

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of October 19, 2015
3 p.m., Altgeld 315

Present: Coller, Douglass, Falkoff, Goldenberg, Gordon, Howell, Hunt, Isabel, Klonoski (for Birberick), Li, Mogren, Parker, Subramony and Winkler

Guests: Megan O'Brien- Student Association-Undergraduate Student

The meeting was called to order at 3:00p.m

Program Review: Theatre Studies and Theatre Arts

Alex Gelman-Director; Paul Bauer- Interim Dean and Professor

Announcements: None

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of September 21, 2015 and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was turned over to Geoff Gordon for the presentation of the subcommittee reports.

Strengths:

The School of Theatre and Dance is responsible for seven major theatre productions each year. These provide profound learning experiences for students in all three degree programs. Furthermore, the hundreds of students throughout the University who take THEA 203 and THEA 210 as Gen Ed courses get to experience the productions as a part of their coursework. For many students, this is their first opportunity to experience live theatre. The school is building community and cultivating the next generation of arts patrons, while at the same time, serving NIU, DeKalb/Sycamore, and northern Illinois more broadly. With renovations of the Stevens Building, the School of Theatre and Dance will have a state of the art facility in which to create and perform their valuable work.

The following questions were asked of the department:

A lot of your report focuses on the new theatre building. Can you describe the implications the new building will bring to your program?

Currently, there is no work progress being made due to the budget impasse at the State of Illinois. This building has been a long time in coming. Two cycles of program review have expressed grave concerns about the professional training tracks as well as the safety of the building. The space was originally created for a fine arts building so some of the rooms would be much better suited for choir practice than the ways that we use the rooms. The renovated building will solve most of our facility issues. The state of the art aspects of the building will help us to recruit new students.

When was the building originally slated for completion?

Originally, we were given a completion date of the end of January, 2016. About three months into the project, the contractor requested a two month extension since they were unable to start on time giving us a completion date of March 1, 2016. With no work taking place since July 1, 2015, I would assume that this would add at least three months to our completion date.

Did you see a change in interest and enrollment in the program with the prospect of the new building and have you seen any other change occurring since no work has been taking place since the beginning of July?

The construction started after all of the commitments had been made, so it hasn't caused us to lose anyone yet.

So it could impact next year?

The greater accomplishment in this, is that we have lost no numbers as a result of the delay. We will, as it stands now, have taken a group of acting students, entirely through the program, outside of our normal building. These students have had to perform at the Holmes Student Center and their classes have been held at Holmes Student Center, Grant South Towers or the Field House.

Has it had any impact on faculty retention?

Time will tell. There have only been two tenure track faculty that have left us, all of the rest of our faculty leaving have been as a result of retirement.

Dean Bauer, would you like to make any general remarks?

Just a couple. This area has a very collaborative faculty. This facility has been promised since I was on campus and I am now technically retired. The resilience of the faculty and their commitment to the institution is very strong. Everyone respects each other, they get the things done that need to be done. There are lots of facets to this program.

I would like to roll up a number of questions all into one. One of the things that was unclear in your report was composition of the staff. If you could please report on that. And, other departments within the university base productivity on number of articles published, which doesn't quite work for your department. What are the metrics that you use and how is productivity reported for things like accreditation associations? How does your faculty compare to peer groups for this?

In terms of productivity, our professors and instructors are all still working in the field and to work on projects, it's not uncommon for them to be gone for weeks at a time. We typically have a good amount of notice prior to the absence and can typically plan and make sure that all classes and work here at the university will be covered while they are gone. We measure productivity by reviewing the projects that have been worked on and consider things like venue and the degree of competitiveness. Unlike this type of measurement done in more traditional means, this is less a measure of quality and more a measure of accomplishment. Our personnel committee makes these

determinations based on the locations and the groups with which our faculty is working with. Additionally, we have associations and accreditation standards to meet.

In your report, you talked about how you've responded to budget cuts and some of the difficulties you've encountered as a result. Are there programs or subprograms that can survive these cuts? Also, please respond to how you would handle further budget cuts should they be necessary in the future.

This is the only comment that I would really like to take issue with. To suggest the cutting of budgets more than we already have would be detrimental to enrollment. A large portion of our recruitments happens out of state, so to cut travel would also limit recruitment efforts.

Recommendations:

The school should give serious consideration to what the department would like to achieve over the next 10 years.

