



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY
Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities

— DEPARTMENT OF —
**PERFORMING
ARTS**

DANCE | MUSIC | THEATRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WSU Department of Performing Arts- Theatre Self-Study Document, Fall 2014

Author's Contact Information: Jennifer A. Kokai

Contact Information:

Phone: (801) 626-6624

Email: jenniferkokai@weber.edu

The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full, self-study document itself.

Mission Statement:

The Theatre Arts area of the Department of Performing Arts provides scholarly, creative, collaborative and practical theatre experience for students. The objectives of the program are to:

1. Encourage participation in and appreciation of theatre and drama;
2. Foster creativity and develop technical skills in acting, directing, theatrical design, script writing, theatre education, dramaturgy, and stage and theatre management;
3. Use and develop higher level thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, and creation in understanding and organizing knowledge;
4. Prepare students for careers or professional schooling in those fields that require strong presentational skills, creative problem solving, effective collaboration, and an understanding of human experience.

Curriculum:

Students in the theatre major have always been required to complete a core set of classes that gives them breadth and experience with all aspects of theatre. Last year the Theatre Area underwent a curriculum overhaul in response to changing student needs, new faculty, and at the request of the Board of Regents. As part of this, we changed all technical and design classes from two hour to three hour. This allows students more time to improve upon their practical skills and for the classes to articulate across the major. With the additional hours for these classes, we were forced to re-examine the requirements for each emphasis and degree to make sure the classes were justified and useful to students. In addition, we created a new emphasis "Theatre Generalist" that corrected a flaw in our program which previously only allowed for students interested in performance, design, or teaching. Now students interested in scholarship, playwriting, dramaturgy, criticism, or other facets of theatre can choose from electives and complete a capstone project that gives them the background for their desired careers.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

At the end of their study at WSU, depending upon their emphasis, students in this program will:

1. Have writing skills and ability to use research tools (library, internet, etc.).
2. Be able to research, prepare, and perform roles in musical theatre with depth in each of the three disciplines: acting, singing, and dancing.
3. Be able to learn choreographic sequences and demonstrate them with security, character, and stage presence.
4. Be able to read music and demonstrate sight-singing skills.
5. Be able to present critical thinking through verbal and written presentations regarding the musical theatre. Specific areas of expertise will include major works, major figures (librettists, composers, lyricists, performers, directors, choreographers), theory, and history.
6. Have a practical, working knowledge of how to produce a play on stage, including all related performance, script, design, and technical considerations.
7. Have the ability to critically evaluate what they and others have created.
8. Develop necessary skills to be proficient in at least one area of theatre (performance, teaching, technical/design-costume, technical/design-scenery, technical/design-lighting, technical/design-sound, directing, theatre management, or playwriting), with the ability to identify, analyze and resolve specific problems pertaining to that area.
9. Understand the historical context of theatre, drama, and performance including plays, major figures, costumes, scenic innovations, and theoretical approaches, and how these relate to contemporary society and culture.
10. Have experience with individual and collaborative processes needed to produce and understand theatre.
11. Be able to articulate a philosophy of theatre education on a secondary level and create a program based upon this philosophy.
12. Be able to demonstrate effective teaching strategies, classroom management skills, and syllabi design for secondary theatre education.

Assessment: The Theatre Area has built a comprehensive and successful assessment practice. The theatre area now assesses individual classes, but also completes twice yearly juries (with an additional jury in the fall for new students). These juries allow all theatre faculty to view and score student progress in their chosen areas. The results allow for better advising and assessing the success of our curriculum. Individual students have continual access to their scores and the average for other students in their year and major.

Academic Advising:

Weber State University has an academic advisor for the College of Arts and Humanities, Debbi Murphy, who helps students navigate their general education and University requirements. Within the department, advising on Theatre Degrees is divided amongst a number of faculty members within the Theatre Area. Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor at the beginning and end of each semester to evaluate their progress and to plan for the following semester(s). In addition, there are numerous materials to help students understand their degrees.

