

WSU Department of Performing Arts: Theatre Area

Theatre Program's Response to Review Team Report

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The Theatre Program Review Team-

Kevin Crouch, Committee Chair, Assistant Professor of Theatre, Sam Houston State University

Kara Thomson, Residential Faculty, Program Coordinator: Theatre, Mesa Community College

Scott Rogers, Professor of English, Weber State University

INTRODUCTION

This document provides an itemized response by the Theatre Area faculty to both the Reviewer Evaluation Worksheet and the Narrative Report from the Program Review Team for the Theatre Area of the Department of Performing Arts. The Theatre faculty would like to express our appreciation to the Review Team. They were originally scheduled to visit Weber State University in March 2020. They were rescheduled to meet with us on September 18, 2020. The team met virtually with faculty, staff, and students. We have studied their findings and offer our responses below. For the 33 sections of the Standards the Review Team's ratings were: 66% Strength, 6% Good, 6% Weakness, 12% Concern, and 9% were unevaluated.

Additionally, this response will address some of the actions and continued concerns of the Theatre area in response to the 2015 Program Review.

Standard A – MISSION STATEMENT (100% Strength)

The Review Team noted that the program meets or exceeds all outcomes—despite our sometimes-limited resources; that the program is remarkably honest and forthright in its self-assessments; that the program is devoted to providing students with practical, professional experiences in the field.

Our mission statement was revised in 2019 while working on the Self-Assessment for this Program Review. We appreciate the team's ratings of Strength for the effectiveness of our mission statement

Standard B – CURRICULUM (50% Strength, 50% Concern)

The Concerns in Standard B are related to allocation of resources and the scheduling of classes.

The Review Team noted that the Theatre Area is in need of additional faculty. We have formally requested a new faculty line for the teaching of acting and movement for nine years and have not been granted permission to conduct a search. Another allocation of resources that baffled the Review Team is the fact that the Theatre Area is responsible to rent the various theatres that are used for productions. It should also be noted that all productions are curricular.

The scheduling of classes in a regular, easily communicated format is a priority of the Theatre Area. The delay has been impacted by a couple of faculty changes in the last three years and the

creation of new classes. An additional faculty member would help with the bottleneck that students experience in the acting/movement area. We regularly update our degree maps.

Standard C – STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT (100% Strength)

The faculty and staff greatly appreciate the Review Team’s recognition of our honest and thoughtful self-assessment of our offerings and of our use of that assessment to drive curriculum revisions. We updated our Student Learning Outcomes in 2019 while working on the Self-Assessment for this Program Review. They also noted, “it is abundantly clear that the program is conducting honest and thoughtful self-assessment of its offerings and is using the results of that assessment to drive curriculum revisions.”

Standard D – ACADEMIC ADVISING (66% Strength, 33% Good)

The Review Team recognized the two layers for advisement available to all students, but noted that there are occasional discrepancies. We appreciate the Review Team’s recommendations and the concern of our students in this area. We strive to provide the best and most accurate advising as possible. As a faculty we share this responsibility. We realize that several of our recent curricular improvements and new programs (AA and AS in Technical Theatre) may not be as well known to all who advise students. We will seek to fix this.

We are also aware of the need to clearly communicate a well-defined plan for students to know what classes to take and when.

We appreciate the positive comments about the professionalizing experiences we provide. We do routinely use this information as part of our recruitment efforts.

Standard E – FACULTY (38% Strength, 25% Unevaluated, 12% Good, 12% Weakness, 12% Concern)

As noted previously under the Standard B – Curriculum heading, the Theatre Area is in need of additional faculty. We have formally yet unsuccessfully requested a new faculty line for the teaching of acting and movement for nine years. We recognize that the lack of this needed position is a weakness of our program and one that we would very much like to rectify to meet the need for academic expansion and increasing enrollments.

We also recognize the concern that there is a lack of diversity among the faculty and staff and have conducted our last two searches with diversity categories formally weighted in the candidate ranking process. Neither search resulted in a result that would be defined as diverse however both hires contribute to the success of our students and program and are excellent colleagues.

Standard F – PROGRAM SUPPORT (33% Strength, 33% Weakness, 33% Concern)

The Review Team documented a weakness and a concern about the support that the Theatre Area receives. The weakness is the need of an additional support staff for the technical areas of lighting and sound. The costume design program and scenic design program each

have one faculty member, one full time technician, and one part time technician. The lighting and sound design programs currently share one faculty member and have no technical staff. Typically, these positions are referred to as a Master Electrician and a Sound Technician; there is a possibility that one person could fulfill both responsibilities. Currently, one faculty member is responsible for training all student designers and all student technicians in these areas which often results in unpaid overload. This is an issue of funding.

