



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2016 Program Review

Department of Theatre and Dance

Academic Review and Planning
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul M. ...".

04/14/2017

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs: Date

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Process Overview

The review of the Department of Theatre and Dance (THDN) was conducted in accordance with the 2016 review guidelines. The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) conducts and writes the final reviews of all academic units on the Boulder campus. The unit submitted a self-study report in December 2015. The self-study was reviewed in early 2016 by an internal review committee (IRC) of two CU Boulder faculty members from outside of THDN, who also met with department personnel and carried out surveys of undergraduate and graduate students. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts within the discipline from outside of the University of Colorado, visited the unit on March 28 and 29, 2016, reviewed the relevant documents, and met with faculty, students, staff, university administrators, and ARPAC members. The internal and external reviewers' comments and recommendations are cited at appropriate points throughout the report. This public document reflects the assessment of and recommendations for the Department of Theatre and Dance as approved by ARPAC.

Academic Review
and Planning
Advisory
Committee
(ARPAC)

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Staff

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Unit Overview

The campus' standardized description of the Department of Theatre and Dance, and information regarding comparable units, can be found on the Office of Data Analytics' (ODA) website (<http://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-0>). ODA updates profiles annually in the fall semester. This report cites the ODA data for THDN posted in October 2015, the most recent update available; these figures reflect the state of the unit in academic year (AY) 2014-2015.

The unit describes its mission in the self-study report in four parts:

1. To educate and train undergraduate and graduate students interested in careers in theatre, dance, and related areas;
2. To provide classes in theatre and dance that will enrich the educational experience of students majoring in other fields;
3. To offer aesthetically and intellectually stimulating performances to the Boulder campus and the broader Colorado community;
4. To contribute, through research and productions, to the health and development of the arts of theatre and dance.

The unit offers BA and BFA degrees in Theatre and in Dance; the Theatre BFA offers specializations in performance, musical theatre, technology and design, or stage management. The unit also offers a Dance MFA, a Theatre MA, and a Theatre PhD. A new Experience Design MFA has been approved.

Personnel and governance

As of November 1, 2015, the department had 12 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty (according to ODA); the unit's website

lists 16 TTT faculty. The ODA report lists seven staff members. The self-study, prepared later in 2015, lists 12 staff. According to the THDN website, the TTT faculty consists of three full professors, eight associate professors, and five assistant professors. The site lists five senior instructors, one instructor, and nine lecturers.

The department's full professors are compensated at 80 percent of what their disciplinary peers in the Association of American Universities (AAU) earn and associate professors at 91 percent. THDN assistant professors earn about five percent more than peers. The external review committee notes that the associate professors who serve as associate chairs and directors of graduate studies are undercompensated.

A faculty-elected chair and two associate chairs (for theatre and for dance) lead the department. There are also two faculty-elected graduate studies directors (one for each of the two divisions). Merit evaluations are performed by a salary committee, consisting of the chair plus four faculty-elected members, with equal representation from the two divisions and with rank stipulations: two members must be tenured, and two members must be untenured or not on the tenure track.

Research, scholarship, and
creative work

The THDN self-study report cites the senior faculty's creative work but does not describe the assistant professors'. ODA data show that while the unit ranks low in scholarly output (as expected), it ranks second of 13 units in creative works.

Undergraduate education

The Office of Data Analytics unit profile shows 183 majors, about in the middle of the units being reviewed, down by almost 30 percent over five years. By contrast, minor-track enrollments

have increased to 98 students, a rise of 75 percent in five years. The student/TTT faculty ratio for majors is about 14, in the upper half of units being reviewed. Total undergraduate student credit hour (SCH) production was 10,834, representing a five-year decline of ten percent, a relatively low decrease among arts and humanities units. The tenured and tenure-track faculty delivered 18 percent of these credit hours, near the bottom among units being reviewed. Over five years, the proportion of TTT-taught credit hours has decreased, and the lecturer-taught proportion has increased. The self-study report notes that faculty teaching activities are underreported in credit hour data, since “as with any Theatre and Dance department, a substantial amount of the faculty's work and the student’s learning takes place in the production of theatre and dance performances – most of which is not reflected in Student Credit Hour totals.” The self-study also notes that THDN faculty contact hours per week exceed college averages: 7.55 hours versus 6.2 hours.

