LEARNING OUTCOMES DATA FOR THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Template

Program THEATRE MINOR

Department THEATRE and DANCE

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: 20

Faculty member(s) completing template Melinda Wilson Ramey in direct consultation with Linda Goodrich, Ed Brazo, Michelle Felten, Manuel Pickett, and Ron Reisner

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Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program? [Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

The theatre minor is a smaller-scale program, in terms of both enrollment and curriculum, compared to the theatre major. As such, theatre minors are only required to take 18 credit units (9 required lower-division units and 9 upper-division elective units). Since the minor requirements match the approximately one-third of those required by the major, faculty do not differentiate learning outcomes for each program.

There has been a great transformation in the organizational culture of our department’s establishment of learning outcomes since AY 2006-2007. Prior to 2009, individual faculty members determined and evaluated learning outcomes for their respective classes, so assessment occurred at the coursework rather than programmatic level. This remains the case for the theatre minor. However, the department developed a new assessment plan that was implemented in the fall of 2010 whereby faculty members assess five specific learning goals for “THEA 121. Rehearsal and Performance.” Although most if not all theatre minors take THEA 121 and are assessed accordingly, the course is required for the major but not the minor. During fall semester 2011, faculty expanded our learning outcomes beyond THEA 121 to define additional programmatic learning outcomes for both the theatre major and minor. Our next step is to likewise expand our assessment plan in order to evaluate these learning outcomes simultaneously and track both majors and minors specifically as they progress through the program.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program. [Please limit your response per outcome to 300 words or less]
The following desired learning outcomes reflect the required and elective coursework for the theatre minor. Theatre minors’ are expected to gain foundational knowledge of the discipline from their required lower-division coursework, as reflected in the first learning outcome listed below. Theatre minors’ selection of upper-division electives generally create a particular area of emphasis, such as acting or multicultural theatre, that reflects the second outcome listed below.

a. LOWER-DIVISION OUTCOME: Interpret the elements of drama. Theatre minors will be able to interpret the elements of drama (plot, character, thought, language/diction, song, and spectacle) that together compose theatrical productions.

This learning outcome, taken from Aristotle’s *The Poetics*, addresses the foundation of Western theatrical thought and practice. It evaluates content knowledge about both play texts and play productions to prepare students to apply the elements of drama as theatrical artists. Minors should understand how these elements operate both individually and collectively in order to grow in and comprehend theatre.

b. UPPER-DIVISION OUTCOME: Analyze theatre, drama and performance in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts. Theatre minors will be able to analyze, that is compare and contrast, the genre, structure, form, and content of diverse playwrights and performance artists (directors, actors, designers, etc.) in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts.

This learning outcome addresses a unique aspect of our programs in that our curriculum requires minors take two semesters of theatre history and offers ethnic-specific theatre/drama classes as elective options (our theatre program has a rich and distinguished history of both Chicano and African American theatre). Our technical production classes are likewise taught from a historical perspective that traces the evolution of theatre from the Greeks to present day. Our upper-division acting classes focus on the acting styles associated with specific playwrights or genres such as Shakespeare and classic realism, which includes the works of Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and August Strindberg. In other words, some of our courses provide an overview of historical periods within particular social/cultural contexts while others examine specific genres, forms, or playwrights. In this, minors gain a greater breadth of knowledge and a more global perspective of theatre’s relationship and contributions to society.

3. For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

*Please limit your response to 400 words or less*

The theatre minor program’s desired learning outcomes align with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals. Our set of learning outcomes are discipline specific articulations of the university’s goals. For example, the university states that students should acquire “knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts. Focused by engagement with big questions, contemporary and enduring.” This goal is articulated in our program’s desire that theatre minors analyze, that is compare and contrast, the genre, structure, form, and content of diverse playwrights and performance artists (directors, actors, designers, etc.) in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts. Sections of our
As stated previously, our current assessment plan focuses on gathering and assessing data for THEA 121, a required course of the major. Data and analysis is not yet available for the two main learning outcomes of the theatre minor. Assessment of these outcomes takes place in THEA 2, 3, 11, 16, 120, and several upper-division elective course offerings and is evaluated by individual faculty members for their respective classes. Faculty members have already identified the respective classes that focus on the theatre minor outcomes. For example, students learn to interpret the elements of drama in a number of required and elective courses such as THEA 2, 3, 11, 16, 101, 109, 110, 111, 114A, and they must analyze drama and performance in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts in THEA 2, 3, 115A, 118, 140 and 175. The theatre minor outcomes are addressed in several courses, so students learn to evaluate the elements of drama from both general (lower-division) and area-specific (upper-division) perspectives.

