

**Southern Utah University
Theatre Arts & Dance Department
Academic Outcomes Assessment Report
Academic Year 2002-2003**

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose:

Vision Statement:

Build, pebble upon pebble, by more and better programs, faculty and facilities, a rising arch of knowledge for our students through which the river of their and our artistic influence will flow across the community, region, and country, so that the national recognition of their talents may enrich all society.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the department of theatre arts and dance is to provide a nurturing and challenging educational environment which celebrates our history, propels us towards our future, and excels in practical application of theatrical and dance techniques. A rich diversity of idioms, theatrical disciplines, and technologies combine with an ever-changing array of production opportunities and personalized mentoring by all our faculty and staff. Central to our focus as a department is superior teaching; our classroom encompasses the studio, the stage, and the technical laboratory.

Goal Statement:

Provide our students with meaningful experiences that promote an understanding of the potentials of theatre arts and dance as mediums of expression and as collaborative art forms. We afford students the opportunity for creative and critical thinking, problem solving, exploration, in an environment that values artistic integrity, understands failure as well as success, respects the viewpoints of others, and encourages artistic truth. Our standard of quality is enhanced by our strong professional link with both the internationally recognized Utah Shakespearean Festival and Burch Mann's American Folk Ballet. The extensive season of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance serves not only as a training lab for our students, but also enhances the cultural and aesthetic experiences of our campus and is a major cultural resource for the southwest region of the state.

Intended Outcomes/Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the societal role of theatre and dance both past and present and will be able to articulate a vision for its role in the future.
2. Seniors will demonstrate their knowledge and mastery of their particular discipline (i.e. acting, directing, stagecraft, design, choreography, dance performance, etc.)
3. Students will know the options for and be prepared for post-baccalaureate opportunities.
4. Theatre and dance courses will be taught by qualified faculty and staff with sufficient expertise in their areas of teaching.
5. Laboratory and research opportunities will be available to all students and facilitated by qualified faculty and staff with expertise in the appropriate areas of the disciplines.

6. The theatre and dance curriculums will meet or exceed the standards set by the National Association of Schools of Theatre and Dance for undergraduate education in course offerings, content, activities and assessment.

7. The Department will provide the necessary facilities and resources to adequately prepare students for graduate studies, competitive job markets and technological advances in the field.

8. Students will develop and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the ethical principles associated with artistic integrity.

Assessment Criteria and Activities

1. Department will hire, promote and tenure faculty members who are qualified in the field and demonstrate teaching excellence. Teacher evaluations will be reviewed each semester and used to identify areas where improvement is needed. These areas are reviewed in annual stewardship interview with the department chair, and plans and commitments are made for necessary changes.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Two new faculty members were hired. One is a Professor of Costume Design and one Professor of Dance. Both new faculty members possess superior skills in their areas of expertise as well as in the discipline in which they will teach. Both bring a desired amount of diversity and knowledge to the program and the classroom fulfilling the department's goal to broaden the overall education of the students. A new staff member was also hired as Technical Director. He has an MFA and a proven track record in the classroom. The department chair (theatre) and associate chair (dance) meet with each faculty member to discuss strengths and weaknesses identified by university evaluations each semester. A yearly departmental evaluation was done to further identify strengths and weaknesses. Students discuss classroom productivity in juries at the end of each semester as well.

2. Department will assign faculty and staff with expertise to offer laboratory and research opportunities. The department will also require faculty to be involved in research and/or laboratory activities.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Many classes are taught in studio/laboratory environments. Each faculty member mentors a selected number of students outside regular classes in practical application of learned techniques (building costumes, designing scenery, directing, choreography, etc), independent studies, special projects and capstone projects. In addition to this, the Utah Shakespearean Festival in a variety of research and professional opportunities employs many of the faculty. All faculty members engage in professional development during the summer, nationally and internationally.

