

**PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT**  
**THEATRE AND DANCE**  
**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS**  
**FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**  
**FEBRUARY 23 & 24, 2017**

**PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM**

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## INTRODUCTION

This program review report (PRT) provides a synthesis of a two day visit (2/23/2017 & 2/24/2017) with Florida Atlantic leadership at the University (R. Ivy; D. Flynn; E. Pratt; N. Barragan) and College (L. Johnson; D. Gallant; M Horswell) level. In addition, the report incorporates information gathered during meetings with faculty (T. Atkins; J-L. Baldet; C. Brooks; D. M. Gallant; K. Johnson; L. McNutt; D. Shamburger; T. Shorrock; A. Soroko) and students in the Department of Theatre and Dance and a tour of theatre and dance facilities. The tour included visits to the Studio 1 and Studio 2 theatres, the University Theatre, the Theatre Lab facility in Parliament Hall, the Dance Studio, and selected classrooms. The visit concluded with a performance of the musical The Spitfire Grill in Studio One Theatre which included performances and/or technical design work by many of the graduate and undergraduate students.

The PRT will begin with an overview and then proceed to a summary of suggested major changes. The review team believes that suggested major changes should rise to University attention and be addressed immediately. Following suggested changes, a SWOT approach will be used to address strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This will be followed by specific responses to questions raised by faculty and recommendations for ongoing development of the Theatre and Dance Program at Florida Atlantic University. From the perspective of the review team, recommendations differ from suggested major changes in their long-term nature demanding incorporation into strategic planning. The Evaluation Team wishes to thank the College and University staff, as well as the students, for facilitating the visit and evaluation.

## OVERVIEW

As academic disciplines, Theatre and Dance demand the collaboration of a large number of specialists, and both have considerable, essential space requirements. As such, they are not unlike the sciences. They require well-equipped laboratories, significant time for project maturation, and considerable support. Because these performing arts units contribute mightily to the region's quality of life, identity, and to positive social evolution, the Department of Theatre and Dance remains an inherent value to the University and its strategic plan.

Indispensable as the unit is, it is not large. William Shakespeare describes Hermia, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, with the descriptive sentence, "Though she be but little, she is fierce." And, after review, it seems clear that the same can be said of FAU's Department of Theatre and Dance. This small unit accomplishes a great deal with genuine success. There is no doubt that the impact on the University and wider community is significant. Dr. Ed Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, told the committee that the unit is characterized by "vibrancy, and there is always something going on." To use a sports metaphor, the unit punches above its weight.

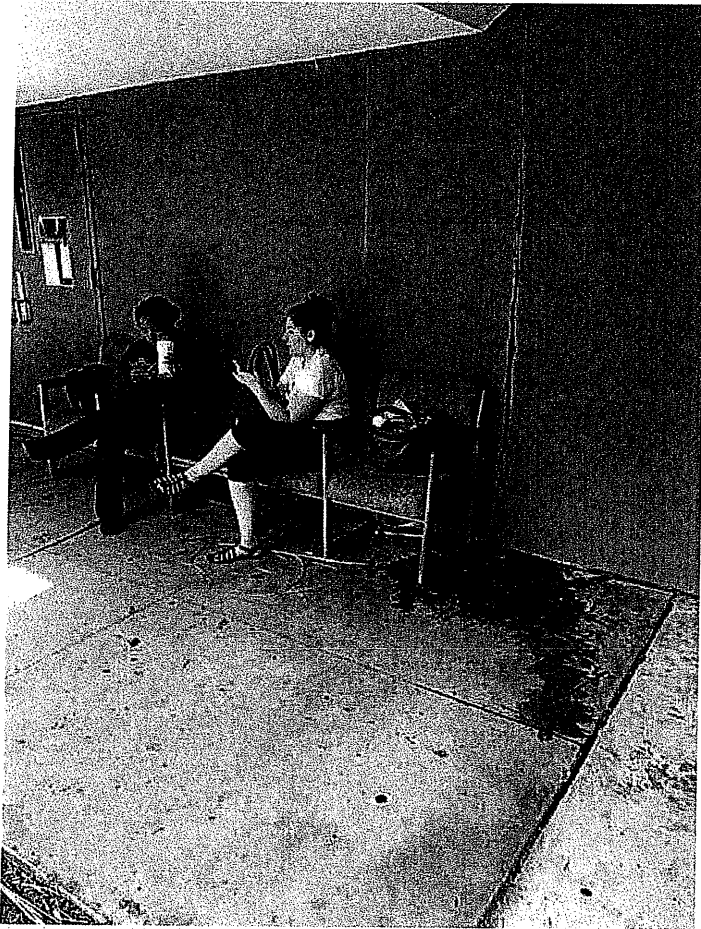
Sports is an appropriate analogy, because, just as with sports at a university, Theatre and Dance are ambassadorial to a broad community, they are the face of the university, and they attract important constituents to the campus. In its Academic Program Review, the unit estimates that more than 6,000 theatregoers come to campus annually. This captures a mere fraction of the community that "put eyeballs" on these campus activities and those who hear about the unit's work, through word of mouth, reviews, etc.

