

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Name of Program:	Theatre Arts
Year:	2018-2019
Name of Preparer:	Dawn Larsen

Program Mission Statement

The Mission of the Theatre Program is:

The Department of Fine Arts offers a major in theatre arts with specialties in performance (acting and directing) or design/technology (scenery, lighting, costuming, and stagecraft). The department seeks to prepare students for graduate studies in the major, for entering professional training programs, or for entering professions that require creative thinking and artistic expression. Students may also earn either a minor or a collateral in theatre. The education students participate in leads to the development of life skills of self-discipline, personal responsibility, and organization; and the ability to communicate effectively and work cooperatively is fostered in the program. The program educates the student body at large and serves the community through quality performances that exhibit student and faculty artistic work and function as a laboratory for applying skills learned in the classroom and studio.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Students will demonstrate communication skills, collaborative problem-solving, and modes of self expression that are essential to the art of theatre and theatre production.
2. Theatre arts students will summarize and examine the relevance, implications and consequences of theatre to its social, cultural and historical context.
3. Theatre arts students will recognize and practice an appreciation for a professional disposition in theatre art analysis, production process and practices.
4. Theatre arts students will identify, interpret, and practice the practical and professional aspects of the production process.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of theatre concepts, theories, organization and production process.
2. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary to successfully participate in a theatrical production under the direction and supervision of an experienced production team.
3. Students will identify, examine, and evaluate skills, knowledge and vocabulary usage to form aesthetic judgments of/within the production process.
4. Students will examine, demonstrate, and create sufficient skills and knowledge in advanced areas of study in their specialty.

Assessment Methods

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of theatre concepts, theories, organization and production process.

The primary and direct assessment tool for this SLO has been the Exit Exam given to graduating seniors. The exit exam included questions from each theatre course that the student completed at FMU. These questions target specifics from the courses that would be representative of the knowledge in this SLO. The graded exams are reviewed by theatre faculty to determine areas in which students seem to have difficulty retaining important information. However, faculty have decided that a pre-/post- test combination would better suit our assessment needs. Essentially the same test containing the same questions, the pre-test would be given in the first semester of a student's program and the post-test given in their exit interview before graduation. We plan to implement the pre-test by Fall 2019 and post-test by December 2019. Any findings will be analyzed by the Theatre faculty at our closing meeting of the semester.

An FMU Theatre Handbook was created to provide important information for Theatre majors and minors. This tool does not assess, but provides useful information for students to apply to their academic and creative pursuits, as well as reinforces information they learn in class and productions.

Baseline – n/a

Benchmark – Continued use of the FMU Theatre Handbook.

Target – To create and implement a pre-/post- test for theatre majors and minors by Fall 2019. Update Theatre Handbook.

2. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary to successfully participate in a theatrical production under the direction and supervision of an experienced production team.

The direct assessment tool for this SLO is the use of the course Theatre Practicum (THEA 210) in which students receive a grade for specific roles (both onstage and backstage) under the direction of theatre faculty. Students are required to take multiple practicums in their program. The theatre faculty who work directly with the student in the production process assigns practicum grades at the end of the semester based on an evaluation of the student's performance in a specific assignment (lighting, acting, stage management, etc.). Items considered include (but are not limited to) attitude, professional manner, timeliness, discipline, commitment, quality of work, etc. Findings will be analyzed by the Theatre faculty at our closing meeting of the semester.

- Baseline – 100% of students taking the Practicum course in the 2017-2018 year were judged to have successfully completed (passed with a C or greater) the requirements of the course by a faculty panel.
- Benchmark – 100% passed with a C or greater 2018-19.
- Target – 100% to excel with an A.

3. Students will identify, examine, and evaluate skills, knowledge and vocabulary usage to form aesthetic judgments of/within the production process.

Many parts of the Exit Exam were specific to the production process including areas of aesthetic judgment. These parts had been directly assessed

independently of the entire exam in previous years. The pre-/post- test will also include these areas of direct assessment.

We also utilize a response report (written and oral) from a KCACTF (Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival) respondent for at least one of our yearly productions. This entails participation in the yearly festival including a visit from a respondent to comment upon all areas within a production. During this response, students are indirectly assessed through questions posed to them via the respondent. This year, we invited respondents to two productions.

At least one of our yearly productions includes an indirect assessment through a “post mortem” gathering. After the production closes, all cast and crew come together to discuss successes and challenges of that particular production.

All findings will be analyzed by the Theatre faculty at our closing meeting of the semester.

- Baseline – Completion of the exit exam, one KCACTF assessment per year, and one post mortem discussion.
- Benchmark – Two KCACTF assessments and one post mortem discussion.
- Target – Completing the pre-/post-test, at least one KCACTF assessment, and one post mortem.

4. Students will examine, demonstrate, and create sufficient skills and knowledge in advanced areas of study in their specialty.

