The Young Americans College of the Performing Arts

Annual Academic Department Report

Department: Theatre | Academic Year: 2014-2015
Written By: Kim Wimmer, Theatre Department Chair

1. Please provide a narrative overview of the activities within your department. Outline key strategies and approaches implemented in your curriculum, learning resources and assessments. Please also comment on goals from previous year end report. (Space down as needed).

The theatre department has really grown and developed beautifully in the past few years. It's great to have a fully integrated program with a clear pathway for the students throughout their time as a YA college program participant.

Our intention for students in the theatre department is to develop skilled, knowledgable, authentic performing artists who are confident in their unique creative offering and are equipped to succeed as professionals.

We begin by focusing on the basics and building a solid foundation in every subject taught. Our two most important objectives in Acting are for students to develop a thorough, repeatable process for creating a character and approaching scene work. Secondly, we stress the importance of integrating their acting technique into voice and dance performance as well. In addition, students receive an overview of theatre history and design elements, improvisation experience, practical application of stage craft and training in audition technique.

All classes focus on the introduction of concepts and techniques and build on that foundation with each subsequent level (lecture, exercises and homework) as well as the application of the information to their performance experience (in-class exercises, the rehearsal process, performance assignments- monologues and scene work, mock auditions, practical application of skills in lighting, sound, set-design, costumes and makeup, as well as participation in a staged reading of a full-length musical.)

Students are assessed using quizzes on material from the text and lectures. Performances are assessed using rubrics created to address technique, integration and other performance elements. Students also complete a variety of writing assignments. Finally, students are assessed on their participation in class discussions, exercises and rehearsals.

2. Describe any activities in other departments that have had an impact on your department.

*The timing of Dance Ex had a detrimental effect on student performance and morale in their finals. They were exhausted, unfocused and unprepared. I am aware that there are major challenges around scheduling that event due to tour dates and I don't have a possible solution... it just seemed it should be noted.

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*I think that Master Class has been a brilliant addition to the curriculum. It was a place where all of the elements we teach separately came together.

*It is challenging when acting, other acting and improv classes share walls. It's just so loud and difficult to create a safe space for actors who are doing quiet, vulnerable acting scenes and exercises next to so much noise and distraction. That's probably true for the academic classes as well. Again... I don't have a solution as I know that space is limited but it was a truthful response to the question.

*I love getting together with the voice faculty for lunch at least once a week. We talk about common challenges with students and strategize how to work together to help them (with much success too! ;-) There were so many stories of synchronicity across classes shared. Teachers reported daily "so and so said, 'that's exactly what Jessica said to me in vocal tech' or 'David said the same thing to me in my voice lesson!'" We were constantly calibrating our shared philosophy and working together to achieve similar goals.

*I know that the faculty meetings where folks go off on tangents for a half an hour at a time can be a drag when you have an agenda (and believe me, they wear me out at times) BUT I think those conversations are golden for increasing connection, morale and team building. This is a great group of people and the more we connect and share with one another, the better our results will be.

*Having students participate in a staged reading of a full-length musical was a revelation for all involved. YAs only have opportunities to work on snipets of shows. In this single activity they applied concepts they'd been learning in all of their performance-based classes and were stretched by the objective of telling a full-length story, developing a character into a three-dimensional human, combining their vocal and acting technique and taking all that they'd learned to a much higher level of application. The subject matter for both projects was more complex and messier than the material they usually work with so it also challenged them intellectually and emotionally as well. There were musical theatre kids who'd never participated in a full-length musical before this project. It was an incredible challenge and wasn't an easy journey but kids were profoundly changed by their participation in the reading and their growth as artists was evident. I hope that Joshua will continue to do this project in his musical theatre classes next year.

3. **Provide an overview of student achievement within your department. Please reference summary of final grades for department courses. (I am unclear how to acquire this information.)**

Course Code and Name	Number of Sections	Average Final Grade Awarded	Mode of Instruction
THF 100: Introduction to Acting	7	91%	On campus
THF 101: Survey of Theatre	2	85%	On campus

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THF 102: Acting I	3	89%	On campus
THF 110: Scene and Character Development	7	88%	On campus
THF 115: Improvisation	5	86%	On campus
THF 150: Intro to Stage Craft	4	94%	On campus
THF 210: Musical Theatre	3	90%	On campus
THF 230: Audition Techniques	3	82%	On campus
THF 275: Stage Craft Crew	6	91%	Practicum studies
THF 290: Performance Practicum	6	86%	Practicum studies
THF 299: Advanced Performance	3	92%	On campus

4. Define the annual goals for your department for the upcoming academic year.

Goal	Activities Linked to Goal	Relationship to College mission and strategic vision
Students successfully integrate the training they receive in acting and improvisation into their overall performing arts skill-set (along with singing and dancing); creating a seamless, cohesive, artistic, fully-realized performance.	In-class rehearsals, exercises and performances.	"To provide members of The Young Americans with a performance-based education emphasizing artistry, leadership, communication, and collaboration."

Students build a song-book, marketing portfolio and audition skill-set to prepare them for success in a professional performing arts career.	material is studied, collected and utilized in all levels of Acting, Audition Techniques and Musical Theatre	Building skills and material for a professional career in the performing arts should show up somewhere in the Institutional goals. (My opinion) (sort of touched on in "ii- Institutional Goals" but not specifically for performing arts- which also needs to be stated since we are a performing arts school. Again, my opinion)
Students learn every aspect of theatrical production. This facilitates their overall understanding and better equips them to work in professional theatre.	exercises in Stage Craft, material studied in Survey of Theatre and practical application on tour and in YA shows.	See above (I could give a couple more goals but couldn't add an extra column to this doc)

Goals that require support from other departments or administration can request support later in the report.

