




CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair/Program Director:  Date: 10/26/2021
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Department of Theatre Arts

College of The Arts

June 2021

This Memorandum of Understanding outlines the consensus reached by the Department of Theatre Arts, the College of the Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review (Self-study in September 2017, accreditation site visit in March 2019 and Action Report in September 2020, and UPRC report in November 2020). It describes the goals to be achieved, and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals, during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The Theatre Arts Department offers degrees for the following programs: BA in Theatre (General, and Options in Performance Technical Theatre: Scenery/Costume/Lighting Design); BFA in Acting – suspended admissions, MFA in Theatre Arts (Option in Acting and Option in Technical Theatre: Costume, Scenery, Lighting Design) – suspended admissions; and, MBA/MFA in Theatre Management. A Minor in Theatre Arts is also offered. Theatre Arts is accredited by the National Association of the School of Theatre (NAST) for all programs.

In their last Accreditation visit and MOU in 2010 the Department was asked to: 1) seek and reduce the difference in retention and graduation rates between native and transfer undergraduates; 2) Assess student learning and use findings for program improvement; 3) reduce the size of performance classes for the majors and bring the Departmental SFR for major courses into closer alignment with College averages; 4) As funding allows, give priority to tenure-track searches in performance. It appears that progress has been made towards most of these recommendations, although Departmental SFR was not addressed.

A number of strengths were identified in the reports.

- Transfer Student Graduation Rates are higher than other programs in the College.
- Given the degree program changes and with the addition of the MBA/MFA degree offering, there are a large number (65) and variety of graduate courses offered, providing breadth and depth for the students as well as a better opportunity for job placement upon graduation.
- The Theatre Department was highly commended within NAST's accreditation reviews for their EPIC and Affinity Series programs, "appearing to provide outstanding outreach into the local community." These connections provide significant opportunity to "build bridges" with the local community and foster a relationship with the campus community. The program, faculty, and students are to be commended for their efforts

over the past 7 years in refining and demonstrating the value of these programs, provide professional opportunities that give valuable practical experience to the students. Such efforts greatly enhance student learning experience and employment opportunities.

Areas of Concern and Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports.

- As mentioned in both the self-study and NAST accreditation reports, “the number of faculty is presently insufficient to cover all the needs of all the graduate and undergraduate programs.” In general, there is limited capacity for faculty advising, support, and mentoring of students. In particular, the insufficient faculty numbers may not allow for a comprehensive graduate experience with mentorship and advising. Insufficient faculty may also be an issue with the Department’s plan to offer a new BFA in Acting degree.
- Although undergraduate headcount has increased slightly during the period of review from 240 in 2015 to 358 in 2019, the number of undergraduate degrees awarded declined from a 70-82 range, down to 57 in 2018-2019. This may be connected to the decline in number of majors or recent changes to curriculum and course offerings. Given that no updates on the program changes were submitted for this expedited review it is not possible to currently assess how these changes may impact the trends in number of majors and number of degrees awarded.
- Graduate applications, admissions and enrollment numbers have seen a steady decline over the past 7 years in both the MFA in Acting and MBA/MFA programs. The Department hypothesizes the decline in graduate headcount is due to challenges with recruitment, faculty resources, and lack of financial support for graduate students.
- The department has PLOs posted on the COTA website. However, they should be revised to be more measurable and sustainable to allow for more accurate assessment and achievement. The department does not have a formal system in place to evaluate the results of their degree or GE programs. The department collects some assessment data, but it is unclear how they review these assessment results, report the results, and how they close the assessment loop for program improvement.
- The NAST accreditation review and the Department self-study identified a weakness in the Department’s aging Facility. While not on the master 10-year renovation plan, this is concerning, given the building’s frequent use and large student enrollment for the program.
- The department has identified a clear opportunity for alumni outreach. They “do not have a formal system in place to track graduates of their programs.” The successful implementation of a formal tracking system and alumni outreach program may help the program to gather better data to help make appropriate changes to curriculum, attract more students, and achieve self-sustaining student enrollment.

It is therefore agreed that the Department will:

1. Develop and implement an assessment plan that includes closing the loop assessment activities. Provide an annual assessment report (due June 1) including progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU to the COTA dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinator of Program Review and Assessment. In its 2020 Action letter NAST awarded a 5-year accreditation approval, therefore the review cycle will be from 2018-2025. A comprehensive self-study will be due June 2024 for

2024-2025 Academic Year accreditation and program review process.

2. Continue revising PLOs to be active and measurable learning outcomes and to formalize their assessment practices, include direct assessment mechanisms, and use assessment data to close the assessment loop for program improvement as well as GE improvement.
3. Work with the college to develop a strategic plan which identifies priority needs for hiring faculty, as well as addresses the need for resources to enhance faculty and graduate student support and mentoring. This plan may include strategic hiring of tenure track faculty and/or lecturer faculty with expertise in niche areas, as resources permit. This plan may also require the School and College to consider the viability of offering all of its current degrees, options, and courses.
4. Continue to identify barriers to graduate student recruitment and work with the college to identify strategies and financial resources for improving graduate recruitment, enrollment and retention in the programs.
5. Monitor the impact of recent changes in curriculum as part of an overall effort to determine the cause of decline in undergraduate majors and degrees granted and develop strategies to address these trends.
6. Create a system to track graduates and engage alumni in their outreach efforts to improve curriculum and attract more students.
7. Evaluate programs within 5 years of suspended admissions to determine if programs should be discontinued, modified, or opened.
8. Work with the College to address building and space needs and consider allocating budgetary resources to theatre building improvements in the short-term.