The concern they identified is one that we have had for many years and we appreciate that it is in their report. The Review Team is strongly concerned “that the program should not have to rent their own facilities. The logic given for reasons was flawed and not clearly defined.” We pay an average of \$2,500 per show to produce productions that are curricular in nature.

In the Narrative Report the Review Team expressed specific areas of concern about the Scene Shop. The Review Team’s concerns and our responses (in italics) are below. The Theatre area faculty and staff acknowledge that there is room for improvement. However, touring our facility virtually is not the best way for it to be seen nor to then make recommendations.

- The paint dock should be renamed to Prop Loft and tools used for smaller milling work such as the lathework be moved upstairs freeing space in the main construction space.
 - o *Sounds like a great idea. The main issue that we have is the appropriate power available on the upper level. In order to move some of the smaller tools (lathe, drill press, small band saw, etc.) we would have to work with FM to get the right power circuits installed. Funding for improvements such as this has been hard to come by.*
- The Metal Working Room is a fine space for smaller metal work yet since scenic needs will not fit through the metal room door, set construction must take place on the main shop floor.
 - o *Due to the size of the metals room, we only do small metal-working projects, and we engineer our shows around its limitations. On the rare occasion that welding needs to be done outside the metals room, we have followed appropriate safety procedures.*
- It is clear that welding, woodworking and scenic painting must share space.
 - o *Our shop space is shared between these elements, and the scenic builds are scheduled with this consideration in mind.*
- It is vital that Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Codes and Guidelines be maintained. The construction areas are lacking visible fire extinguishers and a visible eye wash station that can be quickly accessed. It is advised that the Theater area check with both the college OSHA officer and OSHA to improve the safety protocols.
 - o *The OSHA Officer on campus is the Fire Marshall. Now that the scenic elements that were stored in the shop over the summer have been moved, we meet the requirements that were given to us by the Fire Marshall’s Office at our last inspection. It should be noted that we have a new Fire Marshall (as of about a month ago) and he has not yet toured the scene shop.*
- Additionally, it is recommended that the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) be visibly available in the main shop and specialty shops.
 - o *This is currently in process.*
- The large woodworking tools have discarded pieces of lumber and sheet goods.
 - o *This has already been taken care of and this recommendation will be followed.*
- A daily schedule maintenance protocol should be implemented based on the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) guidelines.

- *The American National Standards Institute through United State Institute for Theatre Technology recommendations have been being followed, if the IATSE guidelines prove to be more applicable or set a higher standard changes will be implemented.*
- The final recommendation is that an outside consultant be hired to enhance the safety protocols, shop flow, and construction material active storage.
 - *If it can be arranged/afforded, a second pair of eyes is always welcome.*

In 2015 the Review Team recommended that we explore a formal separation from the Department of Performing Arts. We attempted a formal request in 2016 and were turned down by the WSU administration. Since this time, we have explored new ways to collaborate with our peers in Dance and Music.

Another recommendation from 2015 concerned our budgeting process. We continue to be concerned that a curricular program must manage budgeting for production work with only soft funding and that this model may not be sustainable.

Standard G - RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES

The Review Team determined that this category was both a strength or something that they could not evaluate. They did not include any comments.

STANDARD H-PROGRAM SUMMARY (100% Strength)

We appreciate the Review Team’s summary that our self-assessment has resulted “in a clear-eyed approach” to the most persistent issues we face, which are a stable budget, the need for additional faculty and staff, and our recruiting efforts.

NARRATIVE REPORT

The last paragraph of the Narrative Report by the Review Team states, “The program’s honest attention to its self-assessment has resulted in a cleareyed approach to the most pressing issues it is currently facing: budget and recruiting (which is a function of budget) and personnel expansion. The production budget relies on a Student Fee Committee who each year chooses the allocation to the theatre department. This is a stressful process one which makes it difficult to choose the show season especially when looking at production demands. If this program is as important to the university as it appears to be, the committee feels that that budget needs to be the priority not only of the department chair but of the Dean’s office and upper administration. The needs for a new faculty line and staff line are extreme and put the department at a disadvantage in recruitment when compared to other programs around the region and nation. These recommendations will elevate a strong program into an elite level with regards to other B.A. programs around the country.”

We, the Theatre Area faculty and staff agree wholeheartedly.

Respectfully submitted,
 Bryce Allen, Tracy Callahan, Jean-Louise England, Andrew Lewis, Cully Long, Jessica Greenberg, Jenny Kokai, Kenneth Plain, Catherine Zublin - Theatre Arts Faculty and Staff