhaps synergistic, such that the whole is greater than the sum of the two?

Several elite professions such as medicine, law and education have entered the academy combining broad-based liberal learning with specific applied outcomes. So too journalism has for the most part navigated the integration of vocationalism within the university liberal arts structure (Parisi, 1992). A study of the entrance of these professions into the academy provides a blueprint for other emerging disciplines such as film production.

Professionalization in the Academy

Traditionally, liberal arts study has been concerned with examining and questioning one's place in the society. The promise of the academy was centered on unpacking the nature of the human condition in culture through discussions of great, relevant works (Sykes, 1990). But while universities were developing intellectual knowledge, the concept of a *profession* was taking form outside of the university.

Metzger (1989) defines a profession as an occupation that has reached the highest level of technical skills and social helpfulness. This is an important distinction from a trade, which is generally regarded as manual labor requiring less critical thinking and little, if any, application of theory (Schon, 1983). Indeed Walker, Hein, Russ, Bertleff and Casperz (2010) expand the differentiation of a profession to one where knowledge or theory is applied to practice in a thoughtful, reflective manner with the purpose of developing new understandings. If this new understanding is framed within the context of a higher education system, it can be distinguished as a profession, rather than simply an occupation (Kett, 1994).

Professionalism is the entry of a profession into the academy with all the rights and privileges afforded to the more traditional disciplines. Bardoel and Dueze (2001) note that a common lens to examine a discipline is its similarities to other established professions. From a historic study of successfully professionalized disciplines, a set of criteria for professionalism can be generated.

History of the Professions

Professional education has its roots in the European guild system born during the middle ages. It involved a three tiered system of learning by doing; an *apprentice* working alongside more experienced peers or mentors to graduate to *journeyman* and then to *master*. Apprentices lived and worked in the workshops of their masters, following the masters' procedures and patterns (Wolek, 1999). The journeyman was a fully trained apprentice lacking only the submission of a capstone project that, once accepted by the guild, would qualify him as a master (Epstein, 1998). In this model, the weight of learning was tipped firmly towards practice and professional growth was limited to the knowledge and skill of the individual master (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

The apprenticeship model continued to dominate through the eighteenth century, branching off from individualized training to include clusters of students - the *schools of the prophets*. These groupings became the genesis of professional schools; first in religion, then spreading to medicine and law (Clifford & Guthrie, 1990). Whereas apprenticeships were learning by doing, professional schools were more concerned with telling rather than doing; more akin to the traditional lecture format. The pendulum had swung towards theory over practice.

Law and medicine were two seminal professions at the forefront of the charge into the academy. Professional schools recognized the need for a more diverse curriculum and expanded classes to neighboring undergraduate disciplines that had complimentary studies; medicine to the hard sciences in biology and chemistry and law to English and rhetoric. Independent professional schools were at a disadvantage and

began to look for affiliations or mergers. Schools like the Litchfield Law School joined Yale and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York joined Columbia University, beginning the professionalization movement (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

Throughout the twentieth century, the alliance between professional and academic aims in these disciplines has been a happy one, for the most part. Toward the end of the century, calls for reform, particularly in medical education, grew stronger and the last decades have seen several studies questioning the balance between the technical knowledge and skills, and the ability to engage the philosophical, cultural, and ethical issues within medicine (Cooke, Irby, Sullivan & Ludmerer, 2006; Drake, 2013; Emmanuel, 2006).

The path to professionalism has not been as straightforward in all professions. Journalism, like medicine and law, began in the apprenticeship model and shares the same innate desire to influence culture for the greater good (Cary, 1978). This ethical component, the idea of truth-telling about the world, aligns neatly with the core notion of civitas and should have provided little resistance to university assimilation. Yet unlike medicine and law, journalism has struggled with the formation of a clear academic identity. While generally accepted as part of the academy, there is a lingering tension over a practitioner-focused curriculum versus the critical analysis required to be an accepted university discipline (Dickson, 2000). This can be traced to accreditation, which will be discussed later.

Acceptance within the academy is tied to the idea of legitimacy. Based on their research, Fedler, Carey, and Counts (1998) have identified eight strategies that disciplines

can use to improve their position towards legitimacy in the university; (1) making themselves central to the mission of the university; (2) serving large numbers of students; (3) recruiting talented students; (4) assisting students on graduation; (5) improving scholarly activity; (6) developing unique programs; (7) emphasizing intellectual rather than vocation training; and (8) seeking accreditation. The first seven points are internal improvements, but it is this last point of accreditation that requires further investigation.

Professionalism and Accreditation

Accreditation plays perhaps the most pivotal role in professionalization. McDavid and Huse (2006) describe the initial process in professionalizing a discipline as one of developing a set of standards and criteria to certify educational outcomes. Staresina (2006) concurs, stating that a true profession is one for which a learned body "agree[s] upon and maintain[s] codified values, ethics and practices within their field which in turn safeguard the integrity of the profession" (p. 102). Programmatic accreditation provides a discipline with academic credibility, legitimacy, and prestige (Kelderman, 2009; Rusch & Wilbur, 2007).

Accreditation at both an institutional and discipline level has the same primary function – quality assurance resulting from accountability (Crow, 2009; Dalrymple, 2001; Ewell, 2008). Indeed the original rationale for accreditation was to provide accountability within program content, ensuring the discipline is truly a higher education program with the capacity for quality (Murray, 2009). Historically, this was the case with the creation of committees and counsels for educational requirements within the

American Medical Association (AMA) and American Bar Association (ABA), which

formed the basis of professional accreditation (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

A seminal document in the development of professional accreditation was the

Flexner Report, which detailed the poor state of medical education at the turn of the

twentieth century. From this report, the AMA and the Journal of the AMA began to rank

medical schools based on number of documented failures. The *Flexner Report* had such

an impact on the quality of educational programs that the number of medical schools

shrank from 160 in 1890, to 85 in 1920 (Langemann, 1983). Armed with newfound

power, the AMA was able to set accreditation standards, selective admissions practices,

and vastly improved pedagogy that became the template for professionalization in other

disciplines such as law, engineering, and teaching (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

However, programmatic accreditation has not been without significant

roadblocks. "Specialized and professional accreditation is deeply entrenched. It has

many accomplishments but like too much in higher education, it is overdue for a

fundamental change" (Dill, 1998, p. 25). One of the significant negatives is the cost of

accreditation, which can be out of reach for the smaller institution (Kelderman, 2009).

The time and money required for self-studies, peer visits and program compliance can

outweigh any perceived benefit.

Another drawback is the strict specification of special interest curricula by

accreditors that often comes at the expense of the overall institution (Leatherman, 1991).

It is the heavy-handed prescriptive nature of the curriculum requirements that has caused

so much consternation for journalism accreditation within the Accrediting Council on

Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The arbitrary stipulation of specific quantities of liberal arts classes has played a role in destabilizing journalism within the discipline and within the academy; insufficient skills-based for one side and too skills-based for the other (Christ, 2004; Deuze, 2001; Seamon, 2010). The counter play between quantitative curriculum requirements and accreditation warrants further attention if film production is to be professionalized.

It is clear that the codification of standards through accreditation has played an important role in the maturation of occupations towards professionalized academic disciplines. Wergin (2005) contends that the rising demands of access and costs within higher education have only increased the pressure on measures of accountability, and accreditation provides multiple levels of accountability.

Future of Professionalism

"By 2001, the distinctions between liberal arts and vocational education will be as obsolete as they were destructive…" (DeMott, 1982, p. 54). This prediction, made in a season of convergence, has a truth perhaps the writer never intended. At the close of the twentieth century, high tuition, government intervention, an escalation in consumerism, combined with an insatiable appetite for business education, has seen occupational fields account for two thirds of undergraduate degrees; over 80% in hundreds of institutions (Brint, et al, 2005). The trend is so far reaching that in 2006, the percentage of public and private four-year institutions that offered career education credentials was 96.6 percent and 97.8 percent respectively (http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P71.asp).

The Carnegie classifications introduced in 1970 to categorize the missions of individual colleges and universities show that traditional liberal arts institutions are closing not through attrition, but by moving to a different type of institution based on student choice and vocational pressure (Eckel & King, 2006). Strassburger (2010) describes it not as an integration of liberal and vocational education but as a capitulation, with most liberal arts colleges becoming pre-professional in every aspect except in name. It is these market forces that have profoundly shaped higher education throughout the twentieth century making the tussle between the liberal and practical arts more akin to a knockout.

The public perception of what a university should be about is clear. A survey in 2006 conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut showed 82 percent of the 1000 respondents felt the purpose of a college education was to either prepare students for specific careers or for work in general (Helies, 2006). In addition, a study by the American Council on Education found nearly 90 percent of those surveyed feel it is *very important* (76 percent) or *fairly important* (13 percent) to have public universities produce a well-trained work force (Hawkins, 1999).

It would be natural to assume then, given the demand and expectation from prospective students, and the overwhelming professional curricula now embedded in the DNA of higher education, that most universities would promote their professional virtues as their primary purpose. This purpose is generally expressed to internal and external publics via a mission statement that declares and drives the philosophy of the organization and that trended throughout the corporate sector in the 1980's and then

eventually in the academy (Birnbaum, 2000). However, examining mission statements uncovers a disparity between the proclaimed purpose and the lived reality within universities.

Breneman (1994) produced a seminal work on the definition of *genuine* liberal arts colleges, which includes characteristics such as high residential status, majority traditional age students, and a requirement of 40% of baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts fields. However, several studies of university mission statements have found that professionally-focused universities still claim, or more accurately proclaim, the mantle of liberal education while displaying few if any of Breneman's criteria (Delucchi, 1997; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Taylor & Morphew, 2010). Delucchi's (1997) research exposed 68% of institutions who asserted liberal arts statements were actually dominated by professional majors. He proposed it was the prestige of the liberal arts label that was of particular importance to smaller, private, and religious institutions to provide legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Liberal arts provide a linkage to heritage, loyalty and a positive public image.

Morphew and Hartley (2006) explain the balance as a need to espouse both formative and applied education as the message to their publics; the former being civic-based liberal arts or what a college or university is supposed to be, and the latter being consumer-driven professionalism or what the target market actually want. In this way, the institution can have the prestige of *saying* it is liberal arts while in actuality *being* professional.

It is this dichotomy between mission and curriculum that again comes to the fore in Taylor and Morphew's (2010) work. There is a strong disconnect between the visionary claims of broad, sweeping mission statements and the practical realities of the curriculum. One cannot assume the true nature of an institution simply by the classification or rhetoric used to define its purpose, particularly in regard to liberal arts.

The major exception to this rule appears when examining institutions with religious affiliations. Statements of mission such as *Christ-centered service*, *service to church* or denominational distinctives are supported through curricular and co-curricular designs, providing the strongest linkage between mission and curriculum (Delucchi, 1997; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Taylor & Morphew, 2010).

Perhaps the balance between the liberal arts tradition and professional curriculum is struck by redefining Breneman's (1994) criteria, and even the Carnegie classifications, in a reprioritization of *applied* liberal arts content within the practical arts curriculum. Communication, problem solving, and reasoning, or higher order learning, are seen as the skills of the new millennium (Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Pope, 2008). These are the tangible outcomes of the modern liberal arts and continue to provide the context for the vocational proficiencies within blended educational programs in what Berberet and Wong (1995) define as *The New American College Model*, and what Blanchard and Christ (1993) call *The New Professionalism*.

If the applied outcomes of liberal arts are to be blended into professional curricula, so too must the philosophy of citivas. The ethical component of professionalism has been underplayed or ignored in pursuit of competitive advantages

(Ozar, 1993; Wurm-Schaar & Fato, 2004). Rakow (2001) regards the entire notion of professionalism contingent on a discipline's service to the public, harking back to Metzger's (1987) requirement that a profession be involved in social helpfulness. One cannot have a professional program in the academy unless it promotes and advances the well-being of those it serves.

Film Production and the New Professionalism

Filmmakers reflect and shape culture with such influence that their attraction to universities is growing. The number of film production programs at colleges and universities has risen to 237; 177 undergraduate programs and 60 post graduate (Sabal, 2009). Yet within many traditional colleges and universities, the study of media is seen as something frivolous; not a truly serious inquiry (Gomery, 1986). This poor reputation may have to do with a perceived lack of praxis – the theory that informs practice.

Integration of theory. While production programs are sprouting up on college campuses, so too are film production trade schools focused solely on Career and Technical Education (CTE). CTE is the nomenclature given by the Perkins report (2006) to vocational education. Unlike four-year or community colleges, most CTE institutions lack official status or any form of regulatory control and have thus traditionally suffered from a lack of academic credibility. This has led to familiar stereotypes of vocational programs, with CTE students labeled as *tin benders and wood butchers* and *grease monkeys* (Kerka, 2000).

Blanchard and Christ (1993) highlight the difference between CTE and baccalaureate education as an *idea-before-use* mentality, "a distinction all communication

and media educators want to make empathically clear both on and off campus" (p. 48).
The key distinctive is the unpacking of praxis; the *how* a skill is done is only relevant
when you fully comprehend the *why* it is done. In this way film theory, the
understanding of why visual and audio messages communicate meaning, must inform
film practice (Bartoni, 2001).

Russian theorist Lev Kuleshov, quoted in Tomasulo (1997), argues that teaching
film production without film theory debases film to the lowest level of amateurism, as
much as the theory with no practice becomes mere intellectualism. Tomasulo (2012)
himself champions the synthesis of theory and practice in an *applied history-theory*
model, alternating fall theory and spring production classes in a year-long cycle of
learning. Without this symbiosis of theory and practice, the storytelling process is diluted
and the outcomes of both areas are weakened (Hershfield & McCarthy, 1997).

Integration of liberal arts. There are three elements of film production that
point to its essential integration in a liberal arts university: what is made, how it is made,
and why it is made. First, Diamond (1989) points to the idea that the university should
provide a counterbalance to the forces of commercialism by reminding students that
filmmaking at its core is still an art form worthy of intellectual critique. Without
travelling down the philosophical rabbit trail regarding the definition of *art*, it can be
safely argued that the aesthetic arrangement of visual and sonic images creates an "art of
filmmaking" (Johnson, 1991, p. 38) worthy of intellectual consideration. Even by the
nomenclature, the liberal *arts* have always included reflection and analysis of artistic
pursuits such as music and visual artifacts.

Second, becoming successful in the film production industry requires the skills of communication and collaboration (Jones & DeFlippi, 1996; Shyles, 2007). These form the basis of the new movement in liberal arts that emphasizes transferability of skills across vocations. "The new professionalism seeks an approach to students as communicators and not simply radio or TV people" (Blanchard & Christ, 1993, p. 33). This notion frames filmmaking as primarily a collective art form where each individual's contribution blends in synergistic collaboration.

Hodge (2009) also speaks to the notion of collaboration and creative conflict as a latent force, simmering below the filmmakers' consciousness. She highlights that conflict resolution strategies are not native skills inbred in filmmakers but must be learned. One cannot imagine many CTE schools engaging Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) five stage group communication model, the type of content that would be at home in a traditional undergraduate communication department.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, filmmakers have the responsibility of being wise citizens of the world. "It is strange to have a ruling class without nurturing and cultivating a sense of civic responsibility in that class" (May, 1986, p. 27). In this way, liberal arts universities are ideal for film production because they emphasize thoughtful reflection in the context of civitas. Sabal (2009) expresses the notion succinctly:

> The enduring value of production classes has to be that as each student develops his or her artistic identity, he or she also comes to a clear and truthful understanding of him or herself, develops an ability to see and appreciate the

talents of others, learns to constructively negotiate conflict, and extends this ability to work positively with others into their institution and for their community (p. 3).

This mission is clearly beyond the scope of a trade or professional school. Hardin (2009) asks film production educators, "are we teaching students to make films or are we teaching them how to become the people who make films?" (p. 32). His argument is solidly rooted in the creation of storytellers who engage in thoughtful practice, in a collaborative workflow, that serves the culture it creates.

Given the importance of film production in cultural influence, given the need for theory to inform practice, and given the inherent liberal arts notions of wise citizenship in the storytelling process, film production deserves a voice in the academic choir. For this professionalization to occur, there are some significant hurdles to overcome.

Film Production Accreditation

The film production field lacks a defined set of educational standards or curricula that are integral to many professional vocations (Staresina, 2006). The University Film and Video Association (UVFA) is the closest related professional body that would oversee accreditation. The UFVA has flirted with the idea several times in its 65 years, most notably within the Master of Fine Arts program (Bukalski, 2000). To date, there has been no movement on undergraduate program accreditation and no move towards measurable outcomes.

While McLane (1997) notes that many film faculty and students operate in ignorance of the existence of the UFVA or its flagship *Journal of Film and Video,* there

are those within this body who are engaged in seeking educational accountability. Tomasulo's (2008) work on the difficulty of quantifying artistic learning outcomes in production courses is a prime example of scholarly thought in the evaluation of what is a quintessentially subjective art form. While his work addresses the notion of measurable outcomes on a course assessment level, there is no conversation on accountability at a program level. Discussion in workshops and at the general meeting from the 2011 UFVA conference indicate a desire from some members to take a more proactive stance on program accountability and accreditation .

Given that the UFVA has to this point refused or been unable to take up the mantle of accreditation, film production has evolved a somewhat convoluted, backdoor system of accountability in curriculum design. The Council for Arts Accrediting Associations, an umbrella organization for accrediting agencies in music, theatre, dance, and art/design, has claimed jurisdiction in the world of film and video. Both the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) and the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) contain strands of accreditation for film production.

The prime concern with both organizations is the bifurcation of liberal arts Bachelor of Arts (BA) programs and the so-called professional degree programs or Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) programs; a perpetuation of liberal arts versus professionalism chasm. NAST guidelines state that each degree program should have distinct goals; the BA focusing on "theatre in the context of a board program of general studies" (NAST, 2012, p. 82) while "the professional degree focuses on intensive work in theatre supported by a program in general studies" (NAST, 2012, p. 82). The distinction

is that of a focus on theatre approached within a broader liberal arts curriculum, versus theatre issues and skills as the primary focus of the curriculum. NASAD uses the same verbiage as NAST but tailored to art and design courses, adding an additional clarification that the BFA in art and design is intended to prepare a student for professional practice (NASAD, 2011). One can only guess what the BA is preparing a student for.

Quantitative Based Objectives

Both NAST and NASAD approach accreditation standards by prescribing a percentage of the curriculum that must be devoted to general studies and to the major. The breakdown of curriculum requirements is similar for both agencies with the BA programs requiring 30-45% of the total classes in the major and general studies requiring 50-70% (NASAD, 2011; NAST, 2012). This amounts to a minimum of 36 credits in the major for the average 120 credit undergraduate degrees. Of note is that there is little if any stipulation as to the content of classes included in those credits.

The BFA in both disciplines is geared towards a more professional degree program and is required to have 65% of the curriculum within the major with a more detailed breakdown of the curricular structure; 10-15% general studies, 30%-40% in the major area (theatre or art and design), and supporting classes in either areas comprising 30%-35% (NASAD, 2011; NAST, 2012). As with the BA, there is no connection to specific content goals or any connection to building cohesive content within the program.

Given this current state of film production curriculum accreditation, several issues are evident. First, the duplications between NAST and NASAD are a continual source of

confusion to faculty who seek accreditation for their film production program (UFVA conference, 2011). Second, given the history of professionalization, the idea that a professional organization such as the UFVA does not house film production accreditation is puzzling. Third, the dichotomy of curricular focus between the BA and BFA classifications destroys the notion of a new professionalism that seeks to blend liberal arts and the practical arts. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the criteria for curriculum design in the current accreditation is based on somewhat arbitrary quantitative divisions rather than any curriculum design theory. Before a system of effective integrated accreditation could be introduced, a sense of the current state of curriculum, the theory driving it, and its design process are needed.

Curriculum Design

"If you don't know where you are going, any bus will do" (George, 2009, p. 161). George contends this idiom speaks of the relationship between the average professor and the curriculum structure. Faculty have been seen as unwilling to develop new curriculum due to; (a) the constraints of teaching, research, and community involvement; (b) a resistance to change either real or implied from themselves or their colleagues; or (c) a granular focus on their own classroom rather than the larger milieu of university mission (Ratcliff, 1997; Stark, Lowther, Sharp, & Arnold, 1997). This singularity had led curriculum design to be primarily associated with pedagogy and individual faculty inputs (Allen, 1996; Barnett & Coate, 2005; Dressel & Marcus, 1982). It seems the focus has too often been on the bus, or simply the next stop on the route, rather than the destination.

The term *curriculum* itself is often used in the abstract; misunderstood and even described as shadowy (Barnett & Coate, 2005). It can refer to a single course, a cluster of courses in a discipline that comprise a major, the courses focused on general education, or a combination of all courses at the institutional level. Of the multitude of definitions offered by both K-12 and higher education literature, Toombs and Tierney's (1993) summation captures the essence of curriculum as "an intentional design for learning, negotiated by faculty in light of their specialized knowledge, and in context of social expectation and students' needs" (p. 21).

History of curriculum design. Stretching back to the trivium and the quadrivium in the late 1500s, Peter Ramus was the first to organize and methodize this knowledge, steering content delivery away from personal instruction toward a structured, sequential design; general objectives at the top flowing to the particular experiences (Doll, 2008; Triche & McKnight, 2004). Doll follows the genealogy of this top-down design beginning with Ramus, through the inception of the puritan American education system, and towards Taylorism and the efficiency movement in the early 1900s. Taylor's positivist notions and mechanical processes influenced the first books on curriculum as an industrial science by Franklin Bobbit (Hunkins & Hammill, 1994; Cullen, Harris & Hill, 2012). Doll argues the while traits of Ramus' design are evident in Taylorism, they reached maturity with the creation of the seminal *Tyler Rationale*.

Tyler (1949) prescribed curriculum creation as a form of backwards design process, asking four basic questions of the designer that begin with the end outcome: (a) what should be accomplished, that is, what are the objectives; (b) what experiences can

be provided to attain these objectives; (c) how can the experience be organized effectively; and (d) how can the effectiveness of the experiences be measured. In essence, these design principles are still widely used in today's K-12 and higher education classrooms (Doll, 2002; Hunkins and Hammill, 1994; Ratcliff, 1997).

Trends in curriculum design. Continuing research into epistemology has given rise to alternate curriculum design models, each with varying emphases and iterations. Most subsequent models to Tyler address curriculum as less mechanically structured; more organic and post-modern in their approach to learning (Doll, 2002; Cullen, Harris & Hill, 2012). Ratcliff (1997) states that curriculum models take at least two major forms; descriptive/prescriptive models that describe the structure and purpose of curriculum, and analytical models that seek to understand the relationship between the student and the variables that affect their development.

A cursory look at several models highlights the contrasting style from Tyler's work. The focus of Dressel's (1980) model is on the relationships between six continua; teacher to discipline, student to content, practice to theory, flexibility to rigidity, unity to compartmentalization and continuity to fragmentation. Dressel deals more with process than on outcomes (Levine, 1982). Lattuca and Stark (2009) reframe the notion of curriculum as an *academic plan* with eight variables; purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation and judgment. Their model stresses the influence of context on the structures that house the curriculum, particularly sociocultural and historical contexts (Cullen, Harris & Hill, 2012). Cowan and Harding's (1986) six stage model of development incorporates a similar structure of

aims, assessment, learning, teaching and evaluation, but focuses more on the logical connections between learning and teaching across these variables rather than the chronological sequencing of the variables (George, 2009).

One of the most significant trends in design theory has been a shift from a *teacher-centered paradigm,* where faculty pursue the primary curricular goal of knowledge transfer, towards a *learner centered paradigm,* where faculty collaborate with students to produce learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Huba & Freed, 2000, Jones, 2002). The critical aspect in this theory is that the learner constructs knowledge rather than simply receiving it (All & Brandon, 2010; Conrad & Platt, 1983). Several distinctives of this paradigm include; (a) an emphasis on student choice as part of a learner centered pedagogy and power sharing (Cullen, Harris & Hill, 2012; Lattuca & Stark, 2009); (b) a non-linear structure that stresses recursive learning rather than a one-and-done approach to content (Doll, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005); and (c) an active or deep learning environment that draws on student interaction and reflection as keys to learning (All & Brandon, 2010; Maimon, 1997).

The theories of curriculum design have clearly fractured along epistemological lines, dividing behaviorists such as Tyler himself and constructivists and such as Stark and Doll. These differing philosophies across the models create a confusing patchwork of ambiguity and imprecision for curriculum planners (Conrad & Pratt, 1983). While the methodologies and approaches conflict, the common ground between theories is a desire to identify exactly how the curriculum can helps students *do*, and *know* and *be*.

Outcome Based Curriculum

At the heart of current design literature, outcomes based learning gained widespread recognition with Benjamin Bloom's development of a cognitive learning taxonomy in 1956, updated by Anderson et al. (2001). Learning outcomes measure the education process by evaluating the quality of the program and the competency of the graduate (Crouse, 1999). In a general sense, they reflect the big ideas of the curriculum (Wiggin & Mctighe, 2005) and describe "something that students can do now that they could not do previously… a change in people as a result of a learning experience" (Watson, 2002, p. 208).

From the mid-1980s when the assessment movement began, learning outcomes have increasingly become the rule rather than the exception in higher education. Institutions are designing, evaluating, and making decisions on their curricula based around these objectives (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Breschani, 2011; Riodran & Roth, 2005). This process has become known as *outcomes-based assessment*, (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Discipline-based Outcomes

On a program level, Hagerty and Stark's (1989) now dated research provides a snapshot of the *before* picture between learning outcomes and professionalized accreditation. They concluded that most professionalized disciplines consider learning objectives implied through the curriculum design, that is, by following the courses as laid out throughout the curriculum, learning objectives will be fulfilled, though not explicitly spelled out (Hagerty & Stark, 1989). This flies in the face of Bloom's original intent that

learning objectives be clearly stated and obvious (Anderson et al., 2001). It also creates the potential for confusion in student expectations and hidden agendas between what a teacher says is the purpose of a program, and what the assessment requires (George, 2009).

Jones (2002) and more recently Cullen, Harris and Hill (2012) provide an updated view of how various programmatic accrediting bodies are using learning outcomes to effect curricular reform in fields such as nursing, pharmacy and teacher education. Many of the outcomes are driven by the desire to incorporate skills such as critical thinking, communication and "reflective judgment" (Jones, 2002, p. 58). Of note is that each of the disciplines identified involves significant government intervention and accountability, which may be an indicator of why they are advanced in their development.

Also of significance are the desired student outcomes for accountancy submitted to the Accounting Education Change Commission and published by Lattuca and Stark (2009). They include ideas such as teamwork, interpersonal skills, critical thinking and ethical perspectives; clearly liberal arts skills. No distinct professional outcomes are listed save for a few broad, generic objectives such as "seeing accounting as a coherent whole" (p. 256). While having accountants as wise citizens is unquestionably desirable, it would be naïve to believe they could be successful in their field and not be well versed in the language of numbers. Additionally, it would also be difficult to conceive of any self-respecting business faculty member proposing only liberal arts outcomes from their courses.

