

REVIEW OF THE B.A., B.S. IN THEATRE

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code: 50.0501
Drama and Dramatics/Theatre Arts, General

OVERVIEW

The B.A., B.S. in Theatre program at Illinois State University is housed in the School of Theatre and Dance within the College of Fine Arts. The school also offers minors in dance, film studies, and theatre; a M.A., M.S. in Theatre Studies; and a M.F.A. in Theatre.

The B.A., B.S. in Theatre program has a long history of service to secondary schools of the state, by providing graduates of Illinois high schools opportunities for quality post-secondary education in theatre and dance and by preparing undergraduate students to teach theatre and dance on the secondary level. Students in the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program choose from six sequences of study: acting, dance performance, dance teacher education, design/production, theatre and film studies, and theatre teacher education. The acting sequence provides training in acting, voice, and movement skills while educating students to understand and interpret the works of a variety of playwrights. The dance performance sequence prepares students for the diverse career options within the fields of dance performance and choreography as well as for graduate study. The dance teacher education and theatre teacher education sequences develop students into creative artists prepared to teach in secondary schools of Illinois. The design/production sequence prepares students for entry-level employment with professional theatre companies and for advanced study in a quality M.F.A. program. The theatre and film studies sequence prepares students to pursue careers in theatre management, directing, creative drama/outreach, dramaturgy, playwriting, and cinema and to pursue graduate study.

Facilities issues have been a concern both for the School of Theatre and Dance and its theatre accrediting body, the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), since at least the 1980s. Clear and deliberate statements about the need for updated or renovated facilities have appeared in each NAST evaluation over the last three accreditation cycles. In February 2013, then Governor Pat Quinn announced release of \$54 million in state funds for reconstruction of the fine arts complex. Planning is well underway for the project, which had been scheduled to break ground in June 2016 and to be completed around 2020. However, due to ongoing state budget issues, the project is on hold. Until reconstruction can proceed, the University continues to address facility maintenance issues, particularly life-safety concerns.

Enrollment by Sequence, Fall Census Day, 2009-2016

B.A., B.S. in Theatre, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sequence:								
Acting	118	107	115	99	96	81	70	81
Dance Performance	18	23	23	32	39	32	29	21
Dance (Teacher) Education	11	13	16	16	15	18	19	23
Design/Production	49	62	59	54	44	47	43	35
Theatre (and Film) Studies	43	41	55	73	86	67	53	47
Theatre (Teacher) Education	47	51	37	46	35	38	42	35
No sequence	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	2
Total	287	297	305	320	315	283	260	244

Degrees Conferred by Sequence, Graduating Fiscal Year, 2010-2016
B.A., B.S. in Theatre, Illinois State University

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sequence:							
Acting	34	16	29	14	29	NA	21
Dance Performance	1	4	3	3	6	NA	9
Dance (Teacher) Education	0	2	0	1	2	NA	4
Design/Production	11	13	23	18	15	NA	11
Theatre (and Film) Studies	7	13	16	17	16	NA	15
Theatre (Teacher) Education	6	3	6	4	6	NA	9
No sequence	0	0	0	0	1	NA	3
Total	59	51	77	57	75	58	72

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Self-study process. The School of Theatre and Dance self-study process began earlier than is typical for program review at Illinois State University. The school first prepared for its accreditation review by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), scheduled for fall 2015, and then used much of the documentation from the accreditation review to prepare its program review self-study reports due in fall 2016. Preparation for the NAST accreditation review began in summer 2012 and ultimately resulted in a revised mission statement, new vision and values statements, a new strategic plan, curricular revisions, and new student learning outcomes assessment plans. In fall 2015, when work on the accreditation request was nearly complete, the school constituted a program review committee. The committee met in spring 2016 for an orientation meeting and to begin its work in earnest. The committee reviewed documents from the prior program review and the NAST accreditation request, discussed plans for data collection, assigned areas of responsibility for the report, and began soliciting information from each area within the school. The program review self-study report was completed in fall 2016.

