

What Distinguishes the College or its Programs?

Art & Art History

Our department focuses on creation and analysis of visual arts, including a broad range of visual forms in our focus. While we do have area concentrations, there is a lot of latitude in students choosing their coursework, which is very different from the Design Department, which has a much more lock-step curriculum per area.

Design

The Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design is the professional degree for students admitted to the major. The curriculum follows a structured sequence of classes that builds upon the knowledge and skills from the previous courses. This professional degree starts with a solid basis of fundamental design principles and practices, progressing through specific courses in print and digital media design, culminating in a fully integrated professional senior year in the development of the exit portfolio. The robust and ever-evolving curriculum is grounded in the tradition of producing thoughtful, creative, and discerning designers. We promote the combination of personal expression with critical thinking, making connections between culture and design, and emphasize being responsible stewards of the industry.

Highlights:

- Successful careers in areas such as branding, UX/UI, web, motion, publication, packaging, environmental, and illustration
- All access 1,390 square-foot industry standard production lab
- Mac computer labs with new robust machines and latest software
- Unique Illustration Certificate opportunity
- Provided networking and learning opportunities from professional design studios via workshops, studio visits, guest speakers, portfolio reviews, and internships
- Intermittent Summer Faculty-Led Study Abroad opportunity
- Active Associated Students Design Club
- Award-winning work by students and faculty

Music

Our department is proud to offer an individualized education that focuses on undergraduate opportunities and success. Students can expect conservatory level training while being deeply rooted in the liberal arts to provide a well-rounded educational experience. Undergraduate students will have access to numerous opportunities including masterclasses and workshops with world-renowned musicians and educators, concerto performances with our symphonic orchestra, full operatic roles and opera scenes, student composition premieres, chamber music collaboration, jazz combos and big band, as well as multiple ensembles that challenge student's creativity and artistry.

Theatre & Dance

Few theatre departments focus on training self-generative artists. We require all students in the major to take a beginning playwriting class, and have courses on Devising, or collaboratively creating new works for the stage. This means our students leave Western empowered to not only audition for graduate school or professional theatres, but they also have the skills to make their own work and opportunities. Faculty member Rich Brown is the only person who has received the national award for Outstanding Lead Deviser from the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival two times.

We focus on experiential learning. Our program is a resume building program where students constantly act, perform, direct, build and write. In addition to our five-theatre, two-dance mainstage season, we support a student producing organization - Student Theatre Productions (STP). Modeled off professional theatre boards, STP produces an entire season of productions that parallel the faculty mainstage season, adding six or more production opportunities per year for our students.

Design students can design for our mainstage productions and their designs are built by professional staff and shops. Few undergraduate programs allow students to design for their mainstage productions.

Recognition and Accreditation

The Music department is accredited through the National Association of Schools of Music.

Chris E. Vargas, Assistant Professor, Time-Based Art, recently received a highly competitive Creative Capital award of \$50,000.

The Learning Outcomes identified for the Design Program reflect the expectations of National Association of Schools of Art & Design [NASAD] for accredited professional design programs as well as recommendations by AIGA and an external professional advisory board.

All Design faculty are active in their area of interest within the field, including:

- Authoring various textbooks, chapters, articles
- Presenting and leading workshops at national and international conferences
- Being featured in critically acclaimed publications, exhibitions, and festivals
- Creating award-winning work
- Maintaining active design practices working with a range of clients, big and small

Western Design students have won at the Type Director's Club, Adobe Design Achievement Awards, American Advertising Awards, Design & Art Direction Awards, MODE Fest, Creative Quarterly, Graphis, and Communication Arts.

The Theatre and Dance department has been lauded as one of the best undergraduate programs in the Pacific Northwest. Theatre faculty and students regularly receive National Awards from the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival, and Rich Brown received the Carnegie Foundation's Professor of the Year Award for the State of Washington in 2015. Starting in 2023, WWU Theatre has also launched a new collaboration with Seattle Children's Theater to develop new plays at WWU, which will premiere on SCT's mainstage.

Undergraduate Academic Programs

Art & Art History

- BA in Art Studio
- BFA in Art Studio
- BAE in Art Education, P-12 Education
- BAE in Art Education, Elementary Education
- BA in Art History
- Minor in Art History

Art Studio Concentration areas include: Printmaking, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Fibers, Time-Based Arts, Photography, and Mixed Media

Design

- BFA in Design
- Minor in Design

Music

- Bachelor of Arts in Music
- Bachelor of Music in Performance
- Bachelor of Music in Composition
- Bachelor of Music Education P-12
- Bachelor of Music in History & Literature
- AECl- Arts Enterprise and Cultural Innovation

Theatre & Dance

- BA in Theatre Arts with the following concentrations: Performance, Production, Entertainment Design, Theatre Education, Theatre Studies
- BA and a BFA in Dance

Internship, Research and Extracurricular Experiences

The Art Department encourages students to engage in internships in the community and have a special number in the department designated for that course (A/HI 306). There is also the Western Gallery Workshop (A/HI 305) for which students' intern throughout the year in the Western Gallery.

