

REVIEW OF THE B.A., B.S. IN THEATRE
 Classification of Instruction Programs (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, Dance, and Film within the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts. The School offers a diverse array of sequences for undergraduate students pursuing a Theatre degree, including Acting, Dance Performance, Dance Teacher Education, Directing, Film and Digital Media, Production Design and Technology, Theatre Studies, and Theatre Teacher Education. The program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), with plans for future accreditation of newer sequences such as Musical Theatre and Film & Digital Media. Students enter the program through their chosen sequence but benefit from an integrated curriculum that emphasizes both theoretical study and experiential learning through production. The School maintains a robust production season to support student training, including eight theatrical productions and two dance concerts annually, and is home to the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. The program fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, encourages participation in research and national festivals, and emphasizes inclusive practices throughout the curriculum and production work.

Enrollment, Fall Census Day, 2017-2024
B.A., B.S., in Theatre, Illinois State University
 First Majors Only

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Acting sequence | 106 | 119 | 102 | 100 | 86 | 69 | 60 | 62 |
| Dance sequence | 28 | 29 | 29 | 27 | 19 | 22 | 15 | 19 |
| Dance Teacher Education sequence | 20 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 14 | 14 | 18 |
| Film and Digital Media sequence | - | - | - | 11 | 49 | 71 | 96 | 134 |
| Musical Theatre sequence | - | - | - | - | - | 13 | 30 | 38 |
| Production Design Technology sequence | 43 | 41 | 42 | 40 | 41 | 39 | 41 | 41 |
| Theatre Studies sequence | 43 | 37 | 46 | 38 | 33 | 26 | 22 | 16 |
| Theatre Teacher Education sequence | 29 | 29 | 38 | 40 | 41 | 41 | 45 | 41 |
| Total | 269 | 272 | 271 | 272 | 287 | 294 | 323 | 369 |

Degrees Conferred, Graduating Fiscal Year, 2017-2024
B.A., B.S., in Theatre, Illinois State University
 First Majors Only

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Acting sequence | 19 | 12 | 19 | 25 | 53 | 35 | 22 | 17 |
| Dance sequence | 11 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Dance Teacher Education sequence | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Film and Digital Media sequence | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 6 | 17 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Musical Theatre sequence | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Production Design Technology sequence | 11 | 10 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 15 | 10 | 13 |
| Theatre Studies sequence | 14 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Theatre Teacher Education sequence | 5 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Total | 62 | 49 | 39 | 67 | 54 | 70 | 56 | 62 |

*Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2019 consists of the following terms: summer 2020, fall 2020, and spring 2021. Degrees by sequence for 2015 were not available. The Film and Digital Media sequence was established May 18, 2020. The Musical Theatre sequence was established May 16, 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Self-Study Process

The School of Theatre, Dance, and Film (STDF) undertook its self-study during the 2022–2023 academic year, with continued work in Fall 2023. While the process was delayed due to the deaths of two staff members and a student, the School responded by redistributing writing responsibilities and appointing new leadership. The self-study draws from multiple sources, including department meetings, surveys, student reflections, production program evaluations, DEI committee reports, alumni and donor engagement, and unit-level assessment plans. These sources provided a comprehensive basis for reflecting on program strengths, challenges, and future directions.

Program Curriculum

The Theatre major offers eight sequences—Acting, Dance, Musical Theatre, Theatre Studies, Film and Digital Media, Production Design and Technology, Theatre Teacher Education, and Dance Education. A new minor in Stage Combat has also been introduced. Recent curricular changes reflect the unit’s responsiveness to student interest, industry trends, and program-level assessment data. These include the launch of the Musical Theatre and Film and Digital Media sequences and ongoing revision of the Production Design and Technology sequence to better integrate contemporary practice and experiential learning.

Program Faculty

STDF is staffed by faculty and staff with a blend of professional and academic experience. While the faculty-to-student ratio has remained relatively stable, recent growth in the Musical Theatre and Acting sequences has strained instructional capacity. The School reports concerns about workload imbalance, rising class sizes, and inadequate staff support for production areas. A decline in faculty and staff headcount due to retirements and deaths has heightened the urgency to secure additional resources.