A major initiative of the School of Theatre and Dance undertaken in conjunction with both accreditation and program review was developing a new student learning outcomes assessment plan for each academic program offered by the school, including the B.A., B.S. in Theatre. In fall 2014 the school established an ad hoc assessment committee to facilitate this initiative. Committee members attended an assessment workshop series sponsored by University Assessment Services and then met with University Assessment Services staff to discuss the school's assessment process in greater depth. In 2015-2016 the school retained a consultant to assist with drafting a new assessment plan for the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program. The ad hoc assessment committee was reconstituted at that time to include members from each sequence of the program. The committee drafted goals that align with the school's newly-adopted mission, vision, and values statements and with NAST accreditation standards. A faculty retreat to work on the assessment plan occurred prior to the fall 2016 term, and a subsequent faculty meeting was devoted to curriculum mapping. The completed plan was adopted by school faculty in fall 2016.

Program curriculum. Requirements of the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program differ by sequence, with the number of credit hours of content courses varying from 43 to 72. The number of credit hours required of students enrolled in either teacher education sequence (dance or theatre) is higher than the number required in other sequences, because teacher education students take pedagogy courses and complete clinical experiences in addition to taking theatre and dance courses. Acting, dance performance, design/production, theatre and film studies, and theatre teacher education sequences are designed to be completed in four years. Dance teacher education students are currently required to take courses that qualify them for endorsement by the state to teach a second content area (other than dance), so graduates of the sequence will have more career opportunities than they would otherwise. As a result, the dance teacher education sequence typically takes longer than four years to complete. Faculty may consider changing that provision from a requirement to a recommendation to reduce time to degree for students in the sequence. All theatre and dance majors are required to enroll in a theatre practicum for four semesters to gain experience in and provide support for the production program sponsored by the school. Beyond the required practicum experience, students in the program are encouraged to participate in other theatre or dance experiences to help them develop as artists or teachers. Numerous production opportunities are available to students through the school, including its production program of

up to 10 fully produced shows each academic year; the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, which offers at least three productions each summer; and numerous productions sponsored by student theatre or dance organizations.

Program or academic unit faculty. The School of Theatre and Dance has 17 tenured or tenure track faculty members (as of fall 2016). Each holds the terminal degree in their field (a Ph.D., Ed.D., or M.F.A.). Two faculty members whose locus of tenure is the school teach full-time in the Arts Technology program in the College of Fine Arts. All faculty members in the school are practicing artists and/or are involved in research and publication. The school has qualified instructors with significant academic and professional experience in the areas of acting (including movement and voice), directing, design (scenic, lighting, and costume), technical theatre, stage management, playwriting, theatre and dance education, creative drama, theatre and film studies (including theatre history, playwriting, dramaturgy, and film studies), dance performance, and choreography.

Program goals and quality indices. Goals of the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program address four broad areas: foundational knowledge, fundamental skills, collaboration and professionalism, and evidence of practice. These four areas are common across all sequences of the undergraduate theatre program and across the two graduate programs of the school. Faculty members have identified quality indices for each of the six sequences of the undergraduate theatre program. Indices common across the six sequences include retaining highly qualified faculty members who are accomplished and recognized in their fields, attracting and retaining talented and dedicated students, providing a variety of co-curricular opportunities including productions and community outreach initiatives, and helping students achieve their educational and professional goals.

Student learning outcomes assessment plan and process. As described in the self-study process section above, the School of Theatre and Dance has developed new student learning outcomes assessment plans for each of its academic programs in conjunction with both the recent accreditation review and this program review. The assessment plan for the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program sets forth learning outcomes related to each of the four broad program goals (foundational knowledge, fundamental skills, collaboration and professionalism, and evidence of practice). Learning outcomes in these four broad areas differ across each of the six sequences in the program. For each sequence, master rubrics have been designed to describe mastery of each outcome at four levels of performance. These rubrics are used to evaluate evidence produced by students in response to assessment tasks that have been established and standardized for each sequence and embedded in required coursework. Data are collected and evaluated using the master rubrics at various points within the course of study for each sequence. Courses and projects have been identified as collection points for the learning outcomes. Examples include analysis papers, design projects, tests, lesson plans, and collaborative projects. The teacher of record or area head person for the course or activity is responsible for collecting the appropriate data and sharing that data with their area head. The area head, in turn, is responsible for submitting collected data to their area representative on the School Curriculum and Assessment Committee every fall semester. The committee then organizes, labels, and analyzes the data and creates summative data reports for submission to the school office.