Along with their quantitative requirements mentioned previously, both NAST and NASAD contain learning outcomes relating to film production. As with the accounting example, there is minimal mention of any professional skills, but rather a mixture of general studies objectives within a core set of broad outcomes common to either theatre or art and design respectively (NASAD, 2011; NAST, 2012). Specific film production competencies are relegated to two points with generic language such as "an emphasis on at least one area of film/video production" (NAST, 2012, p. 82). Clearly this is inadequate for aiding in the curriculum design process.

This lack of clarity in learning outcomes raises questions regarding their usefulness. If outcomes are one of the most important and agreed upon pieces of the curriculum, then it is vital to understand how they were formed and how they contribute to a holistic, integrated, professional curriculum. Katz (2010) agrees, commenting that,

> We know more than we used to about learning outcomes but not enough. We know far too little, however, about how to put the knowledge we do have to practical use in transforming both our pedagogical technique and curriculum design to enhance student learning. (p. 5)

Understanding more fully the design of learning outcomes roles in the academic plan will help educators design a well-aligned curriculum (Allan, 2004; Crouse: 1999). A purpose-built, course-by-course sequence should be intentional; able to meet the competencies, skills or knowledge goals spelled out in the learning objectives in a symbiotic relationship. However, with the somewhat nebulous process of designing both curriculum and learning outcomes, and with a lack of guidance from professional

accreditation, many educational planners are left to design learning experiences in the dark.

Conrad and Pratt (1983) seek to steer the design conversation towards the decision making process, encouraging an examination of how curricular decisions are made, rather than of curriculum planning, in an effort to direct curriculum development theory. Lattuca and Stark (2009) have built on this notion to highlight variables and processes, both internal and external to the designs that are essential to the context of decision making and the examination of any emergent theory. Given the lack of any data on film production curriculum design, it seems prudent to begin with surveying the decisions behind how the current curriculum was designed, redesigned and monitored.

Conclusion

Media is far too important as a cultural enterprise to ignore. As it continues to shape and reflect society, the next generations of media content creators are at an educational cross-roads; either commit to an expensive post-graduate film school education with no guarantee of employment, get a trade school education with a narrow focus and lack of transferable life skills, or find a liberal arts institution that teaches film production. However, many media programs at these institutions are "fragmented with a lack of curricular coherence which has contributed to the relatively low status and low intellectual rigor" (Blanchard & Christ, 1993, p. 40). Stuck in the no fly zone between theory and practice and between liberal arts and vocation, film production stands at the threshold of professionalism and academic legitimacy. Still lacking is an accreditation structure that would support learning outcomes within an integrated and coherent

curriculum structure. Sheffield (2001) wrote over a decade ago that the time was ripe for college and university administrators to "take a look at the collective national breadth and quality of motion picture arts programs and adjust curriculum accordingly" (p. 23). To date, there has been no investigation of film production curriculum to examine how it is designed and assessed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine higher education undergraduate film production programs for evidence and characteristics of an emerging curriculum design theory for this discipline.

Research Design

To fully understand how production curricula are created and implemented to form academic standards and practices, I have undertaken a qualitative study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) qualitative research is ideally designed for exploratory research, which fits the mode of production education given that it is void of significant academic conversation.

"Qualitative research is a vehicle through which traditionally marginalized persons in higher education can have a voice" (Viento, 2007, p. 10). While at face value, there is no documented evidence of film educators being ostracized from the higher education community, the nature of a vocational discipline, combined with the professional background of the professors and their lack of grounding in traditional academic structures, has seen these faculty viewed as somewhat less scholarly, particularly in institutions that cling to the vestiges of the unadulterated liberal arts tradition. It seems prudent then to allow these faculty members who have experienced real or implied academic discrimination, the chance to express their voice as it pertains to the scholarly conduct of developing academic standards through curriculum construction.

While there are several research methods that can report an individual's voice and experience, it is the process of film production curriculum design that is at the core of this study. There is no identified theoretical framework in film production to underpin the design process and as such, a grounded theory approach was the most appropriate method to uncover the emergent patterns in the data; the abstract analytical schema of the phenomena (Creswell, 2008).

Within the grounded theory tradition, Charmaz (2006) posits a stance in which "we can view grounded theories as products of emergent processes that occur through interaction. Researchers construct their respective products from the fabric of the interactions, both witnessed and lived" (p. 178). Thus this study used a constructivist epistemology, seeking to understand the collective truths of the participants within an evaluative philosophy.

Sampling

This study drew participants from film production programs, defined earlier as programs of study where the specific intent is the creation of audio-visual artifacts. These programs were housed within a variety of colleges and universities at various stages of the curricular design and reform process. The distinction of institutions as public or private or the geographic location was considered unimportant to the core questions of curriculum design as was the size of the institution.

Participants were the heads of department or key faculty members involved in decision making on the curriculum design that had a minimum of three years' experience.

No participants were chosen from broadcasting or non-fiction focused media programs, or from professional schools within undergraduate institutions.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that studying a phenomenon requires a sampling strategy that is purposeful and representative. The best strategy for this study was to begin with an initial purposeful sample and progressively implement snowball sampling whereby key participants recommend other potential sources who could provide rich data (Creswell, 2008). This strategy is similar to the notion of theoretical sampling as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal work on grounded theory, although less open to tangential lines of inquiry.

Data Collection

Two primary sources were used to triangulate data. First, I conducted a content analysis of the curriculum elements from the participants' websites, separating the sequencing and structure into the individual course building blocks. Specific syllabi were obtained from the participants where needed, and any published graduate outcomes from both professional and liberal arts were examined for clarity, consistency and alignment across the curriculum. Simple descriptive statistics were the only data reported from this source; (a) overall curricular structure, that is, the type of degree offered and credits required; (b) percentage of theory and practice classes; (c) percentage of general and specialist classes.

This analysis was used to inform the second source of data - personal interviews with those responsible for curriculum design. I conducted semi-structured interviews

with open-ended questions to promote flexible examination of this event while retaining a focused agenda (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Participation was primarily confined to faculty who are institutional members of the UFVA, since these participants have already showed a propensity to engage in academic dialogue by joining a professional association. Also, since the UFVA meets for an annual conference, this provided an opportunity to conduct a portion of the research in one setting - over the four days of the UFVA national conference at Columbia College in Chicago, August 8-11, 2012.

Creswell (2008) recommends 20 to 30 respondents for a grounded theory study. Jette, Grover and Keck (2003) counter, stating that the number of participants in a study can be reduced depending on their expertise in the chosen topic. For a true grounded theory approach the number of participants is initially unknown, dictated by *theoretical saturation* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) whereby the researcher continues sampling until all the relevant threads of data have been exhausted. Charmaz (2006) suggests that a smaller study will achieve saturation faster if the topic is self-contained, that is, housed within a single discipline. Considering the factors for this study; (a) the high expertise of the intended participants; (b) the relative homogeneity of participants within a single discipline; (c) the uncertainty of theoretical saturation; and (d) the implications and limitation within the HSIRB process, I began with 10 institutions, with the option to expand to 15 if the data was not rich enough or I had not already reached redundancy. Given that production programs may have multiple participants, I chose either single or multiple participants from each program when available.

While I hoped to conduct the largest portion of the research at the conference, I also used this opportunity to schedule phone or Skype interviews over the following months. The faculty were both comfortable with the technology, given the discipline they work in, and also had access to the relevant facilities given the technological infrastructure of their workplace.

Interviewing. Prior to conducting the interviews, a critical preparatory process was to recognize the preconceptions and biases I had as the researcher. Referred to as the *epoche,* it involved bracketing off personal experiences so as to gain clarity and separation from prejudgment (Creswell, 1998). If the researcher is truly to be the instrument of the research and the data collected is to be the musical notes, then the epoche allows for free-form improvisation rather than a predetermined melodic form; particularly relevant given the emergent nature of grounded theory research.

The interview protocol is included in Appendix E and focused on the research questions reflected in these categories that, (a) examine the relationship between the professional curriculum and liberal arts; (b) examine how the curriculum was created and constructed; and (c) examine the salient attributes of the current curriculum and how course outcomes build on each other to create graduate outcomes. Elements from the content analysis were included in the questioning, and all interviews regardless of the setting were recorded on a digital audio recorder.

Data Analysis

Part of the process of grounded theory research is the interplay between data collection and data analysis described as the *constant comparison method* (Corbin &

Strauss, 1990) or more colloquially by Bryant and Charmaz (2008) as *the dance* – the notion that a change of music will change the dance style as a change of analysis will be reflected in the collection. I recognized that the results from the initial data analysis impacted the subsequent data collection if a theory began to emerge.

The first stage in data analysis was a verbatim transcription of the audio recording from the interviews. Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005) describe the difference in transcription reporting between *naturalism* in which every utterance is included, and *denaturalism*, in which distracting or idiosyncratic vocalizations are removed. I employed naturalism for the transcription and member checking to ensure the intended accuracy of the responses, and denaturalism for reporting the results in Chapter IV. Engaging in regular memoing by journaling my own thoughts, continued the process of epoche and provided a personal reflection on the emerging themes.

The second stage of analysis consisted of an initial coding of the transcription known as *in vivo* coding (Creswell, 2008). Similar to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) *substantial coding* and Corbin and Strauss' (1990) *open coding*, I used in vivo coding as an inductive way to identify salient phrases and ideas in the participants' own words. These codes became the intuitive building blocks, the raw materials needed to begin construction.

From the in vivo codes, I formed clusters of emergent meanings allowing the organized data to *speak,* and highlighting the salient elements of the curriculum design. As part of the dance, the development of these clusters formed new questions for subsequent interviews.

Finally, once saturation was reached and there were no more emerging clusters, I analyzed and compared the clusters for the connections that could have formed the basis of a theory, in line with the fourth research question. This analysis happened across all clusters both within the individual participant's responses and across all the participants' responses. The emergent processes and interactions described by Charmaz (2006) were of prime consideration in identifying an organic, dynamic theory for film production education.

The Researcher

I recall an afternoon late in the spring semester of 2006 when a piece of audio equipment was malfunctioning, which has the uncanny habit of occurring when major assessment items are due. I crawled under the desk and spent the next few hours troubleshooting until the problem was resolved. While I was engaged in this activity a colleague from a more *academic* department stopped by and after viewing my lower torso jutting out from the machinery commented to our administrative assistant, "well that's not very scholarly."

Such is the perception problem that I have faced in the 17 years of teaching media production at a university level. Some of that perceived prejudice is warranted as I have seen ill-prepared faculty and administrators steer media production programs by gut and intuition, much to the chagrin of their academic colleagues, and I am also guilty of this. Graduating through the ranks of academia at a university of technology did not particularly prepare me to be handed the curricular reins at the small liberal arts institutions in which I have taught over the past decade. I am sure I have perpetrated the

mistakes of the past, or created new ones, or perhaps actually stumbled upon solid

academic curriculum more out of trial and error; more out of serendipity or providence

than a solid educational framework. The chance to potentially correct the mistakes of the

past, to observe and understand the experiences of others in the field, to provide

comrades with suggestions that may be helpful in the trenches, and to contribute to the

whispers of an academic conversation in this arena is an exciting opportunity.

Limitations

With an enormous blank canvas of research possibilities, curriculum design is

only one small portion of best practices that needed examining. Faculty experiences are

valid and so too are the resources implications of a technology driven discipline. Finding

a good entry point to the research is a difficult process and leaves many other elements

unstudied.

Film production is a narrow genre within the world of the media. Television,

animation design, documentary and new media production are all elements worthy of

study but not the primary feature in this process.

From a methodological standpoint, focus groups would give more breadth to the

conversation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), but the distance between participants would

make that impossible unless done through a multi-site video conference. While the

technology needed would be demanding, the primary hindrance would be the different

time zones between participants. Even if focus groups were run within similar time

zones, I believe it would be extremely difficult to coordinate the faculty to be available at

the same time given their differing schedules.

There was the possibility of a convening a focus group at the UFVA conference August 8-11, 2012 where many of the interviews were to have taken place. Unfortunately given the time restraints, this could not be planned and did not occur.

Trustworthiness

While the ability to generalize is not the expressed intent of qualitative research, I provided a level of trustworthiness through the transferability and authenticity of results. Transferability is conveyed by describing the details of the study and the participants in regard to the criteria and context and thereby assuming that the findings could be applied to other populations who share similar contexts (Mertens, 2005). Authenticity is conveyed through the use of memoing and epoche to ensure that the preconceived notions of the researcher are bracketed away from the research and it is able to *speak* unencumbered (Mertens, 2005).

I sent a preliminary copy of the findings to selected participants for review and comment, and also to an independent auditor. Their impressions of the emerging curriculum design theory served to increase the authenticity and provided valuable insight and reflection.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

There is little known regarding the development of undergraduate film production programs. The discipline has transitioned from the apprenticeship model into more formalized patterns of education in colleges and universities, but has remained almost completely void of academic inquiry. Production education exists without significant links to a governing body that could shepherd the creation and evaluation process of the curriculum. As an academic discipline, film production is essentially in the dark.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the interviews with curriculum designers that addressed the primary question of how their curriculum was created. It is important to note that there is no in-depth analysis of each course or assessment item, or any detailed information on the pedagogy of specific courses. As such, the interview questions were not focused on best practices within the programmatic elements of the degree design, but rather on identifying the key factors that influenced curriculum decisions and that could point towards a common theory. Any quantitative data was used only as scaffolding to reinforce the decision making context.

I begin by describing the interview process and the sample selection, followed by a narrative portrayal of each of the institutions, including a description of the relevant historical and evolutionary developments of the program. The rationale is to understand the context in which the curriculum was formed or reformed, and how those decisions were framed. For each of the programs, the context includes the institutional and

departmental mission, particularly as it relates to the intersection of liberal and professional education.

To examine the current state of the curriculum, I use the categories from the interview protocol to provide a description of the curriculum elements. These elements are broken down into: (a) the degree classification and accreditation status; (b) the intent of the curriculum as expressed through learning outcomes and assessment; (c) unique elements of the curriculum; and (d) the content of the curriculum shown through the mixes of film theory and film practice classes, and general versus specialized craft classes. It is within these four distinctions that much of the personality of the design is revealed.

Theory versus practice speaks of the continuum between film studies and Career and Technical Education (CTE). On one side is the liberal arts discipline of film studies that engages deep critical and analytical thought on semiotics and constructed meanings within film, but generally lacks a substantial vocational focus. On the other side is a trade school education where the extended production training has little if any theoretical underpinnings.

A generalized degree program is one whereby students are expected to demonstrate multiple skills and experiences in more than one aspect of the film production process. As a guiding philosophy, this resembles liberal arts notions of a broad scope of education, and leads to graduates as holistic *filmmakers*. A specialist major or track is one that involves the concentration of a single skillset, usually as an upperclassman either in craft-focused classes such as editing, directing, or

cinematography, or as a specialist within a team of other specialists in a project-oriented class. This approach is more akin to CTE and leads towards the notion of graduates as *craftspeople*; editors, cinematographers, production designers, and so forth.

Each film curriculum design intentionally falls somewhere along these two continuums between theory and practice and between general and specialist. It is essential to establish how this balance was designed so various programs can be compared to each other. More importantly for this study, these distinctions illuminate questions of intentionality in purpose and in graduate outcomes: What type of film practitioner is this curriculum designed to produce?

The narrative portion concludes with a discussion of the most prominent factors influencing curriculum decision making and these emergent themes become the basis for the discussion regarding the specific research questions. Whereas the narratives dealt with each institution individually, the research questions compare specific aspects across the participants including:

1. The creation and development contexts of the curriculum;
2. The institutional and departmental missions and their effect on curriculum content, in particular the mix of theory, practice, general, and specialized classes;
3. The prominent influences on decision making.

The fourth and final research question is directly connected to the notion of establishing an existing or emergent theory. As such, I address this question in Chapter Five alongside a comparison to a significant work of design literature. The implications for practice and research are outlined in Chapter Six.

There are two important clarifications of terms and context. First, I acknowledge that within the organizational structure of the participating institution, workgroups could be designated as *departments*, *divisions*, *schools* or even *colleges* depending on the ways of denoting a single track of specialization, a program of study or a cluster of programs. Some institutions have smaller workgroups such as the *sound department* or the *cinematography department*, and others have larger structures such as the *media department* where film production is either the primary or ancillary discipline. Unless noted, I am using the notion of a department to signify the workgroup of faculty that teach in a specific discipline, for example, the film department, the theatre department, and so forth.

Second, I am defining a theoretical framework as the influential elements that have most significantly shaped the decision making process from the conception of the curriculum, through the present state of evolution, and into the future.

Interview Process

I had planned to conduct interviews at the University Film and Video Association (UFVA) conference in August 2012. However, the structure of the event was not conducive to formal, one-on-one interviews. The conference schedule of sessions and screenings was tightly packed, and the nightly social events were geared towards creating a more informal environment. In this way, the conference was ideally suited to networking and recruiting potential participants for an interview at a later time. This was a successful strategy as several of the interviews were scheduled as a result of the personal contact at the conference.

The 10 interviews were conducted via phone, Facetime or Skype over the course of eight months. This elongated process was due to honoring the constant comparison method of grounded theory whereby I would not begin an interview until the subsequent interview was transcribed, in vivo coded, and the initial categorization had begun. By personally transcribing the interviews, I gained a longer period of percolation with the data, and a more balanced impression of non-verbals such as tone, expression and emphasis.

The interview transcripts were coded using the *NVivo* software to highlight the initial inductive codes. As the process of data reduction and clustering of codes continued, the software, or my lack of mastery of it, became more of a hindrance to visualizing connections, and so it became easier to print the codes. Once the emergent clusters were identified and compared across the institutions, the common themes were more evident.

Sample Distribution

Beginning with purposeful sampling and moving to snowball sampling, I recruited participants that were key faculty members or administrators in the design process of the film production curriculum. There was an opportunity to have multiple participants from single institutions in more of a focus group setting. However, this was only practical for one interview and is shown in Table 1 by the use of three codes; Educator 8a, 8b, and 8c at Southern School 1. The remaining participants were solo faculty members, chairs or deans.

I interviewed participants at 10 institutions which provided me with a high degree of theoretical saturation; strong, consistent themes were emerging. The initial purposeful sampling was based on identified key players from my affiliation with the UFVA. The recommendations from those participants became the snowball sample. I have chosen to group the participants by their geographic region and the rationale for this will be discussed in a subsequent section. The corresponding codes from institution to educator are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Interview Codes of Institutions and Participants

Institution Code	Participant Code
Coastal School 1	Educator 1
Coastal School 2	Educator 2
Coastal School 3	Educator 3
Midwest School 1	Educator 4
Midwest School 2	Educator 5
Midwest School 3	Educator 6
Southwest School 1	Educator 7
Southern School 1	Educator 8a, Educator 8b, and Educator 8c
Southern School 2	Educator 9
Southern School 3	Educator 10

Coastal School 1

Institutional Mission

This institution could be categorized as a small to medium sized liberal arts based college. Liberal arts values are mentioned in the university mission, as is a commitment to the ethos of graduating wise citizens (civitas) ready for civic engagement. It is no surprise then that the curriculum of the institution reflects a strong bent towards transferable skills with almost half of the total credits for the degree programs based in liberal arts classes. Educator 1 mentioned a push to deepen the upper levels of liberal arts by encouraging students to pursue multiple classes in a quasi-track approach, rather than a sporadic *one-and-done* approach.

Department Mission

Educator 1 described the integration of liberal arts concepts in the film production programs as a significant driver in their decision making. "You have it as operant philosophy or guiding principle that is articulated by the whole department…To say that it guides a lot of our thinking, I'd say would be accurate" (Educator 1).

This mission provides some tension between those in the department who champion a narrower, conservatory type model of curriculum and those who favor the broad-based educational exposure traditionally associated with a liberal arts philosophy. While Educator 1 mentioned that the faculty revisits this dilemma every time they evaluate a new class or add depth to a track, it is this tension that provides a healthy balance within the department. Each member understands the department mission, but

ultimately it is up to the individual faculty to embed liberal arts philosophies in their

classes.

> Each individual faculty member has to figure it out on their own in some ways
>
> based on the design of their class…how that gets played out or embedded in any
>
> particular class is really up to the individual faculty member but I think in our
>
> program, these are healthy areas of conversation. (Educator 1)
>
> Educator 1 mentioned that faculty use critical assignments and presentations, in

addition to asking students to seriously reflect on their projects, as ways to integrate the

philosophies of liberal arts. However, he/she acknowledged that it is often difficult to say

exactly how the balance is achieved.

Program Development

Educator 1 described the film program as a *traditional* curriculum with a central

philosophical thought that permeated the design process. It is a movement from small

individual projects with a degree of generalized skills, through intermediate and advanced

group projects where students use specialized skills. Both the content and the sequencing

of the classes combine to reflect this idea.

During Educator 1's tenure at the institution, two significant elements of design

were added. First, it was identified that the growth in tech-savvy students required a

change in curricular thought. Educator 1 mentioned, "the reason that we did that

[change] is because students are coming in with so much more media viewing and media

production experience already but with a lack of critical reflection or critical attention."

Their solution was to deemphasize technology and emphasize analytical thinking prior to

taking a production class by inserting an aesthetics class at the beginning of the curriculum sequence. In this way, the question of *why is the project being made* is asked before the question *how is the project made*.

The second change was the addition of specialization tracks in either the craft areas of filmmaking such directing, cinematography, and editing, or the genres of filmmaking such as documentary, animation, or studio television production. This concentrated track approach stemmed from a desire to build collaboration between students who had a depth of focused knowledge, particularly in the intermediate production level classes and above. Educator 1 explained that the specializations mesh a student's areas of interest and strength with a significant level of curricular depth.

Educator 1 indicated that the last substantial curricular change was six years ago and they are presently beginning the process of redesign. However, structural issues within the department are causing a lack of consensus and these will be addressed when discussing the critical influences.

Program Description

Degree classifications. Coastal School 1 offers both a BA and a BFA in the discipline of film production. Educator 1 expressed the difference in terms of graduate outcomes; the BA is for students who want to work in the Los Angeles industry whereas the BFA is more connected to a significant, capstone project. This capstone, year-long film was designed to express a depth of ideas through either a group narrative film or a personal documentary, and help students develop their identity as a media artist. This notion of identity is a hallmark of liberal arts thinking.

Of note is the juxtaposition that the BFA degree, which is a degree classification generally concerned with applied or professional outcomes, was mentioned in conjunction with exploring identity whereas the BA degree, which is traditionally based in liberal arts, is more targeted at industry outcomes.

Neither of the degree programs is accredited through any professional agency. Educator 1 was cognizant of the options in accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and the National Association of School of Art and Design (NASAD) but the department had no desire to move toward these models.

Learning outcomes. There are five published outcomes that are shared between the BA and BFA programs ranging from a *demonstrated understanding of history and technical proficiency*, through to *applying ethical principles in production and analysis*. The BFA has an additional sixth outcome that calls for the *creation of an advanced level project*.

The learning outcomes are generally slanted towards broader goals of intellectual pursuit, that is, the desire for good thinkers that are well-informed problem solvers. They do not contain language that declares measurability in specific technical skills. Educator 1 expressed that their department had no desire for any form of technical competencies or further specificity within these outcomes, and spoke of them as primarily connected with liberal arts or traditional academic measures. Given that the curriculum is designed to graduate students in specialists tracks, these broad liberal arts outcomes appear incompatible. Educator 1 explained:

I think there would be certain kinds of critical thinking skills that we would

expect them to be able to demonstrate, so they ought to be able to write. They

ought to be able to speak. They ought to be able to frame an argument. They

ought to be able to think through a problem and be resourceful about different

kinds of solutions. They ought to be able to have different kinds of frames on

which to understand a situation. They ought to have some self-knowledge. I

think those would be the kinds of outcomes that we would expect from each and

every student. And then beyond that, certain students are going to have certain

kinds of specialized skills, as either a writer, a director, a producer, audio artist, or

whatever it is that they are interested in doing. I don't think this faculty is at the

point of trying to specify what a certain level of outcome for a graduate would be.

(Educator 1)

Educator 1 stated that they have not done a rigorous job of tracking learning

outcomes throughout the program. This is primarily done at end of sophomore year after

students have completed their foundation year and the introductory production class, but

there is little assessment for students coming out of the program. "It hasn't been more

thoughtfully designed at this point" (Educator 1).

Theory versus practice. The film department at Coastal School 1 has both a film

studies track and a production track but there is an intentional emphasis on leveraging the

theory to inform the practice.

There's more than lip service to the idea that students in production need to have

more than a critical foundation. They need to know theory and criticism and

history in a way that will really inform their work as practitioners and also inform

their ability to view, to understand, to give them a palette of decisions…to

understand how their work interacts with the culture and both defines culture and

reproduces culture. (Educator 1)

But far from abdicating the responsibility of theory to the film studies classes,

Educator 1 saw the process more holistically; that production classes are a place to ask

students critical questions while having them read theory and respond in practice.

Moreover, Educator 1 can see a time in the next five years where the content will be so

blended that the designations between classes could disappear. "So you're going to have

a class that is really a narrative class and you're going to study narrative theory and ways

that stories get told and then you're going to make one at the same time" (Educator 1).

Expressed as percentages of the theory to practice classes in the major, Coastal

School 1 has a 36/64 blend in the BA and a 27/73 blend in the BFA.

Generalist versus specialist. Coastal School 1 is one of two participating

institutions that use designated specializations or tracks in their curriculum. This is

seemingly at odds with the liberal arts ethos of broad-based education that seeks to

expose students to a range of experiences rather than a single concentration. Educator 1

mentioned that the department pursues both goals. "What we've decided is that we're

going to offer these opportunities [specializations] to students while still asking students

to have breadth in liberal arts classes" (Educator 1).

Ultimately, Educator 1 described this meld as part of the tradeoff in curriculum

that creates both problems and opportunities. The balance that is struck becomes the

distinctiveness of a program and, in the case of Coastal School 1, they are comfortable in that mix.

> We understand that doing these high level craft jobs whether its editing or cinematography is practicing storytelling, does require problem solving, does require the ability to work collaboratively and communicate, does draw on a depth of viewing experience, so to be reductive and to say these kind of craft oriented jobs don't require broad thinking and understanding, I think we would reject that. (Educator 1)

Based on a percentage of generalist to specialist classes within the practical courses of the major (not of the entire major), the BA has a 43/57 mix and the BFA has a 27/73 mix.

Uniqueness. Given that film production is a technology-dependent discipline, Coastal School 1 has been able to flourish by having an administration that understands the financial implications of their program. "We're an institution that is lucky to have fairly abundant resources so we are not operating from a real position of scarcity" (Educator 1). They are given a capital budget each year for equipment and there had not been a year that Educator 1 recalled having no faculty hires in the department.

Perhaps the most unique item of Coastal School 1's curriculum design is their requirement for students to take liberal arts classes as upper division electives within the film production degree structure, as opposed to strictly general education classes. Prior to this requirement, Coastal School 1 found students were taking too many elective credits within the department and causing a log jam.

What would happen is you'd get somebody who's a senior who decided, now I want to go back and take that beginning web design class that I hadn't had a chance to take…so there were a bunch of seniors in that class and then you didn't get enough freshman and sophomores that could really sustain going to a second level and an advanced level in that track. (Educator 1)

This was also described as a pedagogical issue where students became too focused in their discipline and had little or no depth to their liberal arts. "Instead of just taking an intro history, intro philosophy and an intro psychology class, we wanted them to have at least a second level in one of those areas" (Educator 1). By requiring an extended liberal arts focus, both issues were addressed in "an intersection of management and pedagogy" (Educator 1).