In addition to being directly assessed by faculty in the course, final projects in upper level courses such as, Costume Design, Directing II, and Acting IV, usually receive outside adjudication, which provides direct and indirect assessment.

There is usually a written response and/or score from respondents.

Any findings will be analyzed by the Theatre faculty at our closing meeting of the semester.

Baseline – n/a

Benchmark – Costume Design adjudicated.

Target – We will ensure an outside assessment component in a performance and a technical area of the program each year.

Assessment Results

We had 14 majors and 15 minor/collaterals in Theatre for 2018-19.

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of theatre concepts, theories, organization and production process.

We gave no direct assessment exit exam this year. Therefore the baseline, benchmark, or target were not met and we have no data.

2. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary to successfully participate in a theatrical production under the direction and supervision of an experienced production team.

There were 18 assessed practicums of 14 students. All but one practicum was successfully passed, one student took an incomplete due to personal issues. Therefore, baseline and benchmark were achieved.

3. Students will demonstrate skills, knowledge and vocabulary usage to form aesthetic judgments of/within the production process.

No exit exam was given this year, so the baseline, benchmark and target were not met for this part of SLO #3.

There were 27 students participating in the two KCACTF-assessed productions so we exceeded our baseline from one to two productions, though we do not want to make that a target. The respondents' reports and comments echoed those concepts put forth by the faculty director during the production process. To have an outside professional reiterate what has been emphasized during the production process seems to encourage retention of those concepts. Respondent reports are attached.

There were 13 students participating in one post mortem event for the fall production.

4. Students will acquire and demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge in advanced areas of study in their specialty.

This year we had one outside adjudicator in Costume Design. I received data on May 28, the day before I left for a six week tour. I have included it in the appendix, but was unable to assess the data before I left.

Action Items

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of theatre concepts, theories, organization and production process.
 - Exit exam data is nonexistent for the 2018-19 year. For the last two years, the faculty has been questioning whether the exit exam is providing useful information for our purposes. We intend to redesign the exit exam as a pre-/post-test ready Fall 2019 semester.
 - The Theatre Handbook is online. It needs to be updated for 2019-20.
2. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary to successfully participate in a theatrical production under the direction and supervision of an experienced production team.
 - Benchmark met
3. Students will demonstrate skills, knowledge and vocabulary usage to form aesthetic judgments of/within the production process.
 - Pre-/post-test will be created and implemented by Fall 2019, otherwise the benchmark was exceeded.
4. Students will acquire and demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge in advanced areas of study in their specialty.
 - We will ensure an outside assessment component in both the performance and technical areas of the program, as well as set baselines, benchmarks, and targets in the fall.

Executive Summary of Report

Because of concerns put forth by CHE, in Fall of 2021, we will become a department of performing arts with emphases in music, art, and theatre instead

of individual programs. This will necessitate universal changes to our program. As well, we have made faculty changes in the last two years necessitating changes to our program. As we have considered curriculum changes, we have decided as a faculty that many of our current assessment methods are not valuable to us or providing useful information. Though there is some assessment data, we will change our current assessment tools. As the program structure becomes more clear, we will work to provide more clear information and policies for the students.

Appendix

1. Respondent Reports

a. Report from KCACTF respondent, Patrick Gagliano, for *The Bacchae*

KCACTF RESPONSE
University

THE BACCHAE
10.19.18

Francis Marion

From Pat Gagliano, Prof. of Theatre & Speech/Chair – Dept. of Arts & Communications,
Newberry
College

My goal was to respond to the production using a 45-60-minute dialogue following the performance and offer comments that may be useful in future productions. We discussed five required areas of a KCACTF response:

- I. **Choice of Play**
- II. **Direction**
- III. **Acting**
- IV. **Design**
- V. **Tech Elements / Execution of Design**

I. **Choice of Play**

The play was rewarding in many ways. The director reported that one of the most challenging aspects was teaching students to commit to rehearsals as scheduled. Even with casting challenges and changes from the original cast, the play was an appropriate choice for the University to produce based on the following criteria:

1. The Bacchae fit the potential acting company.
2. The University had the means to produce it.
3. The students and faculty thought the play think was appropriate.

I agree that the play was an appropriate choice because all students should have the opportunity to work on period literature, and Greek Tragedy gave the origins to theatre as we know it today.

II. **Direction**

The director's production concept was viable and realized. The play was staged in a thrust configuration, so composition of stage pictures is different from another theatre arrangement, such as a proscenium theatre. The director did a fine job

overall using the space advantageously, and the one suggestion would be to keep the actors in more diagonals, switching sides more so the audience on three sides would be able to see the faces of the actors intermittently.

The character of Dionysus came across as omnipotent and omnipresent. He used his followers, the women of the city (the Bacchae), as his “props” in an elaborate “play” for Pentheus. This was all part of his revenge on the new king (Pentheus), for not fully acknowledging his status as a deity.