Specialized accreditation. The National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) is the only American association accrediting schools of theatre at the collegiate level. The School of Theatre and Dance hosted a NAST accreditation team visit in October 2015. In March 2016 the NAST Commission on Accreditation re-accredited the school and set the next comprehensive accreditation review for 2025-2026. With the NAST re-accreditation, the theatre sequences in the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program were determined to be in full compliance with NAST standards. However, NAST accreditation does not extend to dance plans of study in the program, as dance is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Seeking NASD accreditation is a goal of the school that may remain unfulfilled until reconstruction of the fine arts complex is complete. NASD requires two dedicated dance studios as a minimum requirement for accreditation. At the present time, the School of Theatre and Dance has just one dance studio. A second studio is included in the fine arts complex reconstruction plans. The two teacher education sequences in the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program, dance teacher education and theatre teacher education, are affiliated with the teacher education unit at Illinois State University accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The teacher education unit was last accredited by NCATE in 2012. The next accreditation review, to be conducted by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) as successor to NCATE, is scheduled for 2019.

Responses to recommendations resulting from the previous program review. The School of Theatre and Dance has addressed all recommendations for the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program made by the Academic Planning Committee at the conclusion of the 2007-2008 program review. The school has developed a new, workable assessment plan with a timeline for its implementation and review. The school has also successfully recruited a more diverse faculty, and this goal is articulated strongly in the new strategic plan for the school. Since the 2007-2008 program review, the school has collaborated with the Office of Admissions and the Office of Enrollment Management and Academic Services to address enrollment fluctuations. The Academic Planning Committee had recommended doing so out of concern about burgeoning enrollments of theatre majors and minors at the time of the 2007-2008 review. During the first half of this program review cycle, efforts to stabilize enrollment in the undergraduate theatre program were successful. However, since then the school has faced declining enrollment in the program and continues to face the challenge shared across all universities in the state to recruit from the diminishing pool of Illinois high school graduates. The school has a plan in place to address this challenge. The impact of the burgeoning number of minors on degree programs in the school has been directly addressed in some areas of study, while, in others, declining enrollment has mitigated concerns that minors may be depleting school resources needed to serve its majors.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand. In 2012 the School of Theatre officially changed its name to the School of Theatre and Dance to provide greater visibility for dance education offered by the school, to mirror trends occurring among other theatre and dance programs in Illinois, and to more accurately reflect the diverse educational opportunities offered within the school and its curricula. This change may be contributing to increased enrollments in the two dance sequences of the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program which, in turn, has had a direct and positive impact on overall enrollment in the school. The number of graduating high school seniors in Illinois continues to decline and the competition from other universities in recruiting those students has increased. The school continues to address this challenge by prioritizing its recruitment initiatives and by revising its curricula to better meet the needs of future students. Interest in music theatre among high school students considering the undergraduate theatre program at Illinois State has grown in recent years. The school is examining how it might absorb the musical theatre sequence disestablished by the School of Music effective May 2016. Interest among students and faculty in collaborative and interdisciplinary studies also continues to grow.

Major findings of this program review self-study. The greatest challenge facing the School of Theatre and Dance in the near future is the replacement of faculty members who have resigned or retired in the last few years. Given the policy at Illinois State University of requiring a unit to obtain approval from university administration to fill a faculty position once it has been vacated and given that program enrollment is considered when deciding which positions to fill, faculty and administrators in the School of Theatre and Dance are increasingly concerned that the curriculum, production program, and student recruitment efforts of the school may be negatively impacted in the long term by recent faculty departures. To help make a case for filling those positions, the school has established a goal of reversing enrollment decreases that began in 2014. Strategies of the school for doing so include establishing a musical theatre sequence, insofar as many high school students find departments with musical theatre programs appealing; participating in the university-wide effort to increase enrollment of international students; entering into articulation agreements with community colleges regionally and nationally (such as the agreement established by the school with Collin College in Plano, Texas); and increasing visibility of the school at theatre and dance festivals in other states.

