

## **MEMO**

**To:** Larry Eilenberg, Chair of Theatre Arts

**From:** ThA Assessment Committee  
Roy Conboy  
Bill Peters  
Kurt Daw  
Kim Schwartz

**Subject:** ThA Assessment Report for Fall '12/Spring '13

**Date:** 5/31/13

### **Intro**

The Theatre Arts Assessment Committee was charged this year with resuscitating the department's Assessment program, and this report is a record of our activities in that regard. It includes:

- The standard reporting matrix, which we compiled for the March preliminary report, supplemented in this report with analysis and proposals for further study and action drawn from that report.
- A series of proposals to the department to enhance our Assessment program, including revisions to the Student Learning Outcomes
- A plan and calendar for future reporting.

The following documents are attached as appendixes to this report:

- **A.** The ThA Report Matrix F '12/S '13
- **B.** NAST Student Learning Outcomes
- **C.** ThA Current Student Learning Outcomes

### **I. The Reporting Matrix**

The Matrix itself is attached as an appendix to this report.

### **II. Matrix Analysis and Proposals**

Analysis: Responses from the faculty summarized in the reporting matrix indicate a large number of revisions to course structures and assignments as a result of decisions by individual faculty members about ways to more effectively achieve *student learning outcomes*. At the same time, two clusters of concerns emerged around topics of interest that bear further analysis and study from the department:

- A significant number of faculty members reported that their ability to achieve student learning outcomes in their classes was hindered by students' lack of reading and analytic skills in relation to dramatic literature. This concern emerged not only in the classes with significant literary components,

but also in acting, directing and design courses where it is needed as a foundation but is not the direct focus of the teaching.

- The assessment committee noted that this issue seems to be emerging from changing conditions (the more visual orientation of general culture, the lack of preparation students bring from their prior education due to systemic underfunding and resulting dysfunction, SF State's increasingly multilingual and international student body – which brings welcomed, enriching diversity also means a common frame of reference is no longer a given, and even the natural attractiveness of our production-oriented program to students with a bias for experiential learning) rather than from any individual or collective failure to deliver our current curriculum well, or a failure of curriculum design.
- The objective for a discussion of this issue, then, would be to consider if there are limited individual or collective “interventions” that might improve student skills in this area (and thus increase their attainment of course and program objectives) without sacrificing any of our program strengths and without assuming responsibility for general societal trends beyond our mission, or even our control.
- Concerns about what seems to be a growing problem of overcrowded and clashing schedule needs, both for individual students and departmental projects. Though this emerged as an issue in many classes, the root cause seems more a matter of extra-curricular involvement.
  - The committee again notes that to the degree this is a problem, it is one stemming from “too much of a good thing,” not faulty curriculum design or individual failure to deliver our curriculum, so it certainly needs to be approached with awareness that a strength of the program is the variety and number of opportunities.
  - The problem seems, instead, to stem from a smaller subset of our students taking on more production responsibilities and over scheduling themselves. This, in turn, might be due to another set of changing conditions, namely an increased number of transfer students meeting departmental requirements in shorter timeframes, combined with students feeling a greater need to compress their education into fewer semesters to control skyrocketing tuition expenses.
  - The focus of the discussion might be, simply stated, is there anything we can do in terms of policy, schedule, or advisement to create more even student levels of involvement across the student body and reduce any tendency to (voluntary but unwise) over scheduling by our juniors and seniors?

Proposals: The Assessment Committee proposes that the department establish small working groups during the course of the next Academic Year to study and propose actions on these two matters.

### **III. A Series of Proposals to the Department to Enhance Our Assessment Program**

The Committee proposes a series of changes, all of which are designed to improve our Assessment program, and adapt it to certain NAST and WASC elements. We'll leave it to the department to decide the procedural manner in which to approach these proposals.

**A.** The Committee proposes that the Department adopt the NAST Outcomes as our Departmental Outcomes. (As a point of clarification, these Learning Outcomes are those of the entire program itself. Individual instructors develop outcomes specifically related to their classes, in alignment with these departmental outcomes.)