Students in the program express great enthusiasm for it. The committee did not speak to any graduate (MFA) students (though many were observed in performance), but did meet with undergraduates (BA and BFA). These students' input is noted in this report, and it does show that students believe there are many useful experiential and creative research opportunities. Students expressed appreciation for the work of the Theatre Lab, and reported participating in the "Future Pages Program," connecting the University to new audiences and student prospects. We spoke with a student who matriculated from FAU High School. Each student demonstrated that the program has guided the development of the individual artistic voice. One hundred percent retention in the MFA and the unit's reputation with the Graduate College for best practices in graduate recruiting, indicate that the high morale the committee noted during its tour is uniform throughout the student body. This spirit may be notable as it persists despite sincere space challenges.

Challenges to future success are noted in this review. The committee expresses optimism that synergy can be found within the university, and based in community connections, to realize the potential in creating and maintaining a state of the art, dynamic performing arts complex between the University Theatre and connected building(s). This investment would create a flagship theatre center in South Florida.

#### **MAJOR CHANGES FROM IMMEDIATE NEEDS TO LONGER-TERM**

- The overall physical plant of the theatre and dance designated spaces, such as hallways, classrooms, rehearsal studios, outside walls and walkway leading to Studio 2, need to be cleaned and painted, and holes in walls patched. The aesthetic quality of the spaces is poor (with the exception of Studio 1).



- The ceiling lights need to be raised in the Dance Studio (impossible to execute lifts with the lights hanging too low), floors refinished, and painted.

- Studio 2 needs to be refurbished. A sprung floor might be considered for Studio 2 for movement and safety reasons.
- The University Theatre space is desperately needed as a dedicated and safe\*\* space for Theatre and Dance classes, labs and productions.
  - The main stage is in need of new or recovered seating, and the first few rows could be raised to improve sightlines.
  - An inspection of the fly loft and rigging is needed to determine renovation costs. It is reported to be unsafe and unusable by Theatre and Dance.
  - The hydraulic lift for the orchestra pit is reported to be in need of repair.
  - The stage floor needs to be refinished and the stage curtains need to be replaced.
  - New lighting and sound equipment is needed.
  - The lighting and sound booth doesn't appear to be handicapped accessible at present.
  - The Scenic Studio adjoining the University Theatre stage should be a primary support space for production in the theatre, as well as classes.
  - The existing shop next to Studio 1 is needed to support construction, stage properties construction, and/or possibly scenic painting, if reconfigured. The welding area needs to remain and have proper screens and personal safety equipment should be worn at all times.

\*\*OSHA safety standards for theatre might give heft to risk management concerns with space utilization [OSHA's regulations for theatre rigging can be found under the 1926 section of the "Safety and Healthy Regulation for Construction," subpart R. The title of the subpart is "Steel Erection" with the standard number 1926.753 and chapter "Hoisting and Rigging." This can be found on OSHA's website or by calling their toll free number, 1-800-321-6742.]

- The department should hold a retreat to clarify the **current department situation, where the faculty wants the department to go, and how it is going to get there**. This needs to be a communal commitment among department faculty members.

