

2017

Excellence in Action Award

Passaic County Technical Institute

Graphic Arts

Arts, A/V Technology, Communications Career Cluster

OVERVIEW

The Graphic Arts program of study at Passaic County Technical Institute in Wayne, New Jersey prepares all of its students for postsecondary and career success by providing rigorous in-school instruction and extensive opportunities for experience in commercial work environments and advanced laboratories.

All students enrolled in the Graphic Arts program may earn college credit through articulated dual enrollment programs with local postsecondary institutions. Over 90 percent of students exit the program with the Visual Communication Adobe Photoshop certification and a portfolio of work to demonstrate their command of the discipline. In an ever-evolving field, students benefit from instructors who stay connected to practice, integrating the latest technologies so graduates are on the cutting edge when they enter postsecondary and the workforce.

Student Demographics (186 students)	Percentage
Male	59%
Female	41%
Low-Income	59%
Minority	82%

EXTENSIVE WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Over the course of the program of study, all students participate in a progression of work-based learning opportunities to put what they're learning into practice and build connections with employers in their communities. The full program, School to Careers, partners with area industry to create effective work-based, transitional learning opportunities for students to connect school to the world of work. The School to Careers program goes beyond a simple mix of school-based and work-based support components. Through this program, the school- and employer-based internships serve as a laboratory in which future professionals can be prepared for jobs vital to the community's economic development.

During the initial School Based Enterprise, students operate industry standard digital copiers, scanners, plotters and finishing equipment. Under the appropriate supervision, students select

proper media for each device and produce real-world quality jobs that mirror industry print, design and production houses. Students write creative briefs, job tickets to communicate job specifications and design objectives. Students also have the opportunity to work directly with a real client or customer from the county.

Finally, during their senior year, all students participate in a capstone experience, showcasing their greatest works from their entire high school careers. This showcase is developed in partnership with the Passaic County Historical Society. Students present their design work to community leaders, faculty from postsecondary partners and industry partners. Students survey the exhibition site and work with museum curators to prepare their show as a professional would in a trade show for a design firm or agency.



INDUSTRY EXPERTS IN THE CLASSROOM

The success of the program can be traced to its instructors – each one is a practicing professional still active in the field, with a finger on the pulse of what is in demand in the industry. Each instructor has differing interests and passions that are evident in the classroom. Students can see how graphic arts relate to the real world and have many opportunities to put their skills into practice even before completing the program. Program supervisor, Jerry Castaneda explains, “This field is changing every day – the technology, the way media and businesses are using graphics are evolving as well. With the guidance from our teachers, our alums are using cutting-edge software products to change the identity of corporate culture.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Instructor Fernando Colon is confident that “the [program’s] future lies in the continual strengthening of the foundation we provide our students. The skills in terms of software – those are useful, but it’s the foundation of what it means to be creative; *that* is what will enable our students to walk away, having learned from the ground up how to develop solutions to problems, built on the foundation we provide.”

PATHWAY TO POSTSECONDARY

All students have the opportunity to earn college credit through dual enrollment programs because of articulation agreements with both two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in the area. Students either earn dual credits directly from colleges or through Passaic County teachers who been elevated to adjunct status at the postsecondary institution, enabling them to teach at the college level within the school. Qualifying students pay minimal cost and, for college credit coursework that falls under a STEM grant sponsored through Passaic County Community College, all affiliated fees are waived.

“Watching the light bulbs come on for these students one by- one, connecting their futures with what they’re doing now and knowing they’re on their way to something. It’s powerful stuff.”
– Andrew Jones, Graphic Design Instructor, Passaic County Technical

Success by the Numbers



100%

Graduated High School



86%

Enrolled in Postsecondary Education



91%

Earned an Industry -recognized Credential



93%

Earned Postsecondary Credit