



2015-16 End-of-Year Report Academic Department Success Plan

Department: Theater

Department Chair: Christopher Berchild

Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report:
Christopher Berchild

Please answer the following questions in two or three pages and submit to your Dean by October 3. Your Dean will review and advance to Academic Affairs by October 10¹ and will offer you feedback by Oct. 17. This report will help inform your 2016-2019 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 4.

1. **Specific accomplishments/achievements this past year (briefly explain using bullet points, noting any changed/adapted):**
 - in the process of identifying barriers to successful graduation in our new curriculum (which has been active for a full academic year) through examination of pre- and co-requisites, proper sequencing in our teaching schedules, and
 - the hiring of Michael Sheldon, a one-year renewable instructor, who is overseeing and organizing our new regional recruitment strategies. Already, Sheldon has worked to schedule multiple appearances at regionally significant high school programs and discipline-specific events and festivals.
 - raised our profile on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, in order to appeal to incoming students, make sure that current students are in the loop about departmental events, and to introduce the activities of current students and faculty members to both potential students and alumni.
 - redesigned our departmental website.
 - engaged with two separate faculty-led international trips to Vietnam and Ireland in which theater (and music, in the case of Vietnam) students could tour a production internationally and experience other cultures and their approaches to performance.
 - we successfully staged a cooperative production of a musical (*Company*) with the ISU School of Music, and subsequently toured the production abroad (see above).
 - we have been dedicated to and successful in reaching out to students with advising audits at regular intervals along their pathway toward graduation. All majors now have regular checks with their faculty advisor to discuss this plan.

2. **Objective/Actions Not Achieved (briefly explain using bullet points):**
 - we have been working to introduce our incoming first-year students and juniors to regional and national production opportunities, which include performances as well as introductions to significant artists and administrators. Due to back-to-back sabbaticals, our efforts to provide these opportunities have fallen victim to time constraints on the in-house faculty.
 - we have not engaged with as many high school visits (and faculty to faculty high school interactions) as we had hoped due to the frequent turnover in the position that has been responsible for these activities.

¹ Note that the Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions.

- we are still struggling to curricularize production work and contact hours in a way that makes sense to both the department and the university. Despite a great deal of our training occurring in the rehearsal room and in production, these credits attached to these performances are often inadequate and challenging to find a place in the curriculum as a whole. There is no overall industry standard for this issue across US theater departments.
 - due to the small size of our faculty, we do not have adequate human-hours to dedicate to information gathering regarding alumni in the industry. This has been especially true in a year with consecutive semesters with faculty on sabbatical.
 - our last faculty member in charge of many student success activities failed to do so, so there are a number of our intended activities that did not come through, including alumni interaction and surveying and development of internship possibilities.
 - due to a number of reasons, our arts administration cooperation with Art and Music has fallen apart, despite its potential to attract students to the various majors.
3. Looking ahead, briefly describe changes, additions, or subtractions that need to be made to your goals and/or action steps, including with respect to their linkage to student learning outcomes.
- our greatest challenge is to create these opportunities for the smallest department (faculty-wise) in the college. We constantly are working as a committee of the whole and our faculty is universally over-committed already, with no faculty members slacking on contributions to the department or university. We need to find ways to integrate student success strategies into what we already do.
 - we need to find the time to build a greater bridge between our department and our successful alumni members in the industry (and associated industries) in order to generate internship and employment possibilities.
 - we need to complete our one-year assessment of our curriculum to ensure that we have streamlined our pathway to graduation for both traditional students and transfer students.
 - we intend to expand our career-planning opportunities within our department for all of our students. We have expanded this significantly for our design/technology students, through access to professionals within the curriculum. However, we need to continue to develop these opportunities for all concentrations within our major.
 - we need to discover and identify internship opportunities for our students outside of working for Crossroads Repertory Theatre in the summer. Despite its professional regional standing, many students need to be encouraged to find alternate opportunities.
 - we are interested in expanding our degree offerings and creating two specific degrees that are parallel to our current theater major, but address significant changes in the industry and may allow us to both attract strong students and produce additional career-ready students: Entertainment Technology and Immersive Performance.
4. Do you see opportunity for this project to work more closely with another department, college, or unit such that greater impact might be possible (*briefly explain*)?
- the opportunity that is most successful between units for us has been our regular engagement with the School of Music on a biennial musical, which is appealing to prospective students and a great training opportunity for both units. Both Music and Theater feel that in order to make this a significant activity that has lasting impact on student success, we need to find a way to curricularize this and create a certificate in Musical Theater.
 - there has been interest in interacting with our colleagues in the traditional STEM disciplines to create programs that may produce students who are prepared for careers in STEAM disciplines—those disciplines that require art and design skillsets to accompany their technical training. These conversations have been begin with Math and Computer

Science and Biology, but need to take a larger (and more institutionally-assisted step) into the other Science, Technology and Engineering disciplines on our campus.

5. Is there anything else about your initiative you feel important to detail?

- it should be noted that despite the increasing number of incoming students into our major that we are often unable to maintain these students into their second year for various reasons (other than the inability to retain them at the university level). We would be interested in what the change in admission standards has on this metric.**