

Department of Performing Arts
Theatre Program's Response to Review Team Report

April 28, 2015

To: Dr. Madonne Miner, Dean
Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities

The Theatre faculty would like to express our appreciation to the Review Team for the extensive time and care given to this process. We have studied their findings and offer our responses below. (The Review Team's comments are shown in italics.)

Standard A – MISSION STATEMENT

All team members agreed that the Theatre Arts program mission statement accurately reflects the reality that we experienced during our visit. The Theatre Arts area of the Department of Performing Arts provides scholarly, creative, collaborative and practical theatre experience for students.

We appreciate the team's support of our mission statement and its effectiveness. It was noted that the mission statement needed revision to include our assessment policies including student juries. We will revise that portion of the statement at our annual Theatre area retreat in the Fall of 2015.

Standard B – CURRICULUM

The Review Team rated our curriculum as "Strong" citing our large curriculum revision last year to address articulation issues within the USHE as well as instituting a new major within Theatre. We would note that the addition of new hires over the past three years will help to address opportunities for curricular growth and refinement. This will also address student concerns for advanced coursework and the offering of specific courses with greater frequency.

Standard C – STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

The jury system implemented by the program provides formative assessment of the majors throughout their time in the Theatre program. The results are most evident in the students themselves—they are confident, thoughtful, and enthusiastic. The faculty members bring professional acumen, commitment, and attention to their teaching and programming, with the results evident in the students' work and learning; numerous, adventuresome public performances; and overall enthusiasm for their program and colleagues.

The faculty and staff greatly appreciate the Review Team's recognition of our students and their achievements. We continue to refine our jurying and assessment processes and always looking for ways to make improvements.

Standard D – ADVISING

Advising appears solid. A dedicated advisor in the College in the area of "Gen Ed" requirements, Debbi Murphy, is of significant assistance. However, the students recognize the need for specialized advising, particularly in the case of the student admitted as a major relatively late in the degree process. Juniors

and seniors may need more specialized attention. Summer advising is also an ongoing concern. (If the three Department areas were to split, a full-time Theatre Arts Chair or Department “Co-Chair” might help to alleviate the summer “advisory vacuum,” if a Chair or Co-Chair position is funded for the full year.)

We appreciate the Review Team’s recommendations in this area. The suggestion for a full-time Theatre Arts Chair or Department “Co-Chair” would certainly address multiple issues, not the least of which would be advisement. Until such measures become feasible, we will continue to provide advisement through our current procedures.

Standard E – FACULTY

Overall, the Theatre Arts area (within the Department of Performing Arts) shows genuine strength and vitality. There is strong faculty commitment to high quality instruction, student mentoring, and creative scholarship. Overall, the staff personnel are exceptional. Their capabilities, dedication, and work ethic are a tremendous contribution to the program’s many successes. Positive visibility for the University flows from the quality of the stage productions presented by the Theatre program.

There appears to be good collegiality within the program—with the sole exception of the integration of the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Endowed Chair Professor position.

The issue of the Beverly Taylor Sorenson (BTS) Endowed Chair position is a delicate one. When Tamara Goldbogen (who currently holds that position) was hired it was done outside the typical hiring procedures and without the Theatre faculty input. Our response does not concern her ability to fulfill the duties of her position as the BTS Endowed Chair but rather her tenure track position within the Theatre area. We were not consulted about our faculty needs. It was stated that Tamara would function like an adjunct and teach an occasional class for us. Indeed, the bulk of the Theatre faculty did not even meet her until the Fall when she was already at the school. The Theatre area had continued to function with her as an adjunct, the way her hire was originally explained. Her work with the BTS keeps her very busy and she is not an active contributor to nor are her teaching specialties a good fit for the mission of the Theatre area. The Theatre area suggests that this position become professional staff instead of tenure track.

We recommend that a meeting that includes the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, the Chair of DPA, the Theatre Arts faculty, and Professor Goldbogen be held to examine her role in Theatre Arts, and also to reconcile Professor Goldbogen’s activities in Learning Arts with the requirements for tenure in the College of Arts and Humanities.

The Theatre area is also preparing to request an additional faculty line in the areas of acting, stage voice, and movement to meet the need for academic expansion and increasing enrollments.

Standard F – SUPPORT (STAFF, ADMINISTRATION, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND LIBRARY)

Many administrative tasks specific to Theatre (such as preparation of the program self-study) are done on an ad hoc basis by a limited number of the Theatre faculty, without re-assigned time or other official notice of their work. This appears to be a consequence of the current administrative setup for the Department of Performing Arts as a whole. The Department Chair, who is from the Music Program, noted that Theatre Arts works well as a team and manage themselves very well.

Specific areas of concern expressed by the Review Team include:

- Faculty members carry significant roles in administration, outreach, recruitment, and service in addition to their full teaching loads
- Budgetary concerns, specifically the reliance on soft monies to support the production season
- Venue and scheduling issues with classrooms and the Val A. Browning Center for the Performing Arts (both within the department and by outside users)
- Ongoing maintenance, equipment, storage, climate and safety demands
- Ticketing and box office practices
- The need for full-time staff assistants in both the Costume Studio and Scene Shop
- The need to equip the Costume Studio as a fully-supported teaching space
- Improved opportunities for outreach and recruitment

Regarding funding, the WSU Development Office and Administration are to be commended for finding necessary financial resources for the most urgent facility needs. However, especially with this aged facility and related program dependence on up-to-date technologies and servicing such large public audiences, the funding needs will only continue to grow for systems, technologies, and building refurbishment. To manage budgeting for production work with only soft funding may not be sustainable.

While each of these areas is being addressed in one form or another, one recommendation from the Review Team is particularly notable.

Recognizing the many and diverse needs of the Theatre area *"...suggests a need for an internal, possibly external, study and consideration of revisions in Department structure."*

The Review Team has recommended *"possible departmental reorganization"* with the following statement: *"Explore a formal separation of Music from Theatre and Dance, such as Co-Chairs within a single department or complete separation of DPA into two departments. Overwhelmingly, the Theatre faculty lean toward two departments. There is acknowledgment that problems exist because of the way DPA currently functions. Questions of space and budget efficiencies should not drive a critical decision about Department organization that will affect the Music, Dance, and Theatre programs and students over the long term. A mechanism such as an Executive Committee could be formed to handle issues among and across the three areas of DPA, whether they stay as a single unit or split into two."*

The Theatre faculty and staff are open to this possibility.

Standard G - RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES

The Review Team determined that this category was "Not applicable."

STANDARD H—PROGRAM SUMMARY

Strong. Addressed all concerns raised in the prior review. Provided a timeline for addressing each concern.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryce Allen, Tracy Callahan, Jim Christian, Jean-Louise England, Jessica Greenberg, Jenny Kokai,

Van Tinkham, Catherine Zublin - Theatre Arts Faculty and Staff