The plan for collecting and analyzing data for the theatre minor requires faculty members to first determine how to expand our assessment plan to include annual evaluation of these outcomes. Next, we must further develop our assessment schedule, so we can evaluate both outcomes simultaneously. This will enable us to evaluate the minor program specifically.

5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

a. Decision-making at the program level has not yet occurred for assessing students’ ability to interpret the elements of drama. However, this outcome is addressed across the theatre minor curriculum through the preparation and presentation of 1) monologues and scenes in THEA
011, 101, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114A; and 2) final class performances and projects and in THEA 16 and 118. Faculty members may plan to focus on a portfolio-style assessment of the theatre minor whereby students submit various assignments for faculty review from select classes at two different times as they progress through the program. This type of evaluation is most manageable given the size of the program and it enables faculty to pinpoint precise areas where outcomes are being met as well as those that may require more attention.

b. Decision-making at the program level has not yet occurred for assessing students’ ability to analyze theatre, drama and performance in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts. However, this outcome is addressed across the theatre minor curriculum and evaluated by individual instructors upon completion of written work such as script and character analysis papers in THEA 011, 101, 109, 110, 111, and critical essays in THEA 2, 3, 140, and 175. As explained in question 4, how faculty members plan to utilize findings from evaluating this outcome is contingent upon how faculty decide to expand our current assessment plan. Focusing on this outcome is particularly challenging because it is addressed across all areas (acting/directing, design/technical theatre, and history/literature/criticism) of the program.

6. **Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.**

   [Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

Currently, the program has not sought data from alumni outside of surveys distributed and collected by the Office of Institutional Research to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the minor’s learning outcomes. All faculty members remain in personal contact with recent alumni. Hence, our knowledge of students’ success is informal and neither systematically gathered nor officially documented by the program. Our tentative plan for measuring the long-term effects of the theatre minor’s learning outcomes is to:

   a. Spring 2012: Compile an alumni database by collecting contact information from the class of 2012 minors as well as recent alumni.
   b. Fall 2012: Create and administer an annual exit survey specifically for the minor that addresses both program learning outcomes and departmental culture.
   c. Spring 2013-Fall 2014: Develop and distribute electronic surveys to track alumni’s success 5, 10, and 15 years post-graduation.
   d. Spring 2014: Evaluate the surveys as part of our annual assessment of the minor.

7. **Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?**

   [Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

The theatre minor program pursues the same learning outcomes of the theatre major program that are identified by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), the accrediting body for university theatre programs. For example, the NAST Handbook 2010-2011 states that an undergraduate pursuing a degree in theatre studies must have:
a. The ability to think conceptually and critically about text, performance, and production.

b. An understanding of playwriting and production processes, aesthetic properties of style, and the way these shape and are shaped by artistic and cultural forces.

c. An acquaintance with a wide selection of theatre repertory including the principal eras, genres, and cultural sources. (VII.D.2.e., pp. 82-83)

The learning outcomes for our theatre minor program align with these standards. For instance, the first NAST standard coincides with our first learning outcome that is the focus of lower-division coursework. Theatre majors must understand Aristotle’s elements of drama and the relationship among text, performance and production. The second and third NAST standards align with our second learning outcome for the minor that is the focus of our upper-division courses. Several classes analyze theatre, drama and performance in relationship to specific global, social, cultural, and historical contexts in order to grasp how artistic and cultural forces shape playwriting, production, and performance aesthetics (style, form and content) through a survey of specific historical periods and theatrical genres.

8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

In the past two years, the Department of Theatre and Dance has made assessment of both major programs a priority. The theatre minor is linked directly to the major, so the programs share certain learning outcomes that are currently evaluated across multiple classes and assessed by individual faculty members. The Department of Theatre and Dance plans to revise our theatre minor curriculum by defining specific tracks/areas of concentration rather than offering a several upper-division electives from which students select their coursework. This change, supported by NAST, will streamline and strengthen the theatre minor while also aligning it more with our forthcoming theatre major curriculum changes.