

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

BACHELOR OF ARTS PROGRAM IN THEATRE
ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre (Design/Production, Drama/Theatre for Youth, General, and Performance) in the Department of Theatre in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences at the University of Northern Iowa.

Executive Summary: The program (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The program was accredited for the full five-year period through 2020 with a progress report due February 1, 2015. The accrediting body voted to accept the progress report. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities for “access, affordability, and student success; educational excellence and impact; and economic development and vitality.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of program.** The purpose of the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre Arts is to value, create, interpret, and evaluate theatre, and build a solid foundation in areas of theatre. Design, production, history, and performance are all studied in order for them to be used simultaneously and collaboratively. The program requires 37 hours of theatre coursework. The three emphasis areas (Design and Production, Drama/Theatre for Youth, and Performance) provide a theatre curriculum and a production environment.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification. Accreditation is also intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST).
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre Arts contained the responses to the appropriate standards required by the accrediting body – purposes; size and scope; finances; governance and administration; faculty and staff; facilities, equipment, health, and safety; library and learning resources; recruitment, admission-retention, record keeping and advisement; community involvement, articulation with other schools; non-degree-granting programs for the community; programs, degrees, and curricula; theatre unit evaluation, and planning and projections.

- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In April 2011, the visiting team conducted an on-site evaluation of the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre Arts and identified clarifications from the university related to the Bachelor of Arts Program in Communication (Theatre Teaching).
- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ☑ “Hard working and dedicated Head, faculty, and staff who communicate and collaborate effectively.
 - ☑ A supportive central administration.
 - ☑ An effective Youth Theatre program that offers unique and valuable opportunities to both the unit’s majors and community youth.
 - ☑ Excellent, flexible performance spaces and very good production facilities.”
- ◇ Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ☑ “Explore ways to leverage the Youth Theatre program to increase unit’s visibility within the university and the community.
 - ☑ Upgrade the electrical system in the Strayer-Wood Theatre to accommodate modern lighting practices and more effectively, repair the convertible seats, and reduce the background noise generated by the HVAC system.
 - ☑ Continue to develop a funding plan for the tentatively scheduled renovation of Strayer-Wood Complex.
 - ☑ Sharpen, hone and consolidate the unit’s mission statement and the learning goals for each emphasis.
 - ☑ Clarify, and possibly reconsider, the relationship of the BA (General) to the various emphasis options. Consider either strengthening the BA (General) to make it more comparable in rigor to the other emphasis options, eliminating the general option altogether.
 - ☑ Explore ways to increase enrollment in advanced courses within the emphases. (In discussion with the visitors, faculty members linked this issue to the previous one.)
 - ☑ Give design students better access to computers and accessories for graphics, CAD, patterning, audio and video editing, and related applications.”
- ◇ Primary Future Issues Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ☑ “Examine long-term faculty staffing needs in the face of future retirements.
 - ☑ Explore ways to fund ongoing capital equipment purchases for which end-of-year funds have been used, but may well not be available in the future.”
- ◇ Suggestions for Long-Term Development Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ☑ “Explore the creation of a Theatre and Stage Management emphasis. (A number of students expressed strong interest in this area to the visitors and the idea is mentioned in the Self Study.)
 - ☑ Hold discussions about the faculty and staff to develop consensus about hiring priorities, especially as lines become vacant through retirements.

- Hire a specialist in theatre history, and/or a scholar with expertise in global performance traditions and practices.
 - Investigate ways to address decreasing production budgets, for example through fundraising and development efforts.
 - Create or find a dedicated performance classroom so that the stages need not be used in that capacity.
 - Relocate the Costume Studio to an unimpeded space so that it can function more effectively as a classroom.
 - Increase storage capability for large props and set pieces.
 - Introduce media design and video production into the curriculum by acquiring the necessary equipment, creating facilities, and hiring faculty with the relevant skills.”
- ◇ Changes Implemented by the Department.
- The self-study revealed both student confusion and faculty dissatisfaction with the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre (General) degree option. A closer review by a department curriculum committee recommended removing this option. NAST acknowledged the elimination of that degree option.
 - UNI has amended areas of published materials that discuss credit and time requirements.
 - The newly re-structured Communication-Theatre teaching degree has been determined to be outside of NAST’s purview. No further information regarding compliance with standards is required.
- ◇ Accreditation Status. In April 2014, the National Association of Schools of Theatre awarded accreditation to the Bachelor of Arts Program in Theatre Arts with three emphasis options (Design and Production, Drama/Theatre for Youth, and Performance) at UNI for a five-year period through 2020. The Commission noted that the Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Teacher Arts Teaching) is not listed consistently and correctly throughout the institution’s published materials. UNI was asked to conduct a comprehensive review of all publications regarding consistency and accuracy. The Commission requested information documenting the results of this review and demonstrating that published materials are consistent. The due date for the progress report was February 1, 2015. The accrediting body voted to accept the progress report.