B.A./B.F.A. in Theatre Studies

Strengths:

Through mandatory internships and direct involvement in on-campus theatre productions, the degree program has a strong experiential learning component. The program is producing high quality graduates that are able to find employment in a variety of fields.

The following questions were asked of the department:

The B.F.A. is a limited admission program. How do you go about choosing these candidates?

It is different for the three different emphases. The B.F.A. is not limited admission, but it is highly selective retention. Acting, for example, we use Unified Auditions to get candidates. For this organization, we must attend three of the four events that they hold, to be a member. These events are held in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Las Vegas and we choose not to attend Las Vegas. The audition consists of a twenty minute slot, an interview and a coaching session. We typically send one faculty member to New York, one to Los Angeles and a team of two or three to Chicago as well as some graduate assistants. With the design candidates, they would send a portfolio of their work, either digitally or traditionally. Their work is then assessed or critiqued and offers made accordingly based on that information.

How much does it typically cost you to do this?

\$45,000/year

I would imagine that is a substantial part of your budget?

Yes

And how many students does that typically yield?

Typically, around 125 students.

Do you keep going to L.A. because the competition is strong? Why not Las Vegas?

Los Angeles is a typically a bigger site and we've built relationships there, which takes time.

How long does the process take?

We have some kids auditioning all year. It begins in earnest in January, usually the week before classes begin where we will typically visit three different sites/organizations. There is typically an audition visit during spring break.

What percentage of students graduate with a B.F.A.?

I would say 60%. 18-22 students usually begin the program with roughly 12 students graduating each year.

What happens to the student that graduates with a B.F.A.?

B.F.A. is a professional degree. Some leave Chicago two or three years later, but most work here in Chicago.

Do you know how many students get jobs?

They are not jobs, they are gigs. This means that they work on a project as long as it runs and then will need to find something different. Depending on the company, this typically means employment runs anywhere from one to two and-a-half months to four or five months on most projects. Chicago is a great place for theatre jobs, but not as much for film work. There may be a string of piece meal work or teaching for our graduates as well.

Recommendations:

With the B.A. and the B.F.A. programs, there have been gaps in the past assessment data that make it difficult to see trends and to flag issues that need attention. Appropriate data is now being archived for future comparisons. The assessment team should be diligent. Given the amount of money that the school spends on recruitment, it should make a better effort to track what happens to students after they drop out of the program. Do they leave the campus entirely, or do they stay at NIU, taking some other major?

M.F.A. in Theatre Arts

Strengths:

The program is very selective and can attract very high quality students from across the country.

The following questions were asked of the department:

The M.F.A. program only has one cohort of students at a time. Why?

Only in acting. Half of our M.F.A.s are acting and the other half are design and technology.

Design and Technology go year by year and acting you will get one group for three years at a time. And then after that group leaves, you get another group. Is this because those are the resources that you have?

Critical mass is important in teaching an actor. You cannot teach three in a row, it just doesn't work. You need an ensemble and they need to be a variety of types. Our assistantships are such that we have 24 full time within the school. Twelve of these are actors and 12 are designers. At this point, we have 13 actors and we started out with 15 about 2 or 2 ½ years ago. When we part company with someone, we never have to worry about the class becoming too small to continue with it.

Would you say that you are potentially losing people if they are ready to come to NIU, but the new admission is still 2 years away?

Probably. There's no question.

Is this a common model that would be found at other schools?

There's the idealistic view and then there is what actually happens. The idealistic view is that there will be a perfect match between the student and the faculty they would like to work with. So the student will want to wait for the perfect faculty and opportunity. In reality, it's a market. There are typically 1000-2500 students that are trying to get into programs in that market.

During your auditions for M.F.A., do they typically piggyback onto the auditions for B.F.A., or are they typically separate?

The M.F.A. is a different association.

Do the M.F.A.s typically pay tuition?

No they do not. It's typically a tuition waiver and assistantship where the students work 10-20 hours. It is a similar process for the design technology.

Recommendations:

As with the B.A. program, there are gaps in past assessment data that make it difficult to see trends, and to flag issues that need attention. The assessment team should be diligent as this new data is becoming available.

A request for the subcommittee chair in training for next year's APC was extended with no one volunteering. The kick off for this coming year will take place in January, with the requests for data for this already sent out. We can expect that APC for this coming year will be very similar to

previous years, although some changes will most likely be made. Requests for this position will continue to be made.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Essex