Critical Influences

While Educator 1 was a firm believer in liberal arts values, this was not a universal sentiment across the faculty within the film department. "I think that inside our faculty people can hold both points of view pretty well" (Educator 1). It is out of this functional tension of liberal arts and professionalism that many of the curriculum decisions were born and Educator 1 indicated the department faculty reexamines this tension each time they do any curriculum revision.

Perhaps the biggest impact on curriculum is the organizational structure of the department that houses the film production disciplines. Coastal School 1 has resisted forming separate genre or craft-specific workgroups such as a narrative film department,

an audio department, or new media department, and instead operates as one large undifferentiated cluster.

> We're loathe to subdivide the department because then it has curricula implications that many people aren't happy with, so how to develop structures that allow us to manage the department and have a kind of integrated curriculum is something that we haven't solved. (Educator 1)

> This fluidity encourages pathways of learning relatively unobstructed by a prescriptive design. Students move vertically though the curriculum from freshman to senior as in most universities, but also move horizontally through the various disciplines in the department; video, audio, web design, and so forth, since there are no curricular barriers. Educator 1 identified the challenge that this does not allow for clear rational management of student progress and is inhibiting their ability to redesign the curriculum. "There is not much consensus on how we are going to progress…so until we can figure out some of these structural issues, I don't think we're going to get to the curricular issues" (Educator 1).

Coastal School 2

Institutional Mission

As a self-declared research university, there is no declaration of liberal arts intent at Coastal School 2. The mission statement does contain one seemingly stray thought regarding the integration of liberal and professional learning but clearly this institution does not connect itself to the civitas tradition. The core curriculum is solely concerned with general education; math, science, history and so forth.

With no professed formation of holistic development in the university mission or a formally stated desire for integration, the general education requirement can be seen as a competing curriculum to the majors. It is this tension that has frustrated Educator 2, particularly as it relates to the story content of the film program.

> This is what enraged me about being in the undergrad; the question of "what are they going to make films about? They haven't even lived yet!" Well they're here and they're like 18 years old. They've lived. "How can you do anything if they haven't read Greek mythology?" And my feeling is that's not our job. Our job is to give them the skills to be artists if they're going to be artists or craftspeople if they're going to be craftspeople and that's my job. At engineering school, nobody would say "how can you be an engineer if you haven't read Greek mythology." (Educator 2)

Department Mission

Within the film department, there was no declared unity of vision. Indeed internal conflict was mentioned regarding the balance of artistic and trade school purposes within the curriculum. Educator 2 was passionate that students could not be artists without the necessary technical skills, and that technical proficiency was not valued as highly as it ought to be across the faculty. The feeling was that this stigma against technical expertise had been formed as a response to the prestige and reputation of the institution in producing artists.

Program Development

The curriculum at Coastal School 2 was well established and Educator 2 did not identify any knowledge of its original design. A major revision had been discussed over the previous fourteen years but it was only in the past four years that a committee was formed to work on the redesign. The new curriculum design is planned to be launched in the upcoming academic year. Educator 2 stated that during this process there was no benchmarking or any form of research survey to determine the plan of restructure. It was more of an organic change since the need for change was self-evident.

Three ideas were addressed in the recent redesign process beginning with *coherency*. The curriculum was to be more unified in a progressive, building-block sequence, rather than a wash of classes that had little connection. This was addressed by elongating the sequence of the major from four semesters to eight semesters to allow a longer gestation period for skill acquisition and development.

The second concept to be addressed in the redesign was *technology* and its effect on curriculum in the following ways: (a) increased student experience and aptitude prior to college; (b) increased need for technological literacy rather than simply an aesthetic prowess; and (c) affordability of new media formats. Educator 2 mentioned that several of the restrictions in the previous curriculum were based on film as a media format. By embracing new digital technology these restrictions were removed, and the types or genres of films that could be made have been expanded.

The third concept of change focused on the top tier of the curriculum in the capstone class. Educator 2 explained that their narrative film structure with specialized

positions meant limited opportunities in the craft roles, forcing students to double up. "Well we're talking fifty students down to four roles, and they really didn't like that. And they also didn't like the fact that they shared what we would call in the industry, the *keys*" (Educator 2). To alleviate this gridlock, Educator 2 reported they would increase the quantity of senior films by allowing a wider range of genres with smaller crews such as documentary or experimental film. These genres would complement the larger narrative film crews. In addition, broadening the middle tier of specializations, that is, requiring students to have more than one specialization would allow a wider range of craft choices in the final projects.

The most noticeable change that intersects all of these elements was the move away from specialized craft tracks within the curriculum to a broader multiskilling approach. This change will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Program Description

Classification. Coastal School 2 is in the process of moving to a BFA degree for freshman but retained a BA for transfer students only. Educator 2 mentioned two main reasons for choosing a BFA; (a) the volume of credits required for a BFA is increased over a BA, allowing the curricular offerings to be expanded; and (b) a BFA meant a change in the organizational structure, moving the program from being housed in a school to being housed in a college.

Educator 2 was unaware of any professional accreditation for film production from either NAST or NASAD.

Learning outcomes. While Coastal School 2 has published institutional learning outcomes for its general education curriculum, there are no outcomes identified for film production; no skills, knowledge, attributes or competencies expected as a result of the curriculum. "We don't have marks that they have to hit…but they do so much production they're kind of under constant supervision" (Educator 2). Educator 2 mentioned there were course objectives in each syllabus and that each class was rewritten during the curriculum redesign process.

Educator 2 identified that the evaluation of the new changes will involve more informal assessment methods; talking to the students at various stages in the curriculum to gauge their impressions. Success will be judged on the extent to which the curriculum changes correct the issues that they were designed to address; namely the students' progression of technology through a unified sequence of classes.

One of the measures that I'm going to be looking at is whether or not the idea that this first course prepares them for the next course and they go in the next course with a set of skills that enables them to build on those skills and then those courses prepare them for the next course. (Educator 2)

Theory versus practice. There is an existing film studies/critical studies program at Coastal School 2. Educator 2 felt the balance of critical studies served the production program well. The only qualm with film studies was that many of those students were angling to get into production by using film studies as a form of backdoor enrollment; to transfer in without going through the regular channels of entry.

Expressed as percentages of the theory to practice classes in the major, Coastal School 2 has a 31/69 blend in the BFA.

Generalist versus specialists. In this recent curricular change, Coastal School 2 will step back from a single specialist track and move to a marginally more generalized degree program. Educator 2 felt that the change in curriculum design was in line with trends in the industry. "Ten years ago that [specialization] seemed like maybe a good idea but now it doesn't seem like such a good idea anymore. Now it seems like people are becoming more and more filmmakers." He/she commented on the notion that the *Hollywood* model of demarcated specializations is not decreasing, but most of the graduates are not going to be employed in that model. The new curriculum allows for a wider range of skills in a way the previous one did not. It also frees students to do more independent work in smaller crews in the upper level classes, rather than be confined to the larger, specialized, narrative film sets.

Specialization has not been completely abandoned in the redesign. Educator 2 stated that students are now required to take three classes in a craft area rather than one. In this way, the notion of *multi-skilling* provides the mid ground between a *jack-of-all-trades* generalist and a *master-of-one* specialist. Students can then pick from any of those three roles on a crew in their senior films.

Based on a percentage of generalist to specialist classes within the practical courses of the major (not of the entire major), the BFA has a 45/55 split.

Uniqueness. Coastal School 2 has developed a five tier structure to deliver their curriculum that was not found in any other program. Level one begins with basic

filmmaking skills where students use cell phone technology. Level two is lab-based instruction where students "get their technology down" (Educator 2) in a series of required multi-skilling classes. Level three is an intermediate production class where students rotate roles. Level four comprises practicums that give students elective choice to go deeper in three specializations, and also require them to be assistants on senior film crews. The progression culminates in level five where students complete their final film project.

Critical Influences

As seen through the recent reworking of the curriculum, the change in technology has played a significant role in influencing curriculum decision making. Acceptance of these changes in the new curriculum was extremely mixed among faculty even though input was taken from all levels of faculty and students throughout the process. However, once the department chair got thoroughly behind the new curriculum and the new courses began to roll out, attitudes quickly shifted towards the positive.

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Coastal School 3

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Institutional Mission

Coastal School 3 has roots in the liberal arts tradition, although Educator 3 mentioned that the institution has transitioned towards more of a research focus. There is official verbiage in the mission statement regarding *character driven lives*, and the course catalog describes the degree programs as *professional education in a liberal arts environment*. The sequencing of elements is significant in that professional education is

listed as the primary driver, rather than the juxtaposition of a liberal arts education within

professional programs.

Coastal School 3 has formed loose groupings of general education classes, similar

to the design of Coastal School 1, as a strategy to encourage students to, (a) pursue

minors, (b) promote more curricular diversity, and (c) gain a depth in liberal arts. The

intention is for students to take their required general education classes in a cluster and

then continue on to *round out* or *round up* their degree with a complete sequence of

classes; to have students consider, "well if I take two other classes, I've got a minor, so I

may as well go for a minor" (Educator 3).

Department Mission

Educator 3 identified that their school has a reputation for being pre-professional

and that the production faculty are divided on the balance of liberal arts and

professionalism. There was a strong personal connection to liberal arts expressed by the

participant, particularly when woven into the production process. Speaking of famous

film sound designers, Educator 3 said that "what distinguishes the button pushers from a

Walter Murch or Gary Rystrom is their ability to use those sounds to tell the

story…without that larger perspective, you're a button pusher and that's where the liberal

arts come in" (Educator 3). This integration is simply signified in the reference to the

film core classes in the production program as the *liberal arts of film.*

The actual integration of liberal and professional skills was left up to the

individual faculty members. "How the courses are taught is very important…like in an

editing class, we don't want the faculty member to teach software…there are mechanics, but it's really about the aesthetics" (Educator 3).

Program Development

When Educator 3 arrived at Coastal School 3, they described the curriculum as *boilerplate*. "It was a pretty standard type of curriculum but there wasn't the kind of curricular rigor and oversight that there is today with assessment, with learning outcomes and frankly, we're still working on that" (Educator 3). The curriculum evolved from a communications program that originally contained elements such as television production and documentary production. Educator 3 identified these genres as still being on the periphery of the production curriculum despite the desire to have them included in the design. This was based on the personalities and specialties of the faculty members that originated them but who were not part of the film department.

There are three issues that Coastal School 3 has addressed or is in the process of addressing in their curriculum; story, pre-production and creative collaboration. In regards to addressing story, while external reviewers identified a number of demonstrated strengths in the program outcomes, particularly in the sophistication of the craft areas, the notion of story was acknowledged as an area that needed attention. This involves both the skills of *writing* a good story and *recognizing* a good story or story analysis. Educator 3 explained how they hoped to address this.

We're developing, and this has been a hard process, a story class that's broader than just screenplay. It's the art of story and this is something we've been

working on. We tried it a few years ago. It didn't really work out the way we wanted, so we're trying to figure out a way to do it. (Educator 3)

As an additional measure to address story concerns, Educator 3 said they had introduced content restrictions in their introductory production classes. Students are prohibited from shooting in a dorm; the *wake up-alarm clock-it was only a dream* sequence, and various clichés around relationship breakups.

Connected to the issue of story is a problem identified in pre-production. "One of the weaknesses we discovered in our program across the board through assessment is that there's not enough time spent on preproduction…they show up with scripts that aren't producible yet" (Educator 3). This issue strikes at the purpose of the curriculum in graduating students as *directors* or students as *writer/directors*, commonly referred to as *auteurs*. Educator 3 identified several ways they have addressed this issue; (a) requiring a script development class before the thesis or senior film; (b) using a script bank whereby directors shoot pre-vetted scripts that they have not personally authored; and (c) introducing a summer class in pre-production to emphasize the importance of the work done before the production phase. This approach was acknowledged as merely a curricular patch and the program may need a complete curriculum rebuild.

The third issue is that of creative collaboration. Educator 3 recounted a story of audio student who had recently finished compiling and executing all of the sound elements for a film project. Unbeknownst to the audio student, the director did not like the work product and demanded possession of the audio elements so that he could redo the sound himself. There was never a point where both parties dialogued regarding the

problems and solutions in the spirit of collaboration. This led Educator 3 to stress that creative collaboration is a *learned skill* that must be taught. To address this, they have reworked a class in set protocol to focus on communication and on-set collaboration.

Educator 3 acknowledged that it is time for significant change in film curriculum. They used the metaphor of a car to describe both the need for constant maintenance and the idea of integrated systems; a change in one part can have an unexpected outcome on another. However Educator 3's primary point was that at some stage, patching is inadequate and a complete paradigm shift is required: The car needs to be replaced. Coastal School 3 may be at that stage.

Program Description

Classification. The BFA was chosen because of the desire for a capstone project, although Educator 3 acknowledged that this is not necessarily a requirement for a BFA. They spoke of the BFA as a deeper, in-depth experience that distinguishes Coastal School 3 as a *legitimate* film school, particularly given the track-based nature of the curriculum. Educator 3 expressed that while the faculty had discussed a BA, and that a BA might be closer to his/her own personal view of a film education experience, the department is content with their choice.

Educator 3 was unaware of professional accreditation from either NAST or NASAD. From the perspective of observing other departments with professional arts accreditation such as music or theatre, they felt the process was too arduous and the rules too archaic. "I'm curious about it but I think we would be a little wary of having an outside agency impose norms on us" (Educator 3).

Learning outcomes. Four learning outcomes are clearly published and labeled on the website. They cover ideas such as creating original films and composing essays, and the demonstration of technical proficiency in one of five craft areas. While the outcomes are succinct, they lack specific details or competencies. Due to the nature of the degree program with various strands, a common set of competencies are not possible. Educator 3 believed that cinematography was the only sub-department that had a quantitative list of competencies but acknowledged the need to formalize them in other craft areas. "I really need to do this now because our students are getting very competent but at the same time, I think we need to point out what they need to know before they get out of this place" (Educator 3).

Educator 3 mentioned that the learning outcomes are linked to all of the courses in the curriculum, and assessment is done against the program student learning outcomes (SLO) and also course learning objectives. This was well documented on the website with access to a full curriculum map. This level of open documentation showed the value the institution places on evaluation. "We've used assessment, basically as a way to improve the program" (Educator 3). Program weaknesses such as story and pre-production have been identified using assessment tools. However, Educator 3 said the actual assessment material is mostly anecdotal; talking to faculty and examining course evaluations with little hard data such as focus groups with in-depth analysis.

Educator 3 also expressed concern that assessment is mostly misunderstood and a lonely job. Faculty often sees assessment as just *another thing* in a long line of responsibilities.

I'm sure every school is like this but most faculty members don't really want to get involved in assessment…It's hard for them to understand the significance. I mean I try to do that. I show them how assessment was helpful in determining that pre-production is suffering. It could be anecdotal but it's nice when you have the data to back it up. (Educator 3)

Theory versus practice. Educator 3 mentioned that there is a smaller film studies program at Coastal School 3 but it was no secret that, to a large extent, studies serve the production program. As with Coastal School 2, it had been a backdoor entrance to film production. However, the institution has taken precautions to block that practice. "We've closed that door, and put many locks on it, and warning signs, and electrical barbed wire. No one's getting in that way anymore" (Educator 3).

The mix between theory and practice classes is 18/68 although there is a high portion of elective credit that could be taken in theory classes. Educator 3 mentioned encouraging production students to take theory classes as electives. "Film is like anthropology. You have to understand the whole culture, not just a piece of it" (Educator 3).

Generalist versus specialist. Much like Coastal School 1, Coastal School 3 has designed their curriculum with specialist tracks that students elect in their junior year. It is a concentration of 15 credits of craft classes in which students then work as specialist collaborators on thesis films. Educator 3 spoke of students committing to a craft area and a specialized area as an historical imperative. "We've always had that kind of conservatory model or approach in our undergrad" (Educator 3).

There are faculty members in the department who would like to see an increase in the number of credit hours devoted to specializations. However, Educator 3 expressed a personal desire for students to take even fewer classes in a specialization in order to broaden their experience in other disciplines. Based on the total number of practical classes and expressed as a percentage, the mix of generalized classes to specialized is 27/73.

Uniqueness. The Coastal School 3 website has the most substantial supporting documentation regarding the curriculum process. From published learning outcomes, curriculum maps, annual learning outcomes assessment reports, assessment rubrics, and program reviews, students have transparency in how their learning experience has been constructed and how it has, and will be assessed.

Critical Influences

Educator 3 mentioned that television and documentary production are curriculum elements that should be included in the film production structure. The ownership of these classes resides with the originating faculty who do not teach in the film department. "We actually have a narrative TV program and why it isn't with production…I mean from a curricular perspective, we need to move it and the same thing with documentary" (Educator 3).

The notion of addressing story was prominent in the interview. While Coastal School 3 has its own writing department to draw scripts from, students have chosen the auteur route by attempting to write and direct their own scripts. This has produced conflict amongst faculty over the curriculum content.

Faculty will come and complain that they're spending most of their class on the

scripts. It's become a screenwriting classes instead of a production class. It

shouldn't be that, and of course the screenwriters are complaining, "why is this

production person teaching screenwriting." Well they're not teaching

screenwriting. They're trying to get the script producible. (Educator 3)

As mentioned previously, Educator 3 hoped to address this with some patching of

the curriculum; changing class requirements, using script banks, adding a story class, and

most importantly reframing outcomes for students; directing students will concentrate on

their craft, writing students will concentrate on their craft, and the emphasis will be on

creative collaboration. If patching is not sufficient, a complete redesign may be needed.

Midwest School 1

Institutional Mission

Midwest School 1 is solidly rooted in the liberal arts tradition. It is undeniably

liberal arts in its mission statement and branding, and also reinforces this with the

identifying curricular markings of a liberal arts institution; relatively small sized majors

and a high percentage of elective credit. This is not to say that Midwest School 1 does

not have professional-oriented degree programs. Their mission and values statements

call for integration of both philosophies of education. Educator 4 explained, "I don't

think Midwest School 1 would favor the idea that it's kind of a two stage process. You

take care of the liberal arts and then you can be a little more professional. I think the idea

is that it's intertwined" (Educator 4).

Department Mission

Educator 4 recounted examples of an unhealthy level of tension in their

department around the concept of mission; in particular the balance of liberal and

professional education. They said that due to the perception of film production as overly

vocational, it was difficult to be *accepted* within the university and even more so within

the department. "We had external reviewers in their final document say that the big risk

of this department is to ostracize the production faculty because it's a non-traditional

discipline" (Educator 4). But as a non- traditional discipline, production is not precluded

in the university's blended mission. Educator 4 pointed to a document on the website

that clearly linked the two concepts of liberal arts and professionalism. Thus, the tension

is not in the stated mission of the university but in the practiced mission of the

department.

Program Development

There was no production curriculum at Midwest School 1 when Educator 4

arrived. The administration wanted to build a program primarily in broadcasting and had

already invested heavily in facilities, but there was no dedicated faculty to create an

academic plan. Educator 4 developed patterns of sequential classes in production and

theory that covered both studio and field production.

Educator 4 was extremely passionate regarding the roadblocks they had traversed

in order to design effective curriculum.

Most of the decisions about this are plagued with politics and are plagued with the

resource needs that each department has and also the need for the department to

allocate faculty in certain places…everything happens by biting each

other…especially when you start as a new faculty untenured; there's not much

power, even though we fought very hard and that's what we have now. (Educator

4)

There has been no significant curricular redesign in the program since its

inception.

Program Description

Classification. Stemming from the mission of the university, the BA was the

only designation that was discussed. A BFA would have appeared too applied or too

professional.

Educator 4 was not aware of professional accreditation. They stated that seeking

professional accreditation would run against the philosophy of the department who

already viewed film production as too vocational.

Learning outcomes. There are no specific published learning outcomes from the

film production degree. The closest correlations are five generic points listed on the

website. These include acquiring *principles and skills*, *developing a reel of projects* and

studying media theory, history, and criticism. They are broad with no connection to

levels of competency.

A stronger linkage is the connection between the curriculum and the published

university learning outcomes. Each syllabus connects the course learning objectives with

an institutional 12 point list of competencies and commitments. Given that they serve the

entire university, these are broadly defined knowledge and skills, deeply rooted in liberal

arts and religious principles. Educator 4 believed the linkage serves a purpose in providing credibility to the program. "It gives us a lot of peace. If somebody starts talking badly about us, we say listen, it's in our syllabi. It's like a birth certificate. We belong at Midwest School 1…so I endorse all this definitely."

There are no professional learning outcomes in the curriculum design due to the tension within the department. Much of the curriculum assessment was mentioned as being anecdotal, revolving around senior film screenings and the assessment done in individual classes rather than across the curriculum.

Theory versus practice. Since film theory is seen as a more legitimate academic fit, there are a high percentage of theory classes in the production program. The balance as a percentage of the credit required in the major is 43/57 which is the highest of any participant. Educator 4 did not have a problem with this mix, or a problem with the culture of theory that informs practice. "It's not a technical school. It's not a brain dead technical, professional school…and I like that" (Educator 4).

Specialist versus generalist. Given the mission of the institution, the notion of deep specialization was rejected. Educator 4 did express a desire to include more components of specialized production and expand the existing curriculum, but the program has already used their maximum number of credits assigned by the university. There is some specialization within the upper level production classes but even in the senior studio classes, a rotation of roles is still expected. The balance expressed as a percentage of the entire degree is 43/57.

Critical Influences

For the majority of the interview, Educator 4 expressed frustration over the

positioning of the discipline at the university and the lack of academic legitimacy. It was

the most significant factor that affected the curriculum from the design of individual

courses, to the lack of professional learning outcomes of the program. For the most part,

the dysfunction was expressed as a product of Educator 4's own department rather than

the university as a whole system.

> Midwest School 1 says there is no contradiction between professional training and
>
> liberal arts. It's not a question of do we need to be in another school…It's just
>
> political. We should not have a problem because other colleagues in our own
>
> department don't have that problem, but we do, not because there is a real
>
> fundamental reason. There is no reason out there. It's just territorialism, just bad
>
> blood and lack of communication. (Educator 4)

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Midwest School 2

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Institutional Mission

Midwest School 2 had a long tradition as a liberal arts college before its

rebranding as a public state institution. While it has repositioned itself in the marketplace

to some extent, it retains the desire to blend liberal arts philosophy with professional

studies as part of its mission statement.

Department Mission

The film program has its own mission statement that clearly echoes the

institutional mission of integrated education. Educator 5 expressed this as a natural part

of what happens in the classroom. "I support it [liberal arts]. I like the idea you're a

fully rounded person in order to make good movies" (Educator 5). While the department

may be comfortable with the integration, others at the institution have questioned the

legitimacy of film production.

> People who say it's a trade school or a button pushing major. I always say "you
>
> mean like learning the clarinet?" Like learning piano?" You have to learn to push
>
> the buttons first. It's in service of learning music. You have to learn the tools.
>
> That's all we're doing…so the camera is just our instrument and we're going to
>
> make art and whatever with it, but you've got to learn the fingering. (Educator 5)

Program Development

Educator 5 was not the originator of the curriculum at Midwest School 2. The

only insight provided into its creation was an anecdote regarding the design of curriculum

around the expertise of original faculty members rather than any form of strategic

planning; creating for what you have, not for what you need.

Educator 5 mentioned that they had just finished a four year redesign process.

This was driven by three primary ideals formed at the department level; (a)

undergraduate education should be broader with less emphasis on a single genre such as

fiction, animation, or documentary which was their previous design; (b) the convergence

of content within these genres calls for a flatter, broader curriculum structure; and (c) the

desire to make students more graduate-ready in jobs of varying areas.

To achieve these goals, the film program moved to a broader menu-based

approach rather than the previous cluster of specified classes within a genre. Instead of

having a major strand in genres such as animation, fiction or documentary where the upper level production classes are prescribed, now students choose five electives from a pool of essentially the same classes offered from any of those genres. The administration of Midwest School 2 was supportive of the change because of the cross-pollination of genres and also the cost savings. If a class is fully populated, students must take another elective to fulfill their degree requirements rather than the administration opening a second section and paying another faculty load.

Program Description

   Classification. This institution offers primarily a BA but with the option of doing a BS degree and thereby removing the general education language requirements. From a disciplinary standpoint, the curriculum is identical.

   There has been much discussion regarding moving to a BFA but Educator 5 described three roadblocks; (a) the generalist culture of the department has actually moved the curriculum further away from a BFA design; (b) accreditation with NASAD would require changing categories and a complete overhaul of the curriculum; and (c) uncertainty as to whether the administration would supply the extra resources needed for the curricular depth of a BFA.

   Accreditation. Midwest School 2 is NASAD accredited and was in the process of reaccreditation during the study. Educator 5 believed the administration supported reaccreditation due to the prestige of professional accreditation, but they were reluctant to contribute extra resources.

Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of the accreditation discussion was that Educator 5 felt NASAD had no specific accreditation for the type of degree that Midwest School 2 was offering which was purposefully designed as a hybrid liberal arts/professional program. It was either a BA that had minimal professional elements in the curriculum, or a BFA that has minimal liberal arts.

> We're liberal and professional and NASAD doesn't really have that category. And they were saying, "do you want to become a BFA, because if you're a BFA, that is a professional degree. You are a BA or a BS. That's a liberal arts degree". So we instantly renewed accreditation in terms of the liberal arts but they kept saying we had to expunge the word "professional" from all our summaries. (Educator 5)

This polarization was more confusing in light of the increasing vocationalism within higher education. Educator 5 explained one of the qualifiers of the BA degree accreditation from NASAD is that it provides only a *background in film and video*, but the primary objective of the accredited program is *not necessarily a career in film and video production*. "Can you see us putting that on our website? …People would be running away" (Educator 5). It is the BFA that is positioned as the professional degree program for those who plan to work in the industry. Educator 5 expressed that their program had much more in common with the BFA, but until the institutional resources could be matched with the accreditation requirements, they would remain with the BA.

Learning outcomes. The film program has a published mission, vision and value statements for the production degree. The value statement lists 11 principles that,

according to Educator 5, reflect the liberal arts roots of the institution. These statements

are less comparable to traditional learning outcomes in that they do not contain active

language of skills, knowledge and attributes, but rather purpose statements such as

valuing service and *belief in civic responsibility*. They are the liberal goals of learning

that Educator 5 stated are embedded in the curriculum, rather than discipline-driven

production learning outcomes.

Educator 5 acknowledged the role and the importance of assessment, even at an

informal level, in determining whether the curriculum was meeting the learning

outcomes.

I don't want to bad mouth assessment, because at some point, you have to stand

there and say is this stuff working? Is our goal to make their cinematography

better? Yes, it is getting better. How about their sound? Their sound used to be

horrible. Their sound is improving. How are we on content? That's still kind of

rough. They're still turning out zombie movies. We've got to work on that.