The Department of Design highly encourages students to seek a summer internship opportunity between their junior and senior year. The internship would be a supervised pragmatic work experience under the direction and supervision of a qualified professional practitioner. Students can earn between 1 and 10 credits depending on the number of hours dedicated to the internship. The course is designated in the course catalog (DSGN 489) and goes towards the major. The department has developed a large network of regional design studios over the years to be able to assist students with finding internships.

Many of our students go on to work at the places they intern with – getting a nice foot in the door. Some of the companies/organizations our students have interned for include: Starbucks, Disney, Sarofsky, Brooks Running, Elva, TenGun, MG2, Rational, Modern Species, Globant, Smashing Ideas, Wildern, Mentor, Indigo Slate, GLDN, BrandQuery, Toolhouse, Knack Collective, April Six, Glowforge, Ben Kinney, Noise 13.

WWU's Design Club is a student-run club which is open to all students. The club has become very active and is growing each year - they get together every other week to learn new skills via workshops and guest speakers, go on fieldtrips, do fun self-initiated design challenges, and discuss all things design.

Theatre students take advantage of theatre and dance internships all over the country including The NeoFuturists, Blessed Unrest Theatre, and The Moth Radio Hour in NYC, Village Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, the 5th Avenue Theatre, and Seattle Children's Theatre. The theatre major requires a Senior Project, which consists of a research project where a faculty advisor works directly with each student to explore an area of interest or project.

Any student can participate in related AS Clubs including the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), Art Club, B Gallery and Ceramics Club, Collegiate Washington Music Educators Association (CWMEA), Jazz Club, WWU Opera Club and the Viking Pep Band.

Equity and Diversity Initiatives

The Department of Design offers several scholarships for students with financial need. We continue to do outreach by visiting schools in person and remotely, as well as open our classrooms to students interested in learning about design. We participate and work with Compass 2 Campus, whose mission is to increase access to higher education for students in Whatcom and Skagit Counties who have been historically excluded from higher education.

Our Theatre season always includes one play focused on underrepresented voices (past productions have explored African American and Latinx experiences, women's rights issues, and LGBTQ+ stories).

We also recently conducted some research by sending out a couple of opt-in surveys. One was sent to local and regional high schools gathering information about their art and design programs and what type of engagement with our department would be most beneficial. The other was with our graduating students to find out their educational experience prior to Western to help gain perspective on their varying backgrounds and identify different high schools and community colleges.

In addition to outreach and research, we try to highlight underrepresented designers in the classroom and bring in various guest speakers with diverse backgrounds to present their work or run workshops. We also seek opportunities to work with non-profits in the community or develop project briefs with a focus on designing for social good.

We also designed our pre-major portfolio process to be more equitable by having applicants do the same 7 assignments without the need of advanced technology or tools.

The Music Department is committed to bringing music to underrepresented populations and students. Through outreach, campus visits and tours, concerts and workshops, we strive to share music with students who represent a wide variety of exposure to this art form.

Successful Alumni

Art & Art History

- Lindsey Ellis, Themed Entertainment Design M.F.A. Program, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)
- Kiersten Fellrath (Art History), Curatorial Associate, JP Morgan Chase Company Art Collection
- Adam Fung, Assistant Professor, Texas Christian University
- Joe Rudko, artist, Seattle, designer of 2015 Death Cab for Cutie CD, Kintsugi, cover:
- Kate Sechrist (Studio/Fiber Arts), received Japanese Government MEXT Grant (Monbukagakusho) to study at a Japanese University (Kyoto Seika University) for 2 years. This is a very prestigious grant, worth about \$20,000 per year.

These are just a few examples; there are many more!

Design

We have alumni coast-to-coast and abroad, in all levels and areas of design, working in-house at places like Airbnb, Alaska, Amazon, Apple, Boeing, Disney, Dropbox, Eventbrite, Everlane, Fabletics, Meta, GLDN, Google, Microsoft, Nike, Nordstrom, Pepsi, Pinterest, REI, Rockstar Games, Starbucks, and Sounders, and working in agencies such as Artifact, BASIC, Frog, Hornall Anderson, Huge, IDEO, Instrument, Mentor, Sarofsky, Smashing Ideas, Teague, Tether, TenGun Design, Wongdoody, and Ziba.

