**August, 2009 Assessment Committee Feedback: Theatre and Dance**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Beth Lincoln**

**Plan also reviewed by: Melissa Mercer-Tachick**

Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfM2dyN3I4eGRm&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "), and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.

Step 1 (Mission) and Step 2 (Learning Goals) are complete, and the outcomes flow naturally from your mission. The outcomes are all phrased from a student perspective, and all seem measurable.   There is mention of Dance in the mission, but not in the outcomes; are there plans to assess the dance program at some later date?

Step 3 (Program Components) is well done.  You have done an excellent job of linking the components to goals.  It would be helpful for outside evaluators, however, if you included the relevant course names and numbers for goals 1-3, even as a parenthetical list following your description of the component.

Step 4:  The plan is to assess goals 1-3 through course grades.  However, much more can go into a course grade than just mastery of the outcome.  For example, the student’s ability to write may influence a grade, but not be relevant to the outcome being measured.  It would be more useful to assess through assignments such as papers or exam questions that directly measure an outcome. For each goal, common rubrics can be devised to be used by all who teach the relevant classes to measure the students’ level of attainment of the goal.  You may use indirect measures in addition to direct ones in these assessments.

For goal 4, the learning outcome states that “Theater majors will participate cooperatively and knowledgeably in all aspects of the production of a play.” The plan is to examine the record of theatrical activity, but it’s not clear for what – for example, do all students need to participate in a certain number of events for this goal to be met?  How will this assess knowledgeable and cooperative participation?

Finally, it is useful to set up a timeline for assessment activities, remembering that you do not have to assess everything every year.

We look forward to reading how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data.

[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfM2dyN3I4eGRm&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o ") *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

**Fall 2009**

**Theatre and Dance Department:**  
I've finished reviewing your department's assessment report for fall 2009, and want to thank you for your excellent work.  My main concern continues to be with your reliance on course grades as assessment measures.  Heretofore outside evaluators have been skeptical of this practice, preferring to see assignments or test questions scored on an assessment-related rubric as well as graded.  This removes the component of the grade related to issues that might not be part of your assessment, such as writing skills or attendance.  Also, I wrote one comment in a pinkish color where I was unclear on why a finding was surprising; otherwise, your report was straightforward and it was easy to understand how the various steps relate.  
  
You are to be commended for following up your assessment with curricular change.