

# 2017-18 Department Student Success Plan Update

## Theater

Please complete this plan update and submit to your Dean by November 3. Your Dean will offer you feedback by November 17 and advance final version<sup>1</sup> to Academic Affairs by November 21. Previous report and plans can be found at this website: <http://irt2.indstate.edu/cms7/sp16/index.cfm/departments-plans/>.

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

**1. Department goals to facilitate persistence to degree** (include action steps, dates, and person(s) responsible underneath each goal):

**Goal One**—To increase the 4-year graduation rates by 1% per annum. Our target baseline is based upon our 2015-16 4-year graduation percentage, as the 2016-17 percentage (of 25%) was a statistical irregularity due to our small cohort sizes). Since we have one of the university's strongest junior-to-senior retention rates, our challenge lies in diagnosing issues in the path to a timely graduation. We have already increased flexibility within our major concentrations so that students will not have to follow as regimented of a course progression in the future. We also note that the aforementioned anomaly accompanies our 2015 curricular revision for the students third year, indicating that the restructuring of the curriculum also had a significant effect on the 2016-17 cohort.

**Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

**Action Step One**—Examine student registration choices in the last two years of our new curriculum as they progress toward graduation. Examine why curricular choices are made that do not advance students toward graduation in a timely manner. Meet with students in the Fall of their senior year to discuss the remainder of their time at ISU. (*Responsible faculty: Chris Berchild. Begun Fall 2016*)

**Action Step Two**—Though our department already engages in semi-annual audits of all of our majors and minors, advisors will mandate a 60 and 90 credit hour audit that will serve as an opportunity to discuss optimal pathway to completion. (*Responsible faculty: Julie Dixon and Michael Jackson. Begun Fall 2016*)

**Action Step Three**—Further develop the curricularization of production work. Many of our students spend countless hours in rehearsal and production meetings, but they do not necessarily count toward forward movement toward graduation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this commitment places a burden on credit-earning courses, though it is the students' best opportunity for experiential learning. Finding a solution to this problem will allow all of our students who participate in productions to receive appropriate credit and assessment for their time spent with faculty. The faculty has begun to address this with curricular shifts in the last academic year and has further proposed refinements to this goal in 2018-19 curricular proposals. (*Responsible faculty: Chris Berchild, Chair; Arthur Feinsod, Chair of Curriculum Committee, and other faculty—Begun Fall 2016*)

**Action Step Four**—Provide opportunities for our junior and senior majors to have contact with professionals in the theater and related industries. Though both online (Skype) and in-person networking sessions with both major industry leaders and well-placed alumni, students will be able to gain perspective and ask questions about the industry in a vocational way. This academic year, we have instituted a "guest designer" role in our department to bring professional designers into the department in order to work on productions. With this new policy, we will see students in constant contact with outside theater professionals throughout the academic year. (*Responsible faculty: Department faculty as a whole—Begun Spring 2016*)

**Action Step Five**—Expand career-planning opportunities during a students' third and fourth years. Integrate career-planning sessions into the major/minor capstone course (Theater Theory) as well as develop course to be

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

taught in the Fall of the students' third year that examines career opportunities within the theater (and other associated) industries to inspire students to think proactively about their career trajectory and life beyond the university. (*Responsible faculty: Chris Berchild, Spring 2017*)

**Goal Two**—To increase the first-year retention rate by 1% per annum as well. We currently have an upward trend in cohort retention from the previous year, despite a significant drop in cohort size.

**Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

**Action Step One**—We are refining the initial courses within our department (THTR 101, 102, 191) in order to ensure the greatest success for our incoming majors and minors without overburdening them during their first year. Past incarnations of these courses have been anecdotally described as “gatekeeper” courses, and the faculty has agreed that we need to ensure the strongest foundation while not barring students from retention at this point in the curriculum. (*Responsible faculty: Chris Berchild, Chair; Arthur Feinsod, Chair of Curriculum Committee—AY 2017*)

**Action Step Two**—Establish contact with potential majors and minors early and provide immediate guidance for the major. While University College advising is important, we are finding that the sooner our students begin talking with our own advisors, the smoother the progression through the major will be. (*Responsible faculty: Julie Dixon, Department Lead Advisor; Michael Jackson, Advisor for Design/Technology Concentration—Spring/Fall 2016*)

**Action Step Three**—As part of the continuing advising process and based on collected data regarding “gateway to major” courses, we will begin to investigate opportunities for supplemental instruction or peer mentoring for our majors. We will approach our Honors Service Fraternity (APO) for assistance in establishing a system of peer mentoring within the department. (*Responsible faculty: Julie Dixon, chief advisor; Chris Berchild, department chair; and Michelle Souza, faculty advisor for APO—Data collection and organizational discussions began Spring 2016*)

