Department of Theatre and Dance
Assessment Plan – 2007-2008

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in the AY ending June 30, 2008?

The goals in both Theatre and Dance were to hold our students accountable for the technical skills necessary in acting (acting studies I, II, III) and dance technique classes (intermediate modern, advanced modern, intermediate jazz, advanced jazz, intermediate ballet and advanced ballet). To this end, learning outcomes included the following:

a. Acting

1. Beginning acting students (Levels I, II) will demonstrate an understanding of basic theatre and acting terminology and be able to put these theories into practice in a performance situation before their peers, the course instructor, and invited guests as applicable. Basic requirements of the beginning acting student include the practice of developing character through an understanding of a plays given circumstances (who, what, where, when, etc.) and the effect this knowledge has on the student-actor’s choices in regards to a character’s goals/objectives; the obstacles which may prevent a successful outcome of these desired goals; the tactics or actions used to overcome these obstacles, and the characters expectations of their success.

2. Advanced acting students (Level II, III) will be expected- in performance for peers, faculty and guests- to demonstrate not only the basic requirements above, but must also develop an understanding of “raising the stakes” or the practice of making bolder and more specific choices in their character development at an earlier point in the process. This includes more specific physical character development incorporating the use of props, secondary activities, and psychological gestures.

3. Advanced acting students (Level III) should be able to incorporate all of the above level requirements as well as comprehend heightened language material such as Shakespeare or Chekhov, and have developed the language skills necessary to perform these styles in a clear and precise way. Advanced actors must also demonstrate a developed audition technique including skills in reading script dialogue without prior study, i.e. “cold”; and the development of no less then three audition monologues that will be evaluated by the professor of expertise, the greater theatre faculty, and a panel of theatre
professionals from the greater community for their effectiveness and appropriateness.

b. Dance (Level I)

1. Beginning dance students (Level I) will demonstrate the basic knowledge of body alignment, basic vocabulary that crosses different styles of dance (modern, ballet, jazz, and ethnic forms). Basic requirements include understanding body placement, execution of non-motor and loco-motor movement, center floor adagio work, movement progression and combination work which incorporate form and function.

2. Intermediate dance students (Level II and III) should be able to incorporate all level requirements for Level I with greater proficiency as well as have a greater understanding of the stylistic differences in modern, ballet, jazz and ethnic dance forms. Intermediate dancers must also demonstrate the connection between pure movement and stylized forms, between technical aspects of movement and performance technique, and between improvisational movement and choreographic development. Students will understand the relationship of classroom skill studies to performance. Students will perform individual projects that demonstrate required skill advancement as well as appropriate understanding of technical component related to the subject matter. Students will learn the components of peer evaluation and self-assessment.

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. In this assessment cycle, the faculty agreed that the primary assessment tool would include faculty and outside professional evaluation of student culminating works. This included oral evaluations from the course instructor/professor of expertise and peers for Acting Level I and II; oral and individual student feedback based on a performance before guests and a panel of faculty (including the professor of expertise) for Acting Level III and a written evaluation from a panel of theatre professionals for Audition Technique. For dance, the evaluation panel included all full-time faculty members who made an assessment of each senior choreographer who presents work in the senior dance concert. Written peer evaluations and self-evaluations required conferences with individual faculty which focused on meeting the learning objectives.

b. As we raise our expectations and further incorporate the above tools of assessment -creating a more specific and accessible learning environment- through peer evaluation, self-assessment, and outside evaluation panels, we are measuring an increased level of student success and focus within our program. Students exhibit more confidence and mastery of the principles of acting and have tools for making valid judgments about their work. By incorporating written reflections of their work, students are
more aligned with the assessment of the instructor. Through more attention given to advising, we find that the students can thrive more completely when presented with a very clear path to graduation, which includes strong faculty interest and mentoring, as well as feedback from community and nationally recognized professionals.

c. We have found that the students are doing particularly well when faced with performance opportunities, whether that is in the classroom for peers; in a Sac State production; or for a panel of professionals. The interest in performing in general has grown over the last few years, as the students’ skill levels have become more in line with course level expectations.

1. We all agree that our curriculum is still in need of updating because we are offering our students too many choices with not enough faculty to cover all of the required coursework in a pattern that would allow students to graduate in four years. Given the current faculty, our updated curriculum in theatre is directly related to a more generalist approach in theatre and dance eliminating the different areas of concentration. While we made huge strides in the area of theatre last year, we are still revising that plan to better accommodate our students’ path towards graduation, our available faculty and staff, and the increased enrollment expectations. The dance program is currently being revised using the above considerations, as well as exploring the length of time spent in the classroom actively learning in relationship to learning outcomes.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?

We are considering the development of a single culminating capstone course for both the theatre and dance concentrations. The new course would merge Theatre 108-Advanced Directing and Dance 143 – Performance Practicum, encouraging collaboration among all disciplines under the Theatre Major umbrella. We believe this would be an exciting and rewarding opportunity for students to not only perform, direct, and choreograph, but also design develop and produce. The faculty is spending time this summer through our departmental retreat addressing the outcomes of the senior dance concert evaluations and the inequity of performance evaluation (or lack there of) for theatre. We will evaluate the merits of a capstone course for both the theatre and dance concentration.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as development of rubrics, course alignment?

Curriculum changes in the dance major include assessing the time needed to complete necessary skills in order to move to the next level. The dance technique classes currently are only 2 units and meet for 1 hour and 15 minutes. We have found this allotment of time is not in accordance with comparable dance programs. The required dance technique classes are being assessed with consideration of possible expanded class time and increased units or
a change in classification in order to achieve extended time to accommodate the
dance technique classes.

5. **What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?**

   Based on peer recommendation, continued curriculum assessment includes
developing opportunities for students to participate in both theatre and dance
courses as part of their graduation requirements, allowing them to develop a
broader skill range across concentrations.