(Educator 5)

Viewing films at the end of the semester was described as the most valid form of

curriculum assessment; asking honest questions about what areas worked and what did

not. Educator 5 expressed the epiphany during the interview that their curriculum

assessment is actually based on valuing professional outcomes whereas the stated

learning outcomes are primarily liberal arts.

We're not actually assessing them on do they get perceptivity and conceptuality

and do they understand history and criticism…We don't ask that. We look at

their films and ask are they good filmmakers…and this is sort of a revelation to me and I'll bring it up at the next film meeting because that is basically all we look at – their work! (Educator 5)

Theory versus practice. From Educator 5's perspective, a good balance is achieved where theory serves the practice. "It's called film production not film studies… you're going to learn history, theory and criticism but the point here is when you get out of here, we want you to be either a commercial film maker, independent filmmakers, or video artists" (Educator 5). He/she used the photography degree at Midwest School 2 as a contrasting example. The graduate outcomes of that program are a connection to life exploration and viewing one's world through the lens, rather than a vocational outcome such as a commercial photographer.

The film degree also has a percentage of required school core credits which is why the balance appears skewed at 26/74.

Generalist versus specialist. Until the most recent curricular change, Midwest School 2 had designated specialist tracks in genres at the upper end of the curriculum. These tracks related to areas such as fiction, documentary, animation and new media, rather than tracks in craft areas of specialization such as editing or cinematography. The redesign of the curriculum has seen a move towards a broad-based, student menu option that symbolizes a step away from genre specialization. Students no longer do a cluster of specific classes but self-select classes from a wide pool of options, still populated by each of the genres. The silos have been removed although the classes remain the same.

While this curriculum shift was in many ways driven by a desire to provide a broader media education, this desire for generalism is somewhat at odds with the skillsets of the faculty. As media professionals, each faculty member has a specialization within a genre that limits their ability to contribute to all but lower level classes across the media production spectrum. Educator 5 shared the example of fiction film professor who cannot teach the upper level animation classes. Faculty are generalists as *teachers* but specialists as *media creators*, and yet the curriculum has been redesigned to encourage generalized media creation.

Within the craft areas of film production, there are some required specialization classes such as writing or editing. Educator 5 mentioned that if there is an area in which the professor or student wants to specialize, it could be offered as a special topics class. However, this practice is generally discouraged by Midwest School 2 as it robs from the regular teaching load of the faculty, or increases the adjunct budget expenditure.

Critical Influences

While Midwest School 2 had seemingly struck a functional balance between liberal arts and professionalism, the tension within the department still dictates curriculum choices. There is no specific film production department but rather an undifferentiated grouping of media genres in areas such as fiction, documentary, new media, and animation. While Educator 5 would rather have seen the curriculum steer towards more specialized film outcomes, the department has swung the opposite way in terms of generalist leanings; hence the menu list of electives. Educator 5 was also disappointed that although their area enrolls the highest number of students, it is not

reflected in resource allocation, particular human resources, when compared to other areas of arts at the institution.

From an institutional perspective, the organizational structure of the university was mentioned as a curricular impediment. The multi-discipline department is housed in a school that should actually be designated as a college. Educator 5 believed this is a cost-saving measure on the part of the institution; only paying a director instead of a dean and conserving and consolidating administrative resources. This structure adds another layer of bureaucracy to curriculum changes; first through department faculty, then school committee, college committee, dean, and finally the university curriculum committee. Educator 5 felt there were too many voices and too many opportunities for curricular ideas to be distorted.

A lack of resources was mentioned as an issue in design. There is no opportunity to expand the curriculum toward the desired BFA unless there was a significant investment in capital from administration, for example, the addition of a soundstage. The budget provided by the institution has to be divided amongst other resource-dependent disciplines in the school, and this affected the type of classes that can be offered.

Midwest School 3

Institutional Mission

Midwest School 3 is clear in its mission as a small residential liberal arts school. The educational philosophy document published on their website speaks plainly of *holistic development*; another characteristic of a strong liberal arts tradition. In statements of blended missions such as this, the sequencing of words is an indicator of

institutional prioritization. In Coastal School 3, it is *professional studies* in a *liberal arts tradition* and at Midwest School 3 it is the idea that students are educated in *liberal arts* and their *chosen discipline*. The emphasis of the institution can be seen clearly in the ordering of the two elements.

Department Mission

Although the department had no published mission statement, there was a strong affinity with the liberal arts mission of the university and the role the film program plays in its application. Educator 6 stated, "I think the curriculum is written more to satisfy the mission of the department…and that's very reflective of our overall mission of the university. We're more specific about how we're doing it."

As mentioned by other participants, the integration of liberal arts and professionalism is more organically integrated in the film production process, particularly when connected to story creation.

> That doesn't mean that within our classes we're not teaching from a liberal arts perspective. I mean it's not like we're training people just how to be bean counters or how to work in a cubicle…We've really pushed against that and that's why I think we emphasize story so much and the story forming process because that's where the liberal arts can really start to come into play. (Educator 6)

Program Development

When Educator 6 arrived at Midwest School 3, there was no film production curriculum but only majors in broadcasting, theatre and communication in the department. The administration believed it was too expensive to start a film production

program so he/she taught in the broadcasting program. With the strong track record of

growth in the broadcasting degree, and with increasing student demand for an expansion

of narrative classes, a film studies program was approved as a gateway to film

production. Much of the curriculum was shared with broadcasting and there were only a

few new courses taught by adjuncts in order to keep the costs down. Also, a partnership

with the Los Angeles Film Studies Center (LAFSC) was secured through the Best

Semester partnership program of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities

(CCCU). Students could take a semester long program in Los Angeles, including

production classes and an internship, and have that experience count towards the credits

in their film studies degree.

In 2002, due to continuing student demand for more production and interest from

art students in animation, Educator 6 collaborated with the arts faculty to begin research

into a digital media arts degree. They toured various digital media programs, secured a

grant from the Lily foundation, bought facilities, and wrote curriculum for a new degree.

The curriculum was based on a mix of animation and live action film production, though

weighted more towards animation. Based on the projected enrollment numbers, the

degree was extremely successful, exceeding expectations over the first several years of its

existence.

While the digital media degree was successful, Educator 6 continued to have a

passion for more film production housed on campus rather than in Los Angeles. They

explained that much of the push to create a standalone film production strand was the

desire to not rely solely on the LAFSC program. The internship experiences in a

community such as Los Angeles are impossible to recreate, but Educator 6 believed they could offer similar coursework at Midwest School 3. "I was determined that I wanted to say, you don't have to go to LA. That's not for everybody…but I want you to be able to say I was able to study here at Midwest School 3 and take those same classes" (Educator 6). After an organizational restructure, the film studies, digital media arts, and broadcasting majors moved to their own department, and animation was split from film production to form two separate degree tracks.

Educator 6 mentioned that one of the driving factors when forming the standalone film production curriculum was to originate curriculum specifically for the film production program and not to double dip in existing classes that were shared with broadcasting. Film production had to be purpose-built. Conversely, it was important to be conscious of any film classes that could serve other majors in a cross-disciplined fashion, as this would help to placate the faculty who were concerned about the curriculum being too specialized.

Program Description

Classification. Educator 6 explained that creating a BS degree provided two advantages. First, it allowed more credits in the degree program since a BA degree generally has a foreign language requirement that is not part of the BS degree. Those extra credits were able to be reallocated towards the major. The second advantage was that a BS degree is regarded as more pre-professional within the film industry than a BA and that was a prime consideration.

The degree program is not professionally accredited but Educator 6 expressed interest in the concept. "It's important because when you do have those accreditations, the nice thing about it is that it justifies to the university why you must have a certain amount of faculty and facilities" (Educator 6). They recounted the story of starting a nursing program at their institution and the accompanying state regulated resources that were mandated for it. The desire was for the film production to be resourced at a similar level. "Well sign me up! How do I get accredited? Where's my association to demand that I have more faculty?" (Educator 6).

Learning outcomes. There are no published outcomes for the department, but Educator 6 explained that the department does use learning outcomes in the curriculum mapping process by linking each class to the department student learning outcomes (SLO). Curriculum maps appear to be part of the institutional approval and redesign process. "We went to retool our curriculum this fall pretty aggressively, particularly on the animation side and because we hadn't done our curriculum mapping or kept up with it, the academic concerns committee wouldn't look at our revision" (Educator 6).

The primary source of data in determining curriculum effectiveness is student evaluations. "Students will pretty much let you know if they think this course is adequate or not. They're good about that" (Educator 6). The focus on student opinions and demand is a recurring theme within Midwest School 3.

Theory versus practice. Educator 6 designed the film studies major as well as the production major ensuring a strong affinity for the value of film studies classes. They discussed achieving balance by finding opportunities to intentionally blend theory and

practice together, particularly in what was described as *book-test-viewing* classes. "We have a canon of films that we try to get every student to watch through and so each class has certain films from that canon" (Educator 6). This balance is more clearly shown when examining the specific content within the courses, since on face value the theory portion appears thin at 27/73.

General versus specialist. Once students work through underclass foundational courses, they progress to a series of specialist classes. If a student has a desire for a specialization that is not offered, they can design their own class as more of an individualized study course or coaching type class. However, these classes are run somewhat irregularly and from a curricula perspective, Educator 6 is unsure of the best use of them. "It's definitely flawed and it's an area I would like to update" (Educator 6).

Uniqueness. Midwest School 3 has been able to forge a workable blend of what is essentially a pre-professional degree in a staunchly liberal arts environment. The pathway has been unique in terms of transitioning from a broadcasting degree, to creating a film studies program, to a digital media program, and finally to a fully-fledged film production program. The actual makeup of the curriculum itself is not particularly unique.

Critical Influences

While several participants mentioned that student demand played a role in designing curriculum, it was identified as the mitigating factor in the creation of both the film studies degree and the production degree at Midwest School 3. **"**I'm able to take the those concerns of current students and maybe even some prospective students that come

and realize we don't have what they want" (Educator 6). Educator 6 explained that they have been able to formulate student's petitions and requests into a campaign of sorts and present them to the administration. "Those are very powerful with powers that be" (Educator 6).

A second influence of design mentioned was the struggle to incorporate story content within the curriculum. Educator 6 emphasized the belief that liberal arts and holistic education plays into story development, given that the story forming process has both psychosocial and theological impact. Of the theological development of story, Midwest School 3 was the only one of the three religious-based institutions where faith was identified as influencing the curriculum.

Funding was acknowledged as a weakness and a continual struggle, particularly in terms of human resources. Educator 6 mentioned that they regularly find themselves in front of the administration pleading for more resources. "We have had to learn to go out and find donors and build a base. We just don't have enough resources to keep up…I wish we had more faculty. Those are hard cards to get. It's herculean" (Educator 6).

Southwest School 1

Institutional Mission

Southwest School 1 is a large, research-focused institution. The only nod to the ideals of liberal arts in their published literature is the mention of educating student to solve complex societal problems. However in context, the mission speaks of using research skills to help humanity, rather than holistic civitas philosophy that would be central in a liberal arts mission.

Departmental Mission

The department went through a significant reformatting in the early 2000s including the formation of a mission statement that was written specifically for the major.

The mission represents work done within divisions across divisions, within programs and then across programs. I think the idea is that it's supposed to guide us. The process is supposed to have been able to help us cross boundaries and make some decisions. (Educator 7)

The department mission speaks to a mixture of experiences in craft areas such as directing and editing, in theory areas such as media aesthetics, history and criticism, and more broad educational statements of developing a media voice that encourages underrepresented voices. The latter statement is an appeal to a more holistic, liberal arts vision of filmmaking.

Program Development

Educator 7 was not the designer of the original curriculum but knew much of the history. The program began as part of the radio, television and film (RTVF) department movement of the 1960's. It was formally incorporated into the School of Communication in the early 1970s and then the College of Fine Arts in the 1980s with a name change to Media Arts. While radio had a small curricular impact, it was mostly multi-camera television with some single camera super 8 and 16mm film work. In terms of curriculum and faculty resources, Educator 7 described the mix as 75% film studies and 25% film production.

This remained the status quo till around 1999 when the number of full-time faculty teaching film studies gradually began to decrease while full time production faculty began to increase. The ratio of production faculty with an MFA to production faculty who were television-oriented professionals changed from a 50/50 mix to virtually all MFA faculty by 2002. Educator 7 described the department as being in a transition stage and searching for direction.

In 2002, an academic program review highlighted a number of problems in strategy that were adversely affecting the curriculum, both across the school and across the department. Educator 7 recounted the primary issues; (a) the production division was not funded as it needed to be; (b) there was an imbalance between film studies and production; and (c) there was a lack of focus within production curriculum in terms of trying to do too much with too little. The Department of Media Arts was deemed a bad fit for the School of Fine Arts and a radical reorganization was needed.

Educator 7 stated that the system, in terms of curriculum and mission, was so broken that "the department was clearly in crisis". At the behest of the dean and the provost and using the results of the program review, an outside consultant was brought in. After much discussion with the faculty, the consultant had a deeper understanding of the problem and echoed many of results from the program review. The program needed a new direction.

In 2004, the provost empowered the department at Southwest School 1 to reorganize itself. Additional consultants were brought it and it became a four month intensive process within and across divisions and departments. Every class was

examined with a view to either change, cut, or maintain. This resulted in culling around

20% of the classes, changing another 20%, and adding 10% new classes.

From a structural perspective, changes included, (a) condensing the BA to a single

focus; (b) expanding the BFA including applying for accreditation through NASAD; (c)

removing technology-driven content and nomenclature in favor of labels such as *non-*

fiction production or *fiction production*; and (d) jettisoning curriculum in

television/multi-camera, new media, animation, broadcast production, and radio to focus

on single-camera production.

While this redesign was in process, the department remained in a state of flux and

this uncertainty, combined with a lagging state economy in the late 2000s, caused

discussion of culling the department from the university. Following an unsuccessful

search for a new head of the department, the dean of the school answered a directive from

the provost to streamline the university by merging media arts and theatre into a new

combined School of Theatre, Film and Television. "It wasn't the perfect option. It was

certainly an option that made sense, given the other choices that were either being

formally or informally addressed by rumor and hallway conversation" (Educator 7).

The new director of the combined school set out a three stage plan for the merger

of the two departments. Educator 7 explained the context:

> The watch words that were used to describe curriculum changes before the merger
>
> was that there would be no attempt to force curriculum changes to existing
>
> programs, and in fact what we would do is to look for natural affinities…Now in

fact there probably has not been as much progress on those existing organic

affinities as there could be. (Educator 7)

Whereas stages one and two of the merger were primarily focused on

consolidation of administration and services, stage three is firmly oriented toward

curriculum design. It deals with creating new combined programs and curricula,

although there was little direction regarding how this new curriculum should be created.

There has not been substantial progress in this third stage but faculty members are

gearing up for the upcoming academic program review of the school that Educator 7

hoped would provide direction.

Program Description

Classification. Prior to the curricular overhaul, Southwest School 1 had a single

BFA and a multi-strand BA that contained various tracks in genres such as new media,

broadcast, animation, and so forth. With the restructure of the curriculum in 2003,

Southwest School 1 positioned the BFA as the primary production degree, raising the

credit number from 60 to 72 and attaining NASAD accreditation. The BA was stripped

of the strands and consolidated to a single focus in the skillset of producing.

Educator 7 explained that neither degree classification was better than the other,

but the primary distinction was how students want to spend their time. The BFA is

intensive, insular, generally cohort driven, and the structure is prescriptive and linear

whereas the BA is broader, more inclusive of other subject matter, and less focused as a

specific academic program. Both share a number of learning outcomes and Educator 7

expressed the need to clearly communicate the strengths of each classification. "I think it

is very hard for example, for an incoming freshman or high school senior to really have a clear sense of what one program might be like versus another" (Educator 7).

Educator 7 was aware of the two accrediting bodies. With the restructure of the mid-2000s, they adopted NASAD accreditation as a BFA production degree because "it makes more sense for us" (Educator 7). Prior to the merger with theatre, the previous director asked the department to evaluate both accreditation agencies to see if they wanted to move to NAST. The faculty evaluated and declined. Now that the merger is complete and the theatre program is NAST accredited, the new director is asking a second time but now with more intent. "He's essentially indicated that he wants us to move to NAST" (Educator 7). They are hoping for the opportunity to reevaluate and make the decision collaboratively.

Learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of the BFA and BA are published on the website in more of a narrative form than specified numeric outcomes. These were developed during the time of turmoil as the department endeavored to establish its mission.

> What we did was to try to get clarity from the provost and from the college as to the larger notion of what our mission was, what goals we should be meeting and then once we were able to get some clarity about what our revised mission and goals were, then those acted as guideposts for very specific work done by the faculty…we identified what were going to be the outcomes for the degrees. (Educator 7)

Educator 7 expressed a strong belief in the notion of curriculum mapping; from department mission, to learning outcomes, to course objectives.

Once things are down on paper and once you begin to formulate outcomes and once you begin to tie specific classes to outcomes, and all that work that you have done at this kind of theoretical abstract level, then it suddenly has a huge impact. (Educator 7)

Some outcomes assessment had been done for the BFA but this was to be expanded in preparation for the upcoming program review. Educator 7 noted that it will be their job to pool and analyze assessment data. There was no indication of engagement in any graduate assessment apart from some anecdotal evidence; no database listing of where graduates are at or how they would rate their education.

The data collection for assessment involved individual meetings with all students at the end of their first year and the following semester. There has been discussion regarding a mid-program review, particularly in the BFA, but there was no consensus on how to evaluate and how to make decisions on whether students should move forward or not.

In general, there was a desire to increase the quality and quantity of their assessment data. "I think we're not doing it anywhere near as much as we could" (Educator 7). They expressed the hope that the work done for the program review will be put into practice on a yearly basis, if only to make it easier for the next review.

Theory versus practice. As mentioned previously, there was a 75/25 mix of film studies to film production when Educator 7 arrived. There was no real curricular tension

because film studies as a discipline was valued within the whole department. Educator 7 stated, "my initial training was in studies so I always thought it was incredibly important."

Tensions between departments were more connected to the type of academic program that the studies faculty were asked to create during the reformat. The last curricular overhaul saw the film studies department repurposed under the banner of *producing*, which in industry practice, is actually part of the pre-production process of film production. The film studies department is the primary controller of the BA degree, which enrolls more students than the BFA. The creation of this dichotomy was a top-down mission directive. "It was an opportunity for studies people to claim something that was hands-on and it met the provost directive and mandate to increase the amount of time spent producing work rather than simply studying work" (Educator 7).

The split for theory and practical classes are 31/69.

Generalist versus specialist. The curricular balance has been driven by the refinement of the mission. Educator 7 stated, "we took the vision and identity, and mission that we've always had with the program to train students, we use the term *holistically* – to train students to be filmmakers." They described this vision using the comparison of a director and a filmmaker; one cannot be a filmmaker without being a director since directing is part of the overall scope of filmmaking, but one can be a director without being a filmmaker if they do not understand the whole process of film creation.

In this way, the curriculum at Southwest School 1 is more accurately labeled as a multi-skilled program than a specialist program. A distinction between multi-skilling and specialization can be made in two areas; (a) all students are required to take all of the craft classes rather than having a single elective choice; and (b) there are no specific tracks as outcomes. Educator 7 explained, "the idea that we try to say is that we don't want to track anybody but we want to make sure that people are well rounded on all of these areas…it is not an MFA program" (Educator 7). The mix of generalized and specialized classes is 32/68.

Uniqueness. Given that this curriculum evolved from a RTVF school, there is little residue from its origins. The curriculum was completely overhauled and rebuilt in a new direction rather than simply adding a few patches. The redefined mission became a strong driver for curricular decision making.

Having the concept of producing as a skillset taught by film studies faculty is unique. This runs contrary to all other participants in which film studies is a wholly theoretic discipline. Exactly how the two departments interface was unclear but this distinctive came from a top-down directive.

In the upper division production classes, Educator 7 spoke of using *preceptorships* as a part of the curriculum. This involves a class created for select seniors to assist with lab instruction, give feedback and critique, read scripts and generally bridge the gap between faculty and the underclass. This is similar to the function of teaching assistants, but with no specific teaching responsibilities, and using course credit as incentives rather than payment.

Critical Influences

The changes in department structure have driven the curricular change throughout the history of the program. As the production department continues to negotiate the most recent merger with theatre, Educator 7 signaled the final phase of integration as the most difficult, that is, intentionally fusing curriculum within the new multi-discipline department. It is clear that balancing the curricular needs of producing/studies, film production, and theatre will continue to be the preeminent force on curriculum.

From a university perspective, the administration at Southwest School 1 has driven much of the redesign, shown through the program reviews, mission casting, and the mandated overhaul. Educator 7 was thankful that although the directives were top down, most of the work and decisions were made at the department level. He/she mentioned that another program review is scheduled for the coming year which indicates an institutional culture of accountability that will continue to impact the program.

Accrediting bodies may also come to bear on the curriculum. Southwest School 1 was the only participant in the study that was accredited under the BFA or professional degree structure of NASAD. However, pressure to move to NAST may require a change in outcomes for the program. It may also require a closer integration and sharing of curriculum between theatre and film production which could hasten the third phase of the merger.

Educator 7 mentioned three specific liberal arts elements embedded in their program; creative collaboration, the ability to respond to feedback, and the notion of ethics. The first two are programmatic elements that are organically addressed within

each class. Ethics is more connected to how a student thinks about the work they do across the entire program. Educator 7 mentioned the difficulty in assessing this ethical element as the boundaries are often unclear until they are crossed.

Southern School 1

This interview was the only time that more than one participant was present. Three of the original designers were able to be present for a group interview although one of the panel had to leave during the interview. The participants will be distinguished by Educator 8a, 8b and 8c.

Institutional Mission

On its website, Southern School 1 is described as a comprehensive university. While it uses the term *educated citizens* as a goal in its mission statement, there are no allusions to liberal arts goals and no other language that would signify a broad-based civitas approach.

Department Mission

The film department is driven by their own mission, vision and core values, many of which would be considered more liberal arts than professional in nature. Herein lies the distinction between *general education* classes such as math, science and history, and *liberal arts* classes that may be more connected to communication, interpersonal relationships and ethical interactions. This distinction is discussed further in question 2.

In regard to general education, Educator 8a commented that, "there's a huge list of classes that students can take and we generally advise them to get those done as quickly as possible so they can get into their major and minor." However with liberal

arts, the participants felt many notions of civitas are part of the production process. "I think very specifically we discussed making sure that it is part of our film production sequence in terms of what they do, but not something that we specify units on" (Educator 8b).

There is a movement at Southern School 1 to broaden the catalogue of general education classes so that students can take coursework in film theory and production and allow those classes to count towards the general education requirements. Educator 8b explained, "so the chance exists that our major and minor will actually become part of the general education program."

Program Development

Educators 8a, 8b and 8c were primarily involved in authoring the curriculum at Southern School 1. The curriculum grew out of the existing mass communication major that had a telecommunications track containing broadcast and television classes. The mandate was to create a film production track, rather than a major, that would fit with the existing structure; 44 credits with a minimal number of new classes. "What we tried to do when we first built the program was to sort of build it alongside the telecommunications track in terms of figuring out which courses could be both" (Educator 8a). They were able to negotiate a number of small changes by taking the existing television production class and turning it into an introductory video class to serve both tracks, recycling two other core classes into the film track, and adding two new production and history/theory classes. By using existing electives, they were able to augment the core classes and complete the film production track.

Educators 8a and 8b discussed how the new courses were based both on their own experiences as students and educators, and based on the assumption that the new program would be in *digital* filmmaking. Educator 8a identified the rationale for choosing digital technology rather than film as a format; (a) the existing broadcast equipment used for the telecommunications track was video equipment rather than film equipment; (b) the lower socioeconomic status of the state meant that students would struggle to afford to shoot on film; and (c) a general consensus that film was a dying format in the eyes of the industry and digital was the future. Educator 8a expressed surprise at how quickly their premonition of the death of the film format has become reality.

The most substantial change in the curriculum since its inception has been moving film production from a track curriculum under the mass communication major to its own dedicated major. Educator 8a mentioned that this involved; (a) splitting the shared classes with telecommunication and developing film production versions; (b) swapping out a core class and introducing an introduction to film theory class; (c) adding a laboratory component to the beginning and intermediate production classes, thereby increasing the credit numbers; and (d) offering specialized classes as electives that eventually became department courses.

Program Description

Classifications. The BA was chosen somewhat by default since the film production program was required to match the existing curriculum structures of the other programs in the department. There was no movement towards a BFA as the department had already invested in developing a MFA.

Educator 8a was aware of professional arts accrediting agencies, acknowledging that the theatre department is NAST accredited and the art department is NASAD accredited. However, there was no desire for film production to seek accreditation.

Learning outcomes. Strategic planning is an integral part of the curriculum process at Southern School 1. They have published a mission statement for the department, an eight point vision statement, and thirteen core values. These are the learning outcomes that are mapped throughout the curriculum and contain a mix of discipline-specific and liberal arts outcomes.

The values are described as being less connected to specific competencies and more in line with a guiding philosophy that drives the curriculum and decision making. Educator 8b explained that even something as pragmatic as choosing editing software was guided by their vision and values. "Core values help us stick to who we said we are" (Educator 8b).

The curriculum is assessed informally through gauging student interest in classes and also formally in a daylong assessment retreat held each summer. Each year, the retreat rotates between evaluating undergraduate and evaluating graduate classes. "We basically review the whole program and try to figure out what's working, what's not working" (Educator 8a). From these retreats, new ideas and plans are formulated. Educator 8a indicated that they are constantly tweaking the program and are happy to embrace change.

Theory versus practice. The balance was designed by simply prioritizing production in the curriculum design process. Each of the educators had observed

production programs where the film studies portion was significantly greater than the practical classes and there was no desire to replicate that model. However, they championed the notion of having theory inform the practice. "We always felt it was important to have at least some kind of more theoretical film studies type of underpinning to what we're doing and try to make our film makers a little more well-rounded" (Educator 8a). The balance at Southern School 1 between theory and practical classes is 34/66.

Generalist versus specialist. Educator 8a expressed two ideas that drove the mix of general and specialist classes; department mission and administrative mandate. In regard to mission, the program from its inception was intentionally envisioned as producing generalists. They wanted to emphasize the holistic skills of the production core classes and not pressure students to specialize. "We've always viewed our students as generalists, not to say that they can't specialize…but from our curricular point of view, we have looked at it with the assumption that we are training generalists" (Educator 8a).

This mission of generalization was informed by two concepts. First, the types of industry positions in their state are more generalist than the coastal markets that lean towards specialists. Second, the designers felt that the film and video industry in general is heading towards generalization. Educator 8a explained:

> We want to do our best to try and figure out where things are going. I think our view has been for quite a while that that's where things are moving with the availability of technology. The Hollywood level things are always going to be huge but increasingly outside of that, things are downsizing. (Educator 8a)

In addition to departmental mission, the second rationale for generalization was a directive from the administration for synchronicity between the BA and the future design of a MFA program, which by its nature is more specialized. In practice, this meant ensuring that undergraduate students could move to the MFA without duplication of classes.

The balance of general classes to specialized electives is 48/52.