**Action Step Four**—We would like to engage with select high school programs with campus visits and an increased presence at state and regional high school thespian conferences. Since we have begun re-implementing this goal with the addition of dedicated faculty, we have seen our first-year numbers rise and we continue to make regular visits to these recruitment opportunities. (*Responsible faculty: David Marcia—AY 2017-18*)

**2. Department goals to enhance student performance and/or learning outcome achievement<sup>2</sup> (include action steps, dates, and person(s) responsible for each goal):**

**Goal One**—To develop students' familiarity with production environments, expectations and quality standards for the professional theater industry (and associated industries).

**Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

**Action Step One**—Provide students throughout their time at ISU with opportunities to experience professional live theater events in nearby cities with significant professional theater cultures (Indianapolis, Chicago, Louisville, Cincinnati). Annual performance “fieldtrips” will be arranged at the department level and will be attached to courses throughout their college career. This will engage students with practical career goals and positions associated with the theater industry. Due to funding, this action step has been challenging, but we did see a growth in first year retention the last time we were able to dedicate specific funding to this goal (AY2014-15). As a note, we have had this step thwarted a number of times in the past two years due to certain university

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<sup>2</sup> Department/Program Student Learning Summary Form report may inform what is noted here.

policies and need to further investigate ways to ensure student engagement with off-campus performances. *(Responsible faculty: Chris Berchild, Chair; department faculty as a whole—Spring 2017)*

**Action Step Two**—We have noted that sustained student engagement with departmental performances often goes hand-in-hand with student retention and timely graduation, as well as developing a strong understanding of the professional world. We seek to further curricularize performance and mandate production practicums for graduation to give students the opportunity to expand their understanding of the potential careers available to them. We continue to gather data to further substantiate this link between student success and practical theater work in the department, though anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. *(Responsible faculty: Michael Jackson, Julie Dixon, Chris Berchild. Data will be collected over next three years)*

**Action Step Three**—To develop a network of professional mentors (alumni and otherwise; within the theater industry as well as outside of it) that give our students further insight into the skills that they are developing (and still need to develop) while still in school. We will continue to track theater alumni as their careers develop and we will send out surveys to new alumni approximately 6 months and two years after graduation in order to foster relationships with the department as well as our current students. This will be further accentuated by the CAS initiative to develop alumni mentors. *(Responsible faculty: Michael Jackson, David Marcia, Julie Dixon, Chris Berchild. Ongoing project started Spring 2016)*

**Goal Two**—To increase the number of graduates who participate in career training opportunities while an advanced student or within a year of graduation. This may include: internships (both paid and unpaid), working in Crossroads Repertory Theatre, industry certifications (for which we would like to directly train students), regional and national auditions and conferences, and other entrepreneurship opportunities.

#### **Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

**Action Step One**—Investigate all of the aforementioned industry opportunities and develop strong pathways and in-course training possibilities. Many of these opportunities are currently in use by the department, but we need to develop a stronger (and more lucid) pathway for our students to follow to engage with them. It is critical that we have an annual evaluation of these opportunities as the criteria often shifts from year to year. *(Responsible faculty (and staff): Michael Jackson, Michelle Souza, Ann Warren, David Marcia—begun Spring 2017 and ongoing)*

#### **Benchmark Metrics**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2016-17 FTFT-BDS Cohort Actual</b>	<b>2017-18 Target</b>	<b>3 Year Target (2019-20)</b>
Freshmen Retention <sup>3</sup> <i>(by latest department)</i>	58.33%	60%	62%
4-Year Grad Rate <i>(by latest department)</i>	25%	43% (based on 2015-16 as baseline)	45%
	<b>Source data for 2016-17 actual</b>	<b>2017-18 Target</b>	<b>3 Year Target (2019-20)</b>
Other Metric #1 <sup>4</sup>			
Other Metric #2			

<sup>3</sup> In a very few cases, such as with departments with very small numbers of majors or who have few or no new freshmen who enroll in their program, this metric and a grad rate may not be applicable. Other appropriate metrics should be used instead (e.g., service course student performance, transfer students, part-time students, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Departments may wish to also focus on key metrics for sub-populations (e.g., transfer students, distance students, minority students, students at a particular class year or years where bottlenecks/movement out of the major/drop out from ISU appear to be a concern) or metrics such as credit hour productivity or D/F/drop rates. See Blue Reports or Institutional Research for ideas.