In the most recent ODA senior survey, 87 percent of graduating seniors say that the program met their educational goals, at the top of units being reviewed. More specific survey items, such as opportunities for interaction with faculty, or advising on careers, also received positive responses, while academic advising received lower ratings; in this area, the unit is just below the middle for units being reviewed.

Based on its student survey, the internal review committee reports that “students were generally satisfied with faculty and staff advising, opportunities to perform, exhibit and practice, and sequencing and continuity of curriculum [...] [but had] more concern with availability of required courses, electives and

financial support [...] [O]ver 80% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the department.”

Some comments on the internal review student survey suggest that there is tension between BA and BFA students. Some BA students feel disrespected by fellow students and underappreciated by faculty.

The external review committee is critical of the musical theatre BFA, suggesting that “neither students nor faculty were supportive of this program in its current form, which offers neither the faculty depth nor production opportunities found in comparable programs at peer institutions.” The self-study report describes some issues with program coordination between THDN and the College of Music.

Graduate education

As mentioned earlier, the unit offers a Dance MFA, a Theatre MA, and a Theatre PhD, and a newly approved Experience Design MFA. This last program is a professional master’s program to train people in creating “site and event-based interactive experiences for the public (e.g.: cultural and entertainment destinations, museums, theme parks, zoos, aquariums, memorials, retail establishments, exhibits, etc.).”

The Office of Data Analytics data profile shows 22 master’s (combined MFA and MA) students and 14 PhD students in the reporting year, with ten master’s and two PhD degrees awarded. Graduate program enrollments are down about a third over five years. Median time to degree for the master’s is 2.7 years, among the longest for units under review, while the doctoral student median is 4.72 years, the shortest in the comparison group.

The ODA graduate student survey suggests that THDN students are reasonably satisfied, as compared to other units, except regarding facilities, which receive ratings close to the bottom among the comparison group. The internal review student survey is less positive, with only 67 percent of students indicating they are very satisfied or satisfied with the graduate program. Areas of concern include financial support and opportunities to attend conferences and present or publish work. Seventy-nine percent of students agree that the department encourages a climate that is tolerant and respectful of diversity.

The department and the internal and external review committees agree that better graduate student financial support would be desirable.

Budget

The Department of Theatre and Dance earns funding from admission charges for its many public events. These funds amount to nearly a quarter of the budget, according to the self-study. The self-study report indicates that the unit views six staff positions (some part time) as supported by this self-funding and expresses concern about these positions being dependent on uncertain ticket sales. The internal review committee suggests that the unit should not distinguish self-funding from other funds in its budget planning, so as not to make certain staff positions more vulnerable to funding changes than others.

Space

The University Theatre Building has a complex history. The building was originally built as the university library and has been refitted and added to many times, resulting in awkwardly arranged and poorly adapted spaces. The unit also uses space in the Carlson Gym.

The self-study report points out many deficiencies in these facilities, ranging from poor sound isolation to old and worn fittings. The external review committee recognizes that “the department has many facility needs and significant deferred maintenance concerns.”

Inclusive excellence

The department self-study reports that the theatre division “[honors] the core value of [its] mission, ‘Diversity of Tradition’ where [it] practice[s] the global diversity of theories, practices and performance conventions, in [its] curricula and production,” and that the dance division is dedicated to diversity, as shown “in the array of activities and industry service [it] engages in and that [the division monitors] the shifting demographics of incoming college populations to ensure that [it plans] curricular transformations [...] to meet the needs of future students.” The report gives examples of activities that support inclusive excellence in both divisions.

Overall, the Department of Theatre and Dance ranks near the top of units under review in percentage of female faculty and in the upper half for faculty from underrepresented minorities. It ranks at the top for percentage of female undergraduate and graduate students, near the top for minority undergraduate students, and about in the middle for minority graduate students. Student surveys show that 77 percent of undergraduate students and 79 percent of graduate students strongly agree or agree that THDN “encourages a climate that is tolerant and respectful of diversity.”

