

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Name of Program:	Theatre Arts
Year:	2019-2020
Name of Preparer:	D. Keith Best

Program Mission Statement

The Mission of the Theatre Program is:

The Department of Fine Arts offers a major in performing arts with specialties in theatre performance (acting and directing) or theatre 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.
5. Students will participate in department productions and demonstrate the ability to recall knowledge by learning the script, blocking, and technical requirements needed for performance.
6. Students will demonstrate understanding of materials and concepts by attending classes and rehearsals, taking responsibility for work assigned out of class and rehearsal time, and

participating in activities assigned during class and rehearsal recognizing that collaborative work requires individual and group attention and accountability.

7. Students will apply knowledge and understanding through development of character motivation and backgrounds as well as design concepts and methods to create cohesive productions within the framework outlined by the faculty.
8. Students will discuss, analyze, and evaluate artistic choices in the performance and design realms postproduction based on knowledge gleaned in class and practical production and guided by faculty or a guest adjudicator.

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 2021 and post-test by December 2021. 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 2021.

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 2018-2019 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 A 2019-20.

- 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 one production.

At least one of our yearly productions includes an indirect assessment through a “postmortem” 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 postmortem discussion.
- Benchmark – Two KCACTF assessments and one postmortem discussion.
- Target – Completing the pre-/post-test, at least one KCACTF assessment, and one postmortem.

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 – Acting IV adjudicated.

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

Assessment Results

We had 10 majors and 11 minor/collaterals in Theatre for 2020-21.

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

Due to complications because of Covid-19, 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 7 assessed practicums of 6 students. The nature of the practicums were altered for individual work and online performance due to live performance restrictions because of Covid19. All practicums were passed with an "A". 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.

Fifteen Students participated in three productions prepared for online consumption over the course of the 2020-21 academic year. Two productions were exclusively student written and performed, guided and closely monitored by several faculty members. One production was written and performed by a faculty member, but the technical requirements were filled by students. No outside adjudication occurred due to Covid19 regulations. Though disappointed at the lack of live performance the students enjoyed the process of following a production from writing all the way through to performance. They were required to demonstrate a variety of acquired knowledge and methods to write, edit, rehearse, and perform their own work and/or work of peers.

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

Two students graduated from the program in the Spring 2021 semester.

One student who graduated in Spring 2020, but walked in the Fall 2021 commencement, will begin Graduate School for Lighting Design at the University of South Carolina in Fall 2021.

There was no adjudication of advanced courses this year due to Covid-19 complications.

Action Items

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of theatre concepts, theories, organization and production process.
 - Exit exam data is nonexistent for the 2020-2021 year. For the last few 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 2021 semester.
 - The Theatre Handbook is online and has been updated as of Spring 2021. We will continue to monitor the needs of the program and students and make future updates

- when required.
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 2021, 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. (Note: The 2020-2021 year has been an exception as there were no live theatre productions involving students due to Covid-19 regulations.)

Executive Summary of Report

In March 2020, universities across the country shut down campuses and moved instruction online because of Covid-19. Francis Marion University's theatre season was cut short and we had no April production. Also, assessment of performance classes did not occur. In the 2020-2021 academic year we faced many challenges as a Department in meeting our students learning needs while honoring the safety regulations made necessary by the Covid19 Pandemic. We altered our approach by widening the circle of perception on what encompasses theatrical performance. Though the year was not typical and was often frustrating it did, by forcing us out of our comfort zone, provide interesting opportunities for collaboration between faculty and students. Through those collaborations a greater understanding was achieved between faculty and students which will aid in setting new Baselines, Benchmarks, and Targets for future PLO's, SLO's, and assessment methods.

Because of concerns put forth by CHE, in Fall of 2021, we are a major in performing arts with Music Industry and Theatre programs allowing for tracks in both areas. 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. We will be in contact with our accrediting organizations to make sure our curriculum meets standards.

*Below I am including the response from the guest KCACTF adjudicator for our last live performance from pre-Covid19 2020. Two of the students in this production graduated this semester, Spring 2021. We look forward to our next live performance and our next guest adjudication!

Report from KCACTF respondent, Tom Burch, for *Boom*

February 24, 2020

To whom it may concern:

This letter will serve as a production response for Francis Marion University Theatre Department's production of **Boom**, by Peter Sinn Nachtreib.

I had the very good fortune to see this production this past SATURDAY, and wish to extend my congratulations to the show's team, the department, and the university for the high quality of work that was on display in multiple areas. There are several things which I wish to speak to in particular.

Conceptually the production was, overall, very sound. This indicates a clear point of view and a concise regard for the process and the story as led by the director, Dr. Dawn Larsen. The choices made in the design, direction, and acting were witty, thoughtful, and while very supportive of the text and the playwright's intent, they expanded on the world to create a unique experience, and that is precisely, the crux of good theatre.

In terms of design and tech, this production ranks among the strongest undergrad productions I've experienced in a while. Aaron Krohn's set and lights were both quirky and fun, and the technical execution of both were superb. Professor Steadman's costumes were clever and smart in their own way, and the surprise "reveal" at the end was perfect.

The acting too was quite good. This is a challenging play with multiple layers and styles required in the performing, and the actors carried it off quite articulately. This shows not only a solid ability of the students, but again, the concerted effort of the director to sculpt what is needed. This too was quite successful.

Overall, this production had a level of care and clear attention that some colleges struggle to achieve. I sincerely hope that you are aware and appreciative of the efforts and talents that you currently have on hand.

Best wishes on the rest of your school year, and if you have questions for me about this response, please feel free to contact me at tburch8@uncc.edu or by phone at 607-793-1275.

Sincerely,

Tom Burch
Assistant Professor of Scenic Design
UNC Charlotte

