

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
Assessment Report
B.F.A. Undergraduate Program Assessment Report
Submitted to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts, December 2010
Dr. Julie Jackson, Chair

I Program Goals

The broad-based program goals of the Department of Theatre support the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) with a major in Theatre and Emphasis areas in Performance and Production. The department will:

- Provide comprehensive curricula and experience in the practical, artistic, and intellectual foundations of theatre art and production
- Support the University's general academic mission by providing courses that stimulate critical and creative thinking in response to theatre literature and practice
- Broaden the context in which students measure themselves and their work in the world
- Prepare students to present competitive portfolios and a repertory of advanced skills necessary for entry level careers or advanced study in the performing arts and entertainment industry
- Present regular and varied programs in theatre and dance for the enrichment of the university and the community

II Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop a basic technical vocabulary and the ability to apply transferable skills relevant to contemporary stage-craft, stage lighting, costume, makeup, stage management, acting, and directing.
2. Demonstrate mastery of higher order objectives (problem-solving skills) that call on individual analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in collaboration with peer artists and craftsmen in the production of theatre and performing arts.
3. Recognize and be able to describe, compare, and critique styles, crafts, conventions, philosophies, values, significant events, and key figures in the performing arts from a wide variety of historic periods and cultures.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of and adherence to professional practice including etiquette and conventions, decorum, protocols, managerial chain of command, legal issues, and ethical standards specific to the performing arts and entertainment industry.

III Assessment Activities:

Summary description of overall assessment activities:

The structure of our program supports a planned learning cycle, moving students from instruction, observation, and repetition in the core or basic skills courses (100-200 level) toward an increasing emphasis on conceptualization, critical thinking, and peer interaction in intermediate (200-300 level) and faculty mentored upper level work (400 level). Direct qualitative assessment of Learning Outcomes one and two (basic skills and mastery of problem solving skills) in the area of performance are conducted in auditions (generally held twice a semester). Performance and production areas are assessed twice a semester in faculty evaluations of overall student achievement demonstrated onstage and backstage in the department's four season productions. Specific curricular adjustments result directly from observations conducted in audition and performance/production assessments. External evaluators critique individual student and ensemble achievement in all main stage productions by submission of a written response structured according to Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) guidelines. These solicited critiques may assess skills, problem solving in collaboration, professionalism, or on occasion, demonstrated comprehension of specific historic styles or cultures, depending on the nature of the production. Sophomore Review, a non-credit portfolio and audition review and interview evaluated by the entire faculty includes a comprehensive exam and is focused on outcomes one and four (basic skills and application of professional practice). The scoring of Sophomore Review is consistent with scoring methods applied to the Senior Project. However, Senior Project encompasses all Learning Outcomes listed above.

Off-campus internship evaluations from employer's or host theatres may be used to assess all learning outcomes, but

are uniquely suited to assessment of number four, overall professionalism. Internships are evaluated by an onsite supervisor. 2009-10 was the second year all interns submitted regular journal entries via email and on their return to campus, prepared an informative presentation and question/answer session with faculty and all theatre majors. Each student also submits a narrative evaluation of the experience. Journal and narrative evaluations are effective tools for indirect as well as direct evaluation of student learning, but are not yet scored according to a numerical system and have no established benchmark.

The department actively supports student and faculty participation in the West Virginia Theatre Conference, South East Theatre Conference (SETC), KCACTF, and competitive auditions on a local, state and national level. Conference auditions and portfolio review are scored according to established protocols for each organization. Assessment Day 10 Minute Play Festival was instituted in 2008-09. This procedure was instituted in order to focus on learning outcomes number two, mastery of higher order objectives (problem-solving skills) that call on individual analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in collaboration with peer artists and craftsmen, and number three, the ability to describe and critique performance styles from a variety of historic periods and cultures. 2009-10 was the second year in which groups of 5-7 students collaborated to create a five minute performance inspired by a title based on a familiar script, one required prop, and an assortment of disparate elements assembled by the faculty. This ensemble performance was evaluated in four categories: knowledge of specific basic skills, problem-solving, demonstrated comprehension of specific dramatic styles, and the ability to divide and share responsibilities and authority. Discussion following the event served as an indirect assessment tool.

