

Date: October 24, 2008

To: Tim Greene, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: Jim Hopfensperger, Associate Dean
College of Fine Arts

Re: Annual Report on the Measurement of Student Learning Outcomes
For Ongoing Program Improvement

1. *Based on evidence provided by the departments/units, evaluate unit-by-unit the implementation and use of assessment data in improving programs.*

DEPARTMENT OF DANCE

The Department of Dance appears to be reflecting on data and making decisions—primarily within processes and protocols for data collection—informed by the data.

Assessment data indicate the department is meeting its standards for enrolled students. During 07-08 minor changes were made in the assessment process, and these changes were made so that evaluative forms used the same criteria as the assessment plan. Further improvements need to be made in this area. In addition, the department needs to clearly define which documents need to be included in a senior B.A. dance major's portfolio, and the format and due date of that portfolio. An evaluative form should also be developed. This should be completed no later than the middle of the Fall 2008 semester.

The assessment process will be modified for 2008-09. Currently, the assessment committee chair ensures that faculty complete evaluations and administer surveys. These results are given to the department chair to tabulate, analyze and report. Next year, the assessment committee will have more members so the tabulation, analysis and reporting of results are completed by the dance faculty and are then reported to the department chair. This process is described in the assessment plan.

Finally, since the department did not conduct alumni surveys this year, no data exists regarding the department's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its graduates. The department has a plan to develop online data collections tools. This project would require college support.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

The Department of Theatre appears to be reflecting on most data and making excellent decisions, including proposals for curricular revisions, informed by those data.

Assessment data indicates that 20% of students in the Music Theatre Performance degree program are repeating a required course, Music 1620, in order to achieve the passing grade of “C”. Actions taken to improve this situation include increased tutoring and assuring that proper prerequisites are completed prior to enrollment. It also appears that the aural comprehension portion of the course is geared toward the classical music student—a proficiency not necessarily required for the study of musical theatre repertoire. The School of Music, which teaches the Music 1620 course, and the Department of Theatre had a positive meeting to address this issue and several excellent options for improvement have been suggested.

Assessment in the Theatre Studies degree program had indicated inconsistency in the level of preparation among student stage managers. In response the department created a specific course of study in stage management—separate from the more general theatre studies program, effective Fall 2008. In addition to improving the education of those students already at Western, this new course of study has resulted in increased applications.

In the Design and Technical Production degree program assessment data revealed weaknesses in drawing and painting skills, drafting skills, and technical production skills. These issues have all been addressed in a curriculum revision for a B.F.A. course of study, a change from the current B.A. degree. This proposal is currently undergoing departmental review. In addition, the fourth and sixth semester reviews of student work indicate a need to introduce computer aided drafting design courses earlier in the sequence of study. In response, THEA 4320 will be offered in Fall Semester 2008 as a second-year as opposed to a fourth-year course. This “experiment” will be evaluated for consideration as a permanent curricular change.

In the Performance degree program assessment data suggests several areas for improvement including 1) preparing students for graduate school auditions and/or the professional world after graduation and 2) improving the collaborative skills of directors. The first issue will be addressed by increased exposure to guest artists currently working in the professional theatre. Some funds are committed for Fall 2008. The second issue is being addressed through changes in course content planned for 2008-2009.

FROSTIC SCHOOL OF ART

The Frostic School of Art did not file a 2007-08 Assessment Report. Thus, insufficient evidence exists to suggest the unit is reflecting on the data to improve its programs.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The School of Music appears to be reflecting on data and making decisions—primarily within protocols for data collection—informed by those data.

Assessment data indicates that in *Conducting*, a course taken by all undergraduates within the ‘core’ curriculum, students are successfully demonstrating conducting

gestures in the meters of 2, 3, 4, and 6—with dynamic ranges from pianissimo to fortissimo and stylistic ranges from marcato to legato—and competency in instrumental clefs, transposition, and nomenclature in French, Italian, and German.

Data indicates that in *Class Piano*, also taken by all undergraduates within the ‘core’ curriculum, fluency is being achieved in: all major and some minor scales, using both hands; harmonization of simple melodies using primary harmonies; transposition of single line melodies; improvisation using both traditional and non-traditional tonalities; and playing simple folk songs by ear is being achieved by most students meet the criteria. The school believes that a second evaluator during the exam could provide increased objectivity in assessment. A remedy for the Fall 2008 semester includes having the final examination performed for a jury of at least 2 class piano instructors.

In *Piano Performance* students at the undergraduate level students are expected to demonstrate a high level of artistry at the piano through performance of pieces at the difficulty level demanded at auditions for further piano performance study at the master’s level. A full senior recital and half junior recital, the preceding hearings and the juries for each semester of study (8) all contribute to the demonstration of skill and talent for this major. The area’s tradition of juries for each semester of study helps track the students’ progress. Data indicates an inconsistency in faculty record keeping. The school will take steps to assure a consistency in faculty submitting the applied music reports to more accurately track the progress of our sophomores’, juniors’ and seniors’ jury, hearing and recital performances.