Uniqueness. There is nothing striking in the program elements at Southern School 1. However, the use of mission and values to fuel decision making was strongly reported by the educators. As with Southwest 1, the department mission is a critical lens through which decisions are viewed; both visionary decisions in terms of graduating generalists over specialists, and pragmatic decisions such as what editing software to purchase. Additionally, their engagement with assessment as a tool for design and redesign was prominent.

A recurring theme from the three educators was the desire to continually look towards the future and stay ahead of the curve. "The question we've just started talking about is where we need to be really in 10 years in terms of curriculum. Do we need to be offering a large portion online and if so how are we going to do that?" (Educator 8b).

Critical Influences

Access to resources and the department structure are two elements working together to influence the curriculum. In terms of resources, broadcasting was the incumbent curriculum prior to film production, and both programs currently share a

sound stage/television studio. Educator 8a spoke of the changes in curriculum that could be achieved if the allocation was changed.

> From our perspective, it would be great to have that studio full time and be able to do what we want with it…so in that sense, what kind of classes we might offer or what faculties we might use to offer them, does get pressure, and the same is true with things like cameras and the availability of the equipment that has some impact on the curriculum…I'd say facility wise, if we either build or move broadcast out, I would really like to see several of our classes be able to use our whole facility more… All our film production classes 1-4 I think could be impacted in a huge way if we could use everything that was in our building. (Educator 8a)

The balance of resources is mediated through the department structure. Film production, broadcasting, and theatre have evolved into relatively autonomous workgroups. "We are maturing and have our own identities and [it is] only when there is some issue at the college and university level that you see us as a department" (Educator 8b). However, the institution views these programs as a single division, particularly with respect to the budget. Educator 8a indicated that theatre is funded from its own separate budget which creates internal tension, leaving film production to divide up the department's budget with broadcasting. Educator 8a described that budget as "good for telephones, blank paper for the copier and it pretty much stops there."

Southern School 2

Institutional Mission

While the mission statement for Southern School 2 has no specific mention of civitas language, it is the vision statement that calls out the merger of liberal arts and professional education within a blend of learning and service.

There is no subsidiary department mission to impact the film production program since the film curriculum has only just been written and will be launched in the coming semester. The degree has been developed in a temporary, incubator department before it is planted it in own department.

In regard to the relationship of university mission with design, Educator 9 expressed a desire to embed liberal arts and transferable skills in their classes as they had done at previous institutions. "It's important to me, the fact that I'm teaching them something that's useful even if they become a priest. I've got one student who's a priest and she said that it's because of me that she gives a good sermon. That's storytelling" (Educator 9).

Program Development

Educator 9 is the originator of the curriculum at Southern School 2 and has been writing and designing the curriculum over the past year in preparation for the launch of the program. The design process began as a fact-finding mission, travelling to eight other institutions and examining their programs. Much of the curriculum was also informed from Educator 9's experience in graduate school. He/she knew the curriculum would

need to culminate in a short capstone or thesis film and described working curriculum design like a script, revising over and over again.

The creation process was described as very free form with no directives or interventions from the university. "I did it. It was all for me. No one has told me anything. They just liked my three page proposal. They feel script is the central key to every film and they are just letting me run with it" (Educator 9).

Three items were identified as key components in the curriculum design; (a) teaching students the value of a good script and story; (b) the value of good sound; and (c) the value of eliciting a good performance from actors. Educator 9 was emphatic regarding the importance of these principles. "Any film school that doesn't teach it that way is making a mistake."

A feature of the design process is that only the first year classes were approved through the university process. Educator 9 stated they will need to revisit the curriculum committee each year to have the future year's proposed classes approved. This strategy was recommended by the provost in order that the curriculum could more dynamically respond to change and feedback as it grows.

Program Description

Classification. Southern School 2 plans to offer both a BA and a BFA. Educator 9 explained the only difference between the programs was that the BFA did not require a minor. "It's just a big fat major and so the difference is they can take more film classes" (Educator 9). Offering both classifications was described as a way to appeal to a variety

of students, some who need more knowledge and others who need "a kick in the pants."

Educator 9 was not aware of any professional accreditation.

Learning outcomes. The idea of learning outcomes was not something Educator 9 had ever heard in the previous 14 years they had been teaching at other institutions. When asked to describe the learning outcomes, they responded; "(a) go to Hollywood and get an entry level position as an assistant; (b) have enough knowledge to form their own company to do industrials or webisodes; (c) stay in state and get a job in the regional film business; and (4) do something else" (Educator 9).

On the website are the published vision, purpose, and goals statements for the program. The goals are more specific in their craft orientation, though perhaps not in their level of achievement. Notions such as students being *comfortable casting, rehearsing and directing actors* or achieving *clean production sound* offer a level of specificity but perhaps more difficult to measure.

Theory versus practice. Sequencing theory before practice was an important recommendation that Educator 9 received during the design process. "Don't just start them making movies, until they spend an entire semester reading up on short film structure." Theory before practice was a common idea echoed by other participants in the study.

Educator 9 also made a distinction in separating film theory and story analysis. They expressed frustration at theorists who over-intellectualize the *mise-en-scene* or the construction of the frame. In one anecdote, he/she recounted a discussion regarding Quentin Tarantino's choice of music in the film *Reservoir Dogs*. A theorist would posit

that Tarantino used synesthesia effectively to blend the visuals and music together and portray a deeper connection and meaning. However from Tarantino's own commentary, he chose the music because it was the correct length and because he could secure the copyright. Educator 9's point was that too much theory can elevate and embellish pragmatic decisions to a level beyond the filmmaker's intent and therefore should be limited in scope.

By including the required business class in the theoretical category, the balance of theory to practice is 22/78

Generalist versus specialist. "It's not a film school. There are no tracks…. I'm hoping that they're going to come out of it being generalists" (Educator 9). Educator 9 expressed the belief that the industry is heading towards generalism as profit margins and budgets become tighter. While students must be competent in all roles of filmmaking, Educator 9 stressed heavily that the key to success is storytelling.

Educator 9 plans to offer craft classes that align with the six graduate outcomes; story, producing, editing, directing, sound, and cinematography. In this way, students graduate more as multi-skilled generalists. It is difficult to gauge the mix of general to specialized classes due to the large amount of elective credits, and the fact that most of these classes have not been approved through the university approval process. Certainly, there are few general production classes proposed and many specialized classes in the elective choice of 15 credits and 48 credits for the BA and BFA respectively.

Uniqueness. As with all participants, the personality and experience of the designer is inherent in the program. This is most evident at Southern School 2 with Educator 9's strong bent towards scriptwriting being woven into the design.

Perhaps the most unique attribute is the context in which the degree was developed; fashioned in somewhat of a guerilla-style and operating on the fringes of the academy or at least outside of traditional academic procedures. Educator 9 recounted how the provost recruited them directly and signed over complete and sole responsibility of the program creation. He/she asked for, and was given, a year of full salary with no teaching load so they could visit other institutions and collect ideas. At the suggestion of the provost, only one year's worth of classes was submitted for approval. Several times during the interview, Educator 9 mentioned that they only answered to the provost and the president and were mostly left alone. Each of these factors indicates a unique autonomy in the curriculum creation process.

Critical Influences

Since the curriculum had not yet launched there is nothing specific to report. Educator 9 believed that in the next year or two, the program will be formed into its own department. While there is an existing video production major in a separate department at Southern School 2, Educator 9 explained that program was news oriented and documentary focused; hence they saw no need for shared curriculum, although they use some of the same equipment.

Southern School 3

Institutional Mission

Southern School 3 is self-described as a public research university. Perhaps the most interesting element in their mission statement is the nod to civitas; the desire to graduate *thoughtful, engaged, citizens of the world*. This appears as a mission disconnect between the stated mission of liberal arts and the lived mission which is unmistakably linked to the German research model.

Department Mission

By its design as a RTVF department, the degree at Southern School 3 most closely embodies the liberal art ethos in its broad and generic media base where students are intentionally exposed to a wide array of media influences. Within the curriculum itself, Educator 10 mentioned the inherency of liberal arts in the process. "As they move through the ranks, they are forced or they have the opportunity to work in crews so we have that embedded into the curriculum" (Educator 10).

It was mentioned that the integration of liberal arts often happened in informal ways where the liberal arts elements are disseminated and integrated by "dancing on your feet as a professor" (Educator 10). As an example, Educator 10 spoke of the difference between filming a rape victim's story using a Red® camera or a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera. The Red camera provides a crisper image but may be too conspicuous or ostentatious thereby creating a barrier to collecting the story. The lower picture quality of the DSLR is compensated for by its relative unassuming ubiquity; less

obtrusive and threatening. This was described as the combination of technological and philosophical considerations; professionalism and liberal arts.

Program Development

Educator 10 was not the originator of the curriculum at Southern School 3 but described it as "historically a fairly traditional department in terms of curricula design" (Educator 10) in the mold of other RTVF departments. They have a campus radio station that serves the wider community, a campus television station that broadcasts on a cable network, and a digital cinema program. All of these elements are combined in the one curricular strand.

The most turbulent event within the curriculum occurred when another college within the university launched a bid to encapsulate the RTVF department and its degree programs. While this takeover was unsuccessful, it did result in the formation of a separate but complimentary major aimed at addressing the converging broadcast media sector.

Educator 10 identified the marketplace as playing a pivotal role in the mix of curriculum elements between broadcasting and film production. The importance of film, described as the *mother ship*, has increased within the region and this has seen a rise in the number of post-production houses. This industry expansion, along with the addition of a production-related MFA program, has in turn expanded or steered the curriculum towards film production over broadcasting. Conversely, radio production presents the conundrum of reconciling a successful, award winning radio station with a curriculum that is void of specific radio elements. Educator 10 indicated many of the audio faculty

members now teach *sound for picture* in areas such as documentary, narrative, or news. While the department has significant pride in the work of radio, there is uncertainty regarding how to resolve it within the curriculum.

Also the transition in technology regarding digital cinema has forced curricular shifts in both the production and distribution processes. This shift is particularly relevant for the studio side of the program as a curricular chasm is forming between film production and television production. Educator 10 explained that the core class, which is currently a survey of each area, will now be separated into two sections to give both film and television more time. "We're always saying these are all converged but we're seeing, not a split, but different kinds of philosophies and different needs in terms of the curricular design of those two" (Educator 10).

Program Description

Classification. The BA program is a natural classification given the broad scope of the curriculum. Educator 10 recounted discussions on moving to a BFA and there was some support from those in the department who had been trained in that conservatory method. However, there were structural hurdles that could not be overcome. Educator 10 described it as "kind of a political thing" both within the politics of the university organizational structure and the politics of the state. In terms of the university, the RVTF department is not aligned with the college that claims *ownership* over all BFA degrees so that would prove to be a structural roadblock. In terms of the state, the current governor has expressed desire to accelerate the education process; to send students out of higher

education into the workface as soon as possible, and a BFA would slow down that progress.

Educator 10 was cognizant of professional accreditation within both NASAD and NAST. The department had discussed pursing accreditation but ran into two barriers. The first issue was whether the benefit of accreditation was worth the effort. "The feeling amongst my colleagues is, why go through that hell if we don't have to?" (Educator 10). Since one of the advantages of accreditation is to lobby administration for resources, Educator 10 expressed that they felt they were already in a good situation. "We need more faculty but we are doing ok" (Educator 10). The second issue was the question of which agency would accredit them. The mixed discipline department of RTVF in its current form does not fit NASAD, NAST or even the journalism accreditation agency.

Learning outcomes. Educator 10 mentioned that they do not publish their SLO, partly because of reluctance by faculty to fully promote or endorse assessment. SLOs are required to be in each syllabus but "it's not for public consumption up on the website" (Educator 10).

In terms of their design and application, Educator 10 expressed that most of the faculty are in favor of more visionary and philosophical statements that guide their curriculum, but that philosophy is at odds with the current climate of accountability in their state. He/she stated that so far, they have been able to resist that pressure of data driven, quantitative outcomes.

Curriculum assessment is conducted each year through a variety of committees within the department. There is an undergraduate curriculum committee that works with an executive committee to identify aspects of the curriculum that need attention. Also there is a production committee that provides input on technology-based curricular changes. The recommendations from each of these groups form the annual assessment report. Educator 10 stressed the notion that it was a holistic assessment of the curriculum.

Theory versus practice. There is a very even mix to the curriculum at Southern School 3; a 40/60 blend of theory and practice. Educator 10 felt this balance was part of the strength of the program design. "I think all of us are very committed to keeping that" (Educator 10).

Generalist versus specialist. The discussion around this continuum is less concerned with craft specialists and more directed at media specialists. As the only participant that did not have a specific, standalone film degree program, Educator 10 expressed uncertainty about the future of the generalized degree. **"**I would however say the majority of students do end up focusing, and we've had a lot of discussion about tracks and should we formalize tracks. A lot of us including myself would like to do that" (Educator 10).

The program also has an even mix of generalized classes and specialized classes but with fewer options in the craft areas, and a high ratio of electives at 33 credits. Given the elective choices between generalized and specialized, the mix is close to an even split.

Critical Influences

Departmental structure and the relationship between disciplines have played the most significant role in influencing curriculum. The dilemma of branching out into tracks of radio, television and film or staying generalist is not one that the department has definitively resolved. As Educator 10 pointed out, they have already moved beyond a fully generalized philosophy by making a separate program major in convergent media. This move itself was a reaction to the power struggles amongst university departments so it appears that departmental politicking is a significant shaper of curriculum.

Technology and resourcing have played a part in the curriculum development in regard to the differing production methodologies between television and film production. Educator 10 mentioned they have recently split their survey class into two sections because multi-cam studio production is significantly different than single camera film production and they both require extra time. The recent purchase of digital cinema equipment will continue to pressure the curricular mix and shift the priorities towards film production.

Summary

These 10 interviews highlight the core descriptive elements of production education design at each institution. The most encouraging aspect of the sample was the diversity of environments and contexts, mostly unintentional, which added richness to the data. Some of the key factors within the sample population were the location of the institution, the categorization and classification of universities, and the diversity in stages of the life cycle of the film programs.

Location. The sample was isolated into four regions. Three institutions were from coastal regions on either east or west coast; three were from the Midwest region; three were from the South region, and one was from the Southwest region. While this distribution was somewhat serendipitous, it proved to be such a salient factor in the research that I used the regions as code labels, and also will address the idea of location in research question three.

Carnegie classifications. Six of the institutions were private, not for profits, and four were public universities. Three institutions were designated *RU/H* or *RU/VH*, indicating research universities as the main category, with a high or very high level of research activity. All three had student populations in excess of 35,000. Half of the institutions were *Master's L*, indicating a mix of bachelor degrees and at least 50 master's programs. The remaining two institutions were classified *Bach*, and *Highly Residential* (http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/basic.php).

By using these classifications, comparing them against Breneman's (1994) criteria for liberal arts institutions, and also the published mission and vision statements for each university, the sample was shown as an even mix of those institutions that openly espouse the combination of liberal and profession education, and those that do not. It is important to clarify that this dichotomy is referring to philosophical tendencies rather than a dogmatic polarization. In this way, I am defining a liberal arts institution as one that foregrounds liberal arts values through their professional degrees rather than an institution that only offers pure liberal arts programs. This distinction will be germane to

the second research question regarding the integration of institutional mission into the production curriculum.

Diversity of film production programs. Three institutions were in the Hollywood Reporters' top 25 film schools around the world. This indicates a high level of prestige, though primarily in their graduate education (http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hollywood-reporter-top-25-film-schools-usc-ucla-afi-353726). Three participants have film programs that had their genesis in radio/television, or broadcasting. Two departments have professional accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), with one participant in the process of becoming reaccredited. Two programs had just completed significant curricular redesign, and one other program was just beginning to offer a film degree in Fall 2013.

The diversity of these institutions and participants created a challenge when comparing programs. A liberal arts institution has a completely different set of operant factors than a research institution, and a BFA degree is considerably different in structure to a BA degree. Rather than the heterogeneity being a disadvantage, it provided a richness of discourse and experience which only served to make the common linkages all the more relevant. These links are discussed within the context of the four research questions.

Research Question 1

How has the professional curriculum of film production been created in this environment and is there any evidence of a theoretical curriculum frame?

In this two-part question, I first address comparisons within the genesis of film production programs across the participants. As discussed in chapter two, the entry of film production into the academy is nebulous and unclear. Indeed none of the participants mentioned any form of central or common origin story, but rather film production curriculum appears to have evolved from a variety of contexts that have shaped its development.

Four of the institutions have programs that had their birth in broadcasting curriculum. Midwest School 3, Southwest School 1, and Southern School 1 created film production programs as *product extensions* alongside the broadcasting curriculum, that is, they continued with the existing broadcasting major while adding a film production strand or major that included a portion of shared classes. Southwest School 1 was the only one of these programs that eventually underwent a complete redesign, allowing the film curriculum to be unencumbered of its broadcasting roots. In contrast, Southern School 3 has retained a RTVF model with melded curriculum for the foreseeable future.

Half of the participating institutions have film production majors created in departments of broadcasting, theatre or communication. These programs exhibited the most tension in curriculum development; tension within mission, tension within classes that serve multiple disciplines, and tension over limited resources. These issues will be explored in more detail in questions two and three.

Midwest School 2 and Coastal School 1 created film curriculum in larger, undifferentiated departments of media, meaning students choose their classes from large pools of electives across many crafts and genres rather than a prescriptive, singular

pathway. Both participants spoke of the struggle to maintain curricular integrity and the difficulty of refining curriculum choices with so much influence from the surrounding disciplines. This model is opposite to Coastal School 2 and Coastal School 3 which have more centralized and localized film departments. Their curriculum has been created or recreated with minimal influence from the external environment.

The lowest level of influence on curriculum creation is seen in Southern School 2. This program was created entirely in isolation from other departments, and indeed had little interfacing with the rest of the institution. Given the lack of influence in this example and the high degree of influence in more embedded programs, the organizational structure appears to play a critical role in the creation and development of film curriculum.

There was a defined clustering of purposes within the creation of degree programs; the *why was the curriculum created* that informs the *how was the curriculum created*. Coastal schools had organized curriculum to target the more specialized, Hollywood-style narrative, filmmaking model. This is shown through Coastal School 1, Coastal School 2 and Coastal School 3 that each required students to select a specialization track or a deep elective multi-skilled path in their academic plan. In contrast, the further inland that the participating institutions were located, the more generalized the mission. The Midwest schools and Southern schools each spoke of designing curriculum for multi-skilled positions where a single filmmaker could perform a number of skilled roles. This speaks to the type of prevalent industry jobs in that market and will be discussed further in question two and three.

The second portion of research question one addresses the idea of design within a theoretical frame. One of the most impactful comments regarding the process of design was the opening response from one of the participants; "designing a curriculum? That might be too deliberate a term" (Educator 1, Coastal School 1). Curriculum creation and refinement did not appear as an intentional, structured process for many of the participants and often happened reactively in response to internal or external stimuli. None of the participants cited a specific framework, author/s, or curriculum design literature that informed the design process. Coastal School 2 and 3, Southern School 1 and 2 and Midwest School 2 and 3 spoke specifically of using their own experiences as students or professionals, of using benchmarking by visiting other institutions, and of building around similar disciplines in their institution as mentioned previously.

While every participant used some form of course level objectives in their design, the programs at Coastal School 3, Midwest School 3, Southwest School 1 and Southern School 1 interfaced with institutional models of design and accountability rooted in the notion of curriculum mapping. In this method, each class is linked through a holistic academic plan to student learning outcomes, somewhat akin to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy and the notion of the *backwards design* curriculum of Tyler (1949) and updated by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). These participants used the end outcomes of the curriculum to frame the intent of each class in a transparent, integrated progress plan. Within the remaining institutions that did not cite curriculum mapping, the learning outcomes were often less defined and did not appear to drive the curriculum decision making. These outcomes were more philosophical statements of vision rather than

specific outcomes of the curriculum, and often connected with liberal arts values such as acquiring principles and communication skills (Midwest School 1) and belief in civic responsibility (Midwest School 2).

There was common philosophy of content and sequence design found within each program. Students were immersed in generalist skills in lower level courses, usually demonstrated in group projects. In middle level courses, students would study a skill in an individualized craft class such as writing or directing. Generally, the programs culminate with students using specialized skills in upper division courses as part of a collaborative workgroup.

In addition, each participant spoke of using film theory classes in conjunction with production classes, at least at the introductory level, to inform the practical classes. Considering the study was conducted in universities as opposed to trade schools, this was an expected outcome.

The results of research question one show both the disparate nature of film production creation, and a common influence of surrounding disciplines within the organizational structure. There is some evidence of a theoretical frame of design with those institutions that use curriculum mapping, and with a commonality in content and sequencing. However, the most significant concept that impacted how the curriculum was designed was centered on mission.

Research Question 2

How does the curriculum of undergraduate film production programs relate to the mission of the universities that house them?

The narrative portion of the study examined the mission of each individual institution through the lens of liberal arts or professionalism. The primary focus of this research question is to examine the relationship of institutional and department missions to the content structure of the program. This is observed specifically through the balance between theoretical classes and practical classes, and more particularly the balance between generalized classes and specialized classes. A more generalist or theoretical curriculum is an indicator of a broad-based liberal arts philosophy to education, whereas a more specialized or practical curriculum is more connected to professional or research based philosophies. In this way, the intent of the question is to understand the relationship between liberal arts as a philosophy, rather than specific classes in a liberal education.

A generalist program mission will require students to take some form of mixed skills across some or all of the seven most common skillsets of film production; writing, producing, directing, production design, cinematography, editing and sound. The desired result is a *jack-of-all-trades* who can proficiently contribute skills to a project from pre-production, through production and to its completion in post-production. This is more prevalent in genres of production such as corporates/industrials, documentary or experimental film than in narrative film where the crews are larger and the roles more defined.

A track-based or specialist mission is designed to produce graduates with a depth of skills at one of the craft levels. In their junior and senior classes, students concentrate on skills and knowledge in one specific craft area. Rather than graduating filmmakers,

the goal is to graduate directors, editors, writers, and so forth, within the narrative genre of short or feature filmmaking.

In seeking to analyze the content structure across these four variables, I have used the broadest definitions to distinguish the classes. If a class uses labels such as *history*, *theory*, or *criticism*, I have designated it theoretical, whereas a class with a label of *production* would be practical. If the class title calls out a craft such as writing, editing or cinematography, it is clearly a specialist class. Freshman and sophomore classes that involve group project work are generally designated generalist classes, whereas I have used the assumption that upper level production classes involve students gravitating towards a specialization rather than rotating through a number of roles. These are imprecise methods of delineation, particularly where the programs offer elective choices that can involve options from all four categories, but it will serve as a broad overview for each of the participating institutions. A simple breakdown of mission and the four content categories is shown in table 2.

Institutional Mission

The most illuminating aspect was that half of the participants had a mission mismatch in which their curriculum design structure did not appear to align with the mission of the institution. Coastal School 1, Midwest School 3 and Southern School 2 had distinctly pre-professional programs but were housed in self-declared liberal arts institutions. Each of these participating programs had a relatively high percentage of practical classes over theory, and specialized classes over generalist. Conversely, Southern School 1 and Southern School 3 were state research universities but housed film

curriculum that was broadly defined and more akin to a liberal arts environment. The

spread between theory to practice and generalist to specialist at these institutions was

more even

Table 2

Breakdown of Institutional Mission and Content Categories

Code	Mission	Theory[a]	Practical[a]	Generalist[b]	Specialist[b]
Coastal School 1	Liberal Arts	36/27[c]	64/73[c]	43/27[c]	57/73[c]
Coastal School 2	Research	31	69	28	72
Coastal School 3	Research	25	75	27	73
Midwest School 1	Liberal Arts	43	57	43	57
Midwest School 2	Liberal Arts	26	74	53	47
Midwest School 3	Liberal Arts	27	73	39	61
Southwest School 1	Research	31	69	32	68
Southern School 1	Research	34	66	48	52
Southern School 2	Liberal Arts	22	78	37	63
Southern School 3	Research	40	60	50	50

[a]Theory and practical are percentages of the total number of credits in the major.
[b]General and specialized are percentages of the total number of practical credits in the major. [c]Coastal School 1 offers both a BA and a BFA and percentages are shown respectively.

There was close alignment on mission and curriculum structure from Coastal

School 2, Midwest School 1 and Southwest School 1 on both ends of the spectrum;

Midwest School 1 clearly liberal arts with the most balanced blend of the four criteria;

Coastal School 2 and Southwest School 1 having clearly professional curriculum at research institutions.

The remaining institutions of Coastal School 3 and Midwest School 2 were more difficult to categorize by mission and appear to fall on each side of the fulcrum. Both institutions began as liberal arts colleges but have transitioned towards more research focus, and their film curriculum appears to show the level of transition. Coastal School 3 has embraced this newer identity more fully and their curriculum is extremely professionalized and track-driven, whereas Midwest 3 has some professional characteristics, but the balance between general and specialists shows a lean towards a liberal arts sensibility.

Of particular note is that the Midwest colleges were all liberal arts focused, the coastal colleges including the southwest were primarily research based, and the south was a mix of large public, small public and small liberal arts.

Since liberal arts values contribute to notions of critical thinking, thoughtful analytical discourse, and responsible societal contributions, it would be natural to expect that the more closely aligned the university mission is with liberal arts, the higher the percentage of theory classes. This was certainly true in Midwest School 1. As the most staunch liberal arts institution in the study, the film production program has the highest percentage of theory classes. However, apart from this one example, this theory does not hold true and in fact the opposite appears to be in play. Almost all liberal arts schools had a lower percentage of theory than their research counterparts.

Departmental Mission

The strongest relationship and influence on the curriculum from the department mission is the balance of generalist or specialist courses. This intentional decision at the department level has implications in the classification of the degree, the number of credits offered, the type of classes and assessment items, and most obviously the learning outcomes. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the programs into theory, practice, generalized and specialized curriculum along with the stated departmental mission.

Those programs with specialist missions have the highest ratio of specialist classes; each with over 70% of the major. Coastal School 1 and Coastal School 3 are track based curricula, beginning with generalized classes but culminating in a deep and narrow experience in a craft field. Coastal School 2 has recently stepped back from a track-based curriculum, but still employs a slightly broader field of specialization in three areas. They have retained craft-based tracks for their graduate program.

Southwest School 1 has a high percentage of specialized classes although their mission is more holistic. This was due to the number of *required* specialization classes as opposed to *electives* that created a more multi-skilled graduate rather than a generalist. To a lesser extent, Southern School 2 and Midwest School 3 have similar philosophies in providing a solid base of generalism with a portion of required specialized electives.

Table 3

Breakdown of Department Mission and Content Categories

Code	Department Mission	Theory	Practical	Generalist	Specialist
Coastal School 1	Specialist	36/27	64/73	43/27	57/73
Coastal School 2	Specialist	31	69	28	72
Coastal School 3	Specialist	25	75	27	73
Midwest School 1	Generalist	43	57	43	57
Midwest School 2	Generalist	26	74	53	47
Midwest School 3	Generalist	27	73	39	61
Southwest School 1	Generalist	31	69	32	68
Southern School 1	Generalist	34	66	48	52
Southern School 2	Generalist	22	78	37	63
Southern School 3	Generalist	40	60	50	50

[a]Theory and practical are percentages of the total number of credits in the major.
[b]General and specialized are percentages of the total number of practical credits in the major. [c]Coastal School 1 offers both a BA and a BFA and percentages are shown respectively.