Assessment is not limited to the systematic tools outlined above. Overall assessment is ongoing, cumulative, multi-faceted, and pragmatic. Opportune or unanticipated assessment tools includes interviews with professional guest artists and visitors, graduate surveys and interviews, employer surveys, patron testimonials, performance critiques assigned in THE112 Theatre Appreciation, and audience satisfaction surveys.

Assessment of Learning Outcome #3: Recognize and be able to describe, compare, and critique styles, crafts, conventions, philosophies, values, significant events, and key figures in the performing arts from a wide variety of historic periods and cultures

Systematic assessment tools for this learning outcome include:

- Assessment Day Olympics
- Participation in regional and national competitive auditions, portfolio review and performance adjudication
- Marshall Theatre Alliance auditions

As reported in our 2007-08 assessment, the mastery of higher order objectives was not being adequately assessed. In 2009-10, the department undertook a major revision to Assessment Day activities in order to address this outcome

Assessment Day Impromptu Play Festival

- A. For a second consecutive year, faculty agreed to enlist Assessment Day as a measurement tool for higher order objectives. Once again, a simulation learning environment was created to replace the game environment of a skills competition, and the focus of evaluation was shifted to ensemble work rather than individual achievement. The activity was designed to measure our student's ability to (1) demonstrate mastery of skills and vocabulary in an entirely new situation, and (2) devise, design, and perform a coherent original performance within narrowly defined limitations.

Assigned teams were allowed to select from a list of titles clearly linked to the name of a play studied in class or performed on our stage. Each group was given an incongruous and challenging prop (required use), a sack of disparate properties and costume pieces (optional use), and a private space to devise and rehearse for one hour. Performances were limited to five minutes on stage. Seven Sacred Rules were posted, with rule number eight stating that nothing was sacred except time limits. Each group leader was provided with a check list of evaluation categories and a ranking system. Ranking was based on a 0-3 point system in four categories with subcategories, including (1) application of dramatic structure theory (point of attack, inciting incident, clarity of unfolding plot, complication brought to a conclusion), (2) use of given circumstances (setting, character development, world of the play), (3) ensemble mandates/collaboration, (4) technical narration, and (5) assignment mandates that included overall comprehension and execution of style or context. Each faculty member completed an evaluation sheet. A panel of faculty, one guest, and

on staff member served as adjudicators and votes were n was tabulated for each group in each category and a final overall ranking was tabulated for each group. Awards (a plastic medallion) were given in each area.

- B. Benchmarks. In 2008-09, the department agreed that 60% of the student body (anticipated student participation in the event) should achieve a composite evaluation of 80% or higher in each category. Our students reached and in some cases exceeded this level of achievement. In 2010, the 2008-09 scores were available as a benchmark. However, prior to the event, we did not take into account the fact that though the total number of participants was consistent, 13 senior and 7 junior level students participated in the event in 2009, whereas 2 senior and 4 junior level students participated in 2010.
- C. Result/Analysis. Prior to the event, faculty agreed to maintain a “hands-off policy” in order to allow students autonomy within delineated boundaries. This choice supports effective assessment of peer collaboration, initiative, analysis, synthesis, self evaluation, and creative thinking.

Results. Judges included one guest artist, one staff member and four full time faculty members. Voting categories and scale were the same as in the previous year. Student participation was strongly encouraged, perhaps too strongly. Many students were under the impression that participation was mandatory. 90% of continuing majors participated and were divided into seven assigned teams.

Of the seven teams, two fell well below the group mean and in some areas, did not complete the project. In both cases, team members were not familiar with the play they were asked to parody and both low scoring teams less than 2 upperclassmen. Also, two members of one team left before the performance. Scoring for these two teams fell significantly below the class mean and it was felt that these scores would unfairly distort our findings. Therefore, the highest scoring and lowest scoring teams were excluded in tabulating the results below.