During our work to put together the Assessment Report we found the current Departmental Outcomes difficult to deal with in terms of both number, and clarity. These issues were solved when we turned instead to the Student Learning Outcomes which have been developed by the National Association of Schools of Theatre, our accrediting organization.

This is not to say that we opposed the ideas in the current outcomes, only that they do not lend themselves to assessment at the departmental level, for the following reasons, among others:

- They were created without a clear idea of how they would be employed in assessment, and do not lead to measureable outcomes.
- A number of them emphasize scholarly aspects without regard to craft or art.
- Some are either too-overarching, or too specific – and some are both.
- Concepts such as professionalism and practical tools are mostly absent.

Adopting the NAST Outcomes as our departmental outcomes has a number of benefits:

- They've been tested in assessment programs nationwide.
- They will make for a more graceful comparison and study in subsequent NAST reviews.
- Because they are fewer in number they make the review process more practical.

If we adopt the NAST Outcomes we could then move on to further refine our Outcomes:

- Focus on specifically how each Learning Outcome serves our classes, and conversely how our classes serve the Outcomes.
- Develop Outcomes that are specific to our areas of emphasis.

**B.** The Committee proposes that the Assessment Committee take as one of its charges next year the study and development of proposals to create or designate capstone experiences for the major.

**C.** In order to comply with a WASC Key Effectiveness Element, we propose that the department agree that all syllabi in the department will include the full text of the department's Learning Outcomes, or attach the Outcomes as an addendum. In addition we propose that the Outcomes be prominently posted in the department, and on the Web Site.

**D.** In order to comply with a WASC Key Effectiveness Element, we propose that all faculty members indicate (at least by number) in the "objectives, goals, or outcomes section" of their syllabi which learning outcomes the course primarily addresses.

**E.** Finally in terms of long-range planning for the Theatre Arts Assessment Program we propose that the department adopt a seven year cycle in which NAST Learning Outcomes will be systematically assessed, with a detailed analysis of related data for one outcome per year. Section IV below sets out a calendar for such a cycle.

#### IV. Plan and Calendar for Assessment Reporting

It should be understood that every class in the Department should have a designated process for Assessment. And that most of these already exist. During each semester, the Assessment Committee will designate which classes will report the results of these processes, according to which Student Learning Outcome is due for study. Deadlines for reporting to the Committee would be the same as those for turning in grades. The table below shows the 7 year cycle for Assessment reporting, with a list of classes that would currently be designated for each report.

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Year of Assessment</b>	<b>Courses</b>
1. Be effectively involved in the creation and presentation of public performances in the theatre.	2013-14	
2. Understand basic production processes such as acting; directing; stage, costume, and lighting design; and basic technical operations related to productions.	2014-15	
3. Become familiar with and develop competence in a number of theatre techniques	2015-16	
4. Develop visual and aural perceptions related to theatre performance, as well as a structured approach (through linguistics) to the use of language.	2016-17	
5. Become familiar with the historical and cultural dimensions of theatre, including the works of leading playwrights, actors, directors, and designers both past and present.	2017-18	
6. Understand and evaluate contemporary thinking about theatre and related arts.	2019-20	
7. Make informed assessments of quality in works of theatre.	2021-22	

## **V. Conclusions**

Overall the Committee found, as did our NAST review, that the department continues to offer a high-quality program rich with scholarship, creativity, and diversity of learning. The proposals for further study and for Assessment changes contained in this report we believe can only enhance our program.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the entire department for their assistance and support for our endeavors this semester. We're pleased to have re-established our Departmental Assessment process, and by the thoughtfulness and scholarship of the reporting and consultation which helped to make this possible.

Thanks.

**Theatre Arts Assessment Report – Spring ‘13**  
**Appendix A**  
**San Francisco State University**  
**Inventory of Program Assessment Activities**

**Program: Theatre Arts BA**

**College: Liberal and Creative Arts Date: 5/23/13 - Final**

**Program Mission:** The Department of Theatre Arts (THA) is an inclusive learning environment that promotes creativity and scholarship, and mirrors the wide range of cultural, artistic and scholarly interests in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our mission is to create and maintain an environment that promotes respect for and appreciation of scholarship, freedom, human diversity and the cultural mosaic of the city of San Francisco and the Bay Area. To promote excellence in instruction and intellectual accomplishment; to provide broadly accessible higher education for residents of the region and state, as well as the nation and world.