There were many “model staging moments” that helped communicate the director’s concept and the plot of the story including: Dionysus’ walk downstage to address all after the earthquake, Teiresias’ entrance, Dionysus on the bench eating grapes, and the Herdsman scene with the Bacchae. Other moments may have been enhanced with more use of the stage such as Pentheus’ first scene, which stayed too static on the stage-right side.

The Bacchae (chorus) was unified, which is consistent with the literature and what we understand an ancient Greek production would have included. A suggestion was that the Bacchae could have enjoyed the Herdsman speech even more. Their pleasure in this scene would make the devastation that is to come more effective.

Vocally, virtually every line was articulated appropriately for comprehension. This is an area for student-actors to continue to stress.

III. Acting

In the response we discussed how the actors approached their characterizations, the character relationships, what period research they had done, and specific choices actors made to help establish their characters.

As a respondent, I offered a few descriptive words or phrases for each character:

- **Dionysus** – confident, calm, relaxed, vengeful. Very clear diction and a powerful voice.
- **Pentheus** – agitated, immature, impulsive, rigid, angry. Pentheus could have added the quality of scheming his next move rather than just playing “angry” at times.
- **Cadmus** – helpful, friendly, a “peace-maker,” angry with Agave at the end
- **Tieresias** – confident, secure, older (*seen in movement; suggest adding age to vocal qualities*)
- **Soldiers** – dutiful
- **Herdsman** – fearful of Pentheus (the king), vivid description with outstanding visual imagery; could add in how fantastic it is to witness these miracles!
- **Messenger** – respectful, appropriately fearful of the God, disgusted, lost, warned
- **Agave** – proud, devastated, shattered, shamed
- **Bacchae** – fluid, unified, disembodied voice at times, controlled by Dionysus

IV. & V. Design Elements & Execution of Design / Technical production

- A. Sound / Music** – Preshow music gave an “Asian” feel to the production. The calm, mysterious and at times, violent music also served as aesthetic tuning for the play to come. It was played at an appropriate level, allowing audience members to converse and it was audible enough to be heard.
- B. Scenery** – Simple, yet elegant depiction of the front of the palace of Pentheus and the street area. The urns on stage included thyrsi as a constant reminder of the Dionysian influence on the proceedings. The open space allowed the action of the play to take place and be staged appropriately for the thrust configuration of the theatre, as mentioned in “Direction” comments above.
- C. Lighting** – The pre-show setting used gobos to give the effect of an outdoor area. Color changes to highlight different moods helped communicate the emotional level of the scene or choral ode being presented. The challenge with using dramatic stage lighting effects is to always be sure actors facial expressions are sufficiently illuminated without losing the special effect. It would be okay for a moment or two to lose light on faces, however there were too many times when the faces of the Bacchae were obscured by insufficient illumination during the choral odes. The silhouette effects behind the scrim for ripping the cattle apart was very effectively done with red lighting, suggesting the violence. While this is a departure from the concept used in true Greek theatre, the invention of electricity and the 21st century demand for visual stimulation made this an excellent production choice.
- D. Costumes/Makeup/Wigs** – Dionysus’ horns are appropriate. He ate grapes and this coincides with his status as God of Wine. Costumes, makeup, and wigs were excellent overall to communicate character status, the time period of the action of the play, and they were simple enough to allow actors to move as planned and in character. One suggestion: make the first costumes for Cadmus and Tiresias sillier, because they admit they are not dressed as they typically would be, but in costume to worship the God Dionysus.
- E. Props** – good props overall to help communicate the action of the play. Suggestion: at the end of the play, when Dionysus reveals himself as the God, he could have had the more elaborate thyrsus to help distinguish him as a God. This is a way props can help tell the story through showing status.

In summary, The Bacchae produced by Francis Marion University Theatre was well-done, and an enjoyable night in the theatre. I look forward to more work from this production team and these students.

b. Report from KCACTF respondent, Steve Earnest, for *Dog Sees God*

TO: Dr. Keith Best, Professor
Department of Theatre
Francis Marion University

FROM: Steve Earnest, Professor
Department of Theatre
Coastal Carolina University

DATE: May 16, 2019

RE: ACTF Adjudication for DOG SEES GOD

On Saturday, April 13 I attended DOG SEES GOD at Francis Marion University. The production was entered as an associate entry in the American College Theatre Festival. I have included a few comments to document the guidance and support that I witnessed at this production and also make commentary on what I was able to glean from the department that evening.

First it was a wonderful educational experience to enable a senior theatre student, Emily Bouchette, to serve as director for this production. It was noted that this had been a singular goal of this student (to direct this particular play) and it was great to see that the faculty there found a way to make it happen. The production had very good qualities for a student directed production – her very first in this regard. In the talkback afterwards it was obvious that Ms. Bouchette felt adequately supported and mentored by her faculty colleagues.