2008-09		2009	2009	2010	2010
Category	Possible points	Average composite score	%	Average composite score	%
Comprehension and application of dramatic structure theory	9	8.1	90%	6.6	73%
Use of given circumstances	12	10.56	88%	9.3	77%
Application of ensemble mandates/collaboration	15	14	96%	13	87%
Technical narration/stage directions	9	6.12	68%	7.6	84.4%
Assignment mandates Pass/fail only	P/F	P	100% P	P	100% P

- The only area that saw an increase in 2010 was technical narrative and stage directions. This increase was significant, though the score, 84.4% is lower than any single score recorded in 2009.
- Comprehension/application of dramatic structure theory and use of given circumstances dropped significantly from 2009. In the feedback session immediately following this exercise, students pointed out that many team members were unfamiliar with the play referenced to in the title.
- The department’s emphasis on applied knowledge, professional attitudes and the development of complex relationships in a collaborative environment, though lower than last year, once again received the highest evaluation. However, comments, questions, and the general tone of our discussion suggested that in 2009 students were less satisfied with their ability to collaborate toward a shared goal in a high pressure situation than in 2008.
- Assignment mandates were not evaluated on the point scale, but were discussed at length in the student feedback session. Each group was assigned the name of an innovative producing company with a unique identity and an international reputation. Student recognition of contemporary theatre companies was improved in 2010, but still disappointing. Most students had heard of the name, and a few groups were able to recognize the salient characteristics, history, and mission of the company. Knowledge about

contemporary playwrights and specific production histories was lower than in 2009.

- D. In an extended talkback session students viewed the event as generally useful for self-reflection and self-conscious synthesis (“putting it together”).

IV. Analysis/planned action.

- Faculty members continue to view this event as a useful exercise, but will continue to refine the description/directions and evaluation protocol. Our planning must take into consideration the mean grade level of the participants. The relatively low number of upperclassmen clearly impacted the ability of each group to function at a high level of collaboration.
- This tool will be further developed to include a more focused assessment of learning outcome number three: ability to recognize and describe, compare, and critique styles, crafts, conventions, philosophies, values, significant events, and key figures in the performing arts from a wide variety of historic periods and cultures. In future, elements of historic style, events, and significant artists will be included in the assignment and assessment protocol. In addition, subcategories and the point system need to reflect program priorities with greater precision. For example, use of given circumstances may need to be balanced in relation to dramatic structure.
- Approximately 90% of our student body identifies as performers and 10% as production area majors. This may affect higher level learning objectives in the area of technical theatre and design in our student population. However, all students pass through the same foundation classes in technical theatre and it is possible that we may need to refocus our attention on this important area of theatre production.
- Planned action: In 2009 the department reconfigured the core requirements of the degree to include a 200 level course intended to enhance learning outcomes 2 (analysis and synthesis) and 3 (familiarity with historic western and non-western theatre conventions). This course was taught for the first time in spring 2010 and will be taught again in spring 2011. In 2011, course content will be more carefully structured to enhance the students mastery of dramatic structure and use of given circumstances.
- In order to enhance knowledge of theatre literature, THE 101 Introduction to Theatre and THE201 Critical Analysis have adopted a new and comprehensive text. The *Longman Anthology of Theatre; a global perspective* includes contemporary, Chicano, Asian, and feminist theatre texts as well as a broad spectrum of the western canon.

