Assessment Report for the Department of Theatre and Dance

This year the department graduated a total of four majors and two minors. We returned to a former practice of giving an exit exam. We had stopped doing this about six years ago when we were told that such a small sample has no statistical validity. The previous standard we hoped to achieve was that we wanted 75% of our graduates to score a 75% or better. The exam was edited by or present faculty to make it more representative of our present curriculum and to make to language of the questions less confusing and obtuse. We decided to give the minors the same exam since many of the basic courses in the core of the major are the same. Also, our minors do tend to take more than the minimum number of courses.

Of this year’s grads, five of the six took the exam. One of our minors didn’t manage to make it in during the last week before graduation. This may have been because this was a particularly bad semester for her. Family and personal issues impacted her academic work and she was very much behind in all her classes. She needed that time to catch up and graduate on time. We still hope to get her to do the exam (she has promised to do so).

The scores on the exam ranged from 80 to 70. This means that all of them passed. The breakdown was 80,79,77,77and 70. The one minor who took the exam got the 77. This means that three of the four majors got better than a 75, which met our expectations.

In looking at the questions that people missed, there were only four questions that more than three people got wrong. They all dealt with rather arcane bits of theater history. We are going to look at these questions in light of the text we now use. Our department has a series of three history courses. Of these, only two are required. Some people do take the third course, but some will take another three hundred level course instead. This does leave holes in the knowledge of some of our students. It may also be a problem that this test asks for information that our students may have studied two or three years ago. The students who graduated this year have had three people teaching our history courses because of turnover and loss of positions. This may also have had an effect on the student’s learning. Continuity is important in maintaining a program. At present we don’t have an Historian in the department. Mark and I are dividing up the history courses, but even though we have had a full compliment of history courses, neither of us is a real historian.

In addition to the exit exam we gave a satisfaction survey, which allowed the students to express their opinions on the department, the program and their participation. This consisted of ten questions about the major, the difficulty of the curriculum, the breadth of the curriculum, the rigor of the grading, and suggestions for improving the program. We did have one student major who was clearly dissatisfied with the program. He felt that courses were too easy, the plays were too big, and there was not enough professionalism in the program. One other student major also wanted more professionalism in the program. Part of the problem that that reaction reveals is in the nature of theater programs. When we get the few real hardcore majors that we do get, they often want to be treated like students in a true conservatory program. We do not, nor cannot offer a conservatory program. We don’t have enough faculty. Our curriculum, because the restrictions of the unit system, is adequate for a liberal arts school, but is nowhere near as intensive and in depth as a curriculum in a conservatory program. Our classes are usually at least half filled with students who are there because they want to do theater as a hobby or activity, or are there to fulfill mode/categories. There will always be a disconnect between the true theatre majors and the dilettantes. Past history has shown that if students are not cast in shows in their first year, they drift away from the program. As with most small programs we have many more women involved than men (about 3to 1). So we try to do shows of sufficient size to involve our core people and keep as many new people interested as possible. It’s a difficult balance.

The other people were far more positive in their assessment of their four years. Most were either agreeable or strongly agreeable in their opinion of what they knew about theater and its application. They felt on average that the curriculum was sufficiently demanding and that their experiences were good and prepared them for future work in the theater.

Several of our students plan to continue work in the theater and are going to look for work in that area. The two minors are going to pursue their major career goals. We advise our students to take a year or two to gain life and career experience before trying for Grad school. For example, Ben Hardin is going to U of Texas next year to study Theatre after three years of work experience. Two of our grads expressed an interest in Grad school in the future.

We will take these results under advisement and continue to work to develop our curriculum.

Assessment of modes and categories

Department of Theatre and Dance

Thea 251 Artistic Creative Mode

This mode asks that students perform a creative task. I had 16 students who all performed final monologues. The grades ranged as follows.

4.0 2

3.7 3

3.3 7

3.0 3

2.7 1

This mode also asks that students critically assess a work of art. My students reviewed 2 plays put on by the department. The results of one of those assignments is as follows:

4.0 5

3.7 6

3.3 4

3.0 1

Thea 209 This course fulfills the Textual Analysis Mode. As such, the class has to analyze an original text. The course is designed to teach the students how to analyze plays from different historical periods and genres. All the papers in the class are designed to do this. The students successfully wrote a final analysis paper, with the following breakdown of grades.

4.0 6

3.7 4

3.3 3

3.0 2

2.7 2

2.3 1

THEA 280 This course fulfills the Historical Cultural Mode. The students had to analyze a document or an artifact. The students wrote pre and post analyses about Greek masks, among other things. The grades were as follows. Two students did not complete the assignment.

Pre Post

4.0 0 4.0 1

3.0 2 3.0 3

2.0 2 2.0 0

Thea 111 This course is designed fulfill the Artistic Creation Mode. As such, the students should analyze a piece of art and perform a creative project.

Analysis of Performance

4.0 7

3.7 5

3.3 5

3.0 3

2.7 2

2.3 4

2.0 2

Final Creative Project

4.0 5

3.7 8

3.3 4

3.0 2

2.7 2

2.3 3

2.0 1

1.7 2