3. Every theatre and dance major is assigned a faculty advisor within the department.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Students have taken a more active role in their degree planning. Students have a better understanding of the university catalogue and how to utilize it. Each student receives a semester advising plan after advisement. This plan is a record of the advisement and serves as an unofficial contract between the student and their advisor maintaining it is ultimately the student's responsibility to follow the plan. Faculty advisors make sure students are staying on track with general education requirements and making progress toward graduation.

If a student fails to make satisfactory progress in class work, the advisor can limit the amount of departmental involvement such as: participating in productions or other departmental opportunities affecting the student's progress. A student can also be put on departmental probation limiting the opportunities for the student until grades improve or satisfactory progress is obtained. Freshmen are monitored closely to insure retention. Faculty advisors also serve as mentors for each student capstone project.

4. Every theatre and dance major is required to attend the fall and spring mandatory meetings for preparation toward the upcoming semester.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

The student handbook is reviewed and any additions or changes are identified. Students are made aware of departmental policy, introduced to all faculty, staff and student organizations, made aware of important dates and any other information deemed necessary by the faculty. The meeting is an open forum for questions and answers. This is especially helpful for new and incoming students. It serves to acclimate students and faculty for each upcoming semester.

5. All incoming freshmen will be required to produce a writing sample to assess adequate writing skills and identify deficiencies.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Deficiencies are identified and students are advised on where to obtain additional help. Writing skills show improvement and students are better prepared for writing their capstone thesis in their senior year.

6. Theatre students will complete the departmental core offerings with a satisfactory grade of C or higher.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Students are better prepared for upper level courses. The varying levels of skill, knowledge, and technique in upper level courses are reduced allowing the class to progress at a faster and more even rate.

7. All theatre and dance majors will be required to complete a mentored capstone project demonstrating competency in their discipline. Students will meet with professor and/or supervisor on a biweekly basis to monitor progress.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Students take a more active and interested role in a capstone project designed around their specific interests, skills and needs. Faculty members can also design a capstone that addresses student's weaknesses. A capstone project is essential in an art's program. The student must first successfully complete the project and then be able to articulate their process on paper. Most of these capstones are realized projects (some on paper) allowing the student to use these projects on resumes for graduate study or post-graduate employment.

8. Senior capstone presentations will be made to the supervisor and other appropriate faculty.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Students appreciate receiving feedback from more than one instructor. It also helps determine their ability to articulate their project in concise, understandable terms. Each capstone receives a post-mortem from at least two faculty members.

9. All dance students must participate in placement auditions before admission into major level courses.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Students are placed in appropriate level courses based on skill and technique. This ensures the student's desired rate of progress as well as the progress of the entire class. It is also essential in avoiding injuries or damage to the student's physical condition.

10. All dance students will have to meet competency levels before being allowed to advance in their dance course work.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

See above.

11. Time will be allotted at the annual fall faculty and staff retreat to discuss capstone project options for each of the senior students. Assignments will then be made through subsequent consultations between the student and their advisor. (In the case of a student with a performing discipline, if a major role has not been earned through the auditioning process, then the student and advisor will make a proposal to the faculty for a special project.)

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Each student's strengths and weaknesses are addressed. A basic capstone is then formulated to address respective areas (directing, acting, designing, choreography, dance, etc). Then the advisor meets with the student to finalize the capstone allowing the student to design the specifics of the project in accordance with the faculty's expectations. This ensures that each capstone is designed to meet the specific needs of each student as designated by the faculty and the student.

12. Juries will be held at the end of each semester for all theatre and dance students. Faculty will allot a ten to fifteen minute interview for every major. Faculty members will be present to determine each student's level of skill, competency and progress. Strengths and weaknesses will be assessed for each student and an individualized course of action will be developed.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

This process takes four to five days to complete and is mandatory for all majors. The students are reacting positively in numerous ways. It allows the faculty to know and assess each student's needs individually. The student is allowed time to discuss any of their concerns and desires. They are encouraged to provide examples of their work from the semester and receive feedback. Writing samples are reviewed to ensure progress. Overall departmental moral has improved significantly. Students feel they have an active voice in the department. Students are more apt to succeed knowing they will be individually assessed at the end of each semester by all faculty and staff members. Individual student successes are recognized. All seniors are given exit interviews to evaluate the program strengths and weaknesses.