Many of our successful graduates are transfer students. Our 2023 Department Outstanding Graduate, Wendy Dith, was a transfer student from Edmonds College who graduated with a minor in Business and Cum Laude honors. Another recent graduate, Charlotte Offin, who was a transfer student from Everett Community College won multiple design awards including an American Advertising Award, graduated with Magna Cum Laude and an Illustration Certificate. She landed a job as a designer at Starbucks immediately following graduation. Daniel Geiszler and Nick Gardner, both transfer students from Cascadia College and Whatcom Community College also won numerous awards and started as junior designers at the infamous motion design studio, Sarofsky, in Chicago.

- Read about Outstanding Graduate, Wendy Dith:
<https://www.wvu.edu/design/outstandinggraduate.html>
- Read about the American Advertising Award recipients
<https://cfpa.wvu.edu/news/design-students-win-gold-and-silver-seattle-american-advertising-awards-daniel-geiszler>
- Meet Daniel Geiszler:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CwXop_6N1fe/?img_index=1
- Meet Nick Gardner:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CvxteOWN6XR/?img_index=2

Music

Our music students have won national and regional competitions in a number of areas including performance, conducting, and compositions, and often continue their studies at some of the finest graduate programs in the nation.

Our graduates hold positions teaching in public school settings and universities, perform in symphony orchestras and opera houses, compose works for films, ensembles, further their education at top graduate schools, work in arts administration and hold a variety of positions in the music industry.

Notable Alumni Include:

- **Erin Wall ('98) Vocalist:** Metropolitan Opera, two time Grammy Award Winner
- **Marc Seales ('78) Jazz Pianist:** Department Chair of Jazz, University of Washington, Jazz Hall of Fame
- **Brett Mitchell (01') Conductor:** Music Director of the Colorado Symphony
- **Madeline Slettedahl (14') Pianist:** Lyric Opera of Chicago, Carnegie Hall
- **Ian Dorsch, Composer:** "Gears of War 2", Xbox Fitness, "Praey for the Gods", Xbox and PS4

Theatre & Dance

Recent graduates include: Dan Erickson, the creator/writer of *Severance* on Apple+; Rashawn Scott, who stars in *Southside* on Comedy Central; Connor Peirson, who performed on Broadway and in the national tour of *Book of Mormon*; and James McGrath, who was a voice-actor in the film *Boss Baby*. Additionally, our alums frequent the professional stages in Seattle, especially Seattle Repertory Theatre and Seattle Children's Theatre.

Our students have gone on to do graduate training in acting, playwrighting, scenic design, costume design, and directing at top graduate programs.

The Dance program has alumni dancing for many national companies and also running their own dance schools. Some students have been interns with the Gerring Dance Company and Polaris Dance Theatre, just to name a few.

Application Process & Requirements

Art & Art History

<https://cfpa.wvu.edu/art/application-process>

The application is available on the Department of Art & Art History website. For Studio and Art Education applications, students should put their best work forward. Faculty are looking for potential, not previous training. A portfolio is not required for Art History applicants.

Design

<https://www.wvu.edu/design/admissions.html>

The Design major is very sequential. Students are first admitted as minors/pre-majors through a portfolio review in early Spring. As minors/pre-majors, they gain access to all the 200-level courses starting in Fall and Winter. At the end of the Winter quarter, they can apply for the BFA major. If admitted, they start taking upper division courses that Spring. If they are not admitted into the major or if they decide not to continue beyond the 200-level, they will be awarded a design minor. Pre-majors and majors must maintain a cumulative 2.50 GPA both overall and in Design courses taken at Western.

To become a pre-major or design minor, students must submit an application which includes a candidate's statement, unofficial transcripts, and a portfolio. The portfolio should consist of 7 specific assignments plus 3 projects of your choice. For the latest updates on how to apply, please refer to the Department of Design website.

The portfolio will be reviewed by the Design faculty and evaluated based on a demonstrated understanding of the elements of visual communication, technical proficiency, creativity, and problem-solving.

Music

<https://cfpa.wvu.edu/music/prospective-music-students>

All students who are interested in becoming a music major or minor must complete an entrance audition on their primary instrument or voice. These auditions take place during January, February, and March prior to the fall in which a student wishes to enroll. Prospective Composition majors must also submit a portfolio of previous work for faculty review. Due to the sequential nature of the music curriculum, mid-year applications are not recommended. Students electing to begin in a quarter other than fall should seek advisement before their audition.

Theatre & Dance

<https://cfpa.wvu.edu/theatre/advising>

The Theatre program welcomes all students who want to declare a Theatre major; no audition is required. The Dance program holds placement auditions in the fall of every academic year to determine the level of a student's ability and background.

