

**Academic Program Review of the
Department of Theater Arts**
University of Wisconsin - La Crosse
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BACKGROUND:

The Self Study for the Department of Theater Arts submitted its self-study report to the College of Liberal Studies, Dean's Office on October 24, 2006. Prof. Dean Yohnk, UW Parkside completed the external review on December 8-9, 2005.

SUMMARY OF THE SELF STUDY:

Goals and Objectives

The Department of Theater Arts have a clearly stated Mission Statement, with goals and objectives, listed in the "Purposes" section of the self study document. Goals and objectives are supported by a twelve-point listing of program methodology and related Student Learning Outcomes. The Goals/Objectives of the Department are:

- 1) provide training for theatre careers by preparing students for further specialization at the graduate level or employment within the professional field, and
- 2) provide students with the skills necessary to seek other career opportunities

Summary of how the program reaches its Goals/objectives

The Department of Theater Arts has put considerable effort into remolding itself into a vital, stand alone department in the College of Liberal Studies. At the time of the last Academic Program Review (1996-97) this department was part of the larger Department of Speech and Theater. The Goals/objectives of the Department of Theater Arts are continually reviewed and assessed through Student Evaluation of Instruction, Portfolio/Performance Review, Senior Exit Survey/Interview, Freshman Year and Junior Year Assessment, KC/ACTF Adjudications, Senior Projects.

Success in theater related competitions and the placement of graduates into graduate programs and professionally related positions, along with alumni surveys function as postgraduate measurements.

In addition, the department's ability to recruit incoming students/transfer students, its success in audience development and success in outreach are also measurements of the success of the department.

NOTABLE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAM:

The faculty members and support staff of the Department are its greatest strength. Members of the department are highly motivated and productive. The composite of the department is a cohesive and well-developed group of professionals. Each member of the department is able to support the department's goals and objectives through their respective subspecialties, augmenting their ability to fulfill the requirements of the classroom as well as production(s). Between 2001-05 the faculty has produced over 25 peer-reviewed theatrical productions, presented at regional and national conferences, in addition to the publication of creative and scholarly work.

The department has been committed to a thorough revision of its curriculum and the development of an advising and mentoring program that truly supports the development of its students.

Programs

The department offers a wide variety of programs for majors and minors, while continuing to provide high level theater experiences for non-majors. Through curricular changes the department now offers four emphasis areas that build upon its general, theater arts core requirements. The minor in theater arts offers four emphasis areas. The department, along with the Music department offers an additional, interdisciplinary emphasis area (Music/Theater).

Curriculum

The Department of Theater Arts has made significant changes and developments in its curriculum. Changes better suit the department's ability to offer a wider range of specialties and more rigorous experience for its students. Curricular changes address and take advantage of each member's specialty.

Department curriculum, through its Theater Appreciation courses, supports the General Education Requirements of UW-L.

Program Success

The department has instituted a thorough and successful program assessment. It has developed an assessment program that tracks, advises and mentors students as they proceed through its major and minor.

Through the development of leadership and collegiality, members of the department are able to better engage students and have created an open and responsive relationship that reinforces the basic communal nature of the theater environment.

The department tracks alumni success and placement. Department graduates have been placed in numerous regional, national and international positions and experiences. The department is able to document increases in the number of majors, minors and non-majors participating in the program and theater productions.

In addition to its role within the curricular structure of the University the department has a demonstrated record of success in audience development and outreach to the community.

Previous Academic Program Review and New Program Initiatives

Because the Department of Theater Arts was part of a larger department at the time of the last review, some of the recommendations are not applicable to the structure of the current Department. Those recommendations that apply to the department and require a response by the department have been acted upon and have been met.

Personnel

The department consists of seven full time positions (including ¼ time for chair) dedicated to the department and its programs and productions, with one additional tenured member serving as Associate Dean CLS/Director, School of Arts and Communication. Of the seven, active within the department, each maintains classroom commitments and respective roles in the theater (technical director, scenic and lighting designer, costume designer, director, etc.) Scholarly and creative activity is an essential element within the department. It is evidenced by obtaining grants and commissions to design theatre works, creating theatre arts and related research, performing in and designing theatrical productions, serving as artists in residence, guest artists, and visiting critics, and publishing journal articles and books.

Support for Achieving Academic Program Goals (Resources)

The Department of Theater Arts has witnessed the need for additional support in reaching its program goals. Both the age of the current facility(s) and the growth of the program have necessitated the need for substantial growth in facilities/space and personnel. Specific needs include classroom, office and storage space, computers (and relevant software), equipment and theater renovations.

Each of these needs is real and will require substantial support from the College of Liberal Studies, the University and the Community. The department has instituted a fundraising effort of its own but requires and deserves dedicated support from the University Foundation and the community.

Comments on External Reviewer/Department Response/Dean's Letter

The external review indicates numerous comments (most of them positive) and some deficiencies. There is strong support for the work of the faculty, department curriculum and general performance of the department. The department continues to assess and refine its offerings. The department is dedicated to offering the highest quality education for its students and providing them with a professional and rewarding experience.

The external review, Dean's letter and Associate Dean's letter all indicate the need for additional support to the department and its programs. Needed support is recognized as increased support for personnel in the form of time reassignments with added faculty and support personnel. The facilities of the theater and related programs are also in need of much attention. Much of the theater has reached the end of its life cycle and will need much attention and revision.

Some minor curricular changes may need department attention but it is indicated in letters and the report that these changes can be accomplished in the scope of other larger adjustments (faculty and space needs).

APR's Recommendations

The Department of Theater Arts achieves at a particularly high level. In a relatively short period of time it has remolded itself into a standalone department that strives to meet the educational needs of its majors and minors. It also plays a large role in meeting the cultural needs of the campus community and the community of this region. It does so with a strain on its personnel and in facilities that are in need of serious attention and updating.

The department has a sound grasp of its programs, its assessment and its role in the university and community.

The Department of Theater Arts should undergo its next Academic Program Review in seven years