

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FOR THEATRE DEPARTMENT DEGREE PROGRAMS:
BA, BFA, and BSED**

Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

The undergraduate degree programs offered by the Department of Theatre are accredited by both NCATE and NAST, the two leading evaluators of Education and Theatre programs, respectively. The courses offered across the degree tracks prepare theatre students for careers in theatre, for graduate studies, and for other career paths in which theatre studies are good preparation. The emphases upon collaboration, responsibility, interdisciplinary studies, personal growth and artistic expression, all contribute to future success in various careers.

Among the quality indicators which rank as **very strong** are Quality of Faculty, Quality of Teaching, Quality of Faculty Service, Quality of Curriculum, and Quality of Facilities and Equipment. The growth in the department is directly attributable to the strength in instruction and the impressive facilities in which students learn and practice. Faculty research/artistic endeavor beyond the institution is often difficult because of the department's reliance on their artistic work *within* the department to such a demanding level. All faculty members are involved in the production work of the program, either in directing or in design and technical theatre. With additional resources (including either sabbaticals or faculty research monies), more research and creative endeavors might be expected outside the department.

When compared to the university's peer institutions, CSU Theatre is very strong. We consistently attract and graduate as many—and often more—students as our peers.

Department of Theatre retention rates are above the university average of 71.6 percent, based upon 5-year averages. Theatre Arts is 78.9 percent, and Theatre Education is 83.6percent . Since reinstating the BA degree in Theatre Arts, we are channeling a greater number of students into that degree program while limiting the size of the BFA programs. We do not anticipate graduates in the BA program until 2012-13, but the overall growth in the department is already evidenced.

The department remains the only USG institution to offer the BS.ED in Theatre Teaching, and this attracts many students from throughout the state, as well as creating ongoing connections with public educators who are products of our department.

The percentages would indicate that the Theatre Department graduation rate, by entering cohorts, is at about the same average as the university as a whole. In terms of percentages, the 5-year average rates for the programs are:

Theatre Arts	33.5 percent
Theatre Ed	41 percent
CSU	37.3 percent

These numbers fluctuate considerably during the five previous years, ranging from 20 percent to 43.8 percent in the Theatre Arts degree track for specific years, and from 20 percent to 60

percent in the Theatre Education track. (Again, the five-year average for Theatre Arts is 33.5 percent and in Theatre Education it is 41 percent.)

With the exception of one year (2008/9), the per capita instructional costs in the Department of Theatre have been trending downward for the past five years, from a high of \$6,711 in 2006/7. Cost per student in 2009/10 was \$4,928, which is higher than the institutional average in that same year of \$4,230 per student. (It should be noted that the institutional averages have been trending upward.)

There is always room for improvement in each area of the overall program. Suggestions include:

◆ **Facilities.** While performance and production facilities are outstanding, instruction spaces are somewhat worse for wear. Some of these concerns are nothing more than cosmetic in nature (flooring, paint, soundproofing, etc.), but others are more substantial. Equipment in the scene and costume shops needs to be regularly repaired and/or replaced. Budgeting on the university/college level will need to take into account the need to repair and replace. The Dance studio has never been outfitted with ballet Barres and mirrors.

Additional studio space is needed. At a bare minimum, one additional space in which acting classes, movement classes, and scene rehearsal is required.

◆ **Instruction and Curriculum.** The faculty has been diligent in updating and revising curriculum to meet the needs of multiple degree tracks that all share common courses. Each area has reworked degree requirements over the past several years. The re-activation of the BA degree will eventually channel students into an acceptable program of study instead of increasing the size of the BFA degree which—by its very nature—should remain small and selective. More changes will need to address overcrowding in certain courses.

A continuing question for our program (and other programs) is if we should offer a degree in Musical Theatre. While we are able to cobble together most of the components out of existing courses for interested students, we do not have the faculty or resources to offer Musical Theatre as a degree track. We can only speculate what offering such a degree would mean, but the evidence points to attracting many students who do not currently intend to attend CSU. (These students typically attend peer institutions with the degree.) Expanding our numbers would mean reassessing CORE theatre courses and our ability to cover these with current instructors. Dance faculty would be needed and, in fact, it is unlikely we could proceed without at least a minor in dance. The School of Music would have to commit instructors to required courses in voice and in theory. Creating a Musical Theatre degree cannot be a departmental initiative alone; it would require resources at the college and university levels.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality

◆ **Faculty Support.** Resources supporting faculty scholarship and creative endeavor remain very low. As CSU, and other universities like it, continue to increase the requirements for such activities, resources need to follow.

◆ **Additional Studio/Rehearsal space.**

◆ **State money in the budget for staff (especially the Marketing Coordinator, who is currently being paid mostly out of Foundation monies).**

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity

◆ Our student population numbers has already been maximized. Required classes on the lower-division level are full and faculty loads preclude adding sections. Most of our improvement needs to take place on the front end of the process. We are carefully screening applicants through audition and interview. We also believe this will increase retention and related concerns.

Conclusion about the Program's Viability at CSU:

The Degree tracks offered by the Department of Theatre at Columbus State University remain **very strong** and are all clearly viable as evidenced by the assessment of both the Review Team and the CPR Committee. Given the university's positioning of its College of the Arts as a vital component of the city's Uptown economic development initiatives, the Department of Theatre is a significant component of the university's efforts in this regard. Factors leading to a positive conclusion include:

- ◆ Growth in numbers of majors
- ◆ A downward trend in per capita costs for instructional delivery
- ◆ 100 percent of professors possess a terminal degree in their fields
- ◆ Audition process for all degree tracks increase selectivity and quality
- ◆ Enrollments and graduation rates often higher than peer institutions
- ◆ State-of-the-art performance and production facilities
- ◆ Only program in the state system to offer BS.Ed in theatre education

Program Improvement Plan

As the department prepares to develop its Strategic Plan for 2013-2018, the provost and dean have agreed to assist the department in allocating funds to meet the CPR Committee's request that ballet barres, mirrors, and adequate ventilation be addressed during the FY 2014 budget cycle. As part of the university's ongoing efforts to meet ADA compliance challenges, the department will work with the physical plant operations management to ensure ADA accommodation issues are studied and a plan developed for resolving any issues identified in the study.

The department will be encouraged to develop a plan for improving faculty support and an expansion of studio/rehearsal space as part of its strategic plan. The dean has already allocated funds for a college-level coordinator of marketing so as to eliminate that burden from the department. Faculty efforts to raise the level of student quality through a more rigorous auditioning process have the support of the dean.

Summary Recommendation and Supporting Rationale

Expand the Program. The faculty has been encouraged to fully develop a plan for the addition of musical theatre as a major to the program. This would be not only consistent with the college's efforts to grow enrollment, it would also provide the platform from which to build a vibrant summer theatre program designed to enhance tourism development for Columbus. The department secured its first Convention and Visitors Bureau grant for marketing in 2013, and it will apply for an even larger grant for summer 2014. The city's whitewater course tourism

attraction could be cross marketed to build the summer theatre revenues while expanding entertainment offerings for the recreationalist. Furthermore, given the faculty expertise and state-of-the-art facilities, the department is positioned to grow through better retention strategies and an expanded curriculum. With the reduction in state funding, theatre would provide among the best opportunities for program expansion through increased self-generated revenues and private philanthropic gifts rather than complete dependence upon additional state funding.