It was also great to be able to see the tremendous support of the Francis Marion Theatre faculty that evening as many were present, assisting with production, working box office, etc. I was made to feel that the entire departmental atmosphere is one of great collegiality and one that is enabling students to achieve superior learning goals. It was clear that the students who were involved were keenly interested in their studies and that a great environment for learning is being fostered at Francis Marion.

2. Costume Design Outside Adjudication

Notes on THEA 309 Costume Design Final Projects

Respondents:

- Jay Briggs, Company and House Manager for The Warehouse Theatre and Freelance Director

- Amanda Sox, Professional Actress and Costume Design MFA

Respondents rated the students' performance in the following areas by assigning them 1-5 points and were given the option of providing comments.

1. Strength of Concept
2. Execution of Concept
3. Quality of Designs
4. Support Materials (Quality & Quantity)
5. Display
6. Ability to Communicate Ideas (Visually & Through Discussion)
7. Completion of Work
8. Preparedness

The scores and comments are below.

Student #1:

- Respondent #1, 33/40 points
 1. 5
 2. 3
 3. 3
 4. 4
 5. 3
 6. 5
 7. 5
 8. 5
 - Comments: I'd love to see this concept in some small theatre in Brooklyn. It's a great idea, and the concept could be produced somewhere, though (Student #1) was adamant that it would never be done. She excelled in tone and mood, but didn't communicate a story other than (student's) concept.
- Respondent #2, 34/40 points
 1. 5
 - Strong idea, very committed to it.
 2. 5
 - Nice commitment to the overall production concept. Considered storytelling while also integrating the concept.
 3. 4
 - Nice attention paid to color, materials, textures, etc.
 4. 4
 - Lots of research represented, not incredibly well organized.
 5. 3
 - Design board was a little sloppy, also wasn't utilized to explain the design.
 6. 4
 - Was able to communicate the idea, but didn't respond succinctly to all my inquiries.
 7. 4

- 8. 5
 - The prep work seemed well done; the presentation, particularly visually, was a little lacking.
 - Preparedness was strong; seemed ready to discuss the idea.

Student #2

- Respondent #1, 38/40 points
 1. 4
 2. 5
 3. 5
 4. 5
 5. 5
 6. 4
 7. 5
 8. 5
 - Excellent presentation-visually engaging. I could tell (the student) was passionate about the story. All support materials were thorough and very well executed. Nice sense of characters and their arcs. (The student) was a bit self-deprecating, even though (the student) did a great job. The concept wasn't particularly specific, but the work (the student) put into it was. Make a strong concept statement and own it!
- Respondent #2, 36/40 points
 1. 4
 - Concept is pretty straight-forward. Nothing radical here, but I do think it would highlight important themes.
 2. 5
 - I think nice attention has been paid to showing characters journeys of actualization through the fabrics, colors, and items
 3. 5
 - The design is well represented and well thought out.
 4. 4
 - Excellent renderings and + swatches to represent the work. Would like to have seen some of the practical elements (plot).
 5. 5
 - Excellent display. Liked how the board was used for research-table for samples-book for rendering. Well organized.
 6. 3
 - Explanation was a bit convoluted. Had strong ideas, just needs to practice articulating them a bit.
 7. 5
 - Excellent work here
 8. 5
 - Seemed well-prepared
 9. Additional Comments

- Made a strong case for why this play is important. Didn't want (student) to apologize for "not being a designer." Excellent visual display.

Student #3

- Respondent #1, 25/40 points
 1. 3
 2. 3
 3. 4
 4. 2
 5. 2
 6. 3
 7. 5
 8. 3
 - The modern concept could be visually lovely, but there wasn't much support made as to WHY it should be modern. Difference in class wasn't noticeable, nor jobs like shepherd. More attention to characters is needed, and support for concept.
- Respondent #2, 33/40 points
 1. 4
 - Contemporary take for the sake of clarity is useful while not particularly unique. That said, making it outdoorsy does have some specificity to the play.
 2. 5
 - The concept is well-maintained for the design throughout.
 3. 4
 - Seems a lot of attention was paid to specific articles of clothing and what they might convey about the characters.
 4. 4
 - Would have liked to have seen a bit more research represented.
 5. 3
 - Felt a little light. Would like to have seen more attention paid to this.
 6. 4
 - Pretty nice job articulating ideas-although relied a bit heavy on prechosen adjective.
 7. 4
 - The work seems mostly complete, but I think it could have been displayed in a way that exhibited this better.
 8. 5
 - Seemed prepared to discuss the work, but would like to have seen a bit more support material
 9. Additional Notes
 - Nice job sticking to your concept. Am curious if the dark/muted color palette would serve the comic elements of the play?