Participation in competitive regional and national auditions

- A. Three program components are balanced at every level of the learning cycle: classroom work (academics), lab (application), and performance (demonstration). Student performance onstage and backstage is a complex synthesis of classroom and lab work directly linked to higher order learning outcomes. Individual and ensemble achievement in production and performance are regularly evaluated by state, regional, and national auditions. Both emphasis areas are also evaluated by unbiased, external observers who adjudicate Marshall Theatre season productions
- B. Benchmarks We anticipate that at least 50% of juniors and seniors who audition or present a portfolio at the fall WV screening will pass on to the SETC conference in spring. Of these, we look for 80% placement for summer internships or jobs. We anticipate that 100% of students who seek a summer internship will achieve this goal. However, there are far too many variables at play—nature of the competitive pool, biased judges, travel issues, illness, economic cutbacks in theatre budgets—to determine a reliable numerical base for off campus auditions.
- C. Result/Analysis In 2010, only 2 of 7 students who auditioned for WV screening were passed on to audition at the SETC conference. For the second year in a row, several of our most talented and dedicated actors were disqualified. Faculty who witnessed the auditions felt that judging was poorly structured. In addition, 2 of 8 students who sought a summer internship were unable to find a position. At one time SETC was our primary source of student internships. However, for the past years, SETC has not proven to be reliable, in part, because of the nature and structure of judging. In addition, employers have developed more focused regional unified audition venues and are less likely to recruit primarily at SETC.
- D. Analysis/planned action. SETC remains an excellent source for student internships. However, the department has taken significant steps to advertise and encourage participation in other competitive regional and national auditions in major cities (Florida, Baltimore, Atlanta, St Louis, Chicago, Texas, Indiana, DC) and under other organizations, including Top Hat (musical theatre) and U/RTA (resident

theatre association). We have updated an Internship bulletin board and increased email announcements of upcoming auditions and invitations to apply for internship positions. All theatre majors are required to attend a presentation by returning interns. This presentation has significantly increased knowledge of who can apply, where and how. We will develop additional opportunities for peer exchange of information and advice on the internship process.

Marshall Theatre Alliance Auditions and Adjudication

- A. All four productions of the Marshall Theatre season were adjudicated for Kennedy Center Association for College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). In addition, productions are regularly reviewed in the local press. This assessment tool applies to design, acting, and stage management, but does not cover many back stage production positions. Auditions take place twice a year and are viewed by the chair and all acting/directing faculty. Any failure to advance is noted and discussed in casting conferences. Moreover, since all students in the program perform in close succession, specific weak points in the program become painfully obvious when problems or shortfalls are demonstrated as endemic across the entire casting pool.
- A. Benchmarks There are no numerical benchmarks in this area of assessment. However, assessment via the audition process is ongoing, cumulative, and multi-faceted.
- B. Result/Analysis KCACTF adjudications were extremely positive. One student costume designer, a student stage manager, and three actors received nominations to compete at the Kennedy Center conference in early Spring 2010. Typical of the evaluations submitted is this excerpt from the adjudicator for *Our Country's Good*. "The overall ensemble acting was very strong and mature. ... The actors worked well together and I felt as if they were really talking and listening to one another. There was great connection on the stage. Overall, the acting was very strong and engaging."
- C. Analysis/planned action. While the KCACTF adjudications were helpful and positive, the process is increasingly fraught with problems and obstacles. We are required to secure adjudicators from within a region dictated by the organization and unfortunately WV is at a distant outpost in our region. It is difficult to bring an approved adjudicator to campus without considerable expense. In 2010-11, the department has elected to drop out of the KCACTF process, at least for this year. Instead, we will bring in two adjudicators, one with academic credentials and one with a significant professional profile, for a single production directed by a probationary faculty member. We will request an assessment of the overall production and process as well as of the faculty director. We will evaluate this project to determine whether or not to continue our membership in the Association of College Theatre adjudication.

IV. Overview of changes implemented in your program this past year based on results and planned action specified in last year's report.

In its first year, department sponsored participation in College Days at the Humana Festival of New Plays, Louisville Actor's Theatre, was highly successful in supporting critical skills and knowledge of professional practices and expectations. Students attended 4-5 Equity productions and participated in 4-6 professional workshops over a 3 day weekend. 26 students submitted a written critical analysis of the event in partial fulfillment of the requirements for THE201 Critical Analysis. This process will be formalized in 2011 with an assessment rubric to measure successful support of higher level learning objectives.