- An “open house” social event of some kind for all Theatre and Dance students during the first few days of fall classes could be helpful for first year students and transfer students to meet faculty, staff and other students.
- Student Learning Outcomes should be quantified through clear rubrics. As assessment of the Outcomes are tied to frequent faculty interaction and direct review of students, measures regarding successful progress should be established and records be evaluated during periodic program review.
- Research/Creative Activities, as part of the criteria for evaluating faculty for tenure and promotion, should be revised:
  - There needs to be a definition of professional work (what constitutes professional work) at the beginning of the document.
  - The document should be consistent and accurate in citing and references.
  - Because the unit is small, new hires might need to be generalists or experts in multiple areas.
  - Repeated use of the term “specialist” might be removed.
  - Criteria should support hybridity within faculty ranks and consider the worth of excellence across disciplines.
  - Distinctions between performance venues might be evaluated, but the criteria should not describe any particular path (e.g.: summer theatre).
  - Expectations across the discipline (for example, the number of projects completed or the value of outside work) should be detailed and consistent.
  - In regards to the tenure and promotion guidelines, many theatre programs count creative work produced at their university to be significant creative work. It is often impossible for a director, actor, stage manager, or other theatre artist to take the time away from a busy theatre and dance program like this one. While that does not exclude having at least one regional, national and/or international external work, there are ways to get those credits through performance presentations at national/international theatre association conferences such as the New Play Development Workshop (and other production opportunities) of the Association for

Theatre in Higher Education which offers juried opportunities for a rather brief, but intense performance, directing, stage managing, design, and/or playwriting opportunity.

- Establish a dedicated undergraduate adviser for the program to engage as early as possible in the students' academic journey. Retain, as a second tier of advising, a faculty mentor for each major.
- Perhaps a Production Handbook can communicate goals for each academic track, with regard to casting and other opportunities for participation in production. Guidelines for casting and other unit policies and procedures should be published and available.
- A staff Technical Director needs to be hired as soon as possible to replace a missing position. This is a key infrastructure position in the production lab area.
- Petition the State to increase the course credit requirements from 120 hours for the BFA to be consistent with other Florida state universities, which range from 126 to 129.

### **STRENGTHS**

- Students feel that faculty members are skilled, supportive, and accessible instructors who are professional artists they respect. It is clear to the review team that these are committed faculty members who provide individual attention and critical feedback to their students. They are effective in helping students find their artistic voice and research focus.
- The connection to professional theatre companies housed on campus (Theatre Lab; Summer Festival) are a plus for the program.
- A new movement faculty member is currently being recruited for a vacant position.
- The production quality is noted to be of high quality by those who have seen it.
- Faculty are active, working professionals in their fields of creative activity and research.

