

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WSU Program: Theatre
Self-Study Document, Fall 2019

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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 area has significantly revised the mission statement, which now reads:

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 high impact educational experiences in theatre through required practicum classes;
2. Foster creativity and develop technical skills in acting, directing, theatrical design, script writing, theatre education, theatre history, dramaturgy, and/or stage and theatre management as evaluated by regular juries;
3. Use and develop higher level thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, and creation in understanding and organizing knowledge as demonstrated through coursework, capstone, senior, and/or undergraduate research projects;
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 demonstrated by monitoring graduates' career success post-graduation.
5. Seek out, produce, and create new works to foster the individual voices of our students as artists, to participate in nationwide conversations on what theatre means, and to allow degree seeking students to actively contribute to the development of the American Theatre.

Curriculum:

The Theatre area regularly revises curriculum in response to USHE articulation requests, streamlining the time to graduation, and market demands. The Theatre area revised all programs last year to better evaluate the most pertinent classes for each track or emphasis. Some changes included things like increasing the number of classes in Musical Theatre production for Theatre Education in response to their stated desire to feel more prepared for a future of directing musicals (and obviously removing some less crucial classes to keep the credit requirements the same). Similar evaluations were made and enacted by all program directors. The Theatre area has ensured all General Education classes comply with the new Revitalization standards. The Theatre area continuously evaluates their curriculum to ensure they reflect best practices.

The Theatre area wants to stress the importance of High Impact Teaching Practices in their work. To quantify this, using the program Toggl, we tracked all of our hours worked for a thirty day period (Oct

1-Oct 30). During this time period, the eight reporting faculty and staff clocked 350.7 hours working on *The House of Edgar Allen Poe*, 320.4 hours working on *Sense and Sensibility* and 18 hours working on *The 39 Steps*. Every single one of these hours, totaling 689 hours for the month of October alone, is direct face-to-face mentorship with students, through rehearsal, design mentorship, or teaching crew skills on a practical project. This averages to 21.5 hours per faculty and full time staff of active engagement in direct face-to-face mentorship per week beyond interacting with students in classrooms, voice lessons, and other expected teaching assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

The Theatre Area revised their Program Outcomes for this year. Previously there were twelve outcomes, some of which were not truly Program Outcomes but rather individual degree outcomes. The Theatre Area adjusted the outcomes to truly be umbrella outcomes for all Theatre majors regardless of emphasis.

The Theatre Area has made sure to assess for each of our seven program outcomes. We focused on assessing core classes that the majority of our majors take, or several core classes to make sure each student is captured to assess for this outcome. We make sure to assess both lower and upper division classes. The Theatre Area has put into place Juries, where students curate and present materials that demonstrate their current mastery of the skills and practices needed to be successful in professional theatre. Students do a benchmark Jury upon entering the program and then complete Juries at the end of each semester. Along with theatre skills, students are assessed on Discipline, Organization, Professionalism, and Metacognition. Juries in particular aid in Faculty curriculum strategic planning (for example, consistent lower Jury scores in rendering skills led to adding more rendering to all Design classes). They also serve to give students a snapshot of their current strengths and weaknesses as an advising tool when they are selecting future classes.

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.

All Theatre students are required to take Freshman Seminar, which serves as an advising introduction to theatre area and the university including information on how to use Cattracks, how to use course maps, and other orientation information. In addition, we hold a meeting at the beginning of each semester in which we outline important information like how Practicum works and other advising matters. On a one-on-one basis, advising on Theatre Degrees is divided amongst a number of faculty 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).

At the current time, there are no major issues with advising. Students are able to meet with a faculty member who understands the requirements for the degree, consult materials that reinforce these requirements, and note their progress through Cattracks. Theatre faculty handle articulation requests and strive to give students credit for as much previous work as is possible. According to our voluntary October 2019 self-study, Faculty reported through Toggl spending 25 additional hours advising students for the thirty-day period beyond the time spent on students who attended the 70 reported office hours faculty held.

Faculty:

Theatre Area faculty and staff are held to both internal standards based upon program assessment and student performance and to the University evaluation system in the policies and procedures for tenure and promotion (per the tenure document and PPM 8-11).

The theatre area works collaboratively to plan class schedules, and faculty collaboratively assess all students and how their courses have improved their skills twice a semester at Juries. With one exception, all full time faculty have a terminal degree in their respective fields. One Visiting Professor, in a specialty—Musical Direction-- that really has no history of terminal degree granting programs, has extensive national professional experience that serves as an alternate qualification.

Weber State theatre faculty maintain active creative and scholarly agendas. There has been discussion at the state level about eliminating research at Dual Mission Universities. We want to **strongly** push back against that idea as it would harm our pedagogy and the professional avenues we create for our students after their graduation. Our faculty frequently actively involve students in their research, by using students as assistants on artistic projects nationally, as research assistants, and by developing academic articles based upon university productions. This means that while they are earning their degree, our students are earning professional design, dramaturgy, assistant directing, etc. credits as well as building their own professional connections.

Adjunct and concurrent enrollment faculty are observed regularly by a faculty member of the Theatre Area with expertise in the subject being taught.

