

# 2016-17 Department Student Success Plan Assessment Report

## THEATER

Please answer the following questions in two pages and submit to your Dean by October 2. Your Dean will offer you feedback by Oct. 16 and advance final version<sup>1</sup> to Academic Affairs by October 20. This report will inform your 2017-18 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 3. Previous report and plans can be found at this website: <http://irt2.indstate.edu/cms7/sp16/index.cfm/department-plans/>.

**Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report:** Chris Berchild, Chairperson

### 1. Specific accomplishments/achievements this past year (*briefly explain using bullet points, noting any changed/adapted*):

- Given the statistical anomaly discussed in our last report (the Fall 2014 Cohort retention by latest department at 77.78%), our freshman retention this year has returned to the range that we had hoped to see (the Fall 2016 Cohort at 58.33%). We had a year of correction with our Fall 2015 cohort falling to 52%, but have returned to numbers above our 2013 Baseline of 56.25%
- We have identified multiple issues within our current curriculum that served to hinder timely movement through the major. In integrating dance courses into our curriculum, offering a broader selection of courses, and streamlining prerequisites and timely course offerings, we believe that we have eliminated most of the evident barriers to timely graduation within the major.
- We have increased opportunities for our students to attend professional productions (and engage with summer professional work at Crossroads Rep) over the last year, and continue to find opportunities to engage students with the professional marketplace. A professional theater troupe founded in Terre Haute in the last year, Theater 7, has been able to provide additional experiential opportunities for our students to work directly with productions.
- Our department take advising very seriously and, in my opinion, is a model for overall advising policy. Julie Dixon, our main departmental advisor, spends an extraordinary number of hours providing student guidance and assessing student progress through the major (and the university), and our other faculty advisors take direct personal responsibility over our major's pathways to success.
- The Department has established increased contact with alumni (both recent and earlier) and has started to create opportunities for contact. This has been achieved through bringing alumni professionals into class, either in person or by Skype, and through aggressive social media. We have teamed up with our alumni to establish and maintain an ISU Theater Alumni Facebook group, which allows alumni and current students access to one another (along with faculty and staff as well).
- We have made significant strides in creating our new Entertainment Design and Technology minor (which we are interested in eventually converting into a major) in order to attract and serve students with more diverse interests and career paths within the entertainment industry. We anticipate that this minor will be offered beginning next academic year.

### 2. Objective/Actions Not Achieved (*briefly explain using bullet points*):

- Though our benchmarks are improved, we did not meet our earlier stated first-year retention benchmarks. I believe that the inability to meet the targets came from an unrealistic interpretation of the data that pushed projected targets almost 6-7% over the realistic range. For this reason, the department will be reassessing both our targets and our annual improvement percentages in the next report.
- We were not able to secure adequate funding to provide performance opportunities for all of our incoming students this year. We have been able to take high-achieving students to performance opportunities, but the students that perhaps need the exposure most still are left unserved by this opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions. Report will be shared with Trustees.

- Despite our strong advising culture in the department and a strong upturn in 4-year completion benchmarks over the last two years (34.78% and 42.86%), we experienced a sharp downturn this last year (25%), which is surprising. This may be partially due to the fact that an entirely new curriculum was introduced to these students at the start of their third year, making four-year completion more confusing than for other cohorts. It is notable that, despite this hiccup in 4-year graduation, that our 6-year graduation rates have continued to rise from 40% (2008 Cohort) to 50% (2010 Cohort) to 56.52% (2011 Cohort).
- We need to dedicate time to establishing a survey to query alumni and recent graduates regarding their career paths and how their education contributed to their successes. At the moment, much of the data we have is indirect or anecdotal, and we need to collect more direct and quantitative data about their experiences.

**3. Attention areas going forward as informed by 2016-17 retention, completion, course completion ratio, credit hour productivity, and D/F/drop rate data provided as well as other Blue Report or departmental data (briefly explain using bullet points).**

- It is evident that we need to increase our early retention efforts, as we continue to see a drop off after our first year. We continue to have strong retention after our initial first-year drop, so if we can continue to improve our early retention we feel confident that our students will stay with us. We have reconfigured our major core courses so that they are still rigorous, but less of a hurdle for first year students.
- We note that our four-year completion is down this year, and can only attribute that to our curricular change amidst the 2013 Cohort's junior year. Since our advising is so strong within our department, we cannot imagine that the drop was due to improper mentorship.
- We find that we have extremely strong course completion (89.43% lower division/98.51% upper division in 2015-16, 87.97% lower division/97.39% upper division in 2016-17). That being said, we need to turn our attention to our drop/fail rates. We feel that we have a relatively small drop rate (2.73%/4.06% in 2015/16 respectively), but our DF fail rate is a bit larger than we would like (16.37%/15.58% in 2015/16 respectively). Though we maintain high standards for our courses, including our Foundational Studies (which accounts for much our lower division completion rates).