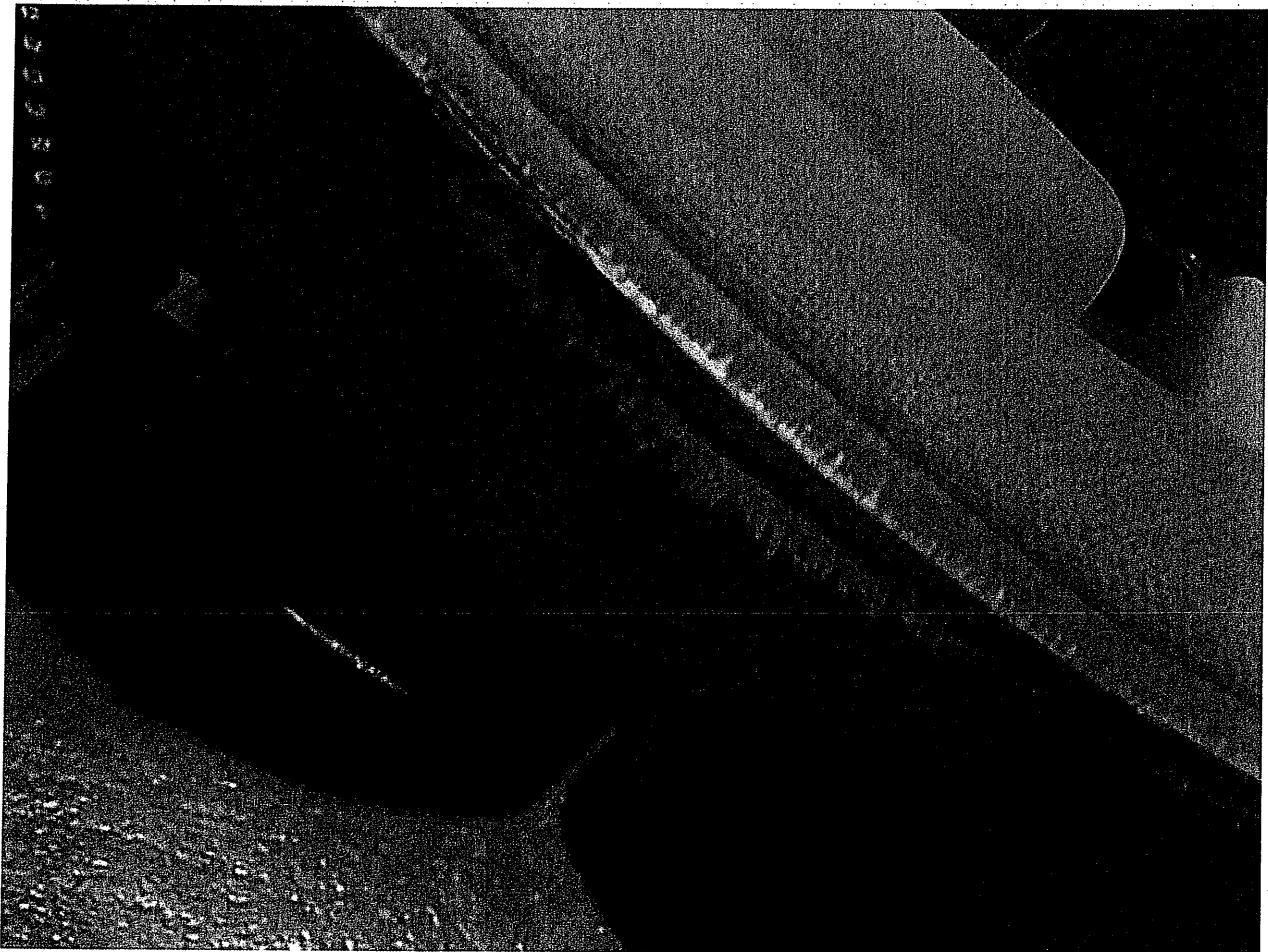
- Studio 1 is a good, functional black box, though limited in size. This impacts play/musical selection, audience capacity, and revenue potential.
- There is a shared decision-making process in the department, fostering a sense of community in the group.
- This is the only MFA Theatre program in South Florida.
- This geographic area allows for fund development opportunities especially connected to professional work and/or professional venues. That is, it may be possible to work on naming opportunities for theatre/dance spaces to enable structural re-design/refurbishing.
- Support for important outside scholarly work/travel for faculty might be available from sources like the Dorothy F. Schmidt Foundation.
- There is connection to bolded “platforms” described in the University Strategic Plan. We believe that linkages could be identified with other platforms (*italicized*), and this could be important to ongoing growth of the department.
  - Big Data Analytics
  - **Community Engagement and Economic Development**
  - *Diversity*
  - *Global Perspectives and Participation*
  - *Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Campus*
  - *Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship*
  - **Peace, Justice, and Human Rights**
  - **South Florida Culture**
  - **Undergraduate Research and Inquiry**

## WEAKNESSES

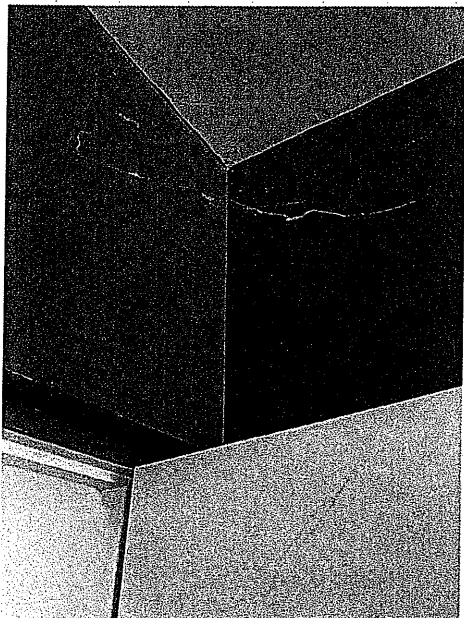
- Personnel infrastructure is challenged and pushed to its limit, threatening future progress.
  - Faculty members do not clearly tell a shared, communal story. There are many different stories about what is valued, but there is a desire to come together regarding needs and how to proceed.
  - Faculty members are spread too thin with some holding multiple positions that are normally held by several people.



