

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

AP-024-234

Academic Program Review for BA Theatre

Academic Programs Committee

Date: 02/07/2024

**Executive Committee
Received and Forwarded**

Date: 11/20/2024

Academic Senate

**Date: 12/04/2024
First Reading**

BACKGROUND:

As part of the academic program review for accredited programs, the Theatre Department conducted a self-study in Spring 2022. It was followed by an internal review by Dr. Kathryn McCulloch (Chemistry and Biochemistry) and Dr. Julie Shen (Library) on 05 April 2022, an external review conducted by Dr. Risa Brainin (UCSB) and Dr. Dave Mickey (CSUF) on 16 February 2022 (virtual) and 24 February 2022 (in-person), and a meeting with Dean Camille Johnson (CLASS) on 13 November 2023. Five documents were submitted: a department self-study report, a department action plan, an external review report, an internal review report, and response from the Dean. The departmental self-study covered overview and history of the program, program quality, inclusive polytechnic identity, GI 20205, and the challenges and needs from the department to improve program quality, such as faculty, financial, and technological support from the university.

This review covers (1) B.A. in Theatre with five options (Acting, Dance Theatre, Design & Technical Production, General Theatre, and Theatre in Education & Community Engagement), and (2) minors in two areas (Theatre and Dance).

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

Dr. Camille Johnson, Dean, CLASS
Dr. Sarah Krainin, Chair, Theatre and New Dance Department

DISCUSSION:

The self-study describes a department of 131 majors (nearly half concentrated in acting) and 31 minors, noting that these numbers represent a 45% increase from 2017. Since their last evaluation, the department has implemented several recommendations, including merging with Dance, hiring more Design and Production faculty, hiring a theatre historian, and keeping robust connections with the community. There are many recommendations that remain unaddressed due to lack of university support including and especially for space, which in 2010 was already considered to be at its limit. Despite the department's good-faith attempts to find alternate spaces and times to meet, these efforts ran into campus-wide space limitations and limitations imposed by complex student study and work schedules. Workload is another issue that has not improved, mostly on account of insufficient tenure line density. As a result, the department's members regularly sacrifice professional development in favor of university mandates for teaching and advising. This prevents faculty from staying current and has deleterious downstream effects on teaching and service as a result.

The internal review team identified many strengths of the department. Curricular and co-curricular opportunities in the core and four out of five options are aligned with polytechnic educational practices. The department practices intentional inclusivity through its vision statement and engagement with diverse campus groups. Ample performance opportunities with students involved directly in all aspects of production. SLOs are well-aligned to program

LOs, and assessment is taken seriously. Most notably, the department has no meaningful achievement gap between URM and non-URM students. The team also noted several challenges. Workload is foremost among them, owing to the intersection of low tenure density and a significant expansion of the student population since 2017. Funding for technology updates and upgrades is insufficient, resulting in software being out of date and specialized equipment languishing without maintenance.

The external review team praised the department for having a “great heart and soul.” Noting the passion and energy of all stakeholders. Faculty and staff are unified and effective. The department has good structures for presenting mainstage performances. Finally, students feel well-served and well-rounded by their education. They noted that many of the 2010 recommendations had not been implemented and reiterated/reinforced many of these including 1) making the costume shop supervisor a full-time position, 2) giving the costume shop manager and technical director a P-card to avoid out-of-pocket expenses, 3) allocate more space for offices, classes, and performances (the student population has doubled since 2010 yet no additional space is available), 4) address faculty workload, 5) hire a tenure-track professor in Dance Theatre, and 6) support technical equipment refreshes and production costs at a much higher rate.

In her evaluation, Dean Johnson noted many of the same strengths as the external review team. Her priorities for action were to 1) expand the costume shop supervisor to a 10-month contract, 2) increase tenure-track hiring, 3) assess equitable release time for service, and 4) develop a schedule and funding strategy for maintenance, waste removal, and safety inspections. While many of these align with the department’s 5-year action plan, there is no mention of what their most critical issue is probably: space.

In the consultation comment, the department chair asks that the Academic Programs committee specifically highlight 1) the issue of facilities and space, especially in view of Cal Poly Pomona’s being chosen as the site for CSU Summer Arts starting in 2025, 2) the issue of maintenance for which they do not have a budget line item and must draw on their space rental fees to pay, 3) the need for a second dedicated acting studio.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Academic Programs Committee commends the Theatre Department for the successful operation of their BA and minor programs. The thorough and thoughtful reviews that were prepared highlight issues of critical importance at the department, college, and university level.