A distinction should be drawn between the notion of electives and required classes. The higher the ratio of electives, the more the balance can be skewed among the four course designations of theory, practice, general and specialized. Thus it is important to return to the intent of the curriculum as shown through the mission.

This research question highlights that the relationship of institutional mission to the curriculum design is not universal. Varying curricula of narrow and broad scope can

be mismatched with the institutional mission. However, the department mission appears to have tight synchronization with the design structure.

Research Question 3

What are the critical features and elements of each of the film production programs studied and how are those features related across the programs?

In research question three, I begin by comparing, (a) the administrative structures that frame the curriculum such as the degree classification and professional accreditation; and (b) the shared design structure of the content within the curricula. Following this discussion, I highlight the common key factors that have emerged as the most influential on curriculum.

Administrative Structure

Classification. The most prominent variable between programs is the classification of the curriculum as a BA, BFA or a BS degree. Three of the institutions offered a BA only, three offered a BFA only, two offered both a BA and a BFA, one offered both a BA and BS, and one a solo BS. This totaled six BA, five BFA and two BS. Of significance is that all of the Coastal institutions offered BFAs including Southwest School 1 which, although not directly adjacent to a coast, is closest in proximity. The remaining BFA is from Southern School 3, but it is worth noting that their program is designed to include significant off campus portion in the Hollywood region. In contrast, none of the Midwest region schools offered a BFA, and all of the Southern schools offered at least a BA. The breakdown of credit numbers within each degree classification is shown on Table 4.

Table 4

Degree Classifications, Accreditation, and Number of Credits in the Major

Code	BA	BFA	BS	Professional Accreditation
Coastal School 1[a]	44	60		
Coastal School 2		64		
Coastal School 3		66		
Midwest School 1	37			
Midwest School 2[a]	41		41	NASAD (liberal)
Midwest School 3			63	
Southwest School 1		72		NASAD (professional)
Southern School 1	44			
Southern School 2[a]	40	73		
Southern School 3	45			

[a]Coastal School 1, Midwest School 2 and Southern School 2 offer or will offer two classifications of degrees.

This suggests that professionalized curriculum as shown through the BFA classification is centered more on the coasts. As you move away from the coasts, the classifications become more generalized. This is supported in the previous discussion on departmental missions by the data in table 3 where the coastal schools have an explicit desire to graduate specialists rather than generalists. These programs also have the highest percentage of specialized classes of any of the participant's programs.

Accreditation. Only two institutions were professionally accredited and both were through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). NASAD offers two categories of accreditation and Midwest School 2 was accredited with their BA program in the *liberal arts* category, and Southwest School 1 with their BFA in the *professional* category. Half of the participants had no knowledge of any professional accreditation through NASAD or the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and even expressed surprise at the idea; "Oh wow I had no idea" (Educator 3, Coastal School 3). The remaining three participants were aware of these agencies but had chosen not to pursue accreditation. Their primary rationale was that it was too restrictive, the costs were too prohibitive, and the benefits were not worth the effort. Of the eight programs that were not accredited, only Midwest School 3 expressed a positive attitude towards accreditation.

Content Structure

There was a common sequencing thread identified within each program. At tier one, freshmen are introduced to production in a generalist fashion with an exposure to various roles and skills. Tier two is a layer of specialization, as basic as a single required class in scriptwriting and as advanced as a fleet of classes in each of the craft specializations. Tier 3 is project-oriented classes where students perform a specific specialist role in a crew, or alternatively produce a smaller project more holistically, either solo or in smaller workgroups. This basic curricular skeleton is the foundational structure that provides support for all production classes in some form or variation.

As identified in question two, a core distinction between programs stems from the relationship of the departmental mission with the basic structure. Generalist missions use curriculum designed to produce graduates who are proficient in all aspects of the film production process, while specialist missions graduates students with a depth of specialization in one aspect. Tier one and tier three of the content structure are similar across programs, but it is tier two where this differentiation in missions is most evident.

Coastal School 1 and Coastal School 3 offer tracks where students graduate as specialists. Coastal School 2 has recently stepped back from the track approach but retained much of the specialization; three elective craft areas rather than one. Southwest School 1 and Southern School 2 have programs with similar specializations but also require students to choose more than just one specialization. In this way, they offer more content than a generalist program and could be classed as multi-skilled. All of these programs are matched with a BFA classification.

Another distinction is the notion of generalization across media genres in addition to generalization across craft skills. In this way, students learn multiple craft areas in preproduction, production and post-production and apply these skills to a variety of genres such as narrative fiction, documentary or experimental filmmaking. At Southern School 3, students are intentionally required to experience other genres and medias of storytelling such as television and radio. Midwest School 3 too requires a broader base of genres including new media and documentary while Midwest School 2 has moved to an undifferentiated pool where students can choose fiction, documentary and other genre related classes as part of their program pathway.

Election versus prescription. Another differentiation among programs is the number of prescribed courses compared to the number of electives courses. Every program had some elective choice ranging from Midwest School 1 where the only option was selecting a single class from a pool of three options, to Southern School 2 with 48 credits of electives in their proposed BFA program.

Programs generally included a range of choices within the theory electives, industry electives and so forth. Within practical classes, the distinction of specialized craft classes as either required or elective was one of the primary factors that differentiated the BFA programs. The two programs that offered track-based curriculum at Coastal School 1 and Coastal School 3 required student choice to elect their track. In contrast, the BFA at Southwest School 1 also had pockets of specialized classes, but the pathway was more prescriptive. "We have very few production electives. And in fact it's almost like every production class is a requirement with the idea that it is very linear, and very foundational" (Educator 8, Southern School 1).

While there were some commonalities in the general content structure, the diversity of the sample shows a wide number of differences in administrative and content structure. There was more similarity in the subgrouping; within BFAs or within BAs, and within generalist or within specialist content.

Since no common structure was identified, I examined the factors that were reported as playing a significant role on the curriculum decisions. Nine key elements have been identified.

Critical Influencers

  Department Structure. The most common and arguably the most influential factor that has impacted curriculum design is the department structure. In many cases, the historical development of the film program has been explicitly influenced by the department that bore it. This was the case at Southern School 1 where continued resource and curricular sharing played a negative role on the curriculum development. "It might impact the kind of assignments and how many individual projects versus group projects we do" (Educator 8b, Southern School 1). At Coastal School 3, the historic ownership of curriculum in production genres such as television and documentary continues to keep those genres out of the film production curriculum design process.

> I mean from a curricular perspective, we need to move it [television] and the same
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> thing with documentary. The person teaching it was more from the perspective of
>
> broadcast journalism. Now the people teach it, teach it more as independent, kind
>
> of, filmmakers. But the structure hasn't caught up in a way. I think the
>
> curriculum hasn't caught up with the reality on the ground. (Educator 3, Coastal
>
> School 3)

  The question of what constitutes a *department* is an important distinction. Often film production is a program within a larger department, division or school. This is the case at Coastal School 1, Midwest School 1, Midwest School 2, Midwest School 3 and Southern School 1. "And sometimes you'll hear students call us the film department, and the theatre department and the journalism department and that's not true, but that's actually the way we feel" (Educator 8b, Southern School 1).

When film production is not an independent department, the curriculum is more susceptible to neighboring disciplines and more varied curricular influences. At Coastal School 1, the conglomeration of media genres and craft programs exists under the one umbrella. Educator 1 expressed concern over how to restructure the curriculum in this environment.

> There is not much consensus on how we're going to do the process because we also have some departmental structural problems that affect our curricular orientation so until we can figure out some of these structural issues I don't think we're going to get to the curricula issues. (Educator 1, Coastal School 1)

Similarly at Midwest School 2, the departmental desire to remove silos has seen all the media based programs blend into an undifferentiated elective pool. This has created problems in determining needs within the curricular structure, particularly when it comes to new faculty hires. Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 explained,

> Because we're so short in terms of resources, human resources, there are people in the department saying no we need someone in film studies…We only have one PhD. All you guys are all MFAs. We need another film studies person. And another voice would say, we need to show off the non-main stream stuff here. Film takes care of itself. But it's the main stream. That's what students want to do. If we want to be liberal arts we need to look at who we have now. (Educator 5, Midwest School 2)

Southern School 3 has a central hub of radio, television and film. The discussion of dividing the curricular tracks into a separate more focused film program has not been resolved due to the competing elements within the department.

> The department has always taken pride in recognizing the value of understanding all sides of the media fields, both in production and studies, and so some of my colleagues feel very strongly that no let's keep this more general…I'm kind of curious in the next couple of years to see how that discussion goes. (Educator 10, Southern School 3)

Coastal School 2 has perhaps the most structured centralized film department. Within this structure, the craft disciplines appear to act as sub-departments. The move from a track based curriculum has increased the related politicking over the curriculum.

Departmental dysfunction is paramount in curricular discussions at Midwest School 1. The level of conflict makes curriculum design a constant battle.

> My colleague and I have been pretty much alone. Now the department supports us and it's a cheery department. And they like the good results and stuff so there's some camaraderie. But, I mean it's a Midwestern camaraderie, you know, your worst enemy will smile at you in the street at this place so that's kind of the trouble. (Educator 4, Midwest School 1)

At Midwest School 3, the tension was expressed more in the pressure to conform to the systems and structures of the surrounding departments that are unlike the laboratory-based, film production pedagogy.

It is frustrating because the arts typically get overlooked and abused. We have

labs attached to most of our classes so the class might be a legitimate lecture class

for three hours a week and then you put another three hour lab on top of that,

you've just doubled your time as a faculty member. Time and time again I see

that and it's so hard for the humanities division to understand that. (Educator 6,

Midwest School 3)

Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 expressed disillusionment with organizational

structures in regard to resources. They described departmental conflicts as inherent in the

academic structures.

It creates what appears to be a zero sum game and the fact that if someone else is

getting something, chances are then that's coming from you or from your area and

it becomes harder to look at things expansively and generously. (Educator 7,

Southwest School 1)

Location. The study highlighted the notion that the location of the institution has

a significant effect on the curriculum design. Coastal School 1, Coastal School 2 and

Coastal School 3 are the only institutions that offer a BFA combined with a significant

depth of specialization within the curriculum; either single specialization or deep elective

multiskilling. This appears to be connected to their proximity to the epicenters of

narrative film production on each coast. Each of these institutions also offers MFA

programs in production providing another, deeper layer of specializations.

The seven remaining participants all espoused a generalized goal for their

curriculum and for their graduates, in particular the two BFA programs. In each case,

there were a higher number of required craft classes and/or a higher number of project-oriented production classes, indicating that the curriculum in non-coastal institutions is more multi-skilled.

While those institutions closest to the industry hubs were the most specialized, the opposite appeared to be supported. Educator 8a at Southern School 1 expressed that the rationale for their generalized curriculum was related to their detached proximity from the coasts and the type of jobs that were available to graduates in that state.

> We're not anywhere obviously close to New York or L.A. I mean serving a population a lot of whom unfortunately won't leave the state after they graduate. We need to be saying, well what kind of training can we give them so that they can be working in the state, trying to find work, and of course that's hard enough already. (Educator 8a, Southern School 1)

Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 also identified the distance from the coasts as an inhibitor to resource allocation, citing a perceived lack of legitimacy from the administration. The programs at Midwest School 3 and Southern School 2 have intentionally negated this disadvantage by using existing off-campus programs, or creating new ones, in the Southern California hub. Both these programs provide students with an experience that helps validate an industry connection to the administration.

Other than the geographic proximity to industry hubs, the demographics of the state was mentioned as an influence. Educator 10 at Southern School 3 identified the political climate of their state was a factor on their curriculum in keeping it leaner and more vocationally focused. Educator 8a at Southern School 1 also noted that the lower

socioeconomic environment of the students in their catchment area was a significant factor in dictating their generalist mission.

Institution mission. The results of the study indicate that institutional mission has a marked, but not universal impact on the design of the film production curriculum. In regards to liberal arts institutions, the participants mentioned a strong connection to liberal arts values in the decision making process; specifically Coastal School 1, Midwest School 1, Midwest School 2, and Midwest School 3. The outlier is Southern School 2 whose curriculum was created mostly in a vacuum from the institution. However, even the freedom under which the program at Southern School 2 operates only serves to underscore the effect of institutional imperatives.

Coastal School 1 and Midwest School 3 were able to superimpose a design that was highly pre-professional onto a generalist, broad skilled, holistic environment which shows that institutional mission is not a definitive influencer. Although there are differing views on this balance between liberal and professional education within the departments, both participants expressed strong belief in the university mission and reported embedding elements of mission throughout their classes. In this way, the mission appeared likely more influential on individual pedagogy than on overall design.

In terms of institutional design elements, Coastal School 1 required liberal arts classes in the upper level of their program, in addition to their core curriculum. Coastal School 3 encouraged students to group their liberal arts into minors alongside their film major. Southern School 1 is the process of examining whether classes in the film program could count in their general education program.

For the participants at Midwest School 1 and Midwest School 2, there was agreement and alignment with the university mission but a desire for professional production classes to be stronger in the mix. In both instances, the stated mission of blending liberal arts and professional learning appears in contrast to the lived experience within the departmental workgroup. The issue was not dissonance with the university mission but rather an even balance in the blend of liberal arts and professional education.

Of the research or professional institutions, Coastal School 3 and Southwest School 1 have the best match of curriculum design to mission with both missions championing professionalism and both having degree programs as professional BFA degrees. Southern School 1 and Southern School 2 had flexibility within their institutional mission to create more specialized programs but continue to offer more diverse, generalist programs. Of note is that both of these institutions offer production based MFA programs which may somewhat fill the void of specialization.

Of the faith based institutions, that is, Midwest School 1, Midwest School 3 and Southern School 2, only Midwest School 1 mentioned faith as a curriculum influencer and this was encased in pedagogy rather than a demonstrable outcome of the curriculum design.

Department mission. All of the participants had some form of overarching statements of purpose for their programs that melded with the institutional mission. Educator 6 at Midwest School 3 mentioned that the curriculum is written more to satisfy the department mission than the university mission, although the two are synchronous.

Many participants labeled the statements specifically as *mission* or *vision* statements, often displayed in conjunction with the learning outcomes of the film program.

In several cases, the values of the mission were so owned that they became the primary decision making lens. Educator 8a at Southern School 1 said "I think going back to our core values and mission statement help us make sure that we're approaching the problem" (Educator 8a). Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 discussed their curriculum being in crisis with no sense of purpose until a program mission was established and clearly communicated. In the case of Midwest School 2, the department mission statement was not reflective of the type of professional outcomes contained in the curriculum. The discipline level mission matched the institution mission but did not match the expressed desire of those teaching the curriculum.

The impact of departmental mission is most clearly observed in the mix of generalist and specialist classes. Departments declare their intent to graduate either generalists who are adept at a range of craft skills, or specialists who are a master of one skill. While all institutions use a blend of both types of classes, those with specialist missions have a deeper elective pool of curriculum within one of the craft areas. The specialist programs are generally BFA programs and are geared towards graduating students for narrative production roles in the independent or feature film industry.

Liberal arts outcomes. Every participant regardless of the institutional mission reinforced the importance of imparting or embedding liberal arts as part of their curriculum. This included concepts such as critical thinking, group communication, conflict management, interpersonal skills, and ethical considerations. It is important to

distinguish that this use of liberal arts was entirely connected to the notion of transferable skills or the practical outcomes of a liberal arts philosophy, rather than specific classes in a liberal or general education curriculum.

All of the published learning objectives except for those at Southern School 2, consisted of a majority of liberal arts related features rather than professional outcomes or competencies. However, participants struggled to identify how those skills were specifically taught or assessed. Educator 1 at Coastal School 1 expressed, "it guides our thinking…to say exactly how is tough." Only two programs reported that they attempted to quantifiably measure these skills through self or peer assessments.

None of the participants used any form of prescribed classes to convey salient concepts such as group communication or conflict management, nor were these skills taught specifically inside the film production classes. Educator 2 at Coastal School 2 reported that they did not feel it was their job to teach anything other than production, and Educator 8a at Southern School 1 explained that while their classes are, "all about team building and leadership, but from I guess an academic or scholarly view, it's farmed out to the general education program."

The most common response was that these skills are inherent in the film production process; more organic outcomes than intentionally systemized. Educator 10 at Southern School 3 explained "we have that embedded into the curriculum", and Educator 2 at Coastal School 2 reinforced that, "group communication is embedded. It's not like something where we take them aside and say blah blah blah, but we do it."

Most participants pointed to the idea that the faculty themselves are responsible for the implementation of liberal arts principles within their classes. Faculty are given the autonomy to embed these virtues but "how that gets discussed, played out, embedded in in any particular class is really up to the individual faculty member" (Educator 1, Coastal School 1).

Most institutions mentioned some form of conflict between liberal arts and professionalism that balanced their department's curricular philosophy. Since the faculty is solely responsible for the transmission of these organic mission critical skills in addition to the tangible production skills, it was unclear how this balance is achieved. The balance was achieved either by faculty members individually being able to reconcile both liberal arts and professional philosophies in their thinking at the same time, or it was from an equilibrium of liberal arts professors and professional professors; a delicately balanced tug-of-war. One can see that within either model, faculty hires or organizational restructuring has the potential to sway the curricular balance dramatically.

Industry trends. The Hollywood narrative filmmaking process is a significantly unionized industrial process more akin to an assembly line than most artists would like to acknowledge. Educator 2 at Coastal School 2 and Educator 8b at Southern School 1 both commented that this type of production and the associated demarcation of skillsets are not going away. The coastal institutions view narrative filmmaking as a primary graduate outcome and thus tailor their specialized curriculum toward this industry.

Outside of the narrative film industry, the field of video production is a vast employer and the target industry for many of the non-coastal institutions. The video

production industry can refer to production houses or freelance businesses that produce corporate productions, documentaries, commercials, church media, wedding videography, or short independent narrative film. Educator 8b at Southern School 1 spoke of seeking input from the industry before designing new classes. "Part of it is talking to the people in the state. Well what are you using? What are you doing? What are your preferences? And that does guide our decision making" (Educator 8b, Southern School 1).

The video production industry has been affected by the decreasing price and increasing sophistication of technology. Educator 8a at Southern School 1 reported that this has caused the downsizing of staffing within production houses and an increased need for multi-skilled practitioners. This trend has been a primary driver in the current thinking regarding a generalist curriculum both in craft and in genre. Educator 8a at Southern School 1 mentioned that, "our assumption is they need to know a little bit of everything. I would also say that I think that's our view of where the future is." Educator 9 at Southern School 2 concurred; "I think the way the world is going, everything is aimed at the generalist. You have to be able, because the budgets are so tight now on anything. You need to be a one man band - period." Even within the Coastal schools, there was an acknowledgement of this trend. Educator 2 at Coastal School 2 said "now it seems like people are becoming more and more film makers because of the way the media's working."

Resources. Given that film production is a technology-dependent discipline, it is no surprise that resources played a virtual role in the curriculum design. None of the

coastal schools expressed a concern over resourcing or that it detrimentally impacted their curriculum. "We're an institution that is lucky enough to have fairly abundant resources" (Educator 1, Coastal School 1). This serves to support the premise from Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 that programs closer to the centers of production are more esteemed by their administrations. The program at Southern School 2 has so far been given everything they need, so resourcing was not a consideration. "Are they giving me, you know, not all the money in the universe, but plenty of money" (Educator 9, Southern School 2). Educator 10 at Southern School 3 expressed they were adequately resourced and used this as an example of why professional accreditation, and its role in lobbying university administrations for resources, was not as attractive.

However, the remaining four institutions flagged a lack of resources as a central influence. Each program had healthy enrollment but lacked either physical or human resources. Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 was somewhat frustrated that their program had such strong enrollment but they could not get the institutional support to offer the types of classes they would like. Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 acknowledged that they were not as well-resourced as schools on the coast and could not compete, and this was a consideration in their most recent curriculum redesign.

While sharing physical resources within the department at Southern School 1 was an issue, Educator 8b also commented on the need for more human resources. "If money wasn't an issue, we would hire more because we need another scholar or two" (Educator 8a, Southern School 1). The approach to staffing of Educator 6 at Midwest School 3 was to try to negotiate with the administration; to get them to agree to a new hire when

enrollment hit a certain number. They also spoke of learning how to cultivate donors and asking those donors directly for money.

Other than bartering with administration and fundraising outside of the university advancement office, Educator 6 at Midwest School 3 made a unique connection between curriculum outcomes and funding.

One thing that I've found that helps them loosen the purse strings a little is if you can get your students winning awards. So they're winning. Their films are being shown in film festivals. They're getting national recognition or even regional recognition… then the school starts to realize their payoff and the publicity of it. (Educator 6, Midwest School 3)

Student demand. In an age of increasing consumerism, student preference continues to shape curriculum decisions. As mentioned previously, each program has some form of student choice ranging from a handful of credits up to 48 credits of electives. Educator 6 at Midwest School 3, who had created three separate curriculum programs based on student demand, said, "I've found my success here at Midwest School 3 has all been from the ground up. It pretty much comes from students who make the case for it, on a consumer level."

Educator 10 at Southern School 3 mentioned adding classes in film production to their RTVF program based on student demand. Also, the undifferentiated structure at Coastal School 1 is partly designed to allow the maximum level of student choice, even at the expense of curricular integrity. However, Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 spoke of the danger of allowing too much influence from student demand. "The tension is always

between essentially not watering down the degree just to make the student happy"

(Educator 7, Southwest School 1).

A pragmatic way that student demand influences the curriculum is through special topics classes. These were mentioned at Southern School 1 as classes that began as one-off electives but made permanent inroads in the curriculum. "We'll try it out as a topics course and if it works well enough and it seems like students are into it enough, then we add it into the curriculum" (Educator 8b, Southern School 1). At Midwest School 1, which has the smallest set of production classes, it is this style of student driven classes that punctuates the curriculum. "The major has grown because if someone needs an independent study, we give them an independent study. I counted my last four years and I have taught 47 Independent studies" (Educator 4, Midwest School 1). Educator 6 at Midwest School 3 described their independent electives as "more of a supervised coaching where the student wants to go in a very advanced way."

Perhaps the most insightful observation regarding the relationship between student demand and curriculum design was given by Educator 5 at Midwest School 2. Speaking of the classes in film production at their institution:

> To some degree the student interest drives this, regardless of what the faculty may set out as the goals of the program. The things they want to learn, those classes close instantly. And the things that they are not interested in learning don't fill. And then the university says well we can't run a class with six students so we're cutting that class. And so now, they're shaping our curriculum based on student interest. (Educator 5, Midwest School 2)

This speaks to the complex interplay between the faculty's responsibility in designing and offering an integrated curriculum, the fiscal responsibility of university administration and the ever widening influence of consumerism on higher education.

Several programs mentioned student satisfaction as a large measure of their assessment. Course evaluations and student focus groups close the assessment loop and allow for formative and summative assessment of the curriculum. Other examples of student related influences were off campus study at Midwest School 3, the broadening of the upper level production classes at Coastal School 2, and a general orientation towards student focused teaching at Southern School 2. Educator 9 described the process they will go through when they hire a new faculty member.

> And one thing about me is I really love the students. I really like teaching. I really like helping them out. One of the questions I want to ask of the teacher is have you ever gotten your student out of jail, gotten them a lawyer, gotten them a doctor, gone to visit them in a hospital, and if the answer to those is all No, then I'm not going to be quite so interested. (Educator 9, Southern School 2)

Technology. The movie making industry is in the final adoption phase of perhaps the largest revolution in technology since the introduction of sound 85 years ago. Digital cinema has swept aside film as a format perhaps faster than anyone predicted as mentioned by Educator 8a at Southern School 1 and Educator 9 at Southern School 2. The effect of technology on curriculum decisions is most evident in the areas of student experience, change of content, effect of specific technologies and the change in language.

Student experience. The relative affordability of new equipment has meant a spike in the experience of incoming students mentioned by Educator 1 at Coastal School 1, Educator 2 at Coastal School 3 and Educator 10 at Southern School 3. It was a primary driver of the new curriculum redesign at Coastal School 2; empowering students who have already had experience prior to college with a higher degree of technical literacy. "It really felt like it was time to make a change, to address those things that were being dictated by the technology, and by the kids, because a lot of them came in having made films already" (Educator 2, Coastal School 2). At Coastal School 1, they took an opposing perspective in actively downplaying technology due to a lack of accompanying critical thought.

> Because students are coming in with so much more media viewing and media production experience already but with a lack of critical reflection or critical attention, we wanted to foreground the critical and creative at the beginning, deemphasize the technology but given them practice in really process and thinking before they went into their first production class. (Educator 1, Coastal School 1)

Content. Technology is changing the type of films that can be produced and avenues for distribution and display. Coastal School 2 has embraced smart phone technologies in their curriculum, Southern School 2 is exploring webisodes, and other institutions reported that they are waiting and watching for direction.

> Film is not just a feature film anymore. Film is also the iPod, it's the web, it's all these other things and that's where the jobs are so we need to look at the

curriculum of other schools [Coastal School 2]. They've basically adapted it for a new reality and we're going to have to, at some point, start thinking about that too. (Educator 3, Coastal School 3)

Educator 2 at Coastal School 2 also mentioned how cheaper technology had enabled them to remove restrictions on the projects for classes. With cheap media formats, shooting time increases and limits that had been previously been dictated by the expense of shooting on film as a format were removed.

Specific technologies. The digital single lens reflex camera (DSLR) has been widely accepted within film departments. DSLRs use interchangeable lenses and the ability to have shallow depth of field to enable a cinematic quality to the pictures with the affordability of video. Educator 5 at Midwest School 2, Educator 6 at Midwest School 3 and Educator 10 at Southern School 3 specifically mentioned using a DSLR in their curriculum and, in the case of Educator 10, using different technologies with regard to curricular pedagogy; the intersection of technological and philosophical issues. Also Educator 4 at Midwest School 1 spoke of how technology has increased the required knowledge needed within the industry, particularly in the field of post-production with the notion of colorization and HD formats.

The field has changed. I think in the last four years I realized that postproduction has become kind of the front burner. The technology…You think that the technology is complicating teaching. I thought about that for a long time. I don't really think so. I mean you are shooting with HD instead of DV. The workflow

is fairly similar. But in post [post-production], it is different. (Educator 4, Midwest School 1)

Language. As a result of this technological evolution, film production has been robbed of words used to describe the very nature of what is taught. While I have previously defined film as a synonym for movie, others still consider it still as a format. Educator 2 at Coastal School 2, Educator 7 at Southwest School 1, and Educator 9 at Southern School 2 all mentioned reworking their curriculum to remove film from the title, descriptors, and content of classes. They intentionally used terms such as *motion pictures* or *cinema arts* or *narrative fiction.* Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 took the opposite approach and was insistent that the nomenclature was irrelevant. "Film suggests movies. We make movies. Who cares?" (Educator 5).

Television is another area where technology has changed the semantics. The production of narrative television has more similarities with single camera film production which is distinct from multi-camera television studio production. Educator 10 at Southern School 3 expressed the common confusion; "I don't even know the word to use anymore, you know, we used to say television but, you know maybe non-location based?"