Program Goals and Quality Indices

The School is guided by goals centered on recruitment, retention, quality learning environments, and integration of performance opportunities into the curriculum. It also prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA), and the support of community and collaboration within the School. Retention and graduation rates remain strong, with first-time, full-time student retention above the university average.

Student Learning Outcomes

Each sequence maintains a distinct set of student learning outcomes, which are reviewed through juries, auditions, performances, classroom assessments, and advising. Students are expected to maintain minimum academic standards and participate in departmental productions and assignments, reinforcing applied learning.

Assessment Plan and Processes

Assessment is embedded in both curricular and co-curricular experiences. The program uses a mix of juried assessments, auditions, focus groups, production critiques, and standardized evaluation tools. Assessment results have led to changes such as sequence-specific curriculum updates and planned revisions to the production lab crediting structure to better reflect student workload.

Specialized Accreditation

The Theatre program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), with a comprehensive reaccreditation review scheduled for 2025–2026. The newly established Musical Theatre sequence will be reviewed during that cycle. STDF is not currently eligible for National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) accreditation due to facilities constraints, though the School anticipates eligibility upon completion of a new fine arts building.

Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Program Review

In response to its last program review, STDF has expanded its curricular offerings, increased student enrollment, improved assessment practices, and advanced DEIA work. It has also strengthened advising and is seeking resources to address production staffing and technological upgrades. Strategic planning efforts have clarified program priorities and refined the School's mission.

Changes in the Academic Discipline

Theatre and related fields are undergoing significant shifts, including an emphasis on digital media, equity-centered pedagogy, interdisciplinary work, and technology-enhanced design. STDF has responded by integrating digital media into coursework, expanding sequence offerings, and adopting more inclusive production and casting practices.

Major Findings of the Self-Study

Key findings include high student engagement, excellent retention, and successful integration of performance and production into student learning. Challenges include unbalanced enrollment across sequences, under-resourced production areas, aging infrastructure, and rising material and labor costs. Faculty report feeling overextended due to rising demand in performance sequences and insufficient technical staff support.

Initiatives and Plans for the Next Review Cycle

Looking ahead, the School aims to revise its production curriculum, pursue NAST accreditation for Musical Theatre, and develop assessment for newer sequences. Additional priorities include launching new minors, strengthening DEIA initiatives, expanding interdisciplinary collaborations, and modernizing production spaces. STDF also plans to review policies on sequence declarations and rebalancing enrollment across sequences to ensure equitable access to opportunities and learning experiences.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The School of Theatre and Dance houses undergraduate degree programs in Theatre and Dance (B.A./B.S.), with multiple sequences in areas such as Acting, Musical Theatre, Production Design and Technology, Theatre

Education, and Film and Digital Media. The Academic Planning Committee (APC) appreciates the considerable effort made by the faculty and staff to submit the self-study report for the B.A./B.S. in Theatre, especially in light of numerous challenges during the review period. These included the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden loss of staff and students, significant shifts in leadership, and widespread staffing vacancies that affected operations across the School. We recognize the dedication of program faculty to sustain instruction and creative production throughout these disruptions.

The committee commends the Theatre program for several significant accomplishments. The program has seen overall enrollment growth since the last review, particularly with the successful launch of the Film and Digital Media and Musical Theatre sequences. Student retention rates are strong and consistently above university averages, and the program has cultivated an engaged and successful student body, with students earning regional and national recognition for their creative and scholarly work. The program's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is visible through curricular reform, student survey work, and efforts to foster a more inclusive classroom environment. Recruitment practices are dynamic and strategic, contributing to the program's visibility both regionally and nationally.