<b>Measurable learning outcome</b>	<b>Place in curriculum where outcome is addressed</b>	<b>Academic year outcome was/will be assessed</b>	<b>Assessment Procedures/ Methods/Strategies</b>	<b>Summary of findings about student learning</b>	<b>Use of findings for program improvement</b>
8. Be effectively involved in the creation and presentation of public performances in the theatre.	310: Scenery and Properties Lab and Crew 312: Costuming and Make-up Lab and Crew 313: Lighting and Sound Lab and Crew 335: Rehearsal and Performance 515: Leadership and Organization for Production 530: Acting the Play 533: Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop 610: Practicum In Theatre 690: Brown Bag Theatre Company	Theatre Arts has developed a 10-year L.O. assessment cycle which aligns with our national accreditation (NAST) visits. We were last visited and reaccredited in 2011-12. Data collection is continuous, but full analysis of each outcome will happen in two specified years before our next visit.  <b>This outcome will receive particular focus in:</b>	<b>ThA310</b> – Primary direct observation of basic scenic construction techniques, safe tool usage, safe shop operating procedures and commitment to a set schedule.	Although not the focus of detailed analysis this year:  <b>ThA310</b> – The timeline of the production schedule present structural issues. The first challenge comes during the first weeks of the semester, when all students enrolled must be trained on the safe use of the equipment within the first week (or two) of classes. The remainder of the semester is an ebb and flow of busy times and less busy times which can be	Although not receiving major focus this year:  <b>ThA301-</b> Constant re-structuring of the class is occurring. Every semester the hours that the students are required to work are shaved down as much as possible. Training has been streamlined into 3 training sessions, instead of 4. One training session has been turned into a treasure hunt to make it more fun and interactive.

		<p><b>2013-14, 2018-19</b></p>	<p><b>ThA 610.13</b> - 1. Rubric-based qualitative assessment. 2. Peer assessment of collaborative process.</p> <p><b>ThA 533:</b> Interactive primary assessment of rehearsal process. Data captured via narrative-based notes.</p>	<p>disorienting for some students. Finally, the required crew assignments are often more hours than should be completed for a 2-unit class.</p> <p><b>ThA 610.13</b> Instructor suggests that students find collaboration a bigger challenge than they anticipate, as opposed to technical knowledge and expertise.</p> <p><b>ThA 533:</b> Instructor finds the learning outcomes are being met consistently. Generally, the weakness of our students is their literacy with script work and research.</p>	<p><b>ThA 610 .13</b> Collaborative group discussions instituted in the pre-production semester, w/small group interactions in a low-pressure situation. This fostered an atmosphere of trust and group focus, leading to openness and responsiveness of the individuals toward the group effort.</p> <p><b>ThA 533:</b> Instituted relationship with our GWAR program, encouraging wider research and related reading.</p>
<p><b>9. Understand basic production processes such as acting; directing; stage, costume, and lighting design; and basic technical operations related</b></p>	<p>130: Acting Workshop I 205: Intro to Tech Theatre and Design 230: Acting Workshop II 305: Design Graphics for Stage and Screen</p>	<p><b>2012-13, 2017-18</b></p>	<p><b>THA205 –</b> Evaluative assessment via quizzes and exams based on material covered during lectures.</p>	<p><b>THA205 –</b> Students proceed from 205 to the various areas of emphasis with a general knowledge of all design and technical related</p>	<p><b>THA205 –</b> Inviting guest lecturers in to break up the monotony has been helpful. The guests often bring examples of their work or demonstrations to</p>

to productions.