It is difficult to describe what happens in a curriculum if there is no common language. Words such as *film*, *video* and *television* are the heart of narrative production but technological advancements has rendered them ambiguous.

Faculty. Rather than intentionally design a curriculum structure and find the right pieces to fill it, the results of the study suggests that many programs build classes

and programs around those professors who are there, and around their expertise as mentioned by Educator 5 at Midwest School 2 and Educator 8a at Southern School 1.

When speaking of the design of their BFA, Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 explained that, "a lot of that actually relates to both the sort of the training and background that I have and the other faculty have as well as our individual interests." Educator 9 at Southern School 2 and Educator 10 at Southern School 3 shared similar experiences. "A lot of it was informed by my experience at my graduate school" (Educator 9, Southern School 2). "I think a lot of that came out of the courses we had taken as students or the kind of courses that had been in the programs that we had already been a part" (Educator 10, Southern School 3).

Interests. As mentioned previously, topics or independent study courses are a tangible way of dynamically redesigning curriculum. While student demand is the primary motivation, often the drive of the professor is the initial spark.

> We have a new idea for something either something that we want to dig into ourselves or if we want to bring back some of our specialty into the offerings for the students then we'll try it out as a topics course. (Educator 8b, Southern School 1)

Educator 5 concurred regarding the benefits of topics courses if the administration was willing to let them run. "So if there's anything you want to teach that's not in the curriculum they'll let you do it" (Educator 5, Midwest School 2).

Attitude. As curriculum leaders and designers, many participants reported a negative attitude from faculty toward curriculum change. The responses ranged from a

general reluctance to embrace assessment and learning outcomes as reported by Educator 3 at Coastal School 3 and Educator 10 at Southern School 3, to full hostility as reported by Educator 2 at Coastal School 2. Educator 7 at Southwest School 1 observed that the larger the department, the harder it was to get faculty to buy-in.

Educator 3 at Coastal School 3 expressed amazement about how some faculty have become adept at curriculum work and others choose to stay on the periphery. "I'm always shocked because some faculty members are experts at this stuff. And then there are some that know nothing…I mean they know nothing, they're like "um so what's a learning objective" (Educator 3, Coastal School 3).

This reluctance or ignorance speaks to the expanding role of faculty in curriculum design, but also a lack of complimentary training. No participant mentioned any form of specific instruction or immersion experience to learn curriculum design skills. It seems that the *learning by osmosis* method is the one most commonly reflected within the participants.

Liberal arts. This study identified that most programs, regardless of their institutional mission, have liberal arts focused learning outcomes as a portion of the intended result of their programs. While liberal arts values were implicitly or explicitly stated in the participant's missional language, they were not part of curriculum design in any program in terms of specific coursework. Few participants could even identify assessment items that targeted this mission or how they measure how well they are doing it. Rather it is the individual faculty member's responsibility to draw out those *teachable moments* that help the student mature as a wise citizen. One could ask how well each

production faculty member is trained to manage conflict or speak to ethical dilemmas or even the process of critical reflection on their work.

Research Question 4

Within any common critical features and elements of the programs studied, is there evidence of an emerging or fully formed curriculum theory?

There is not enough evidence of a fully formed theory in film production curriculum at this time. There were some commonalties in content and administrative structure within sub groups but the sample was too diverse and the field too unexplored to venture any informed explanations of a developed theory of design.

However, a framework of design, as defined by common, influencing factors on decision making, has emerged. I have identified nine elements as the most critical factors in film production curriculums: department structure, location, institutional and departmental mission, liberal arts outcomes, industry trends, resources, student demand, technology, and faculty.

Auditor Comments

I have used an auditor to comment on the findings, with the goal of establishing a level of validity. The notion was to have the auditor consider if the results of the research were typical of issues element that they had experienced in their career. Creswell (2003) suggests that the auditor should be separate from the researcher, committee or participants and "can provide an assessment of the project [e.g., how the variables in the theory interact with the researcher's variable]" (p. 197).

I supplied a copy of the research findings to Lee Faulkner who has had a professional career in the broadcast industry, and also been engaged in film production education since 1992. He currently serves as the Media Director at the Digital Media Center for the Arts at Yale University. After reading the research, Lee reinforced that each of the elements rang true. He mentioned that over the past 25 years, he has observed or experienced each of the nine interlocking factors. What was most illuminating was that Lee mentioned he had not consciously considered some of the elements until they surfaced in the research.

To further establish validity, I compared the findings from this study against Lattuca and Stark's (2009) socio-contextual model of academic planning and use this literature as a lens to examine the state of the emerging design model. The results are expressed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

THEORETICAL FRAME

While radio and television played the preeminent role of *culture shaper* during the twentieth century, the internet has already shown the propensity to outstrip the influence of these old technologies and become the most powerful distribution mechanism for media. From its beginnings as a text-only delivery system to now streaming hi-definition pictures and sounds, the internet carries the culture of the twenty-first century to a global marketplace. This means films are no longer chained to the local multiplex cinema or the terrestrial broadcast of the small screen, but can be accessed from virtually any electronic device around the world.

Those practitioners who create the content that shape and reflect our culture have acquired their skills through a number of pathways throughout the history of film production; beginning as apprentices' at the inception of the industry, moving to trade schools, and eventually into colleges and universities. With such a loud and important voice speaking into culture, the academy structure seems like the ideal fit for this discipline, particularly undergraduate education which is cheaper and more holistic than graduate education. But little is known regarding how these content creators are trained and equipped to fulfill their role.

The purpose of this study was to understand how curricula are designed in film production programs at the undergraduate level, uncovering common critical elements and influences on the decision making process that might be evidence of an emerging curriculum design theory. I have interviewed representatives from 10 institutions ranging

from small liberal arts colleges to larger comprehensive universities and, while no theory was established, I have identified nine salient elements that have informed their design choices; department structure, location, mission, liberal arts outcomes, industry trends, resources, student demand, technology, and the faculty.

In this chapter, I present a theoretical framework which I have developed to serve as a snapshot of the current state of undergraduate film production curriculum design. Using the findings of the study and the lens of Lattuca and Stark's (2009) curriculum model, I have created a design frame to describe six major categories of a curriculum plan and how they interact with the nine influences. This provides a visual representation of the state of film production curriculum. By comparing my framework with the author's model, evidence of commonality and validity is established.

Since this chapter is focused on theoretical framework, I address the implications for research and practice in Chapter Six.

An Emergent Framework

Frameworks are the initial step in building a model that could inform a theory. The research area is far too naked to be clothed in a theory at this point and frameworks are ideal at establishing variables and the way they interact with the environment; part of Charmaz (2006) criteria for ground theory research. Hence, I have established a frame that is designed to describe film production curriculum at this stage of its development. This is shown in figure 1.
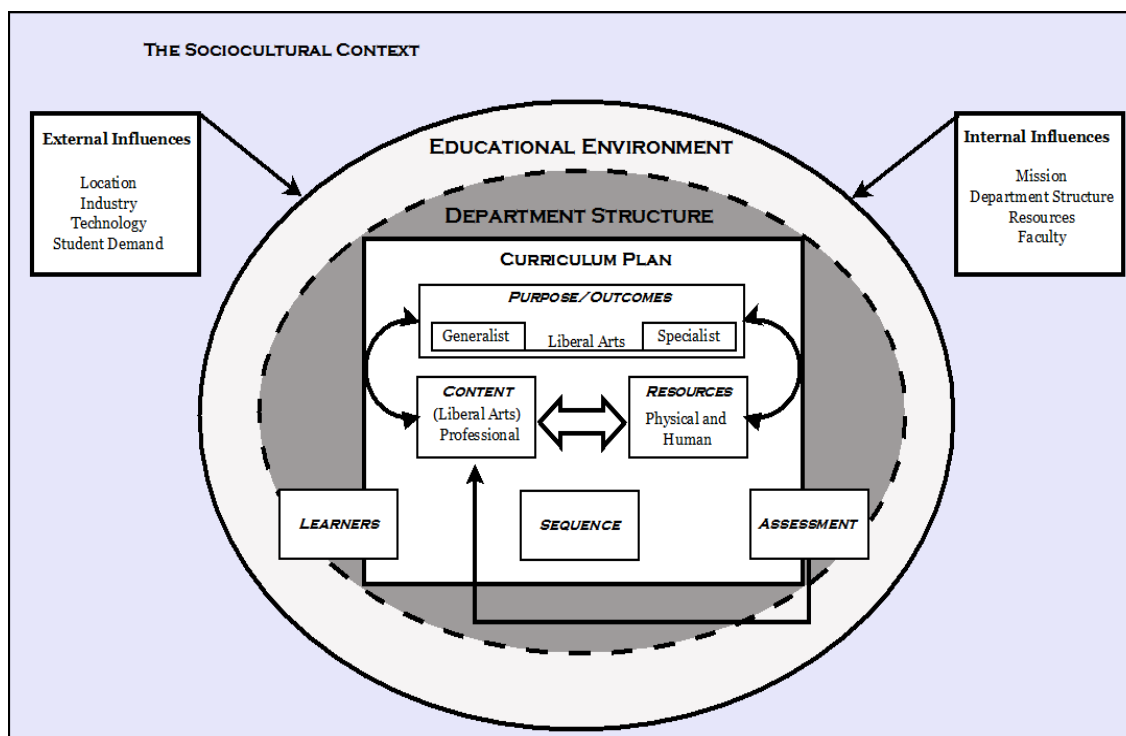
Figure 1. A framework of the current state of film production curriculum design.

The curriculum plan is comprised of a set of six categories that involve both the most deliberate decisions of film production curriculum, that is, purpose/outcomes, content and resources, and categories in which the study showed less intentionality, that is sequence, learners and assessment. For each category, I highlighted the influential elements that have most impacted the decisions, dividing the nine elements into two basic categories of internal and external influences.

Purpose/Outcomes

The terms *purpose* and *outcome* were used interchangeably throughout the study to describe the driving force of meaning; what the curriculum is intended to do. This category is at the heart of the plan.

The framework shows two distinct boxes within the larger confines of the curriculum plan and within the purpose/outcome indicating there is no single common purpose to film production curriculum. The skills, knowledge and attributes are geared towards producing graduates in one of two connected yet distinct purposes. The first purpose is to graduate generalists; students who have developed proficiencies in all areas of the production process, ranging from idea inception and design, through visual and sonic recording, to the editing of picture and sound elements. These are graduates as holistic filmmakers.

The second purpose is to graduate specialists; students who have developed a proficiency in a single or limited area of the production process, for example, directing, scriptwriting, producing, cinematography, sound design or editing. These are graduates that do not identify as filmmakers but are distinguished by their craft or genre concentration.

It is important to distinguish that these purposes are not polarizations of content. A generalist purpose will still include content of specialized classes, although usually as required classes rather than elective courses, and a specialist purpose will still include a generalist overview of the production roles and process, although usually in first and second year classes. In this way, the analogy could be drawn to the medical field where graduates choose a path towards being general practitioners in a deep overview, or as a specialist in a single field of medicine once they have completed the overview.

Liberal arts outcomes are common to both generalist and specialist purposes and represent a critical finding of the study; one of the nine elements. They comprise most of

the published learning outcomes of each curriculum and, as such, are an indicator of the common purpose amongst participants regardless of the institutional mission. Each institution mentioned liberal arts skills, knowledge and attitudes as explicitly integrated into the film production curriculum process, and thus both the generalist and specialist outcomes are linked by liberal arts outcomes as shown in figure 1.

External influences. *Location.* The study shows that the proximity of academic institutions to the industry hubs has a marked influence on the purpose of curriculum plans. Those institutions that were located closest to the coastal centers of narrative filmmaking have a purpose of specialized education. In contrast, those institutions further away from the coastal hubs have goals more closely aligned with a generalist philosophy. Also the demographics and political climate of the home state was mentioned as playing a role in the purpose of the degree program.

Industry trends. Film and video production program outcomes are oriented towards vocations and thus curriculum plans must be purposed towards *industry-ready* graduates. While the specialized production methodology of the Hollywood industry remains mostly unchanged since its development, the study highlighted the growing propensity towards generalist skills within the video production industry. With the influx of cheaper technologies and tighter budgets, the video production industry has changed more rapidly towards generalist outcomes, forcing higher education to follow this trend.

Internal influences. *Institutional mission.* The results of this study show an influential relationship between the university mission and the purpose of the curricula design. There was a tendency for liberal arts focused universities to have more generalist

curriculum and for those without a strong affinity to liberal arts, to have more specialized curriculum.

   Department mission. While university and departmental missions are clearly connected, the departmental mission has more ownership from faculty since it was developed in consultation with the divisional unit. As such, program mission was the clearest indication of the defining purpose of the curriculum in either holistic filmmaking or more craft-driven specialization.

   Department structure. Lattaca and Stark (2009) mentioned that substantial compromises in program curriculum decision making must be made when a variety of disciplines are involved in the organizational structures. Decisions are often politically motivated due to the power relationships at play and this was voiced by many of the participants. This was most apparent where film production faculty felt pressure to keep their curriculum purposes more broad and generic because the surrounding faculty or department had significant leanings towards more liberal arts philosophies.

Content

   Lattuca and Stark (2009) state that faculty nearly always relate purpose and content together. If the purpose is the *why* of the curriculum, the content is more specifically the *what* of the curriculum; what skills, knowledge, and attributes will be taught.

   In general, there was correlation between the purposes and the type of subject matter taught in the content. Each participant had a broad common content structure made up of three types of classes; (1) broad generic production classes where students

were exposed to multiple areas of the production process; (2) specialist craft classes where students concentrated on one area of content; and (3) project-based classed where students used a specialist skill/s as a member of a group to produce an artifact. In addition, there were accompanying theoretical classes to inform the practical production classes; in some cases, offered by a separate film studies department.

The purpose was best demonstrated through the content choices of the curriculum, specifically through the prescriptive nature and quantity of the specialization classes. An emphasis on required classes with shallow specialization indicated a generalist purpose, while electives with deep knowledge and skills in a few areas signified a specialist purpose.

However, when addressing liberal arts skills, there was a significant discrepancy between the stated purpose and the content of film programs. Virtually every participant stated that liberal arts values are a desired outcome of the program, and yet there was no data to suggest how these liberal arts values make their way from purpose to content. There were no required classes in subjects such as leadership, ethics, group communication, or conflict management, nor were there any substantial evidences of how these concepts are taught or assessed within specific production classes. This is not to say they are neglected, but rather that the skills, knowledge and attitudes are left for individual faculty to find their own ways of drawing out of the production process; faculty who often do not share a liberal arts philosophy. For values deemed so crucial to the purpose of a program, the lack of connecting content was surprising and concerning.

Within the framework, I have illustrated this disconnect by placing the liberal arts content

in parentheses as shown in figure 2.
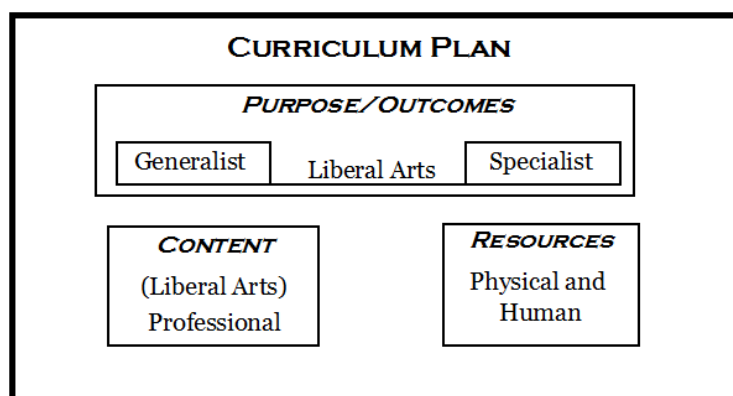
Figure 2. Liberal arts content in the curriculum plan.

External influences. *Location.* As stated previously, the location of the

institution influenced the purpose which in turn, dictates the content. Location also

played into the structure of the content. Those institutions closer to the coasts offered

BFA degree classifications and required students to spend much of their middle tier of

their curriculum experience engaged in elective specialized classes either in a single craft

track or deep multi-skilled path. The further away from the coastal hubs, the greater the

tendencies for broader content offerings in a BA or BS degree program. Only one

institution in the study that offered a BFA was not within a few hundred miles of the

coast, and that institution had plans for an off-site center in the Hollywood community.

Industry trends. Several participants mentioned the trend of the video production industry towards generalist skills. This influenced the broadness of the subject matter within the courses.

Technology. Location, industry and technology are interlinking forces that impact curriculum plans. The study identified that the proliferation of cheaper technology has changed the tools of the industry which in turn had changed the content of film and video programs. Classes have been added, program majors redesigned, and the entire technical vocabulary has been recreated as the digital file-based technologies become ubiquitous and the traditional format of film fades into obscurity.

Student demand. Lattuca and Stark (2009) specifically refer to the prescription versus choice debate as part of the external influences on the higher education. This study identified that each participating program offered elective choice within the curriculum plans. At some institutions, the area of specialization within film production was an elective or track-based choice, and in other cases the majority of the curriculum was looser in structure. Students were not only encouraged, but were expected to find their own pathways through various content areas. In each instance, the curriculum allowed room for students to explore their own goals and motivations within the structure. In the case of at least one participant, this was at the expense of clear managerial and organizational efficiency.

The findings of the study also support the notion that consumerism has a vast influence on university curricula. From the addition of classes to the creation of complete majors, participants spoke of listening to the input they received from students

and adjusting their academic plans accordingly. This impact was most visible in the special topics or independent study courses, primarily run at the request of students, which have made their way into the permanent structure of the curriculum at several institutions. While listed as an external influence, student demand appears to significantly overlap the internal influences and will be discussed further in the section on *Learners.*

Internal influences. *Department structure.* Given that academic organizational units are most commonly grouped around similar content areas, it is surprising to note the level of influence, overwhelmingly negative, that the department has played over the curriculum content. In some cases, the tension stemmed from historical context of the curriculum; the faculty or department that birthed the curriculum had the academic version of *squatter's rights* to those classes. In other cases, it was connected to the departmental liberal arts culture that implicitly or explicitly placed restrictions over the type of classes and the depth of specializations that were offered, in spite of freedom within the institutional mission.

Faculty. The faculty's relationship towards liberal arts was identified as a core influential element. Every participant discussed the value of skills such as group communication and interpersonal skills. They believed the skills to be a central, but somewhat latent part of the film production process. Depending on the faculty member's experience and philosophy regarding liberal arts, the content would vary greatly.

Resources

Access to resources is the lifeblood for film production curriculum. Indeed Lattaca and Stark (2009) state that "sometimes they are the primary consideration in an academic plan" (p. 10). Technology obviously plays the most important role in providing student access to the tools of storytelling, and the study identified a range of attitudes towards institutional support. Those participants who offered BFA programs did not identify institutional resources as a negative factor on their curriculum, but those with BA or BS programs cited their underfunding as detrimental.

In this way there is a strong relationship between institutional resources and the purpose of the program. The specialist purpose programs were well resourced in multiple areas of production, and the generalist programs reported that the lack of institutional resources reduced their ability to offer the curriculum plan they desired. In some instances, there was no choice but to be generalist since the resources would not allow for anything else. Consequently, the type of content that could be offered was directly connected to institutional resources, linking the three areas of purpose, content and resources into a symbiotic trinity where each category influences the other in a recursive cycle. This is shown in figure 3.
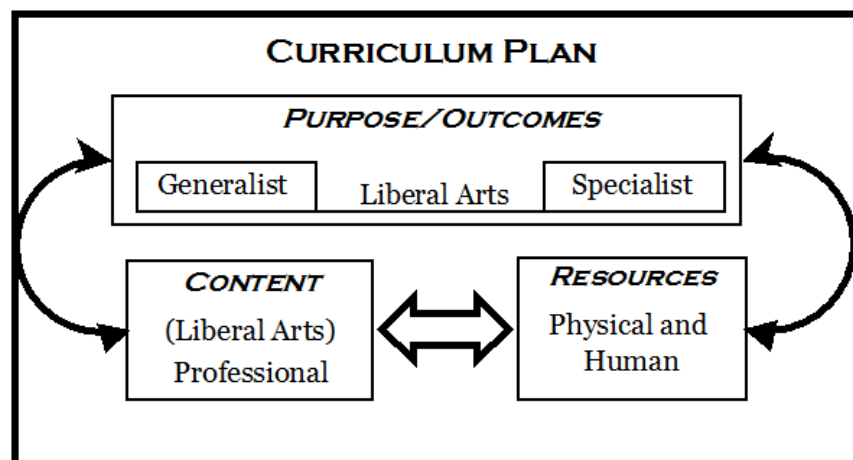
Figure 3. Relationship between purpose/outcomes, content, and resources.

External influences. *Location.* The institutions closest to the industry hubs had a relative abundance of resources. It was clearly a strength of their curriculum plan that there were no significant needs in human or physical resources. Conversely, several of these non-hub institutions reported that their proximity had a detrimental influence on institutional resources, citing a lack of funding and credibility compared to their coastal counterparts. Each of these institutions had made significant compromises over the type of content that could be offered or the frequency of class offerings. One participant referred to the funding discrepancy as a case of feeling less bona fide because they are not near the Los Angeles market.

Internal influences. *Department structure.* While institution decision making is obviously at the heart of resource allocation, it was at the department level when the highest tension was reported. When grouped with other resource-intensive disciplines, participants reported feeling pitted against other colleagues in a win-lose pattern; when one discipline received resources, it was perceived to be at the expense of another area.

While in most cases the resource allocation process was described as civil, the more limited the resources, the more tension within the department. One participant linked institutional resources with student outcomes and enrollment in a form of corporatized model; a way of leveraging the administration to support the curricular goals.

Sequence

The role of sequence in the curriculum plan was given some deliberation but was secondary in the planning process to outcomes, content and resources. There was a relatively common sequencing pattern across the participants in the study, regardless of the purpose. Students begin with generalist theory and practical classes in their freshman and sophomore years, move towards specialist craft foci, and culminate in project-based classes in the upper class experience. Thesis films or capstone classes were common at the culmination of each BFA program.

External influences. *Technology.* The increased familiarity and aptitude of incoming students with new technologies has seen a change in the sequence of programs. Rather than beginning with the tools of technology in formative classes, curriculum planners now have the freedom to focus first on story skills. Also one participant prioritized technology by changing the sequence from four semesters to eight semesters to allow for greater development of technical skills.

Internal influences. *Department structure.* At several institutions, the requirement for completion of school or department core classes slowed the sequencing of film production classes. One participant mentioned that their undifferentiated

department structure allowed horizontal sequencing across disciplines and this lateral
movement impeded student progress.

Learners

The motivation of the learner is a key aspect in modern curriculum design and this
was addressed in film production, albeit inconsistently. The study showed that learner's
choices have impacted the curriculum in the following ways: (a) sequencing of classes in
institutions that have undifferentiated department structures; (b) in the creation of classes
and majors; (c) in the offering of special topics and independent study classes; and (d) in
the tension between elective and prescriptive classes. Given that every program had
some elective choice, this tension requires further examination.

Unlike required prescriptive classes, elective classes are contingent on being
selected by students and can therefore be subject to low enrollments depending on the
number of alternatives on offer. Low enrollment in a course is often seen as an indicator
of student dissatisfaction and can spark a change in the curriculum (Lattuca & Stark,
2009). It is in these instances that the complex interactions of the educational
environment are most evident; classes offered by faculty as part of integrated curriculum;
students validate that choice with their enrollment; administration weight the financial
viability of the class based on enrollment numbers.

Lattuca and Stark (2009) note that learners are generally not consciously
considered at the program planning stage. The learner's needs were rarely mentioned as
a core element of the academic plan and tended to be more ancillary to the process rather
than intentionally factored in. While there was evidence of influence regarding student

desires at a course level, there was little systematic data about leatners themselves; no attempt to address notions of diversity or student motivation. There must be more attention given to learner's motivations if film production is going to flourish in an increasingly learner-centric environment.

Since learner motivation is not fully embraced in curriculum planning, the framework shows the learner box is as overlapping the curriculum plan; extending out into the surrounding external environments as shown in figure 4.

Assessment

In the assessment category, much like the learners category, the study identified a range of strategies and varying levels of engagement across the participating programs. Many of the programs could be identified as using Lattuca and Stark's (2009), *informal evaluation* strategy, the most popular form of response in colleges and universities. This involves prompt feedback and direct adjustments to the classroom plans, and can be seen in this study through the identification of corrective elements in senior film screenings.

Some participants identified a *student centered* approach, using the needs and behaviors of students to adjust plans. Institutions reported using student feedback through course evaluations or senior surveys, but this tended to be more on a single class basis rather than across the curriculum.

A few participants engaged in *goal-focused assessment* where the learning outcomes were used to assess the effectiveness of the curricula plan. This was expressed as a part of the institutional assessment policy of curriculum mapping.

Internal influences. *Faculty.* The quality of the evaluation was most influenced by the faculty's own experience or perception of the assessment process. The study indicated that many professors have a negative view of assessment if they cannot see the usefulness of it.

The study also showed an inconsistency regarding faculty's attitude towards the process of evaluating courses and curriculum. Many programs did not have clearly defined learning outcomes, or a sense of how to assess aspects of the curriculum content, in particular the values of liberal arts. Most participants mentioned tweaking or patching the curriculum, and this aligns with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) premise that most faculty see tinkering as the most common form of curriculum adjustment. This is shown in the framework on figure 4 by the assessment arrow connecting only to the content box rather than to the curriculum plan. Also figure 4 demonstrates a similar relationship for assessment with the curriculum to what is described for the learner; not fully embraced or inconsistently applied and shown in the framework by an overlapping box.
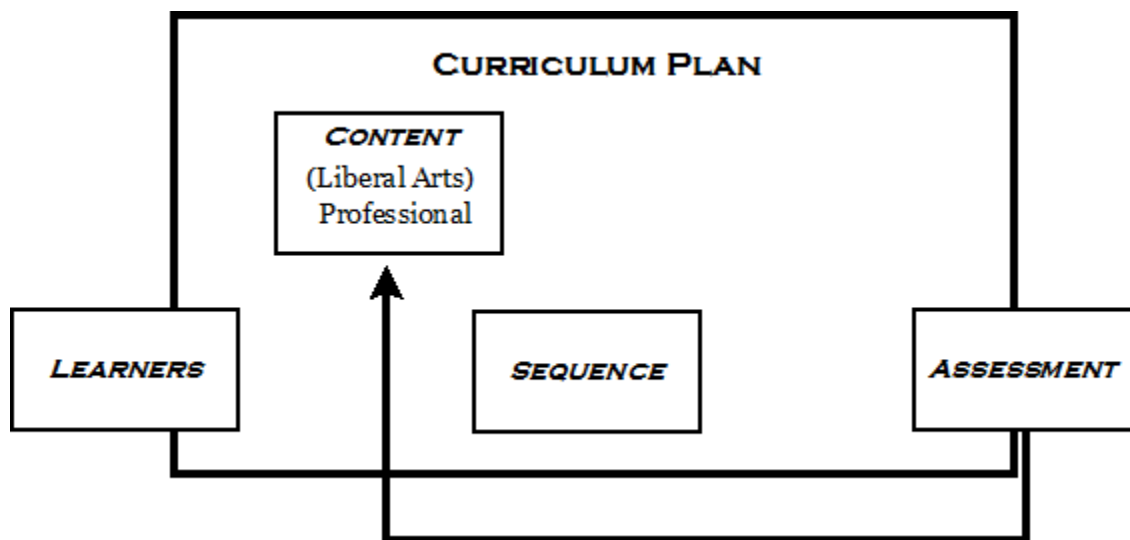
Figure 4. Learner and assessment interactions.