Program Support:

The Department of Performing Arts has five full time staff positions: Technical Director, Costume Studio Manager, Department Administrative Assistant, Budget Specialist, and Multimedia Specialist. The Theatre Area has two additional part time staff positions: Scene Shop Assistant and Costume Studio Assistant. In addition, we benefit from the Marketing and PR specialist who works with the college as a whole, the college academic advisors, the college employment advisor, and a part-time internship coordinator for the department. 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 area, a music area, and a dance area. With very little overlapping coursework between dance, music and theatre, it is challenging to maintain the cohesiveness of a single department. The half-time department chair, who is a Music professor, manages five staff, 21 full-time faculty members and 44 adjunct faculty members. Theatre is also served by co-area heads who each receive three hours of reassigned time for their service which includes most duties that would be performed by a chair in a strictly Theatre department. This is a marked improvement over the administrative situation at the last program review, however the departmental structure continues to be a unique challenge.

The Theatre Area is supported by a full time staff member who is the Technical Director and handles some Production Manager tasks. He is supported by a half-time Scene Shop Supervisor. We also have a

full time Costume Studio Supervisor who is supported by a half-time Assistant. The part-time assistant positions were funded after the last program review and have made an immense difference in the program. At this time we feel the staff support is adequate in many areas, however we need a part-time staff member to serve as support for lighting/sound/projections. In addition, there is a significant wage discrepancy between the two full time staff members that appears to replicate gendered issues in the Theatre industry which reward Technical Directors (who are mostly men) over Costume Studio Supervisors (mostly women). We believe the two salaries should be equal as they are asked to do equivalent amounts of work. The work of our Costume Studio Supervisor, Jean Louise England, is vital. For the month of October, she worked 269.5 hours, or roughly 57 hours a week. The bulk of this was engaging in high impact teaching practices, mentoring students in design and construction.

The Theatre Collection in the library is maintained and updated by Nicole Beatty, Arts and Humanities Librarian and Associate Professor. While the librarian admits that being liaison to Theatre as well as Dance, Communication, English, Art, and Women and Gender Studies is a large task, there are currently no funding lines to get an additional Arts and Humanities librarian, nor is there money in the budget for individual subject librarians for each discipline. It is Beatty’s goal to provide the best possible service to the departments in which she is liaison. While this is challenging, it is not impossible as long as the relationship with the faculty remains cooperative.

The Theatre area is grateful for the administrative support of the Dean’s office both financially and through his leadership, as well as the other University offices who have contributed to supporting our work.

Relations with External Community:

The theatre area is heavily involved in external communities. Their involvement tends to fall into the following categories:

Creative and Scholarly Work	Weber State faculty and staff have directed, written, performed in, and provided technical design or support for productions at numerous theatre companies locally, nationally, and internationally and published in peer reviewed well regarded journals.
Participation in National Organizations	Weber State faculty and staff are members of and participate in the governing board of a variety of national and state theatre organizations including the Kennedy Center for the American College Theatre Festival, Utah Theatre Association, United State Institute for Theatre Technology, the American Society for Theatrical Research, and the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.
Outreach and Programs with K-12 students and teachers.	The theatre area is affiliated with the current Chair of the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Foundation. This is a program that is heavily invested in programs with local schools. In addition, our full time theatre faculty is often out in the schools doing master classes, guest lectures, or working with student teachers and/or Concurrent Enrollment instructors.
Service and Committee Work to the larger university	The theatre faculty frequently serves on a variety of University committees in curriculum, scholarships, general education, faculty senate, and more. In addition, theatre faculty is often asked to do specialized committee work using their talents, such as plan and present the new President of WSU’s Inauguration Gala.

Results of Previous Program Reviews:

Issue 1 Budgetary Issues- The Theatre area is reliant upon student fees to supply its entire production budget. We would like to expand our offerings: do more shows, regularly take students to conferences and professional development opportunities, but we cannot do that without more money. Although this continues to be a concern this issue is outside the theatre area's control.

Issue 2 Recruiting- The theatre area faculty has a very high number of student contact hours in addition to performing extensive teaching, service, and creative and scholarly work. This means that although we hold a scholarship day, attend orientations, and participate in the Utah Theatre Association auditions for seniors, we do not have the time to do much recruiting for our program. The theatre area proposes the college as a whole think about hiring a recruitment specialist

Issue 3 Departmental Relationships- The Theatre Area continues to function as an almost entirely separate entity from Music and Dance. In addition, the previous Program Review strongly encouraged considering how the Theatre department interacts with the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program Endowed Chair. Administration did not support dividing the three areas for budget reasons. The chair (from Music) created formal Program Coordinator roles in each area In addition, after reviewing the nature of the BTS ALP coordinator's job and its incompatibility with the mission statement of the Theatre Area, it was decided that its coordinator would be viewed and evaluated as a separate area within the Department of Performing Arts and not as a Theatre faculty member.

Issue 4 Personnel- The Theatre area faculty and staff is relatively small, the previous program review advised increasing these numbers. The Theatre area hired a new Musical Theatre faculty member in Music Direction which allowed new classes such as Group Voice to be offered. Theatre has consistently requested an additional position in Voice and Movement and that request has not yet been granted.

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

Name	Position	Affiliation
Kevin Crouch	Asst. Professor/Assistant Chair	Sam Houston State University
Kara Thomson	Residential Faculty, Program Coordinator: Theatre	Mesa Community College
Scott Rogers	Full Professor, Department of English	Weber State University