<p>340: Principles of Directing</p>		<p><b>ThA 230:</b> Interactive primary assessment of exercise assignments, final improvisation and final scene presentation. Data capture methods in discussion.</p> <p><b>ThA 305-</b> Portfolio based assessment.</p> <p><b>TH A 340</b> – 1. Primary assessment of three</p>	<p>areas, thereby giving them a greater understanding of all departments and how they interact. The on-going challenge of this class is that many students find it difficult to take notes in a typical lecture-based class and then recall the information during a written exam.</p> <p><b>ThA 230:</b> Instructor finds this objective relating to basic acting process is being met.</p> <p><b>ThA 305</b> – Most challenging is the process of unlearning unproductive technique and breaking through rigid assumptions about “I can’t draw.”</p>	<p>share during their lecture. Attempts to interject more stories about experiences in theater to assist students in connecting the vocabulary with a memorable story or anecdote. When possible, examples of materials are handed around the class and the entire class is invited onto the stage at the end of the session to view certain elements discussed.</p> <p><b>ThA 230:</b> None appear to be needed at the introductory level. Re-consideration of evaluation techniques will occur with new hire acting professor in the coming academic year.</p> <p><b>ThA 305</b> – Created more assignments accomplished primarily in class where non-threatening nurturing is encouraging students to let go of their resistance to new techniques.</p> <p><b>TH A 340</b> – In process:</p>
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			<p>directorial projects, two focused formatively and a final focused more evaluatively. 2. Portfolio-style assessment of “director’s books” for projects. 3. Three objective examinations of terminology. 4. Four analytic papers used for evaluative assessment.</p>	<p><b>TH A 340</b> – Most difficulties are encountered in the <i>initial</i> process of choosing scenes, casting (finding actors), carrying out rehearsals, and presenting them in proscenium, thrust, or arena staging.</p>	<p>Instructor suggests more availability of experienced actors, greater variety and availability of rehearsal spaces needed.</p>
<p>10. Become familiar with and develop competence in a number of theatre techniques</p>	<p>125: Movement I Skills 223: Voice I Skills 310: Scenery and Properties Lab and Crew 312: Costuming and Make-up Lab and Crew 313: Lighting and Sound Lab and Crew 460: Play Development Workshop 515: Leadership and Organization for Production</p>	<p><b>2014-15, 2019-20</b></p>	<p><b>ThA 223:</b> 1. Primary assessment of performance projects. 2. Objective quizzes and written reports for evaluative assessment. 3. Peer evaluation used for formative assessment.</p> <p><b>ThA 460</b> – 1. Qualitative</p>	<p>Although not the focus of detailed analysis this year:</p> <p><b>ThA 223:</b> An area for improvement is quiz scores, which average 70%.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Although not receiving major focus this year:</p> <p><b>ThA 223:</b> Due to a restructuring of the class assignments and grading, the regular updating of grades in iLearn, addition of written reports about voice work in plays on and off campus, and Peer feedback in online discussions during the last assessment cycle, attendance, class participation and level of skills and performances has already improved significantly. Instructor plans to add additional lecture and hands-on practice of voice skills to help students make connections of the theory and practice.</p>

			primary review of final playwriting projects. 2. Formative evaluation of growth of technique from initial creative spark to rough draft.	<b>ThA 460</b> – Most difficulties are encountered in middle sections of process, where creative ideas get stifled by structural concerns.	<b>ThA 460</b> – Installation of more units of improvisational prompts for writing to break the orderly mold, and assist writers in envisioning structures that mirror the original creative charge.
11. Develop visual and aural perceptions related to theatre performance, as well as a structured approach (through linguistics) to the use of language.	341: History of Directing 401: Theatre Backgrounds: 500 BC – 1642 402: Theatre Backgrounds: 1642 – 1900 403: Theatre Backgrounds: 1900 – Present 504: Historical Styles for the Theatre: Prehistory to 1700 505: Historical Styles for the Theatre: 1700 to Present	<b>2013-14, 2018-19</b>	<b>THA401</b> – 1. Assessment via short reports on filmed or live performances of representative plays are employed in which students demonstrate conceptual mastery by exploring and explaining disciplinary perspectives on performance styles. In these projects students also demonstrate research and citation skills. 2. Applied projects (for example, performing selections from plays in class using the performance practice of the time in which it was created, or recasting a Western drama into the form of a Noh play) in which students demonstrate mastery of concepts by using historical approaches for creative problem solving.	<b>THA401</b> – Applied projects showed that students entered the course with almost no exposure to, or retention of, major analytical tools: Less than a quarter of the students said that they had ever heard of <i>The Poetics</i> , or even the Aristotelian components of drama. Less than 10% of the class could demonstrate initial familiarity with terms for dramatic structure or character functions. Only a single student over the course of three semesters could demonstrate the ability to cite an assigned reading using standard MLA format in an initial project. (All students	<b>ThA 401</b> – The major roadblock to achievement of this learning objective was the lack of exposure to analytical frames and research/citations skills in prior study. <i>The Poetics</i> was added to the reading list. The format for the fifteen required play reports was revamped to require use of Aristotelian terms and concepts of dramatic components, structure, and character functions. Instruction in MLA citation was incorporated into the course content and reinforced through multiple projects. This was more successful, but in future iterations of the class the added unit on <i>The Poetics</i> will be moved out of chronology to be