In *Piano Performance* students at the graduate level students are expected to demonstrate a high level of artistry at the piano through performance of pieces at an appropriate graduate level. Students must pass a recital hearing, including submission of written program notes, the master’s degree recital itself, and the subsequent oral examination. Assessment data indicates that success in this area is attributed to the requirement of juries each semester, and the encouragement and number of opportunities for performances has a direct impact on the strength of the program and the quality of experience for the students.

In *Vocal Performance* students are expected to demonstrate the ability to sing with accurate intonation, rhythm, enunciation, articulation, and pronunciation as well as clear dramatization and memorization of every work presented. Written program notes and translations of texts in every language performed other than English, must be presented at the time of the hearing. The hearings and recitals appear to be successful tools for assessing the strength of the program. Data indicates more than 85% of Music students pass these hearings on the first attempt. However, the school sees the need to more accurately track the progress of our juniors’ and seniors’ performance hearings and recitals.

2. *Based on your evaluation of unit implementation, what exemplars of best practice do you find? Examples include, but are not limited to, clarity of student learning outcomes, assessment methods, forms of evidence used, configuration of direct and indirect measures, inclusion of*

students, improvements identified and implemented.

- All four of the college's units engage in the ongoing and continuous assessment of student learning. This process begins with auditions and portfolio reviews for entry into the degree programs, continues into the reviews (again, auditions and portfolios) within course work in each discipline, and culminates in capstone experiences such as concerts, productions, and exhibitions. These are our best, most consistent, and most telling practices in assessment of student learning.
 - The decision in the Theatre Studies degree program to create a specific course of study in stage management—separate from the more general theatre studies program, effective Fall 2008.
 - The decision to draft revised curricula, changing from B.A. degree programs to a B.F.A. degree programs in the Design and Technical Production, Performance, and Stage Management.
 - Offering the THEA 4320, computer aided drafting design course, as a second-year course to remedy weaknesses revealed in fourth-semester reviews.
3. *Beginning in fall 2008, the University Steering Committee will review and approve departmental and unit assessment plans and examine the uses made of findings (University Assessment Plan, 2003, p. 5). Please indicate which departments, according to their assessment impact reports, have reviewed and revised their plans and are prepared for UASC review in 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11, respectively.*

The Department of Dance, the Department of Theatre, and the School of Music have reviewed and revised their plans and are prepared for UASC review. The Frostic School of Art did not file an Assessment Report in 2007-08. Thus, the college is unable to determine a recommended timetable for USAC review.

4. *In what ways has the college addressed those challenges cited in the January 10, 2008, letter from the provost to the dean?*

The January 10, 2008 letter from the provost to the dean cites the near term challenge of documenting program improvements and moving through cycles of assessment.

The Department of Dance is implementing changes to the assessment process that include changes to evaluation forms, the documents for a dance major's portfolio, and the composition of the assessment committee. As these changes are implemented the college expects future documentation of program improvements.

The Department of Theatre has numerous documented examples of program improvements. The unit has increased tutoring and is assuring proper prerequisites prior to enrollment in Music 1600; created a specific course of study in stage management; begun offering a second-year course in computer aided drafting design;

increased exposure to guest artists for the performance students; changed course content to improve the collaborative skills of directors; and is considering a curriculum revision to a B.F.A. course of study in three degree programs.

The School of Music implemented program improvements in the number of evaluators in class piano exams and the reporting system for undergraduate piano performance exams.

5. *What evidence is there to show that during 2007-08 the college, through allocation of its resources, supported the work of faculty colleagues in assessing student learning? In what other ways did the college foster a culture of assessment?*

The chairs of the unit-level assessment committees convened for a mid-year meeting to exchange best practices and insights as each assessment program moved toward its next level of refinement.

6. *For 2008-09 at the college level, what are the goals for supporting departments in implementing their departmental assessment plans, and what are the expected outcomes?*

In 2008-09 the college will fund two proposals from departments to improve processes within their respective units.

The Department of Dance will refine and further develop its assessment tools. Professors Jane Baas and Megan Slayter will work with Karen Stokes and Kathy Cummings to create internet-based tools for assessment of capstone projects, artistic statements, and alumni accomplishments. The faculty members will be provided stipends for this work.

The Department of Theater will overhaul its assessment materials and forms. The work is currently done by area with four assessment leaders, a separation that has proven efficient for the department. The four leaders will review assessment practices in their respective areas, make recommendations for new approaches, and develop the requisite new support materials and forms. These leaders will facilitate change for implementation in the 2009-10 academic year. As with the Department of Dance, the faculty members will be provided stipends for this work.