- There is lack of staff support, particularly technical direction and, separately, production management/stage management supervision.
- Environmental infrastructure is failing, threatening future progress and recruitment.
  - The theatre and classrooms are in disrepair: more and larger dedicated classroom spaces are desperately needed. Classroom overflow is being accommodated in hallways, a safety concern.
  - There are serious safety issues with the University Theatre facility.
  - Access to theatres is problematic, especially for Theatre 2.
  - There is inefficient use of existing spaces.
  - The aesthetics of the dedicated theatre and dance spaces need immediate attention; this was described in detail in the section describing major changes being suggested.



- A lack of rehearsal, performance and storage spaces for Theatre and Dance; hallways are used for storage, classroom overflow, and student activities.
- It is very odd that there is no hot water for showers in the locker rooms.
- The scenic studio and work areas for Studio 1 need to be improved aesthetically. It looks junky and dirty. It doesn't lend to the image of the department and the quality of the work. It seems that people have gotten used to working in these conditions throughout the facilities, but attention to this issue (noted in the suggested changes) could benefit morale and overall efficiency. The welding area has broken lights, spider webs, and needs power washing and painting. The scene shop looks cluttered and unprofessional.



- Studio 1 is limited in the size and scope of productions due to the type and size of the space. This impedes the department's mission.
- Several students complain that, too often, faculty members who are advising students make errors. They say that they are switched from one advisor to another with little communication from one advisor to another, causing students to enroll in incorrect course sequences, or the advisor has not been given information on the student.

- It was frequently mentioned that there needs to be a tie-in with film and TV acting and dance on film, along with a camera production studio, to address the workplace needs for this kind of training - - students request more exposure to the overall "business of acting."
- Some junior faculty feel that they need a break from the summer theatre program to do external work, but feel some pressure to be involved. Perhaps there needs to be more redundancy for positions with area professionals for those who need a break from it now and then to seek other extramural creative opportunities that are essential for tenure stream faculty research.
- BA student actors desire more opportunities to work with faculty directors in productions.
- A faculty member is needed to serve as production manager and stage manager supervisor. The supervision and instruction of stage management students is needed and is a concern of faculty. This position could lead a potential growth area for the department: to add a stage management BFA and/or MFA concentration. It was also noted that a stage manager trained or with experience in stage managing dance is also needed.
- The Dance Program is positioned for growth but is stymied by the need for additional dance studios and an equipped performance space. The renovation of the University Theatre could address some of this need. The Dance program could become a separate major and it is expected that it would be quite successful.
- The Dance Program appears to need two additional full-time instructors to address the growth of the program and specific dance technique training.
- Exterior directional and building signage is needed for the Lab Theatre, Studio 1 and Studio 2.
- The need for more course hours in the BFA degree concentrations (126-129 rather than 120) is most evident in the missing required courses that are commonly found in BFA programs across the U.S.

- The retention of BA General Studies students has been raised as a possible concern. Students may need a faculty member who can be their area head and look after BA student needs/degree plan.
- GTAs need higher, more competitive graduate stipends and parity for terminal degree (PhD & MFA). \$15,000, along with health insurance is minimum – currently FAU is at least \$4,000 below Florida peer institutions.
- More attention and resources could be used for in-state and out of state student recruitment at state and regional Theatre conferences to help grow the program.
- Budgeting seems to be a mystery of sorts. It is uncertain how much the department has budgeted for it. This makes budget/cost center management nearly impossible.
- More office space is needed for GTAs and any new faculty or staff.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- University Theatre has the potential to be a primary teaching and performance space.
- University scenic lab (next to University Theatre) could be converted to a teaching space/useful shop.
- Faculty works democratically to achieve group consensus. There may be benefit in articulating values of the unit and charting growth accordingly.
- BA students have specific requests in response to preferential casting policies within the unit, and communicating guidelines is easily accomplished.
- Crossover hallway and outdoor space between Theatre Building and Studio I offers a place for student and audience engagement.
- Consider creatively connecting to the strategic plan “Pillars.” When the unit chooses its production seasons, exploring themes related to the Pillars, when applicable, would be synergistic.
- New work might address the “Pillars” directly.