			<p>must do so to successfully complete the course.)</p> <p><b>ThA 504 &amp; 505-</b> 1. Formative assessment of primary research via a portfolio-style “research notebook” 2. Objective exams and written reports for evaluative assessment.</p>	<p><b>ThA 504 &amp; 505-</b> The challenge in this research-intensive study is to foster the use of sources other than the internet. A secondary issue is the ongoing struggle to develop curiosity about and respect for history.</p>	<p>the first major assignment, in order to provide students with better tools for play analysis before they read and report on any plays.</p> <p><b>ThA 504 &amp; 505</b> – The next offering of these classes will be the first test of the influence of the new library on the quality of visual research accomplished by the students in this class.</p>
<p><b>12. Become familiar with the historical and cultural dimensions of theatre, including the works of leading playwrights, actors, directors, and designers both past and present.</b></p>	<p>341: History of Directing 401: Theatre Backgrounds: 500 BC – 1642 402: Theatre Backgrounds: 1642 – 1900 403: Theatre Backgrounds: 1900 – Present 504: Historical Styles for the Theatre: Prehistory to 1700 505: Historical Styles for the Theatre: 1700 to Present</p>	<p><b>2012-13, 2017-18</b></p>	<p><b>ThA 401</b> – 1. Pre- and post-course surveys of student self-assessment of content recognition and recall (using the Teagle Foundation/AMC metacognitive framework). 2. Formative assessment via weekly objective quizzes on assigned readings and plays. 3. An objective final exam is used for evaluative assessment. 4. Further evaluative assessment of research and citation skills using analytical essays on representative plays 5. Applied projects (for example, editing a selection from an early modern text for contemporary performance) employed for both formative and evaluative purposes.</p>	<p><b>ThA 401</b> - Assessment results were consistent across multiple measures. Students showed very low prior exposure (less than 10%) to course content. Early attempts at quizzes also confirmed weak understanding and/or retention of major concepts. Students made cumulative, strong gains in knowledge of content and concepts from the class. Post-course self-assessments of learning indicated an average mastery of</p>	<p><b>THA 401</b> – Data suggest students are generally successful at meeting this learning objective, consistently developing a high degree of familiarity with the specified content. The last iteration of the class created a separate menu of elective applied projects. The idea was to focus on a smaller number of applied projects, encouraging busy performers to engage in them. While succeeding at this goal, it also created some student dissatisfaction. Greater choice</p>