Faculty:

The faculty consists of six full time faculty members, five with a MFA and one with a PhD. We have eleven adjunct faculty members, which includes two staff members with regularly teaching

duties and nine adjunct teaching private voice, Introduction to Theatre, and Introduction to Film. All faculty members are regularly assessed to maintain excellent teaching standards.

Program Support:

The Department of Performing Arts has five staff positions: Technical Director, Costume Studio Manager, Department Secretary, Budget Specialist, and Multimedia Specialist. The theatre area feels that the staff in general is more than adequate in fulfilling their duties. We do feel that the college would benefit by hiring someone to focus on recruiting both in and out of state students. The Department of Performing Arts really functions as three departments in one with a theatre department, a school of music, and a dance department. Because of the lack of an administrator particular to theatre, and the lack of a designated area head, administrative paperwork pertaining to curriculum, assessment, program review, scholarships and so forth is extremely burdensome. No one on the theatre faculty is given a course reduction to allow them time to do the work.

In the last two years we have added two new faculty positions, and it is difficult to find additional office space. Other than this issue, the theatre area finds its facilities more than adequate. Equipment has been a problem, but faculty are working to write grants and to get updated technical equipment that will prepare students for the current theatrical working world. Theatre faculty hope for continued administrative support in achieving these aims.

Relations with External Community:

The theatre area is heavily involved in external communities. Their involvement tends to fall into the categories of creative and scholarly work, participation in national organizations, outreach and programs with local schools, and service and community work. The theatre area is exceptionally involved in all of these external communities and maintains a large and vibrant presence in Northern Utah.

Student, Faculty, Contract/Adjunct Faculty and Staff Statistics:

In 2014 there were 134 theatre majors, with 12 graduating. Information for theatre alone is not available, but the Department of Performing Arts averages 2-1 female to male students.

The theatre faculty and full time staff are 3 men and 5 women. The theatre faculty desires more racial diversity and representation but has difficulty recruiting for that.

Results of Previous Program Reviews:

Problem: Academic Advising- there are no advisors available during the summer and students complained of mis-advisement.

Results: Many steps have been taken to improve advisement. The information is available in a wide spectrum of ways and when there are holes, it is most often because students are not heeding the call to meet regularly with their advisors and taking ownership over their education.

Problem: We were advised to consider how being part of a department of performing arts can enrich the curriculum and intellectual/artistic environment by crossing the boundaries of the individual disciplines.

Result: There is frequent collaboration between individual faculty and some between students in the three areas of performing arts, but there is not any programmatic overlap to this point. Given

this, the theatre area is not always sure whether it is clear why we are a department of performing arts and not two departments (a department of Music AND a department of Theatre and Dance).

Problem: Personnel- The team suggested that the dean, chair and faculty discuss future lines and hiring plans.

Result: The Dean put a system into place requiring programs write position rationales for all positions, new or replacement. This resolved the previous identified issue.

Problem: Budget- The previous review suggested moving away from Budget reliance on Student Fees, systematizing budgets for replacement equipment, and reviewing budgetary processes and allocations with an eye towards transparency.

Result: Budgets continue to rely upon student fees and that seems unlikely to change, although we agree it is troubling to have curricular activities funded by soft money.

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

WSU Faculty Member from Outside the Department of Performing Arts but within the Telitha Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities:

K. Stevenson
Department of Visual Arts and Design
Foundations / Art Education
Phone: (801) 626-7273
Email: kstevenson1@weber.edu

WSU Faculty Member from outside the College of Arts and Humanities:

Sue Harley
Professor of Botany
Phone: (801) 626-7434
Email: sharley@weber.edu

Two Committee Members from Outside of Weber State University:

John Hill, Committee Chair
Front Range Community College
Phone: (970) 204-8386
Email: John.Hill@frontrange.edu

Robert Nelson, University of Utah
University of Utah
Phone: (801) 581-6448
Email: bob.nelson@utah.edu