Past Reviews

The 2009 review made a number of recommendations to the department; the department has acted on some of these. In particular, it has

1. Expanded its staff to provide better support for performance productions;
2. Improved graduate assessment;
3. Strengthened its relations to the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (see Campus Context below);
4. Improved undergraduate advising (as indicated by positive student survey results).

By contrast, other recommendations have gone unaddressed, or only partially addressed, leaving unresolved issues in the following areas:

1. Strategic planning: This remains a problem area. The current self-study report includes many promising ideas for improvement, but lacks prioritization, as judged by this year's external reviewers;
2. Facilities: ARPAC recommended that the unit devote resources to improving facilities rather than adding faculty or creating new educational programs; this has not been done;
3. Fundraising;
4. Accreditation;

5. Bylaws: ARPAC recommended language clarifying the voting status of non-TTT faculty, but this has not been done (however, neither the self-study nor the internal or external review committee reports suggest that there is a problem).

ARPAC's recommendations to the administration in the 2009 review, to provide help in improving facilities and support for graduate students, have not been acted on, or at any rate, not enough has been done. On the other hand, questions about how staff could be supported seem to have been resolved.

Campus Context

The Department of Theatre and Dance self-study report complains, “with rhetoric and resources, the campus has bolstered the STEM disciplines, while leaving the rest of the academic programs in the dark.” The department favors collaborative structures that would give them, and other arts units, a greater voice in college and campus affairs. Discussions regarding a school of the arts continue. The department and the external reviewers favor the formation of a school. The department suggests that an organization with fewer participating units—perhaps limited in scope to include Film Studies, Dance, Theatre, and possibly Music—might be viable. The self-study says, “there is no ongoing mechanism in place to coordinate / advocate for the arts at CU: Art and Art History, College of Music, CU Art Museum, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Film Studies, Theatre & Dance. Individually we are strong, vibrant units. However, without institutional advocacy and support, we are not able to realize our full potential in terms of attracting students, increasing donor participation, and growing audiences who attend our programming.”

The unit shares in a campus-wide problem: financial support for graduate students is uncompetitive and indeed simply inadequate, given Boulder’s increasingly high cost of living. Addressing this issue, especially in fields with limited grant funding, will be a major challenge. The best thinking across the campus, and likely a willingness to experiment, will be needed.

The department’s relationship with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (CSF), founded in 1958 by Department of English faculty, has varied over time. Currently there is no formal relationship, yet the THDN chair also chairs the CSF executive committee and the two entities share some staff, and THDN faculty and students do

important work for CSF (while gaining educational benefits in the process). The self-study report notes that working relations between the two groups have improved, but there are opportunities for greater synergy, especially in connection with a new THDN faculty hire specializing in Shakespeare and with campus events connected with the Shakespeare anniversary in 2016 (now completed). Starting in 2017, THDN plans to offer a new graduate certificate in Applied Shakespeare aimed at secondary school teachers.

National Context

The external review committee notes that the Department of Theatre and Dance does not participate in the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) or the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and hence lacks information about how it compares with similar units elsewhere. NASD and NAST provide data through HEADS (Higher Education Arts Data Service) that would be useful in this comparison, according to the external reviewers, and urges the unit's participation as "a means to research best practices in the field and stay abreast of trending theories about the role of the arts in higher education." The 2009 ARPAC review recommended that the unit consider accreditation by NASD or NAST or both; the external review committee says that participation without accreditation would itself be valuable.

Analysis

The external review committee identifies a number of important department strengths, including collegiality and cohesion, a good administrative structure with an experienced, well-respected chair, and faculty and staff that are productive, culturally and intellectually diverse, and supportive of junior colleagues. The unit is moving ahead with new initiatives, such as the Applied Shakespeare certificate and the new Experience Design MFA, and the self-study report includes many further planning ideas. However, the self-study, internal and external reviewers also suggest significant resource limitations that may limit the unit's progress in the near and middle term. Here are some of the issues that ARPAC notes.

