

THEATRE AND DANCE - PROGRAM REVIEW

PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY HIGHLIGHTS:

The Department of Theatre and Dance produces six theatre and three dance productions each year. The academic mission is to produce innovative artists and scholars through a pursuit of academic and creative excellence by:

- Providing an experiential approach to the collaborative nature of theatre and dance
- Integrating production experience with a scholarly understanding
- Developing excellence in research and creative expression
- Engaging with our regional communities as active leaders to South Florida culture

Headcount statistics 2015-16:

- Undergraduate students – 108 (down from 116 in 2014-15)
- Graduate students – 12
- Full-time Faculty – 10 (9TT, 1 NTT)
- Adjunct Faculty – 12 (up from 7)
- The faculty/student ratio is 1:11.6

Theatre and Dance degree programs:

- BA – Theatre (general degree)
- BA – Design and Technology
- BFA – Theatre Performance (professional program and MFA prep.)
- MFA – Theatre Design and Technology, (terminal degree, 60 cr. hrs.)
- MFA – Theatre Performance (terminal degree, 60 cr. hrs.)

Period in review highlights:

- Addition of a Dance Program and Dance Minor.
- The Department of Theatre and Dance is not currently accredited through the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). During the period in review the Department has evaluated and revised the curriculum structure in order to align with NAST standards, with the intent to pursue accreditation and membership.
- The BA and BFA degree requirements were reduced to 120 credit hours. This is at or below the requirements of the same or similar degrees at other SUS and peer institutions.
- Theatre Lab, a resident professional theatre company opened in the Parliament Hall residence facility, offering theatre students pre-graduation and post-graduation internship and practicum experiences. Some of these have started as volunteer opportunities but have often led to paid opportunities.
- All BFA and BA students are assigned to a department faculty advisor with track in consideration.

Undergraduate Program:

First year retention rate –

- BFA 3 out of 5 years had a 100% retention rate
- BA – varies widely year-to-year, 81.3% in 2014, 50% in 2013

Graduation rate

In 2009, the six-year departmental graduation rate was 52.6%.

The college average for this same period was 50.9%.

The university average was 48.4%.

OURI: Students working with professionals in the field and performing to public audiences provides opportunities for distinction through discovery and research experiences that promote scholarship. **Summer Festival Repertory** produces a musical and a non-musical play each summer. Students have the opportunity to work side-by-side with professional equity actors and stage managers. Students in performance and stage management roles also earn points towards their own membership in Equity.

Graduate Program:

- Master of Fine Arts degrees - Performance and Theatre Design and Technology
- Terminal degree programs for practical theatre artists, 60 credit hours.
Program admits ten actors (five men and five women) as a cohort of students every other year through an extensive offsite recruitment process interviewing over 300 candidates. Only 3% of candidates interviewed are accepted into the program.

Community Engagement: Through production in the department and Theatre LAB, we perform work that can be transformational to young and old audiences.

South Florida Culture: The departmental productions and those of Theatre LAB, FAU's resident professional theatre company, seek to develop programming as a hub for the arts and humanities in the South Florida Communities.

Department Faculty:

- Tenure-line faculty teach the equivalent of a 3/2 load during the academic year. Most are also contracted for additional compensation to teach/participate in the Summer Festival Repertory.
- The department follows NAST guidelines and affords a director or designer a one course reduction for each production.

Department Needs:

- The Department struggles with inadequate staffing that has an impact on the ability of faculty to better conduct research. Hire additional faculty and staff positions with a priority on these lines:
 - Movement Specialist – TT or Instructor
 - Dance Specialist – TT or Instructor
 - Theatre History or Theatre Generalist – TT or Instructor
 - Stage/Production Manager – staff
 - Technical Director – staff
- Shortage and condition of dedicated classroom space needs to be addressed. A second dance classroom to accommodate demand.
- Aging support facilities are inadequate for current need including the scene shop, loading dock, welding area and dressing rooms.
- To more adequately fund the Department so as to grow into additional areas.

Department Goals:

- Give faculty members the opportunity to approach their craft outside of FAU, thus allowing for new insights into the professional world which can be shared with their students.
- To partner with additional union affiliated professional regional theatres.
- Addition of a Dance major.
- Addition of a Musical Theatre concentration

PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM REPORT (SUMMARY)

Program assets:

The Department of Theatre and Dance is ambassadorial to a broad community. They contribute to the region's quality of life, identity, and to positive social evolution. It is an inherent value to the University and its strategic plan.

- The department is small but accomplishes a great deal with genuine success.
- Students are provided with many useful experiential and creative research opportunities.
- Morale and collegiality among faculty and students is high.
- 100% retention in the MFA degree program
- Department's connection to professional theatre companies and equity actors through Theatre Lab and Summer Festival Repertory is a plus for the program.
- Theatre Lab has potential to bring national recognition to the program
- Studio One is a good, functional black box theatre.
- The geographic location allows for fund development opportunities.

