1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in the AY ending June 30, 2009?

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Department of Theatre and Dance focused specifically on the following two learning objectives/outcomes:

1. Students will be able to develop the practical performance skills and techniques required to advance intellectually and artistically in the performing arts.

2. Students will be able to apply and integrate their knowledge of multiple areas of theatre and/or dance (i.e. ballet, jazz, choreography, acting, designing, stage managing, dramatic criticism, theatre/Dance history, performance analysis, etc.) to coursework, production, and their desired career goals.

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered? (Description, date administered, results)

1. In order to develop students' skills and techniques, the department implemented changes to the dance course offerings and curriculum fall semester 2008. For instance, the beginning ballet class, DNCE 3, was divided into two courses: DNCE 3A. Ballet I and DNCE 3B. Ballet II. This change enabled faculty to place beginning students in one of two classes according to their skill level. From either DNCE 3A or 3B, students continue the ballet course sequence with DNCE 13 Intermediate Ballet. As a result of this change, students learn technical skills more quickly and apply vocabulary with minimal frustration and as a whole are better prepared for DNCE 13, the next level. In another instance, DNCE 151. Dance Criticism was eliminated from the curriculum and its course material implemented into DNCE 150. Dance Theory. This year, the department offered DNCE 150 under its new course title, “Dance Theory and Criticism.” This change combined DNCE 150 and 151 to allow for a more productive knowledge base among theory, performance, and critical assessment. This in turn increased enrollment for DNCE 150 and provided students with a more cohesive learning experience in preparation for their culminating project that requires them to apply specific theoretical frameworks to their original choreography.

Assessing students’ skill development was also measured through advising and course observation and rubrics that track students’ progress from course to course or production to production.

2. The department assessed students’ ability to apply and integrate their knowledge of multiple areas of theatre and dance by implementing another course change in the dance area and providing
additional opportunities for students to contribute to and/or create productions as part of their coursework. DNCE 143 was changed from the 1-unit “Performance Practicum” course to a 3-unit course entitled “Culminating Choreographic Project.” This change made DNCE 143 a culminating experience course that now requires students to create choreography that intentionally incorporates their knowledge from the choreography sequence of classes they are required to take. This course design ensures students cull from multiple areas of dance to create original work. The choreography pieces that resulted from the first year were conceptually stronger and technically cleaner compared to previous years due to the facts that students had more direct instructions and class time to commit to their choreography.

The 2009 Student Directed One Acts provides a strong example of theatre students applying and integrating their knowledge base. In the past, students in the THEA 108. Advanced Directing course produced the one acts festival; however, that course was not offered this year due to low enrollment, and students interested in directing a one act were given the opportunity to do so as a THEA 199. Independent Study. In essence, student directors served as their own directors, designers, dramaturges and stage managers as they mounted 45-minute productions in the Studio Theatre. Moreover, the directors underwent a rigorous application and interview process with faculty members in order to be selected to direct. In this, the department simulated a situation students will face professionally should they choose to direct. The learning outcomes in this instance became crystal clear when the number of students who expressed interest in directing decreased as the intensity of the selection process and requirements increased. In other words, the department achieved its goal by selecting student directors who best demonstrated their readiness for this culminating experience. The department required these students to justify their script selections, prepare rehearsal schedules and rehearsal notes, cast their shows, produce their shows, and submit a portfolio evaluating their one act and their directorial process.

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

This academic year, the department noticed great improvement in the skill development and students’ ability to apply and integrate their acquired knowledge. The department attributes the program’s success in these areas to the aforementioned curriculum revisions and advising. Curriculum revisions ensure students take classes that meet their skill level. In addition, since students are now required to meet with their faculty advisor at least once each semester to discuss the student’s grades, class scheduling, and progress toward graduation. Faculty members then complete and submit an advising report for each student to the department office, so the department can track students’ progress. Essentially, students are told directly when to enroll in certain classes. This ensures that students take classes sequentially to build their knowledge base and develop their skills.

c. In what areas are students doing well and achieving expectations?

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1 Under this arrangement, three students were selected to direct one act plays and assigned a faculty mentor who advised and graded their work. However, the student directors worked largely independently of the faculty and staff with whom they met two or three times during the semester.
In the area of production that is students’ ability to create quality public performances of plays, musicals, and dance concerts, our students continue to excel. For example, approximately sixteen students participated in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) again this year. Out of more than 300 competitors, two of our students advanced to the semi-final round of the Irene Ryan acting competition, and one of them also advanced the final round and earned the Outstanding Classical Actor award. KCACTF also invited a scene from the department’s fall production of *Picnic* to perform at the festival, which is a distinguished honor. This summer alone, several of our students are participating in CSU Summer Arts and working professionally as interns, actors, teachers, and stage managers for California Musical Theatre, Woodland Opera House, Sacramento Theatre Company, the Sacramento Shakespeare Festival, and the Summer Repertory Theatre (SRT) at Santa Rosa Junior College. Students in the Department of Theatre and Dance take the initiative to showcase their skills and talents across northern California and beyond.

Furthermore, the number of our students not only interested in pursuing graduate degrees but also accepted directly into graduate programs continues to increase slowly thus proving that our students are committed to continuing their educational excellence.\(^2\) The process for applying to MFA programs in the theatre requires students to demonstrate their ability to apply and integrate their knowledge of theatre and performance, for they must submit statements of purpose, writing samples, and portfolios of their work. They must also audition or interview for admission into certain programs. Our students’ preparedness and attention to detail as they pursue graduate degrees is exceeding the department’s expectations and leading us to raise our bar of expectations.