Personnel and governance

The external review committee suggests a need for planning for leadership succession, and the internal review committee notes some potential organizational issues to be addressed if a future chair should come from dance. The IRC also suggests that some added mentoring may be appropriate for associate professors to support their progress to full rank, which is important for future unit leadership. Noting that THDN full professors are paid significantly below their peers elsewhere, ARPAC suggests that this fact may reduce the incentives for faculty to move up in rank and into leadership positions.

The self-study report describes many unit needs and attractive new opportunities, but it does so without setting priorities. A lack of prioritization complicates the allocation of resources, especially considering how many other campus units compete for funding. The external reviewers say, "absent a clear vision for the future, promising innovations such as the Applied Shakespeare certificate and the professional master's degree in Experience Design are simply additional responsibilities that must be met

rather than solutions.” A particular issue here is staffing the professional master’s program in such a way that it does not draw resources, such as TTT faculty time, from other programs.

The unit and the external review committee (and the previous ARPAC review) support some form of administrative cooperation among arts units, to include THDN. As things stand, activities that could be synergistic between the units are often uncoordinated, making it difficult to identify and address shared needs. Better coordination might enable a case to be made for new performance and rehearsal spaces, not for any one unit, but as a campus resource. Such synergies may exist among units within the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) and also between A&S and the College of Music and the College of Media, Communication, and Information.

Research, scholarship, and
creative work

The unit lacks good data on how its programs and resources compare with those at peer institutions. This lack complicates the work of requesting funds. It also makes it more difficult for the unit to set priorities. As mentioned earlier, comparative data are available from the National Association of Schools of Dance and the National Association of Schools of Theatre. Seeking accreditation would of course bring with it engagement with these data, but the external reviewers suggest that participation even without accreditation would be useful. Accreditation could help the Department of Theatre and Dance develop closer relationships with other campus units and improve program quality.

The department and the internal and external reviewers agree that THDN benefits from its association with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. The external review committee notes that

the relationship remains informal, while currently strong, and suggests that formalization of agreements would be desirable, to avoid possible future problems. Such a formalization should be accompanied by a careful analysis of potential partnership benefits and costs. As the the self-study report notes, the department faces many resource demands and should therefore be cautious before committing additional staff or facilities resources to CSF.

Undergraduate and
graduate education and
support

While student satisfaction with the undergraduate program is generally good, the external reviewers say that “neither students nor faculty were supportive” of the Musical Theatre BFA program in its present form, as mentioned earlier. A couple of student comments support this assertion; one comment complains of poor support from the College of Music for THDN students in the program. The external review committee suggests that the unit consider suspending or discontinuing the program. It is also possible that new Music faculty, with a strong interest in musical theatre, may help address the difficulties.

As mentioned earlier, some student comments suggest tension between BA and BFA students. This stands out against the background of generally harmonious unit relations.

While graduate student satisfaction is reasonably high, the graduate program suffers from limited facilities and a lack of financial support. The external review committee also saw evidence of faculty being stretched too thin: graduate students “collectively expressed deep concern over limited faculty availability.” Downsizing may be a way to address these issues. Fewer students would enjoy greater financial support, better facilities, and more faculty attention.

Budget

The unit and the external reviewers agree on the potential for regional support and donor contributions. Funds might be raised for scholarships, guest artists, and other needs. However, priority setting and closer cooperation across arts units are key missing ingredients that potential donors might wish to see.

The Department of Theatre and Dance is a complex unit to manage. As mentioned earlier, the internal review committee suggests that the unit is unwise to entangle funding sources, such as ticket sales, with staff needs, and should consider overall staffing needs, and overall funding, when managing staff. The external review committee cautions that while staff relations are generally harmonious, there are matters of staff classification and salary that may become sources of tension if not attended to.

Space

The self-study report lists many needs, including for deferred facilities maintenance and for additional and/or improved space. As the external reviewers suggest, THDN needs to prioritize: “prioritization means recognizing which facilities situations present health hazards, accessibility problems, and other potential liability as well as which equipment is ‘mission-critical.’ It also means recognizing which needs may justify internal reallocation of the unit’s existing resources as opposed to petitioning administration for support.” A prioritized list would also show what needs could be addressed by downsizing (as may be appropriate) and which not. Such an analysis would form the basis of a well-justified request for university investment.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) address the following recommendations to the Department of Theatre and Dance and to the offices of the dean, the provost, and the chancellor. It is the committee's intention that the recommendations serve to benefit program improvement and development and to further the mission of the University of Colorado Boulder.