Initiatives and plans for the next program review cycle.

- Restructure the curriculum of the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program to allow for more collaborative coursework across sequences in the program
- Examine the feasibility of establishing a sequence in musical theatre
- Continue to focus on time-to-degree issues for transfer students
- Continue to advocate for the replacement of faculty members who have retired or resigned
- Monitor experiences of students in the dance theatre education and theatre teacher education sequences of the program with the new edTPA teacher licensure requirement, including edTPA scores
- Identify opportunities for guest artist residencies and explore ways to fund them
- Develop a plan for alumni outreach and tracking

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program to be in Good Standing.

The committee thanks the program for a detailed, critical, and forward-looking self-study report that documents a methodical, multiple-year effort involving all faculty and staff members of the school to carefully evaluate its theatre and dance programs. Particularly noteworthy aspects of the report are the thorough description and analysis of the curriculum by sequence and the analysis of aspirational programs and their relevance to the program at Illinois State University. Through its planning process, the program has successfully addressed requirements of both specialized accreditation and program review.

Regarding accreditation, the committee congratulates the school on reaccreditation of its theatre programs, including the B.A., B.S. in Theatre, by the National Association of Schools of Theatre in 2016 for a 10-year period. The committee also congratulates the program on approval of its two teacher education sequences (theatre and dance) in 2012 in connection with reaccreditation of the teacher education unit at Illinois State University by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

The committee congratulates and thanks faculty and students in the program for their contributions to the arts through the many productions sponsored by the school and through the nationally-renowned Illinois Shakespeare Festival. These curricular and co-curricular production opportunities provide valuable learning experiences for students while positively contributing to the quality of life in the community, region, and state. The committee recognizes faculty members for their dedication in mentoring students in these and other venues, typically involving evening and weekend hours.

The committee commends the program and school for its aggressive efforts to recruit highly talented students to the program. Examples include offering scholarships to meritorious students, involvement of faculty in competitions and intensive learning opportunities for high school students, biannually hosting the Illinois High School Theatre Festival, and the recent introduction of the College Dance Day open house.

The committee recognizes the program and school for its commitment to diversifying the student population across multiple dimensions and to create and maintain an inclusive environment. In addition to its aggressive recruitment efforts, the school has diversified its production schedule to include more works by persons of color and supports efforts of registered student organizations, including Freestage, the Black Actors League, and the Latin American Theatre Association, to independently stage such works. The committee supports the program in its continuation of these efforts and its goal of increasing the percentage of students in the program who are male, particularly students in the dance sequences.

The committee commends faculty members for their extensive efforts to develop a student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program that aligns with the new mission, vision, and values of the School of Theatre and Dance. The plan builds from four broad learning goals applicable to all academic programs in the school by articulating learning outcomes unique to the B.A., B.S. in Theatre program and its sequences for each broad goal. The committee encourages the program to proceed with plan implementation in the coming years and to use findings resulting from plan implementation to inform program changes. The committee asks the program to report on its implementation of the plan in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 through a report submitted by the School of Theatre and Dance to the Office of the Provost by October 31, 2019. The committee asks that the report include a brief description of assessment activities, assessment findings and their implications, and any changes to the assessment plan either made or planned to be made based on experiences with its initial implementation.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study, tentatively due October 1, 2023, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