Anecdotal and numerical evidence collected during Assessment Day demonstrated that our students' familiarity with classic and contemporary theatre literature needs improvement. In the spring 2009 the department identified a need for greater access to scripts and theatre history resources, particularly new and contemporary scripts that are not available in local or university libraries. Room PAC234 was designated as a Theatre Resource Center and renovated in the summer in 2009. In fall 2009, over 1000 volumes of theatre scripts and other resources were catalogued and shelved. The room will open to students in 2010 as a non circulating reference and resource area and a comfortable study area.

In spring 2010, one of six faculty members was on sabbatical, one member announced his retirement, and remaining four members of the department conducted a successful search for a new faculty member in the emphasis area of performance. Not only was this search the focus of our time and attention, it was felt that significant changes in

course content, curriculum structure, and program assessment should be postponed until a full contingent of faculty was able to participate. Among the areas we will or have begun to address are:

- The establishment of a scoring rubric for ensemble work and audition readiness
- A formal mechanism for tracking students through the learning cycle in order to better assess impact on new initiatives on student learning.
- Further refinement of the Assessment Day play festival
- Increased information and support for internships

V. Specify any changes/modifications made to your program based specifically on data obtained during Assessment Day Activities.

While the tool developed for assessment day will require at least three years of development and data before we can make any significant changes based on our findings, incremental changes have been instituted in our production schedule. Encouraged by notable success in the area of peer collaboration and initiation, we introduced a student directed ten minute play festival in fall 2010. Also, a student generated and directed Cabaret is included in MTA 2010-11 season. Finally, we have identified six opportunities in the 211-12 academic year for student initiated projects in the Frances Booth Experimental Theatre. Students will present proposals for these Studio 043 (so called because of the room number assigned to the Frances Booth) productions this spring and next fall. We anticipate that the 2011-12 academic year will include at least four student initiated productions.

VI. No assistance needed.

Marshall University
Assessment of Program's Student Learning Outcomes for the Department of Theatre
2009

Not every student learning outcome must be assessed every year. However, it is expected that at least one-fourth of the outcomes will be assessed each year, allowing for assessment of all outcomes within a four-year cycle. It also is important to use more than one assessment measure for each outcome.

Program's Student Learning Outcomes	Year evaluated	Assessment Measures (Tools)	Benchmarks	Results	Analysis/ Planned Actions
#1 Develop a basic technical vocabulary and the ability to apply transferable skills relevant to contemporary stage-craft, stage lighting, costume, makeup, stage management, acting, and directing	2006/2007	Sophomore Review Tech Olympics			
#2 Demonstrate mastery of higher order objectives (problem-solving skills) that call on individual analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in collaboration with peer artists and craftsmen in the production of theatre and performing arts	2008 /2009	Assessment Day Play festival Adjudication and audition	Assessment Day: 70% participation 80% success	Assessment Day: 70% participation 90%+ success	Measurement tool will be refined to include technical aspects of production THE201 critical analysis introduced to the curriculum

Program's Student Learning Outcomes	Year evaluated	Assessment Measures (Tools)	Benchmarks	Results	Analysis/ Planned Actions
#3: Recognize and be able to describe, compare, and critique styles, crafts, conventions, philosophies, values, significant events, and key figures in the performing arts from a wide variety of historic periods and cultures	2009/2010	Assessment Day Adjudication and audition National auditions and internship placement and evaluation	Assessment Day: 70% participation 80% success	Assessment Day: 90% participation 80% success	Syllabus for THE201 will be adjusted to emphasize critical skills Development of a Theatre Resource Center within the department with over 1,000 texts available to students and faculty. Returning theatre interns and all majors participate in a Q&A secession to explore how the position was obtained, what it was like, and who might be interested in future.
#4. Demonstrate knowledge of and adherence to professional practice including etiquette and conventions, decorum, protocols, managerial chain of command, legal issues, and ethical standards specific to the performing arts and entertainment industry.	2010 /2011				
	20__ / __				
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