Nonetheless, the committee has concerns regarding the current state of the B.A./B.S. in Theatre program and the quality and completeness of the self-study report. The report lacks cohesion and is fragmented by sequence, making it difficult to understand the degree program as a unified whole. There is limited evidence of faculty collaboration or reflection across sequences. Key data were omitted, assessment practices were outdated or insufficiently described, and much of the content—including curriculum tables—appears to be recycled from older documents. The committee is also concerned about ongoing issues related to sequence sustainability, outdated facilities, assessment and curriculum alignment, and support for creative work given the rapid enrollment growth. Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the B.A./B.S. in Theatre program for further review. The committee requests that the School of Theatre and Dance take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

Report: Due October 1, 2026

Revise the Academic Unit Overview. The Academic Unit Overview lacked several components critical to understanding the structure and operations of the School. The committee asks the program faculty to revisit this section and provide more clarity in the following areas:

- **Faculty composition:** Clarify the distribution of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty (including TT:Total instructional ratios), including faculty loads and contributions to sequences, advising, and creative activity (including description of faculty workload practices and efforts to recognize production-based labor).
- **Strategic planning:** Include a copy of the current strategic plan or describe the process and timeline for developing one.
- **Staffing and facilities:** Update the section to reflect ongoing staffing vacancies and concerns about physical infrastructure, particularly Westhoff Theatre and the CPA. Include plans for mitigating these challenges in the interim.
- **Graduate and undergraduate support roles:** Clarify the use of graduate assistants and production staff, especially regarding advising, mentoring, and teaching-related roles.

Develop an integrated enrollment and sequence sustainability plan. While the program has experienced healthy enrollment growth, particularly in new sequences, the committee is concerned about internal imbalances and long-term sustainability. The program should:

- Analyze enrollment, production capacity, and faculty/staff support across all sequences.
- Evaluate the balance between performance-focused and technical/design sequences and identify strategies to address disparities.

- Consider whether the number and structure of sequences is sustainable given available resources, and whether shared curriculum or generalist models could improve integration and student flexibility.
- Describe how production opportunities will remain equitably available to students as enrollment grows.
- Complete the subsection of the self-study regarding Student success vision, challenges, initiatives, and metrics.

Revise the assessment plan and demonstrate use of results. The committee found the current assessment plan to be outdated and lacking in meaningful data or examples of use. The program should:

- Update the program's assessment plan to reflect current sequences and learning outcomes.
- Collaborate with University Assessment Services to align the plan with institutional expectations.
- Include 2–3 examples of how assessment results have led to curricular or programmatic changes.
- Describe how assessment findings are shared and used across faculty in all sequences.

Conduct a Curriculum Review and Planning Process. Curricular tables and descriptions were often outdated or inconsistent, and the report lacked evidence of recent or ongoing curriculum evaluation. The committee asks the program to:

- Complete a comprehensive curriculum review across all sequences.
- Evaluate alignment between credit hours, experiential learning, and production participation.
- Address inconsistencies in how production lab courses are credited and described.
- Review course sequencing and availability for potential bottlenecks or inefficiencies.
- Include feedback from internal (students, faculty) and external (alumni, employers) stakeholders in the review process.
- Examine decreasing trends in honors participation and plan actions to reverse this trend.

Expand and deepen the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) Section. The committee acknowledges the importance placed on EDI by the program but encourages the faculty to build on this work with greater specificity and data. The committee asks that the program:

- Describe changes made to production, curriculum, and pedagogy in response to EDI commitments.
- Include evidence of impact (e.g., student surveys, course evaluations, production diversity).
- Address challenges around equitable access to sequences, particularly those with audition or portfolio requirements.
- Reflect on whether student and faculty diversity has increased or changed during the review period.

Complete the section regarding faculty credentials and professional development. This subsection was absent from the submitted report.

Complete comparator and aspirational program analyses. The self-study did not include a substantive comparator analysis and presented aspirational data in sequence-specific silos. The committee requests:

- A structured analysis of comparator programs, including enrollment, curriculum, and niche positioning.
- Identification of aspirational peer programs (regionally or nationally) that can inform planning.
- Reflection on how comparator data might guide program improvement or innovation.

Clarify plans for future initiatives. The initiatives section lists a number of intended projects and goals, but the descriptions are often vague. The committee asks that the program:

- Expand the discussion of each initiative and include expected outcomes and measures of progress.
- Describe implementation timelines and who is responsible for each initiative.
- Connect initiatives to key findings from the self-study and review process.