**d. What areas are seen as needing improvement within your program?**

As a performing arts discipline, the Department of Theatre and Dance is unique compared to other departments because productions and performance are a part of our program curriculum and equally weighted with classroom coursework.\(^3\) As noted above, our students are thriving in the area of performance. However, our students do not always give the same attention to classroom work that they do studio or performance work. Due to poor time management or misplaced priorities, a student’s grade in THEA 2. Theatre History, for example, may suffer while she is in rehearsals nightly for the musical. This, in the end, leads some students to not reach their learning potential and fall behind academically in the program. The department needs to explore ways to improve this aspect of the program, so students recognize the relationship between class and performance and give equal attention to both.

One of the ways we hope to address this issue is by reviewing our current course classifications specifically for technique and performance classes. We believe the time allotted to teach particular classes as well as the number of units assigned to performance-related classes needs to reflect

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\(^2\) In the performing arts, graduate schools typically require students to have 2-3 years professional experience before applying to Master of Fine Arts programs. For schools to accept our students upon graduating from our program speaks highly of their skills and preparation for graduate-level work. One of our December 2008 graduates will be attending the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and two of our spring graduates will be beginning graduate work in the acting and stage management programs at Columbia University this fall.

\(^3\) Students receive course credit for productions, and production course credits are required for graduation.
the importance of the course within the overall curriculum that is designed to build upon students’ foundational knowledge and teach them to apply key concepts learned in class to production. For instance, technique classes in the dance area (i.e. beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes in ballet, jazz, and modern dance) are currently 2-unit courses that meet twice a week. It is essential that these classes have adequate time to teach precisely the foundational technical skills students need to hone their craft. We hope to change the classification of these courses, so they become 3-unit classes that, like the acting class sequence equivalent courses in theatre, meet either 90 minutes or 100 minutes at least two times a week. In terms of performance, the department currently provides several ways for students to earn performance credit. We are considering classifying performances according to the style of the production, so students performing in faculty directed productions and concerts earn more course credit than they would for student-directed or studio productions. The challenge, however, is finding ways to implement these changes with minimal impact on the budget. Course classifications effect faculty workload, class sizes, and other issues beyond the department’s current purview.

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

a. If so, what are those changes?

Splitting the Beginning Ballet course into Ballet I and Ballet II definitely addressed skill level issues in the ballet curriculum sequence. The department plans do the same with DNCE 13, Intermediate Ballet, so it becomes DNCE 13A and DNCE 13B. Dividing the ballet and other dance course sequences in a similar fashion ensures students take classes that match their skill level and allows faculty to concentrate on specific techniques to guide the students’ growth.

The faculty also hopes to consider developing a culminating course for theatre that is comparable to DNCE 143. This, however, will take considerable time and attention, for the department would ideally like to structure a culminating course for both theatre majors and Dance concentrations thereby creating an overlap in the curriculum. One additional concern is creating a culminating experience that not only fosters the department’s learning outcome for students to be able to apply and integrate various aspects of performance but also equally bridges students’ varied interests in different aspects of theatre and dance.

b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

The department will know if these changes achieve the desired results if the students demonstrate steady progress as they move through the program and if students, with little assistance from faculty and staff, are able to effectively communicate and collaborate to create quality productions that reflect the artistic and intellectual integrity of the department.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics, course alignment?
The Department of Theatre and Dance engaged in the following additional assessment activities during the 2008-2009 academic year:

1. Students who register for THEA 120. Practicum in Technical Production run the crews (i.e. work behind the scenes) for the department’s mainstage productions. The department developed a syllabus for this course that outlines the course requirements. This improved student involvement in the academic program because an increased number of students registered in advance for the course and completed it successfully.

2. In efforts to generate more interest in the theatre major and connect non-major/lower-division classes with major/upper-division classes, the THEA 107. Directing course collaborated with all sections of THEA 1. Introduction to Theatre and THEA 9. Appreciation of Acting courses. In this newly developed partnership, directing students recruited students from the other classes to act in their directing scenes and earn extra credit. This hands-on collaboration introduced non-majors and new majors to advanced aspects of our program, and it allowed them to practically apply the acting techniques and theatrical skills learned in lower-division classes to a 10-minute production.

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

First and foremost, the Department of Theatre and Dance plans to restructure its current focus on assessment during the 2009-2010 academic year. Two upcoming activities will guide this process specifically: 1) WASC Program Review and 2) the appointment of junior faculty member, Melinda Wilson, to the Assessment Coordinator position for the College of Arts and Letters. As one of three departments up for program review next academic year, the Department of Theatre and Dance will be evaluating and articulating its assessment goals and strategies precisely as outlined in the program review guidelines. The department welcomes this opportunity as a time to strengthen our program’s assessment plan and gain vital feedback from WACS. Furthermore, with one of our own faculty members serving as Assessment Coordinator for the college, the department will be able to compare our assessment activities with other departments and in turn enhance how we approach and review our learning outcomes. This will enable us to better align our assessment plan with goals of the college and the university.

Furthermore, during the upcoming academic year, the Department of Theatre and Dance plans to incorporate more input from students in its assessment activities. For example, during finals week of spring semester 2009, the department hosted a luncheon for graduating seniors and administered our first exit interviews and surveys as a means of measuring our progress and learning outcomes. The department discovered that students support our efforts to improve our advising system and share faculty’s desire to develop ways to integrate more theatre courses with Dance to create a more interdisciplinary study of theatre and Dance. The department will focus specifically on these areas in the upcoming year. The department plans to continue conducting exit interviews and surveys and using them to guide our future assessment plans and learn from the students directly how we might enhance our educational effectiveness.