**Theater and Dance**

*Assessment for Theatre Major 2009-10*

Four theatre majors graduated in 2010 (three in May, one in September). All were active in the production program, both backstage and onstage throughout their four years.

*Goal one: Theatre majors will be familiar with a variety of plays representative of the whole spectrum of western dramatic literature and types of theatre.*

All theatre classes involve the study of play scripts and thus contribute to this goal, especially the history and literature classes: Survey of Dramatic Literature (209) and the classical (280), modern (281), and post-modern (372) history classes. Additionally, students are familiarized with a variety of plays through our production program.

*Goal two: Theatre majors will articulate and discuss the evolution and development of theatre, as well as the relationship of dramatic literature and physical theatre to cultures and societies.*

This goal is met primarily in the theatre history classes (classical [280], modern [281], and post-modern [372]). The relationship of dramatic literature and the physical theatre to cultures and societies is also an important part of the various period acting classes (365,366).

In order to determine familiarity with a variety of plays and types of theatre (**learning goal one**), as well as to ascertain knowledge of the development of the theatre in relation to culture and society (**learning goal two**), we look to student performance in the Survey of Dramatic Literature class and the various Theatre History classes.  The grades of the four graduating seniors in these classes were generally good, with individual grade point averages in these classes ranging from 3.0 to 4.0; their average g.p.a. for these courses was 3.5. All of the students took at least one period acting class and three of them took two. Grades ranged from 3.3 to 4.0, with an over-all average of 3.8. In addition, each of these students took part in the production program and the play selection process each year, becoming familiar with many more types of plays and styles of theatre. We feel that all of our students met these goals.

*Goal three: Theatre majors will read and analyze play scripts from a theatrical point of view and demonstrate the ability to make informed judgments about play scripts and productions.*

This requirement is addressed in our production classes where plays are read and analyzed with an eye toward production: the acting (251, 365, 366) and directing (350) classes, as well as the design (211,311) classes.

To measure students’ ability to analyze scripts from a theatrical point of view (**learning goal three**), we look at performance in “production” classes dealing with technical theatre and design, acting, and directing.  Here, too, the grades of the graduating seniors were uniformly high—no grade was below 3.3 and the average of all grades was 3.7.  Two of the seniors went on to direct one-act plays as part of the Workshop Theatre. We feel that all our students met this goal.

*Goal four: Theatre majors will participate in all aspects of the production of a play.*

This goal is met through participation in the production program. The theatre keeps a detailed record of each student’s participation in productions throughout his or her time at Albion. Majors are required to enroll in four quarter-unit practicum courses that insure their participation in a variety of productions. In addition, majors are required to serve at least as an Assistant Stage Manager for a production, where they take part first-hand in the whole scope of a production—from production meetings to rehearsals, to technical rehearsals to performances.

The results for **learning goal four** (students will participate in all aspects of the production of a play) revealed the variety f experiences that we expect to see. Each student worked backstage in a variety of functions (including the required assistant stage manager) as well as acted in several productions. Two of the students directed one-act plays, one directed a full-length play, and one designed scenery for two major productions. In the past, some majors acted almost exclusively while some did technical work almost exclusively. We were pleased that each of the graduating seniors participated in all areas of production.

***Exit interview****: on May 4, 2010, the theatre faculty held an exit interview with three of the four graduating seniors (the fourth was in New York City at the GLCA Arts Program).*

The three students found the work load for the major “about right” and the subject matter “sufficiently challenging.” They felt that the grading was “easy” and thought that the curriculum could be “more demanding.” The students also observed the lack of upper-level classes, particularly in the area of theatre history/dramatic literature, theory, and criticism. Students commented on the value of the basic core of classes for the major and noted the positive sense of community that results when majors move through those core classes together. All of the students had been active in the production program throughout their four years, and felt that the theatre practicum “requirement” should remain as an “option” for students.

Interestingly, the students also felt that the department does too much in the production program (four “major” productions each year, plus student-directed workshops and a major dance show). They felt that doing fewer shows (three each year or alternating three and four every-other-year) would increase the quality, result in greater competition, and reduce over-all stress!

Lack of general communication was cited as a weakness in the department. We discussed the possibility of a monthly meeting for majors and minors where information could be disseminated and discussed and student questions could be answered. (The meeting might take place before Sunday evening rehearsals once a month in place of an Albion College Players meeting.)

Assessment results are shared with all department faculty and discussed with student representatives who attend the department meetings. The faculty then make recommendations for changes.

* Curricular changes regarding the 300-level history/literature/theory classes will need to be held in a wider discussion of how the department (and the college) plans to proceed with the loss of the Chapman/Bremner tenure-track position in theatre, the elimination of the dance position, and the retirement of Royal Ward.
* The production load has been a topic of conversation for several years; the recent staff reductions will force the department to come to grips with this issue.
* The observations that grading is too easy and that the curriculum could be more demanding need wider discussion both among the faculty and the students.