The Environment

The nine critical elements identified in the study can be categorized into (a) external influences of location, industry, technology and student demand; and (b) internal influences of mission, department structure, resources and faculty. The influence of liberal arts outcomes is directly embedded in the purpose/outcome element of the frame.

Perhaps the strongest finding from the research is the effect of the department structure shown at every institution. It is a specific and powerful category of the environment that affects virtually all the elements of the curriculum plan. The extent of its influence dictates that it is not only listed as an element of the internal influences on the framework, but directly shown as a critical subset of the educational environment as shown in figure 5.
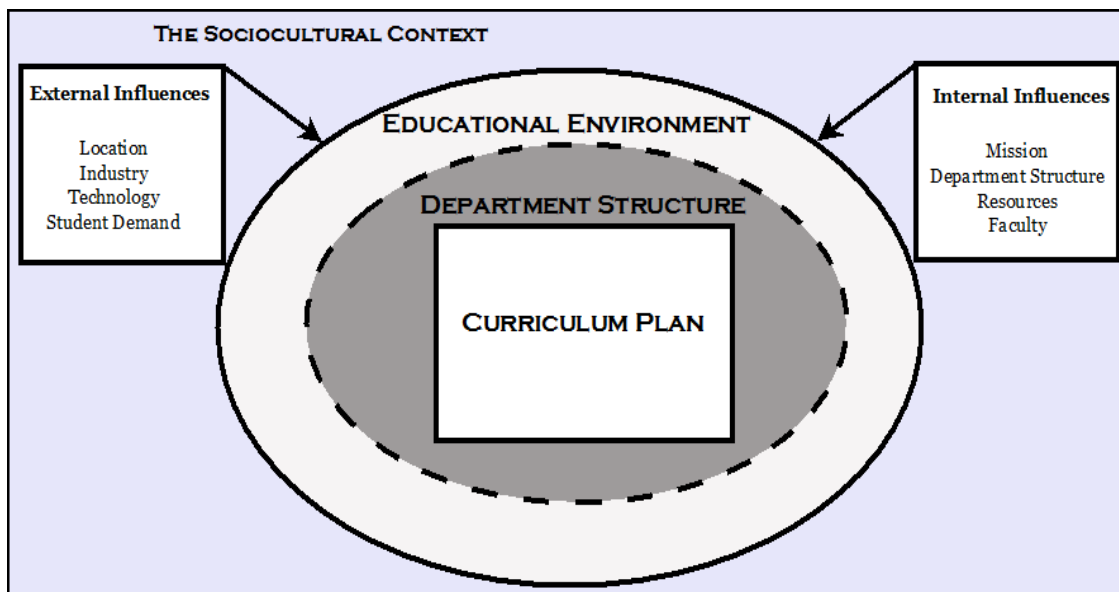
Figure 5. The influences on the curriculum plan.

As with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model, the entire design process is encased in the sociocultural context, reflecting a constructivist view of knowledge. Given that film production is essentially a *team sport* where individuals create together as a work group, the social interactivity of knowledge creation is a primary concern; particularly when the various learner's motivations are engaged with the curriculum and with the goals of the instructor.

The Design Literature

I have chosen Lattuca and Stark's (2009) *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context* as the lens for my framework, and the primary model by which to compare the results of this study. The pragmatic rationale for choosing this literature is twofold: (1) *relevance*, given that the publication of the significantly revised second edition is only a few years old; and (2) *reputation,* given the high praise of the

model within the canon of literature. This work builds from the foundations of other noted theorists to provide a level of comprehensiveness that prompted Conrad (1996) to describe it as "the most compelling and useful book on college curriculum of the past quarter century" (p. 711).

Beyond the timeliness and prestige of the literature, its greater significance is the meat of the framework, in particular three elements that mesh with this study; the focus on decision making, the focus on holistic design, and the view of design within the sociocultural context. First, Lattuca and Stark (2009) emphasize the role of the designer and their intent in the creation process. "By viewing a college curriculum as a plan, *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context* encourages instructors and administrators to think about curriculum as a decision-making process" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. xiii). Understanding the choices and decisions of the designers, and uncovering the elements that most pointedly impact those choices is central to the study.

Second, the concept of an *academic plan* involves a wider span of recursive elements than simply analyzing the sequence of courses or pedagogies used in the classroom. Peck and Brown-Wright (1996) wrote, "A strength of the model presented by Stark and Lattuca is that it avoids the temptation to view curriculum as little more than a lineup of courses that on successful completion, leads to the award of a degree" (p. 347). The model considers the process holistically from the viewpoint of curriculum as a complex system. Reframing curriculum as a plan calls for investigation into the intentionality given to all aspects of the design, from creation to implementation, tying together decision making over a larger perspective.

Third, the work is driven from a sociocultural or constructivist understanding in which the context is a moderating factor in learning. Curriculum is a structure by which knowledge is not simply transferred from teacher to learner, but is produced and constructed by social interactions. It is the interaction of individuals and the curricula within a multifaceted cultural environment that produces learning (Lattuca, 2004). Lattuca and Stark (2009) stressed that the design of curriculum structures is dependent on decisions made within a variety of contextual factors, both inside and outside the institution, which will ultimately impact the learning outcomes. Indeed, the authors place such importance on the context of these interactions that the second edition of their work has been renamed from *Academic Plans in Action* to *Academic Plans in Context*.

As such, Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model addresses eight key elements within the sociocultural environment. They posit that every curriculum addresses these features in the decision making process; conscious or unconscious; deliberate or by default; rational or irrational.

1. *Purpose*: the skills, knowledge and attitudes that the academic plan is designed to produce;

2. *Content*: the subject matter selected to convey the purpose;

3. *Sequence*: an ordering of the content that is intended to lead towards specific outcomes;

4. *Learners*: the relationship between the plan and the motivations of the learners;

5. *Instructional processes*: the pedagogical activities by which learning is constructed;

6. *Instructional resources*: materials and settings used in the processes;

7. *Evaluation*: approaches to determine if the academic plan is functioning as designed;

8. *Adjustment*: improvements to the plan identified through experience and evaluation.

Encasing these eight elements, Lattuca and Stark (2009) identify two overarching categories of influences as part of the sociocultural context; (a) *external influences* – those outside of the institution such as government regulations or accreditation agencies; and (b) *internal influences* – those found inside the institution. The internal influences are further divided into *institutional level influences* such as university mission and resources and *unit level influences* such as faculty beliefs and goals of the academic program. The authors acknowledge that the distinctions between the institutional and the unit influences are often more arbitrary, since their interaction is part of the broader sociocultural environment.

It is important to note that the two basic categories of influences are not mutually exclusive. The idea of mission for example, is a concept that Lattuca and Stark (2009) examine as an external influence in the way universities have historically responded to the environment, in particular to the influence of the German research model and the rise of consumerism. Mission too is at the heart of the internal institutional environment in having academic plans that reflect the purpose, which in turn influences the unit level environment through program goals. The lines between categories are blurred rather than distinctly demarcated, indicated in figure 6 by the two-way arrows between internal and

external influences, and between institutional and unit-level influences. This interplay

only serves to show the problematical nature of the sociocultural environment that frames

curriculum planning. "An academic plan is not the product of totally rational and

context-free deliberations but rather results from a complicated process embedded in a

larger, complex, and somewhat unpredictable set of contexts" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p.
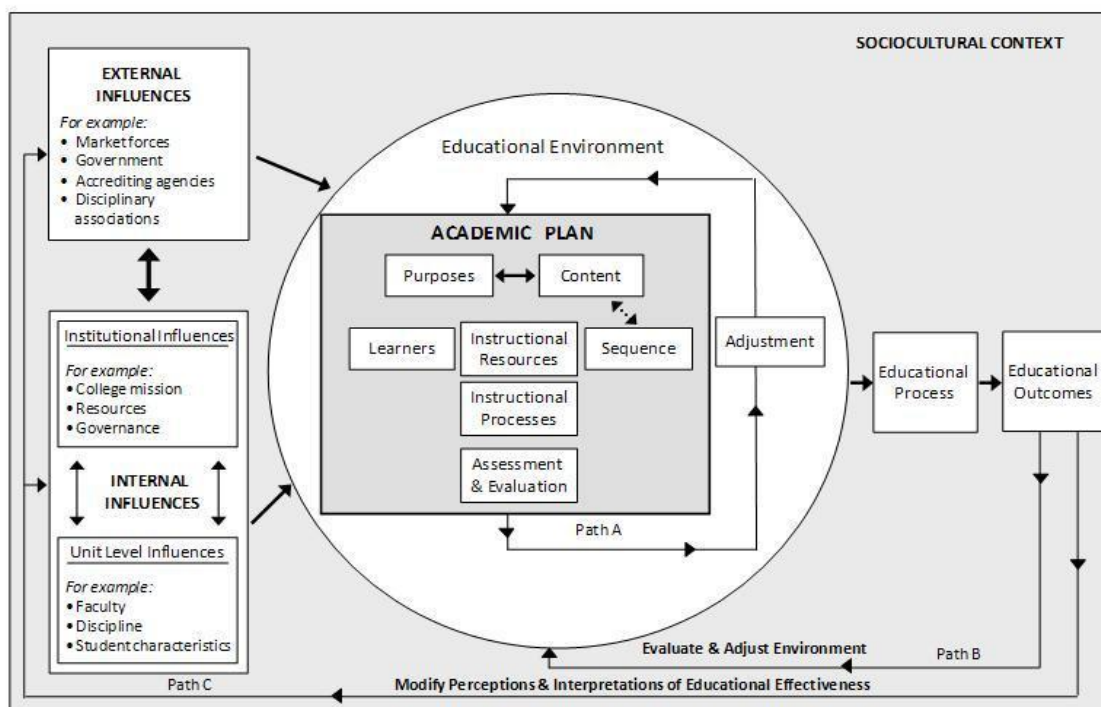
15).

Figure 6. Lattuca and Stark's sociocultural model.

Comparisons of the Framework and the Literature

     I used Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model as a lens in developing the framework so

there are similarities in the general environments. Both share the concept of a holistic

plan operating within a sociocultural context and have similar categories such as purpose

and content. However, a core difference was the relationship of sequence and institutional resources. Lattuca and Stark's model has the category of sequence in a codependent relationship with content shown in figure 6 with the double arrows, but no connection to institutional resources. In my framework, resources play an integral part in establishing the content and even dictate the purpose of the program.

Lack of institutional process. There was very little data reported in the study related to the pedagogical practices in the classroom; certainly a lack of reported intentionality in this area. No design decisions were motivated by pedagogy and in this way, institutional process is not a part of the current framework of film production curriculum design. In contrast, Lattuca and Stark (2009) devote an entire chapter on the institutional process addressing issues such as teaching style, experiential learning, and the integration of knowledge. Cleary this is an area that film production must address.

This also speaks to the autonomy of the faculty in course design. Lattuca and Stark (2009) stated that much of what happens behind the classroom door is the domain of the individual. Apart from the evaluation of teaching, there is no real culture in higher education for examining content or pedagogy of individual professors. The study echoed this autonomy in terms of embedding liberal arts in their class. No participant was exactly sure how the faculty in their department was achieving this goal because so much of what happens in class is individualistic.

Intentionality. Elements such as learners and assessment show some thoughtfulness within the framework but primarily as reactive elements rather than intentional elements. Hence they are shown as not being fully enclosed in the curriculum

plan but spanning into the surrounding environments. Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model calls for a systematic approach to all aspects of the academic plan. It is this intentionality that the authors use to differentiate between curriculum *planning*, the less meticulous process that according to the research, most faculty use in their curriculum plans, and curriculum *design*, the more deliberate choices and strategies suggested by their model.

The environment. The nine core influences on the framework did not interact in the same way that in the Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model anticipated. According to the authors, areas of purpose, content, learners and institutional resources are more subject to external influences, whereas institutional process and evaluation more likely internal influences. While the study showed the external influence of location has undoubtedly influenced purpose, the results point to a far more extensive influence from the internal factors such as mission and department structure on purpose, content and institutional resources. Additionally, Lattuca and Stark mentioned a study in which faculty members ranked the notion of *turf battles* as a weak influence on their curriculum. Given the extensive tensions over department mission and culture, the study appears to contradict this premise.

Lattuca and Stark (2009) reported that *leadership* was rated as the second most important context in program planning behind program goals. No participant mentioned leadership as an influence, although perhaps this is because the study was specifically targeted at leaders in curriculum rather than regular faculty. Additionally, faculty's beliefs about teaching and content were described by the authors as the primary internal

influence. While the study showed some impact of faculty beliefs, both mission and department structures were far more influential.

I believe the primary reason for these differences between the model and the findings of the study is the vulnerability of film production as a discipline within the academy. This is due to its vocational nature, its resource dependency, its antithesis to traditional academic structures such as classroom teaching, its relative age in the academy or some other rationale. When film production is not isolated in its own department, it is particularly susceptible to impact of neighboring disciplines. It needs a champion to establish boundaries and guidelines for the curriculum to flourish.

Summary

According to Lattuca and Stark's (2009) criteria, at this stage of its evolution, film production is still primarily engaged in curriculum planning rather than curriculum design, since much of the curriculum process happens unintentionally. The authors state that "the academic plan concept encourages faculty members and leaders to carry out curriculum planning as an intentional and informed design process" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 20). While the study identified elements of deliberate thought in the decision making processes, particularly in regard to defining purpose and content, many decisions point to a more reactive rather than proactive state of design. Identifying the nine major influences on decision making allows designers to give cognitive attention and intentionality to the elements in their curriculum plan that have been ignored or have been addressed unintentionally.

The theoretical frame describes the interaction of elements in the current state of film production curriculum design. It is the first step in establishing the *lay of the land*; creating an initial map of the charted and uncharted territories of film production curriculum within the academy. While the theoretical perspective is important, of primary relevance are the implications for research and practice, discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has identified nine elements of decision making within film production curriculum which I have developed into a theoretical frame for describing the relationship among categories within the current state of film production curriculum planning. From this frame, I have established recommendations for practice and recommendations for research.

Implications for Practice

Film production curriculum is missing three essential ingredients that would allow it to take the next steps of legitimacy in curriculum design; (a) intentionality, specifically in learners, process and evaluation; (b) consistency; and (c) accountability.

Intentionality. Curriculum designers must give significant attention to learner's motivations and needs. If learning truly is constructed by the interactions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the learner, then film production needs to return to its origins in more of a conservatory or apprenticeship model. Production education will excel with the teacher/master adopting the role of facilitator in developing skills, knowledge and attributes together with the learners. While some institutions have embraced this through independent studies and special topic classes, there must continue to be space in the curriculum for self-directed learning and individualized pathways to explore and develop the student's identity as a storyteller.

The tension with this approach is two-fold. First, using the analogy of personal trainers, faculty often have to push students to excel in areas they otherwise would

choose to ignore; to exercise a wider range of academic and professional muscles than students are comfortable with. For example, students often do not see the value of reflecting on their work, or developing the *soft* skills of conflict resolution and group management. Yet those faculty members close to the industry know the importance of these traits in providing a platform for graduate success and the skills cannot be ignored in spite of student protests.

Administrators need to be aware that a focus on learner needs and motivations cannot be achieved in large lecture halls, but only in small workgroups, often off campus on location, where modeling and mentoring can take place. Class sizes must be smaller, equipment must be plentiful and the curriculum path must be flexible.

There was little intentionality shown toward the pedagogical process of knowledge creation in the current state of academic plans. This is likely due to the understanding that production cannot be taught by traditional *chalk-and-talk* methods and must be done in the real world laboratory of the film set or edit suite. However, the primary challenge of higher education in the twenty-first century in finding better and cheaper processes will run against the conservatory model of teaching and the inherent expense of the discipline. Undergraduate film production education needs to demonstrate that it has value beyond simply providing access to the *toys* of the trade. The future of film production can only be secured by asking questions such as how to teach production skills online, or how to intentionally engage collaborative learning in the *film-set as classroom* notion.

Additionally, whatever the production classroom looks like, it must be *purposely* infused with a blend of professional and liberal skills. Liberal arts values must be systemized and codified, assessed and evaluated. Students have to proactively be given the tools to work effectively in groups, to manage the conflict that will undoubtedly arise as creative minds butt heads, and to thoughtfully reflect on how and why the messages of their films contribute meaningfully to society. Transferable skills such as group communication, conflict resolution, and ethical integrity are a natural part of film production, but must be deliberately and perceptibly emphasized in the instructional process. They cannot be left completely to chance or even to the faculty member's own interpretation.

This leads directly to perhaps the most important and reactive element - the notion of outcomes assessment. Those programs in the study that had the most rigorous and connected evaluation system were nested in institutions that have embraced assessment as a cultural practice. There is little doubt that higher education will be asked to become more accountable for its outcomes, and film production needs to establish deliberate ways to evaluate curriculum and develop procedures for making adjustments. This must happen at both the course level, in terms of assessment of objectives within classes, and also on programmatic level as part of assessing the entire academic plan. The anecdotal practices of observation and reflection on senior film projects need to be documented and formalized into plans and strategies for adjustment and curricula improvement.

Along with intentionality in the design and implementation of learning outcomes, programs must specifically track graduate outcomes; questions such as where are the

students getting employment and in what ways has their educational journey prepared them? Given the distinct generalist or specialist outcomes of film programs, the best way to measure the success of the program is to purposely collect data on alumni through surveys and focus groups. This data can be fed back into the curriculum planning process to ensure industry relevance.

Consistency. I have called for intentionality to the holistic curriculum plan, particularly to learners, process and evaluation, but this does not mean that all programs are void in these areas. Rather, the study highlighted a lack of consistency across programs; conspicuous by its absence. There was a significantly diverse range of learning outcomes, assessment methodologies, and design strategies that lacked a cohesive thread. To a great extent, each designer was doing what seems right in their own eyes.

A certain degree of inconsistency would be expected given the diversity of the sample. Issues such as the variety among types of institution, classifications of degree, and maturity of programs within the participants can account for some discrepancies within the curriculum plan. However, as academic disciplines striving for legitimacy within the academy, this lack of consistency harkens back to the state of medical education before the Flexner report. While the stakes are lower than the practice of medicine in the early 1900's, the environment is equally ripe for developing common standards of excellence by which to measure and adjust the effectiveness of the film programs.

Perhaps the biggest threat to production education is the organizational structure of university departments. Where film production is not the primary discipline, significant compromises were identified. There was a lack of consistency across the areas of the curriculum plan from content, resources, assessment and so forth. This is likely due to the relative newness of the discipline in the academy compared to neighboring disciplines, its perceived lack of academic standing, its non-traditional teaching processes, or its dependency on resources for survival. Regardless, production education needs an advocate to protect the academic integrity of the curriculum.

Accountability. The lack of intentionality and lack of consistency are byproducts of an unregulated system where programs have developed and been refined in isolation from each other. With no central information or database available on curricula matters, it is difficult to ascertain the level of development and sophistication of film programs around the country.

In this context, film production education could benefit from a conversation amongst program designers. Some form of round table discussion with leaders from core film programs would be of enormous value in increasing intentionality across the curriculum elements, and providing consistency and direction in the design and redesign of curriculum.

The University Film and Video Association (UFVA) already serve as an important bridge between the educational and professional realms, providing information and resources on technology and industry trends. It would be within the UFVA's role to provide an avenue for a continuing conversation on academic best practices, perhaps

extending to some form of voluntary accountability or guided self-regulation. In this way, film programs could begin benchmarking against each other, increasing the collegiality and advocacy of the discipline and ensure fidelity within programs around the country.

Recommendations for Research

The primary recommendation is to begin to test the framework against other samples, including specific populations that are more homogeneous; liberal arts colleges only or research universities; programs with BFAs or programs with BAs; degree programs older than 10 years and those younger than 10 years; coastal only institutions or inland only institutions.

A population that was purposefully discounted in this study is post-graduate production education, often described as *film schools*. The framework could be used to examine the similarity or differences in curriculum plans between bachelor programs and the MFA structures, particularly of the *big five* that have produced many of the most commercially successful filmmakers; University of California Los Angeles, University of Southern California, the American Film Institute, New York University and Columbia University.

Film production education would benefit from a quantitative study that encompasses a larger, more diverse sample. This could provide statistical data on the type of programs offered in film production, the size of the programs, the type of courses offered, and the placement rates of graduates.

While this study has examined the process and decisions of curriculum creation, it would be valuable to examine the phenomena of how faculty experiences the design

process, or how students experience the learning process through film production programs. A case study of best practices at highly rated institutions would provide an excellent next step towards establishing some guidelines for accreditation.

The sphere of Career and Technical Education (CTE) is another branch of film production ripe for research. Comparing the type of educational inputs, throughputs and outputs of CTE to the academy would provide indicator of student motivations, of best practices, and of graduate outcomes.

Conclusion

As musician Bono said, "I just hope when the day is done I've been able to tear a little corner off the darkness". In many cases, this research has been like striking a match in the pitch darkness trying to illuminate a little corner of the unknown. Film production curriculum at undergraduate institutions is no longer completely in the dark. This study provides some knowledge for designers to help them more intentionally address designing or redesign the curriculum, and makes them more aware of the critical influences that affect those decisions.

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APPENDIX A

Initial Participant Consent Letter

Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology
Dr. Donna Talbot, Principal Investigator
Pete Muir, Student Investigator
From Script to Screen to Syllabus: The Path to Curriculum Design for
Undergraduate Film Production Programs in Liberal Arts Universities

You are invited to participate in a study examining the path to curriculum design for undergraduate film production programs in liberal arts universities This study is being conducted by Pete Muir, Chair of Communication and Media department at Cornerstone University, and a doctoral student in the Education Leadership doctoral program at Western Michigan University, under the supervision of Dr. Donna Talbot.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in this study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with the researchers or Western Michigan University.

The purpose of this study is to create a grounded theory of film production curriculum design based on research within undergraduate liberal arts universities. If you decide to participate you will be asked to be interviewed lasting no more than 60 minutes with a possible follow-up interview if needed for clarification. These interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information and all interviews will be transcribed into transcripts that you will be able to review and edit. You would be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at anytime during the interview.

My goal is to review your learning objectives and curriculum before the interview so I have some context of what your program's goals. If you agree to this study, I will contact you via email to confirm the interview time and location and also to access the learning objectives and relevant syllabi to your production major. The syllabi will be kept confidential and destroyed at the conclusion of the research.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or while the research is taking place. I will be happy to share the results with you at the completion of the study. *Ensuring the confidentiality of data is the norm in research. Your name or school name will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process*; rather it will only be known to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used for participants (i.e. Educator 1, Educator 2, and so on) and general terms will be used in reporting results (i.e. "Five of the educators commented…;" "Two educators reported that…;" etc.).

Written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher upon each completion and for one year following the completion of the study. The transcripts will be transported directly by the researcher and stored on the campus of Western Michigan University for at least three years.

The audio transcripts will be destroyed once the transcription process has been completed and a written record is produced and you are confident that the written transcript accurately reflects your comments during the interview. There are no other known risks/discomforts associated with participating in this study.

As the first study of film production curriculum in a higher education setting, this research will aid in the creation of best practice standards that could form the basis of possible accreditation. Accreditation would go a long way to increasing the academic prestige of this fledgling discipline and aid in creating a culture of assessment and accountability. Since this discipline is one of the major growth areas of higher education, the research will be beneficial to faculty members to inform future curriculum design, resources planning, and aid in faculty hire, promotion and tenure decisions. With a more formal concept of learning objectives, the idea of benchmarking will allow a more transferrable faculty interface and an easier route for smaller institutions to plan and accelerate growth.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Pete Muir, the student investigator at (616) 254 1617 (office) or via email at pete.muir@cornerstone.edu or you may contact the faculty advisor Dr. Donna Talbot on (269) 387-5122. You may also contact the Chair, The Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269) 387-8293 or via email at hsirb@wmich.edu, or the Vice President for Research (269) 387-8298 if any questions or issues arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use by the researcher for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in the study if the stamped date is older than one year.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

_____   _____
Participant   Date

Consent obtained by: _____
                                    Interviewer/Student Investigator

                                    _____
                                    Date

APPENDIX B

Confirmation Email

Hello _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study of higher education film production programs and their curricula design. I want to confirm with you that the interview will take place at this date and time _____ via phone/Skype/personal interview.

The primary research questions will be as follows:-

1. How was the professional curriculum of film production created in this environment and is there any evidence of a theoretical curriculum frame?

2. How does the curriculum of undergraduate film production programs relate to the liberal arts objectives of the institutions that house them?

3. What are the critical features and elements of each of the film production programs studied and how are those features related across the programs?

4. Within any common critical features and elements of the programs studied is there evidence of an emerging or fully formed curriculum theory?

I would like to review the relevant syllabi from the production classes and the learning objectives of the program prior to the interview. If you could reply to this email with this information or point me towards where this can be obtained, that would be ideal. The syllabi will be kept confidential and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at this address or call my cell (616) 634-3816. Thanks again and I look forward to meeting with you.

Pete Muir
Chair of Communication and Media
Cornerstone University
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616.254.1617 (office)|616.222.1511 (fax)

APPENDIX C

Email to Participants that were Ineligible

Dear _____

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study into film production curriculum design in undergraduate liberal arts universities. Unfortunately I am unable to include you in the study as you do not meet one of the required parameters, i.e. (1) professor of film production program who has input into curriculum design; (2) who has been a professor for three years or more; (3) in a program that is three year or older; (3) at a liberal arts college or university.

Thank you for your input and willingness to be involved.

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APPENDIX D

HSIRB Exemption Letter

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: July 31, 2012

To: Donna Talbot, Principal Investigator
        Peter Muir, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: Approval not needed for HSIRB Protocol Number 12-07-36

This letter will serve as confirmation that your project "Film Production Education" has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Based on that review, the HSIRB has determined that approval is not required for you to conduct this project because you are examining film production programs and not collecting personal identifiable (private) information about individuals.

Thank you for your concerns about protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

A copy of your protocol and a copy of this letter will be maintained in the HSIRB files.

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Question 1

Tell me about the process in designing your curriculum.

What factors influenced your design of classes?

What is the process you went through to have it approved?

How is assessment of the courses undertaken?

How is assessment of the curriculum undertaken?

Question 2

Tell me about the relationship between your film production program and the liberal arts curriculum

How are the liberal arts integrated into your curriculum?

Question 3

What is unique about your curriculum?

What is the balance of generalist classes and specialist classes?

What is the balance of theoretical and practical classes?

How were these balances negotiated?

What are your graduate outcomes? How is the curriculum tied together?

APPENDIX F

Follow up Email for Member Checking

Hello _____

Thanks once again for the interview. I've finished the preliminary data collection so I'm sending you a full transcription of the interview for you to look over if you would like (the process of member checking). If there are elements you want to clarify, expand, or delete please let me know.

Thanks again.

Pete.

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