- Healthy aging – e.g.: there is an emerging science that links health and well-being of older adults with the arts; Healthy Aging might be explored in several ways, such as post-performance development of older adults, effects of engaging the imagination, and the beneficial effects of catharsis.
- Neuroscience – e.g.: Neuroscience investigations might include theatre's exploration of memory, consciousness and moment-to-moment awareness.
- Ocean Science and Engineering/Environmental Science – e.g.: Ocean Science and Engineering/Environmental Sciences might be informed by technical advances and applications in theatre, as well as archived contributions to the interpretation of gestural and facial expressions for uses in national security development. There is also great potential in theatre training for communicating in science.
- Sensing and smart systems – e.g.: Sensing and Smart Systems are often informed by dance interpretation, and future developments might also stem from work with audiences of special needs.

Although these ideas may seem like a bit of a “stretch” we are advocating for connecting in as many ways as possible with the University Strategic Plan. Building relationships with the appropriate committee liaisons may be useful in this regard.

### **THREATS**

- Music is commanding use of the University Theatre space and the theatre space as it currently exists is serving neither music nor theatre and dance.
- Faculty and staff burnout is a possibility.
- Costs of recruiting need to be addressed.
- Costs of external scholarly work and creative development need to be addressed.
- Potential lack of University commitment to move forward with the suggested major changes and, subsequently, the recommendations.

## RESPONSE TO FACULTY QUESTIONS

An overall response relative to each of these questions is that success will be more likely if requests can fit within the pillars and platforms that create the University Strategic Plan.

- What are the best ways to address faculty and staff shortages and to make the case for replacements?  
**Explore best practices in programs that serve as inspiration: who do you want to become? A retreat might be a useful approach to clarify values and set direction. This context is essential for identifying shortages and making the case for replacements.**
- What are the best ways to address the budgetary concerns and needs of the department?  
**It is essential that the chair be accurately informed as to the department's budget. It is important to start here. A long-term strategic plan can be put in place focusing on department priorities, once the budget is available for chair and faculty.**
- What is the best method for the department to address the need for more specialized spaces to continue growth of programs?  
**It is important to consider the existing spaces as dedicated theatre instructional and research settings. Figure out ways to use the spaces that you have for teaching and research. Position faculty on University committees that may impact the expansion of the department's footprint. Enrollment growth may also be triggered by renovated and expanded academic and performance lab spaces.**
- As our spaces continue to age (University Theatre equipment dates to 1964; Studio 1 some equipment still dates to 1995, Studio 2 equipment dates to 1999), how can we ensure the spaces remain safe for students to work in and afford them the opportunities to work with modern technology?  
**We believe that this report will raise University awareness about this issue. The Associate Provost has indicated that he will address these issues immediately with the Provost.**
- What are the best ways to make the case for and implement new degree programs and concentrations?  
**Faculty work democratically and in a group. This strength lends itself to the conduct of a retreat where values are articulated, and there is a thorough**

**assessment of current status (where you are now) and future goals (where you want to go). It is inadvisable to add new degree programs and concentrations prior to review of current practices and program capacity.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Increased participation within the University's common core Intellectual Foundation Program might offer elective alternatives for undergraduates. For instance, the unit might explore submitting THE 2305 Script Analysis, as Group B alternative for Foundations of Written Communication. THE 2040 Interpretation of Drama, might be a Foundation of Society and Human Behavior. And, a potential course in Theatre that represents attention to Foundations of Global Citizenship might institutionalize an interdisciplinary approach to one of the four Pillars of the University's Strategic Vision.
- The university should establish budget lines commensurate with recruiting costs. The unit has identified a cost of \$14,000 every other year for graduate recruitment. Undergraduate recruitment opportunities and costs need to be similarly determined and funded.
- Better access for audiences should include close, handicapped parking and continuing a budget line for transportation between parking and venues.
- The University should guarantee continuing space allocation for the Theatre Lab. This experimental space supports valuable academic and community engagement characterized by vitality and proven impactful in developing national reputations for such programs as those at the University of Chicago and Oberlin College.
- As the next hire will bring the number of active faculty lines to parity with those of 1979, the university should consider new positions, if enrollment growth is intended.
- Degree plans could be examined to bring more specialized focus to the BFA Performance concentration. As an example, there are a few courses in the history and literature areas, with a few exceptions, that could be dropped in favor of requiring performance courses such as Stage Combat, Directing, etc. that are

currently in a “pick one” category. This is especially important in a limited 120 hour BFA Performance track. Ideally, there should be a series of three stage movement courses and 3 voice courses required for the degree along with other specialized performance courses.

