

Dean's Response to Performing Arts'  
Review Team Report and Departmental Response  
November 1, 2010

In spring semester, 2010, Program Reviewers Dr. Nick Morrison (Associate Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Utah State University), Dr. Judy Elsley (English, WSU) and Dr. Brad Carroll (Physics, WSU) reviewed WSU's Department of Performing Arts (DPA) and produced a positive report with eight recommendations. In October 2010, DPA chair Dr. Thom Priest provided me with a response to the review team's report and recommendations.

Recommendations from the Team fall into three major categories: Curriculum and Advising; Personnel; and Budget.

Curriculum and Advising:

1. The team suggested inviting our college advisor to attend departmental staff meetings; identifying a strong upper division student to serve as a paid peer advisor in each program; tracking student advising and progress by faculty advisor and rewarding those advisors who do well; offer training sessions on CatTracks; using Facebook as clearinghouse for advising announcements; and providing a dedicated, full-time advisor for the department.

Like members of the review team, I have heard complaints from students about mis-advisement in DPA. I've heard students discuss difficulties in finding advisors during the summer. Also like members of the team, I would love to develop some creative responses to these advising difficulties. But I respect the department's somewhat cautious response to the team's suggestions. It doesn't make sense to have the college advisor attend staff meetings; she has her hands full in advising students on general requirements and is not responsible for departmental requirements. And while it might make sense to have paid peer advisors, I worry that because of different requirements even within the areas, we would see even more mis-advisement. The department agrees that it wants faculty to become more familiar with CatTracks and they already have participated in training sessions. They also are producing advising handouts aimed at new students. Ideally, DPA would have an advisor dedicated to its majors; but I see no signs of funding for such a position anytime within the near (or even far) future. Meanwhile, I commend the great majority of department faculty who take their advising responsibilities seriously. I hope to work with the department chair and secretary to improve DPA advising during the summer.

2. The team recommended a change in administration of the piano proficiency exam. The department has made this change.
3. The team encouraged more boundary crossing within the department. In its response, DPA talked about its general predisposition toward collaboration, but also about some discipline-

specific issues that occasionally impede collaboration. I am pleased that the department often meets as a whole; being aware of each other's work is a good step toward working together. But like the review team, I'd like to encourage the department to: 1) emphasize the importance of respect for each other's students (A couple times a year I hear stories about faculty in one area criticizing students in another.); 2) support each other's work by, whenever possible, attending productions/recitals/performance. I know we all are busy, but we set an example for students by being audience members as well as performers.

#### Personnel:

1. The team suggests that the dean, chair and faculty discuss future lines and hiring plans. The DPA concurs, as I do. Since the team's visit, DPA lost Larry Dooley, a theatre faculty member who had been serving as chair. The department wrote a very convincing argument for funds to replace Dr. Dooley and they currently are running a search. Although it is unlikely that any new funds for DPA faculty will appear within the next year or two, the department and I should discuss and affirm priorities.
2. The team notes that the chair should consider attending area meetings, sponsoring informal meetings for idea exchange, and scheduling separate meetings for staff. The chair already is attending area meetings and is positive about possible separate meetings for staff. The department does have a well-attended holiday lunch and a scholarship reception; I'm not sure there's time for other gatherings.

#### Budget:

1. The team recommends that the college and department work away from reliance on student fees for such a large percentage of the budget. The department and I agree completely, but are at somewhat of a loss as to how we can do so. DPA is the most expensive department in the college with respect to faculty/student ratios, waiver allocations, student fee support, travel, instruments, equipment, and facilities. It also is our best-known department and, along with athletics, provides a face for the university to the community.  
  
To produce quality theatre, music, and dance, is expensive. There's no getting around that. But it's also likely that the department is going to see fewer activity fee waivers (supporting students engaged in a university activity) as more colleges compete for these funds. I've spoken with Carol Biddle, our development officer, about the necessity of going after more scholarship dollars; we will do so. But the department also will want to think about how to make do with fewer fee waivers—or how to raise funds to replace those we will lose.
2. The team suggests the chair and dean do more to inform the faculty about budgetary processes and allocation. The chair and I agree with this suggestion and will provide faculty with more information than we have in the past.

3. The team recommends systematizing the budget for equipment replacements, involving members of the faculty and staff as necessary in setting priorities. Again, the chair and I appreciate and agree with this recommendation. We've taken a step in this direction as Brad Naisbett, the college's technology supervisor, has completed an inventory of DPA computers and developed a priority list for replacement. I would hope we could have a larger discussion about equipment and instruments in addition to computers. The rub, as usual, is that we have no ongoing budget for such replacements; generally, we hope for one-time monies in spring and use as much of that as comes our way. But we *should* engage in full-faculty discussions of possible expenditures.

Overall: I am very, very proud of faculty, staff, students and alumni of DPA. Faculty take on ambitious, challenging projects and students rise to these challenges. In each area—dance, music, theatre—faculty commit themselves to doing their best possible work; students follow suit. I won't list the many awards and accolades the department's students have received recently, but instead will say that performances taking place in the Browning Center rival performances across the United States.

"Problems" experienced by the department are mostly good problems: increasing enrollments (especially in theatre); facilities that are booked most nights of the year; practice rooms that are full.