Frequently Asked Questions

Art & Art History

Will my art classes transfer?

There is a transfer equivalency guide on the Admissions homepage, or students can email the art department to find out.

What do I include in my portfolio for the art application?

Students submit 12 images as a PowerPoint which is attached to their online application. The choice of images are up to the student: they can be paintings, drawings, fiber art, sculpture, ceramics, print; whatever best shows the talents of the student.

Are there art classes I can take without being a major?

Most of the classes in the Art program are art major restricted, but there are some classes (Foundation classes and 200 level art histories) open to non-art majors, so if the incoming student has not yet been accepted to the program, they can still enroll for art classes that will be applied to their plan of study once accepted.

Design

Will my design classes transfer?

There are few exceptions for classes to transfer since our curriculum is specialized and sequential in nature. If interested in trying to transfer any design credits for specific courses in our curriculum, contact the Department of Design. Identify which courses in our curriculum you think might be equivalent to a course you have previously taken and be prepared to share the syllabus, project examples, and your evaluation for this course. The department will then review the materials and decide if the courses are equivalent.

Are there design classes I can take without being a major?

Most classes in the Design Department are major-restricted, but there are few exceptions:

- We have a 100-level Entry Portfolio Prep course that is open to non-majors and assists with portfolio development, skill-building, and design thinking.
- There are also two large lecture courses called DSGN 111: Design View and DSGN 211: Foundations of Visual Communication, providing general overview of the design landscape and history of the development of visual communication. These are GUR's and open to non-majors, as well as required for the Design Major.

- We also offer the opportunity to take 6 different Illustration courses. These are open to non-majors and can be taken towards earning an Illustration Certificate.
- And finally, we periodically offer a strictly non-major DSGN 249: Graphic Design Concepts course, as well as special topics courses in the Summer, such as DSGN 355: Graphic Novel and Sequential Storytelling and DSGN 375: Design Summer Abroad.

Can I graduate with a design degree in two years after enrolling at Western?

It will most likely take 3 years for transfer students. The BFA is a specialized professional degree ranging from 115-122 credits. The curriculum follows a structured sequence of classes that builds upon the knowledge and skills from the previous courses. Below is an overview of each year:

- **Year 1:** Starts with a solid basis of fundamental design principles and practices in the first year with unique introductory courses such as typography, design technology, motion design, print and finishing, and graphic design in the 20th century.
- **Year 2:** Progresses through specific courses in print and digital media design in the second year, learning more advanced skills and getting a holistic view of design.
- **Year 3:** Culminates in a fully integrated professional senior year with networking opportunities and the development of the exit portfolio.

Music

If I have my AA degree, can I graduate in two years?

Our Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Music is structured around a core curriculum that is sequential and takes an average of three years to complete. If a transfer student has completed courses in any theory, aural skills (ear training), or keyboarding (piano) they are eligible to take placement exams which determine entry level into our program. If a student is successful in passing their placement exams it may accelerate their graduation timeline.

Our Bachelor of Music (BMus) degrees are structured around the same core curriculum and takes an average of four years to complete. If a transfer student has completed courses in any theory, aural skills (ear training), or keyboarding (piano), they are eligible to take placement exams which determine entry level into our program. If a student is successful in passing their placement exams it may will accelerate their graduation timeline. Additionally, each Bachelor of Music degree contains specific curriculum prerequisites that cannot be determined by placement exams, and is based on individualized progress.

It is also important to know that all students at Western Washington University must have 180 minimum credits to graduate, including 60 credits of upper division. The 60 credits of upper division cannot always be obtained solely through your major.

What credits will transfer into my music degree?

We accept transfer credits for ensembles, applied lessons, and pedagogy. The transfer credits for ensemble and applied lessons may only apply to major electives as students are required to participate in these courses each quarter in residence. Credits completed for theory, aural skills, and keyboarding are not directly transferred into our department. Students who have completed these courses are eligible to take placement exam to determine their entry level into our core curriculum. These credits, however, may be used towards the 180 minimum credits required to graduate from Western.

Theatre & Dance

Can transfer students become involved immediately in the department?

Yes! They can audition, work on crews and have an immediate involvement in all areas of the department if they choose.

Can I graduate in two years after enrolling at Western?

Yes. It does somewhat depend on what Concentration they might choose and how many Concentrations they pursue. But, if they have taken a good amount of GURs, then they should be on target to graduate in two years. Most of our transfers graduate in two years.

Will I feel comfortable in the department?

Faculty, staff, and students make a concerted effort to embrace transfer students and help them become established in a Theatre or Dance program. It, of course, depends on them to engage as quickly as possible, but faculty especially make an extra effort to welcome a transfer student and keep an eye on them for their first few quarters as majors.