To the unit

1. Continue advocating for an administrative structure that brings the Department of Theatre and Dance into closer cooperation with other arts units, builds visibility, and assists the units in meeting their strategic objectives. Be flexible in considering what units should participate, so as to include the College of Music and the College of Media, Communication, and Information, as well as the College of Arts and Sciences;
2. Establish ties with the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) and the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), including contributing the associations' data analysis efforts. Consider carefully whether accreditation by either or both bodies would be desirable;
3. Establish priorities among the many needs and good ideas described in the self-study. Regarding new initiatives, establish strategic goals and determine which possible new initiatives best serve these goals. Include an analysis of what high priority opportunities and needs could and should be addressed by redeployment of existing resources from lower priority activities. Second, prioritize facilities needs, distinguishing those that pose health hazards, accessibility problems, and other potential liabilities, as well as which equipment is "mission-critical." Ensure that problems at the

Gateway facility (a storage space on the CU Boulder South Campus) receive particular attention;

4. Discuss faculty interest in, and plans for, future leadership. Be mindful of putting undue service burdens on female faculty members. Provide mentoring for associate professors. Work with the college to adjust full professor compensation;
5. Make a plan for prioritized fundraising to meet unit needs;
6. Analyze the appropriate scale for the unit's educational programs, graduate as well as undergraduate, with the aim of meeting program needs and maintaining or increasing quality within prevailing resource constraints. Consider the balance among current, new, and proposed programs. Pay particular attention to the new Experience Design MFA;
7. Determine whether the Musical Theatre BFA should be eliminated or suspended. Include discussion with the College of Music of its role in the program and the interests of its faculty. Follow through as appropriate;
8. Investigate relations between theatre BA and BFA students, and act to improve those relations as appropriate. Consider in particular what role faculty attitudes may play in the situation;
9. With support from the college, develop a formal memorandum of understanding with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. The memorandum should identify mutually agreed commitments by CSF and THDN and establish mechanisms for cooperation between the parties;

10. Review staff classifications and salary, and make adjustments as appropriate. As part of the review, ensure that restricted funds, such as program or course fees, are appropriately allocated, but do not otherwise tie staff funding to specific funding sources such as ticket sales.

To the deans of the
College of Arts and
Sciences, the College of
Music, and the College of
Media, Communication,
and Information

11. Encourage and support the unit's efforts to create an administrative structure that brings the Department of Theatre and Dance and other campus units into closer cooperation, builds visibility, and assists in meeting shared strategic objectives.

To the dean of the College
of Arts and Sciences

12. Assist the Department of Theatre and Dance in prioritizing its facilities needs, including for maintenance, and provide support for meeting them;

13. Assist the Department of Theatre and Dance in developing a memorandum of understanding with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival that formally establishes the role of THDN in CSF and that outlines the expected benefits of their cooperation;

14. Assist the unit in establishing ties with the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) and the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), including contributing the associations' data analysis efforts. Consider carefully whether accreditation by either or both bodies would be desirable;

15. Work with the unit to address the full professor salary shortfall.

To the deans of the College of
Arts and Sciences, and the
Graduate School

16. Work with the unit to determine the most appropriate scale
for its graduate programs, given available resources.

To the Office of the Vice
Chancellor for
Advancement

17. Assist the unit in developing a fundraising program, in
cooperation with other arts units.

Required Follow-Up

The chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance shall report annually on the first of April for a period of three years following the year of the receipt of this report (i.e., April 1st of 2018, 2019, and 2020) to the deans of the College of Arts and Sciences and of the Graduate School and to the provost on the implementation of these recommendations. Likewise, the dean shall report annually on the first of May to the provost on the implementation of recommendations addressed to the college. The provost, as part of the review reforms, has agreed to respond annually to all outstanding matters under her/his purview arising from this review year. All official responses will be posted online.