

## **NARRATIVE REPORT**

This is the narrative report of the Weber State University Department of Performing Arts Theatre Area five-year program review. The program was last reviewed in 2015, and this program review was originally planned to take place on site in March 2020. Unfortunately, the outbreak of COVID-19 rendered an in-person assessment of the program impossible. The team met virtually with faculty, staff, and students. Overall the committee was impressed with the department successes given the challenges presented to them by limited personnel and budget.

The program meets or exceeds all outcomes of its mission statement—despite their sometimes-limited resources. The program is remarkably honest and forthright in its self-assessments. The program's devotion to providing students with practical, professional experiences in the field is admirable. We feel it might behoove the program to promote this dimension of the student experience at both the department and university level.

The curriculum is consistent with the program's mission and various notes in the self-assessment indicate an intention to revise or improve certain classes, which suggests to us that the program is quite thoughtful about the effectiveness of its course offerings. With that said, a consistent student complaint was the lack of information about when courses will be offered. The program should consider providing students with an easily accessible list of course offerings for at least the next two years. This would allow students to plan their schedules accordingly. Another constant refrain in our discussions with faculty and students was that the program is badly in need of additional faculty and staff. Additional faculty will allow for more regular offerings or rotations of classes, and interviews with faculty did not indicate that additional faculty would result in competition among courses. Indeed, faculty seemed confident that a few strategic hires might free faculty up to focus on their areas of expertise.

The student learning outcomes and assessment as outlined in the self-study show an effective system that is both equitable and transparent. They support the goals of the programs and appear to be directly linked to the program's curriculum as documented in the self-study. 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. The self-study did not provide a clear breakdown of the curriculum for each area of focus, having this clearly mapped out for both the department and the students is imperative.

The program has multiple advisors using both department faculty and college advisors. Although it is commendable that there are two layers of advisement, of the 11 students this committee met with, several noted that there are occasional discrepancies between information provided by departmental advisors and college advisors. This problem is in part a function of the department's not providing students with a list of upcoming class offerings and, perhaps just as importantly, a clear breakdown of what classes students should be taking when. Regardless, the program's commitment to providing students (and particularly the students focusing on the technical elements of theater) with regular and valuable professional experience—either via internships or by working directly on performances—is to be highly commended. The committee feels that the program should showcase its emphasis on professional experience and use it as part of recruitment.

The committee was impressed with the faculty commitment to the department and the students. This was clear in their interviews and with the comments we received from students. However, the most consistent complaint from both faculty and staff is that the program is badly in need of additional faculty and staff. Faculty are routinely providing uncompensated overtime labor, and faculty are being required to teach additional sections of courses that then limit their ability to provide other course offerings—this is particularly a concern with the department serving a Film major that is not part of Theatre. This committee also heard requests from students for instructors of voice, diction, and movement, as well as dance personnel who are accustomed to the dance styles of musical theatre. The lack of performance faculty is staggering and unacceptable for a program this large. It is the committee's understanding that faculty lines are tied to department growth, but given the size of the department, having only one dedicated performance faculty member is unacceptable and could be seen as a negative in recruiting. Both the faculty and the students recognize that there is a lack of diversity among the faculty. While we understand that there are a variety of factors leading to this issue, the department might consider emphasizing the diversity of Ogden

as a city in its job ads or reaching out to certain organizations that might be able to help with outreach to BIPOC candidates. The department appears to conduct regular assessments of teaching. The self-study indicates that faculty are reviewed in their second, third, fourth, and sixth years.

The program has support from a few staff members who seem to be integral parts of the department. This committee feels that the program needs additional staff specifically a Master Electrician and a Sound Tech. This could possibly be the same person. The facilities and equipment were reviewed via video tours and photographs due to the committee being unable to do an in-person visit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee did its best to compile an accurate understanding of the facility's workings and equipment that program has to use. With that said, the committee was concerned about space and safety in a few areas. Costume storage is vital, especially when outside costume rental fees cover the day to day maintenance of this production area. Scenic Shop needs to be redesigned with safety and workflow in mind. It is the recommendation of the committee that the paint dock should be renamed to Prop Loft and tools used for smaller milling work such as the lathework be moved up stairs freeing space in the main construction space. 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. It is clear that welding, woodworking and scenic painting must share space. 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 Department check with both the college OSHA officer and OSHA to improve the safety protocols. Additionally, it is recommended that the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) be visibly available in the main shop and specialty shops. The large woodworking tools have discarded pieces of lumber and sheet goods. A daily schedule maintenance protocol should be implemented based on IATSE guidelines. This practice will produce two valuable outcomes; it will ensure that the limited shop staff can be more confident that students are working in a safe environment and keeping them from lazy habits and it will create for the students a higher level of experience with work standards and practices of the professional shop

across the country. Our final recommendation is that an outside consultant be hired to enhance the safety protocols, shop flow, and construction material active storage.

The program's honest attention to its self-assessment has resulted in a clear-eyed 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 need 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.

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