- Recommend having faculty members designated as area heads of BA, BFA Performance, BFA Design Tech, MFA, etc. Small group meetings with students can be helpful for better communication of student and faculty concerns and information distribution. These area heads could also be the recruitment leaders in their areas, examine curriculum in their area, etc. This doesn't remove the current governance of the faculty as a whole, but it does bring more focus.
- Design courses could be offered with more frequency than in the past.
- There was enthusiasm from faculty and students for a Musical Theatre BFA concentration, and there is high demand for this kind of program throughout Florida and the U.S. However, this is a costly endeavor that must emerge with full University financial support. A renovated University Theatre would help to provide the needed facility to produce major musicals. Other space, equipment, potentially higher production budgets, and specialized faculty would also be needed.
- A group of community theatre and dance supporters, like the “Friends of FAU Theatre and Dance,” might be created to provide increased funding for the summer theatre festival, theatre equipment, student scholarships, etc. Development strategies to include: 1) Grants; 2) Donor Cultivation, such as individual prospects and the establishment of a Friends of primary at FAU; 3) Alumni Giving; 4) Connection to Pillars and Platforms of the University Strategic Plan.
- Establish gateway for BA students via interview and/or audition and/or portfolio review.
- Conduct focus groups with students to determine specialized workshops that would be most appealing.
- Marketing support would be useful to build regional audience and connect with the Strategic Plan.



- Develop a system for external peer review and mentoring, especially to support tenure-track, junior faculty.
- Pursue the development of a teaching certification in Dance Education.
- Work with the Department of Music to create separate sections of closed Music classes (e.g., music theory or private voice lessons) for non-majors.
- Consider scheduling changes to alleviate long waits during class rotation to support a 4-year graduation period. Also consider course substitutions for individual students facing a delay in graduation for only one or two courses that are not in the needed semester rotation.
- Evaluate student engagement with the Registrar's computer system that doesn't appear to keep them in appropriate degree programs regularly or to identify graduation requirements.
- Return on Investment (ROI) should be tracked, focused on: Employment; Further study; Artistic contributions; Connection to the University's Strategic Plan; Enrollment management (as part of curricular examination and recruiting strategies).
- If NAST accreditation is important to the faculty, there should be attention to accreditation standards. The University should commit to supporting the requirements. Space considerations are important to these national standards.
- The APO productions are important undergraduate lab experiences. This scholarship should be supported through codified mentorship and faculty participation. If growth in the Design/Tech area is desired, outlining participation in these productions by undergraduate designers seems a natural fit.
- The deployment of full-time faculty should be reassessed. Some organizing questions might be:
  - Which is more important to the program, technical direction for production or classes in the area?
  - Should the faculty continue to focus on advanced work, or is there value in full-time faculty laying foundational pieces in the students' academic and creative journey?

This report is offered with the intention of providing outside perspectives that may be useful as the Department of Theatre and Dance at Florida Atlantic University moves forward into a next decade. There is so much that is good about what is happening in the department – we want to be sure that this abundance of good work was recognized by the committee, and it should be noted by the College and the University even in light of the suggestions being made.

Much of what is being suggested as Major Changes in this report requires the engagement of the University. We trust that Florida Atlantic University will prioritize these changes, given its commitment to serving the South Florida cultural community and the pride it takes in its environmental image. We noted that many of the newer buildings on campus are LEEDs certified, a high and commendable recognition for environmental sustainability/quality. The majority of the suggested Major Changes are in keeping with one of the platforms that indicates the importance of a healthy and sustainable campus environment. Making these changes imminently is important for the Department, the College, and the University.

Given our experience with the Department of Theatre and Dance, with the leadership of Desmond Gallant, we are certain of the potential for a next decade that contributes substantively to the spirit of the University and the South Florida community. We thank you for this opportunity to spend time with you and come to know the FAU Department of Theatre and Dance.

**Ken Elston, Andrew Gaupp & Patricia Liehr**