		<p><b>THA402-</b> 1. Interactive formative assessment using group discussion and projects. 2. Objective evaluation via quizzes and creative essays.</p> <p><b>ThA 504 &amp; 505 – Portfolio-</b></p>	<p>79.32% of the course content. Final examinations indicate a slightly higher result with an average score of 86.94% over the same material. Students completing all applied projects demonstrated the highest retention of class materials, scoring roughly 10% higher in both self-assessments and on the final exam, than classmates who did not complete projects at similar rates.</p> <p><b>THA402 –</b> Many students enroll in class with primitive writing and reading skills.</p>	<p>increased their anxiety. The elective project structure will be retained but a different approach to laying out the alternatives and explaining the rationale will be employed in the next semester.</p> <p><b>THA402</b> Curriculum designed for reiteration of connective themes and steady expansion of topics by way of ongoing comparison and contrast. Introduction of data, visual documents, films, and documentaries that bridge the evidence of the past with current practices. Creation of quizzes and essay topics that eschew predictable formula and challenge the student to imagine the field with personal</p>
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			based assessment.	<b>ThA 504 &amp; 505</b> – Most students arrive with a good general understanding of the major developments of the <i>architecture</i> of theatre spaces, but less so of the development of design styles within those spaces.	creativity. <b>ThA 504 &amp; 505</b> – The inclusion of more examples of theatrical design that clearly show the thrust of the overall design culture of various periods, both past and contemporary, will attempt to encourage students to link their own work in the theatre to the stylistic and cultural developments of the broader society in which they operate.
13. Understand and evaluate contemporary thinking about theatre and related arts.	403: Theatre Backgrounds: 1900 – Present 505: Historical Styles for the Theatre: 1700 - Present 531: Understanding and Performing Shakespeare	<b>2015-16, 2020-21</b>	<b>ThA 505 - This course is discussed under multiple objectives.</b> The examination of contemporary thinking and theories about design as expressed in written and visual vocabularies are included as part of the overall study of these factors in history. The assessment of this particular segment of awareness often occurs in the students’ further work in other classes and projects that provide an opportunity for these aspects of contemporary thought to be applied to the creative process of theatre.	<b>ThA 505</b> – The ultimate goal in this area is to foster an awareness and curiosity about the contemporary design culture by pointing out its manifestations in concrete tangible examples that are part of the students’ daily experience.	<b>ThA 505</b> – Added emphasis on encouraging engagement in the larger urban experience available to students in this geographic area, through museum visits and professional theatre attendance, along with an enhanced general awareness of the details of the wider visual world has fostered a broader understanding of the development of the art form as a reflection of the temporal and changing world.

14. Make informed assessments of quality in works of theatre.

405: Writing about Theatre GWAR 515: Leadership and Organization for Production 660: Advanced Play Development Workshop 690: Brown Bag Theatre	<b>2016-17, 2021-22</b>			
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## **Theatre Arts Assessment Report – Spring '13**

### **Appendix B**

#### **National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST): Student Learning Outcomes**

Undergraduate studies in theatre should prepare students to function in a variety of artistic roles. In order to achieve this goal, instruction should prepare students to:

15. Be involved in the creation and presentation of public performances in the theatre.
16. Develop visual and aural perceptions related to theatre performance, as well as a structured approach (through linguistics) to the use of language in playwriting and the resultant script.
17. Understand basic production process such as acting; directing; stage, costume, and lighting design; and basic technical operations related to production.
18. Become familiar with and develop competence in a number of theatre techniques.
19. Become familiar with the historical and cultural dimensions of theatre, including the works of leading playwrights, actors, directors, and designers both past and present.
20. Understand and evaluate contemporary thinking about theatre and related arts.
21. Make informed assessments of quality in works of theatre.

## **ThA Assessment Report – Spring ‘13**

### **Appendix C**

#### **Theatre Arts Department Mission: Student Outcomes**

SFSU Graduates earning a B.A. in Drama will be able to

- Gain insight into themselves as both participants and creative forces in the theatrical arts
- Demonstrate technical mastery within their specializations in order to communicate with an audience
- Make effective choices based on giving and receiving constructive criticism
- Display sequence, form, and progression in executing their creative work
- Create impactful and thoughtful aesthetics within their areas of specialization
- Analyze historic and cultural contexts for plays, designs, and productions from a multicultural world
- Apply flexible approaches and divergent points of view to all elements of theatre
- Manage money, people and materials for pragmatic theatre survival
- Develop sensory attention to emotion, mood, context, ensemble and impact during the dramatic process
- Exhibit a willingness to sometimes allow incomprehensible, confusing and intangible experiences in order to learn creatively
- Communicate a passion and commitment to the arts