Students not making satisfactory progress are given a plan of action for improvement. Some students are encouraged to pursue other areas of the discipline. In extreme cases, some students are advised to pursue other majors.

13. All graduating seniors will be given an exit interview at their final jury to assess program strengths and weaknesses. A survey will be administered to all graduating seniors by department to collect quantifiable data for continuing assessment.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

Graduating seniors (also see above) make recommendations to faculty and staff for changes within the program. Each senior is asked if they would recommend SUU to other students: why or why not? The first most frequent request is for the department to offer a BFA in theatre, dance and the implementation of a musical theatre degree. Many senior theatre majors have expressed the need for more preparation toward getting into graduate programs and post-graduate job seeking skills. Most technical theatre students desire more current equipment and resources to better prepare them for the advanced technical level of equipment in their field. Approximately 95% of all student expressed satisfaction with the increased diversity among the faculty, in the classroom as well as the diversity of artistic freedom in student and faculty productions.

A student survey was administered to a sampling of students from all classifications within the department. This survey was administered by a group of students as a communication's class project. These students worked with some of the faculty to develop a series of assessment questions. The survey proved to be a most useful tool for the departmental assessment committee and will be continued in the future.

14. Departmental objective survey administered to all freshman, sophomores and juniors to continually track program strengths and weaknesses during undergraduate development.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

See above.

15. Departmental Curriculum Committee will meet biweekly to evaluate curriculum effectiveness.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

A new theatre core and major curriculum, new course numbers and assessment plan were developed and implemented. Advising contracts were also developed to help track graduation progress. The new curriculum was designed to move easily into a BFA curriculum while maintaining the generalized theatre curriculum as well. New courses were added to offer broader and yet more specialized areas of study. The new curriculum was designed to emulate research done on other accredited theatre programs within the state and around the country.

An accreditation reviewer has been scheduled to visit the program in Fall 2003 and the curriculum committee agreed to pursue departmental accreditation. After this review, the curriculum will be revisited and reviewed. This will also be necessary due to the changes in the GE curriculum.

16. Department will administer surveys every three years to assess curriculum fit with employers and graduate program needs. A variety of post-baccalaureate entities will be contacted to create an assessment profile with respect to the necessary skills needed to adequately prepare students for future endeavors. The data will be tabulated and compared to curriculum for ongoing evaluation.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

No

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

No

What were the results?

Department will delay this criterion until curriculum has been reviewed by accreditation representative and final revisions are made. Projected date for this criterion to be implemented is Fall 2005.

17. Curriculum and departmental policies and procedures will be evaluated with student opinions by the implementation of student focus group reviews on an annual basis.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Partially.

What were the results?

A student focus group was selected to review the student handbook. Only one student member turned in a copy of the handbook with suggested revisions. Students in the process of juries evaluate the curriculum. A BFA in theatre is the optimum request.

18. Department will develop, evaluate and refine the departmental student handbook for policies and procedures on an annual basis. Every theatre and dance major is required to abide by the policies and procedures as set up in the departmental handbook.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Yes

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Yes

What were the results?

The student handbook was implemented two years prior to this assessment. Each year it has been revised according to faculty and student concerns. The handbook has proved to be the most valuable tool for running the department and acclimating students to policies and procedures. Students and faculty now have a reference for any question regarding departmental policy. The handbook has provided a most needed structure for the operations of the department and continues to be revised annually.

19. Department will maintain Alumni contact for post-baccalaureate assessment.

Was this assessment criterion implemented?

Partially

Was this assessment criterion achieved?

Partially

What were the results?

Prior to the appointment of the new department chair (3 years ago), many student files were lost or not maintained. A database for all remaining student files has been developed but funding has not been sufficient to contact former students as of yet. Contact will depend on sufficient funding to develop an alumni newsletter and website. Projected criterion implementation is unknown at this time.