Review Team key observations and recommendations for the Theatre and Dance Department:

Strategic Planning:

- Connect to the University Pillars through performance choices, movement pedagogy, and liaison's to Pillar committees.
- Department faculty need to forge a communal vision for the program that considers the current department situation and limitations (i.e. facilities, staff, faculty, state metrics, University strategic plan).
- Chair and department need to understand the budget

Faculty and Staff:

- Personnel infrastructure is pushed to its limit, threatening future progress.
- Prioritize the hire of a Technical Director with vacated position.
- New hires might need to be generalists or experts in multiple areas, due to the small size of the unit.
- Junior faculty feel pressured to participate in Summer Rep and don't have ample opportunity to seek out extramural creative opportunities.
- Research/Creative Activities as part of the criteria for evaluating faculty for tenure and promotion should be revised and clarified

Students and degree programs:

- A dedicated undergraduate adviser for the program and better dissemination of information regarding the major requirements and sequencing of courses
- Student Learning Outcomes should be quantified through clear rubrics
- Consider increasing participation in the IFP
- Review curriculum of BFA, consider dropping history and literature courses for performance course

Facilities

- Use existing space more efficiently
- Facilities need to be cleaned and organized; scene shop is cluttered and looks unprofessional; welding area has broken lights and spider webs.

Observations and recommendations for College and University:

- Assign an advisor to the Theatre majors.

- Address safety and maintenance concerns for the University Theatre
 - Fly loft and rigging systems need to be replaced (too old too repair)
 - Hydraulic lift for the Orchestra pit sinks without warning and needs to be replaced.
 - Replace or reupholster the University Theatre seating that is tattered and worn.
 - Lighting and sound needs to be replaced.
- Common use areas need to be maintained with more due diligence. That includes cleaning, painting and the holes in walls patched in the areas around studio 1 (bldg.51) and studio 2 (bldg. 9)
- Theatre classrooms/studios are used at capacity and in disrepair. Classroom overflow is being accommodated in hallways presenting a safety concern.
- GTAs stipends need to be more competitive. Health insurance should be included for GTAs
- Fund recruitment of graduate students

THEATRE AND DANCE - PROGRAM REVIEW RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (SUMMARY)

Department Actions items:

- Hire a Technical Director and Instructor of Stage Management/advisor.
- The Department will request a new instructor position for dance.
- Seek accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and the University Resident Theatre Association (URTA)
- The department will work to create more opportunities for students to interact with professionals in the field and classes to improve student exposure to business techniques
- Work with Music, College and University to develop a plan for the UT and a new facility to be built.
- Theatre and Dance plans to implement earlier intervention into student involvement by requiring all students to participate in a gateway interview with each program
- All new BA and BFA students will meet with their program head in their first semester.
- The Department will begin holding an open house in the fall semester for majors
- The Department will revise the Learning Objectives
- Promotion and Tenure documents are being reviewed and rewritten to be submitted in the Fall 2017 term.

Recommendations requiring College and University support:

- Continue to pursue donor(s) and launch an SOTA capital campaign that includes
 - Donor naming opportunity for Studio One
 - Work with the Palm Beach Cultural Council to further the plans for a joint use performing arts facility, located on the FAU Boca Raton campus.
- Request on behalf of the Performing Arts area that a committee be formed to develop an action plan to address the infrastructure needs including members from the FAU Architects office, building and grounds and the provost's office
- Address the need for adequate storage space for equipment and reusable materials. This could be in the form of a portable storage container.
- Raise lights in Dance Studio to make lifts possible

Facility safety concerns requiring University support:

- Inspect, repair and replace the failing equipment in the University Theatre and Studio One areas.
- Lighting system in UT needs to be replaced, FAU Physical Plant refuses to maintain the house lighting system in the University Theatre.
- Hydraulic lift for stage in UT leaks and drifts down
- Stage floor in UT needs to be maintained properly
- Raised equipment leaks oil onto the stage
- *The University Theatre should be considered a special case of dangerous, as it is an industrial space where a single mistake can kill someone. Some examples of the inherent danger include: students working with High Voltage Equipment, Students working at heights of 60+ feet in the air, students performing heavy lifts of equipment exceeding 2000 pounds over other students and the general public. The industry far too often has fatalities or crippling injuries in facilities staffed by professionals that are properly maintained. Students are learning how to work with industrial equipment in a space that has not been properly maintained since 1984. Without addressing the systemic equipment and safety issues in the theatre, it is a question of **when, not if, someone will be seriously injured or loss of life may occur.***

The Department of Theatre and Dance requests to the College and University:

- Additional dedicated theatre space must exist for the Department's production and dance programs to grow.
- The Department requests to work with the Dean's office identifying where new office space can come from as needs arise so a known plan exists.
- The Department requests that the architect's office meet and discuss how to best implement permanent signage that affords the public information to find parking for specific shows rather than theatre spaces on campus.
- The department recommends that the university approve requests to increase credit hours and change language requirements for the BFA degree.
- The department proposes that the college and university increase the budget allocation to the current budget plus amount of last years ticket sales. Ticket sale funds would then be used as supplemental funds to enhance student opportunities and faculty development.
- The department requests a set recruitment budget of \$17,000 per year OR \$10,000 per year with budget recommendations creating discretionary funds as discussed elsewhere.
- The department proposes that the college provide a fixed fund of \$6000 per academic year to support faculty development.
- The department recommends that Music and Theatre develop a plan for renovation of the University Theatre to support either Music OR Theatre AND develop plans for a new facility to be built to support Music OR Theatre. This plan should be placed on high priority for PECO or capital funding plan.
- The department recommends the university provide special project funding to renovate the University Theatre Scene Shop into a classroom/performance space.
- The department recommends initiating funding and expansion plans for the Studio 1 scene shop. In the short term, regular maintenance and outside temporary storage or increased budgets to fund after-show disposal of used production materials will alleviate clutter and overflow and improve appearance.

Items that are in process:

- A new position with responsibilities as an instructor, stage manager and undergraduate advisor was approved and funded. The department will start the hiring process in the fall.
- Hot water needed in the Dance studio locker rooms.