- Faculty has identified numerous curricular initiatives for consideration during the next review cycle. Among them are restructuring the curriculum to promote more collaborative coursework across program sequences, exploring ways to better integrate co-curricular performance activities into the curriculum, and establishing a musical theatre sequence to replace the eponymous sequence disestablished by the School of Music in 2016. Other curricular initiatives include expanding online course offerings when pedagogically appropriate, expanding and sustaining involvement of guest artists in curriculum delivery, and seeking ways to better integrate theatre and film studies to broaden interdisciplinary training and provide students more options. The committee encourages faculty to investigate these issues and others that may arise during the next review cycle. Some issues may be addressed with existing resources. For those that cannot, having a plan in place for their implementation when additional resources become available could be beneficial to the program.
- The self-study report notes that first-time-in-college students are able to graduate from the program within four years regardless of sequence, and the majority of first-time-in-college students graduating from the program do so (70.4 percent versus 64.3 percent across all undergraduate programs in fiscal 2014). The report further notes that external transfer students may need five or six semesters to complete the program, depending on the sequence in which the student enrolls. The committee recognizes the program for its attention to time-to-degree, for its efforts to maintain four-year plans of study for first-time-in-college students, and for its careful analysis of factors affecting time-to-degree for external transfer students. The committee recommends that the program continue its efforts to explore and implement strategies that promote timely graduation, particularly for external transfer students.
- Although the program is the largest of its public university comparator programs in the state with respect to enrollment and degrees conferred, the committee encourages sustained efforts by the program and school to recruit a talented applicant pool to maintain enrollments within established targets. Given the strong reputation of the program, the committee suggests that the program consider expanding its efforts to recruit students from other states. The recent articulation initiative with Collin College in Texas could serve as a model for similar initiatives with other out-of-state institutions with strong theatre and dance programs.
- The committee encourages the program to explore strategies to foster a greater sense of community and purpose among students in the theatre and film studies sequence of the program and a greater understanding and appreciation among all students in the program of the important role played by theatre and film studies in the discipline. Strategies faculty might explore include increasing the rigor of the application and admissions process, expanding the role of the advisor in that process, and implementing strategies to actively recruit students to the sequence as their first-choice plan of study.
- The committee encourages continued attention by the program and school to concerns expressed by some faculty members regarding workloads. Aspects of the program that may warrant attention, in addition to faculty and staffing levels, include production scheduling, integration of academic work and production work, and faculty assignments and credit load. The committee is cognizant of the challenges modifying any one of these aspects may have on student recruitment and student success.
- The committee recognizes and commends the strong commitment by the school to recruit for diversity across multiple dimensions when filling faculty positions. Efforts since the last program review to achieve greater gender balance have been successful. However, in some sub-disciplines the percent of faculty members who are persons of color is less than the average across all university faculty. The committee encourages the school to continue its efforts to promote faculty diversity as it has faculty positions to fill, particularly in sub-disciplines with lower-than-average representation from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- The committee recommends that the program compile a plan for alumni outreach, tracking, and networking. The program already has many elements of such a plan in place. Compiling them could help prioritize allocation of limited resources to outreach efforts, minimize duplication of outreach efforts, and foster collaboration with other units that work with alumni, such as University Advancement. Strengthening ties with program alumni could benefit the program and its students in numerous ways, such as involving more alumni in student mentoring, obtaining additional perspectives regarding the program that could help guide curriculum changes, and increasing financial contributions to program and school priorities such as facility improvements and scholarship funds.

- The self-study report articulates a goal of achieving accreditation of the dance sequences by the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD), indicating that such accreditation could serve as further evidence of the quality of the dance program and help efforts to attract highly-talented students to the sequence. However, the report also indicates that the dance program will not qualify for accreditation until planned reconstruction of the Fine Arts complex is complete because the reconstructed facility will include a second dance studio and related facilities required for accreditation. Given the importance of accreditation to recruiting the highest quality students and given the likelihood that a reconstructed facility may not be ready for occupancy during the next review cycle, the committee suggests that the program continue to work with the school and college to explore facility arrangements that would meet NASD requirements, such as development and use of space outside the Fine Arts complex.
- The NAST accreditation report notes that much of the equipment used by School of Theatre and Dance programs is reaching the end of its life cycle. The report notes that some but not all needed equipment upgrades have been included in the planned fine arts complex reconstruction project. The committee suggests that the school develop a long-term plan for systematic replacement of equipment across its programs. Having such a plan could help guide allocation of resources as they become available and may also be useful when seeking private contributions to the school.