5. List requests for new or replacement staff, faculty or support staff, needed. List in order of importance, explain reason for needing the position, and provide brief description of role and responsibilities.

Position Title	Reason	Description of role and responsibilities

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Teaching Assistant for dept chair	In order to maximize my ability to enrich the experience and education of my students as well as helping me to best utilize my time in class and with students during office hours, I need a TA to assist with administrative tasks.	It would be so helpful to have a work-study YA (or one who will receive an intern credit) who's not in my classes, to help with grading papers. I can still handle populi but help grading writing assignments would make it easier for me to prioritize my time for the students and class prep and to get their assignments returned to them promptly so that they may benefit from the feedback in their rehearsal process and performance work. I would train the TA how to grade as well as train them on the material but it would be an added bonus to have someone who has taken my classes before.

6. **List, in order of importance, requests for equipment and technology not supported by current budget.**

Item Description	Why It is Needed	Cost Per Item	Number Requested	Total Cost

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Quality digital video cameras with proper connection cords for tv and computers (This is very important)	for performance study and assessment	depends	2-3 Often Roger and I need them at the same time. I don't know if Joshua will need access as well.	
Every instructor should be issued a personal HDMI cable	These disappear constantly, leaving faculty in a bind and putting them behind in class instruction as they waste time trying to fix the problem.	$7-$12	1 per faculty member plus a supply of extras, just in case.	
A bookshelf for Roger's and my office	I need a place to store personal copies of books, plays and other materials that I either personally loan out or that I need to make sure that they don't disappear.	There's probably one somewhere on campus that can be utilized.	1	
Permanent stage lights in the black box	There were many times that we would set lights for performances, recitals or master class only to return on performance day to find that they'd been removed for another project after school hours. The lights are necessary as the lighting in that room is not conducive for performance.	There are many lights around the theatre that are uninstalled. Maybe they could be used? We simply need a permanent, off-limits to other projects solution.		

Permanent covers for the skylights in the black box	The current solution is ineffective and very dangerous for whomever has to climb onto the roof and place rocks or other heavy items onto a tarp only to have the wind blow it off during a performance.	I have no idea. Maybe Don would know?		

7. **List, in order of importance, requests for professional development not supported by current budget, whether or not they incur a direct cost.**

Development Need	Why It is Needed	Cost Per Item	Number Requested	Total Cost

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Arrange for on-site or off-site attendance of workshops, classes or seminars for instructors	To improve teachers' breadth of knowledge and keep us on the cutting edge of teaching techniques in general as well as in our field. (For example, I attended an NLP seminar at my own expense that gave me great tools for the classroom and how to use language and techniques that help me teach more effectively. Also, there have been workshops for "acting-the business of the business" that I couldn't afford to go to but would have given me up-to-date info that would have really enriched what I was able to teach the kids about marketing, current casting directors, agents, etc. They ask me questions constantly that I don't feel 100% confident about answering because the business has changed so much since I started teaching here full-time. I do all that I can to stay current but a class like that would really help me to have the latest information.) Even bringing in someone to teach a workshop to the faculty for a day on things like creativity, new developments in teaching techniques (like how to make a concept sticky), positive education... anything that would help us to keep improving and growing. It's easy for people to become complacent when they're not actively engaged in new learning. And having the school sponsor opportunities for that new learning sends the message that the instructors are valued and that innovation and growth are important.	varies		

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Team-building retreat and/or "good job, faculty!" gathering and/or personal acknowledgements.	Please take this feedback in the spirit in which it is given-communication in an effort to create enhanced faculty/administration relations. There have been so many changes as we've worked to achieve accreditation. Much has been asked of the faculty and there are several who are real "work horses." But there's often not much done to acknowledge that nor the great strides being made in the education and support of the students along with improvements in our program content and progress. Some people feel overworked and somewhat overlooked. The faculty needs a morale booster... to feel appreciated. I understand that the school doesn't have the budget for a Christmas bonus but maybe a holiday faculty party (like the staff gets) or even an official letter from YA that essentially says "good Job." (For example, at the end of the semester, I usually receive a form thank you note from NCMC. It's a nice gesture-even though they have no idea who I am or what I'm doing for the school.) The challenge that needs to be addressed is that people are not feeling "seen." Some of us give our work and the kids 100% but wonder if it's even being noticed. It's difficult for people to sustain their enthusiasm and commitment without regular **positive, specific feedback**.(It was great to have LeeAnn evaluate a class and give us a report on what was working and what needed improvement.) When people feel valued, they're willing to give more of themselves. It also creates a deeper level of loyalty. A little of the human touch and recognition goes a long way. This was not meant to be a complaint-fest. Please forgive me if it seemed that way. But it seemed this was the best place to give this feedback. This is not just my opinion. Much of it has been expressed to me by various faculty members.			

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8. **List, in order of importance, requests for learning support and/or library resources needed in addition to student services and library resources currently available. These may include resources such as books, dvds, periodicals etc. must include title, author, and editions as applicable.**

Student Support Need	Why It is Needed
I gave a full list to the theatre dept virtual librarian. Please let me know if I need to submit a second list for this report.	

9. **List, in order of importance, requests for other needs or support services that did not fit into prior categories.**

Need	Why It is Needed	Any Estimated Costs

Thanks for reading. I know I gave a lot of feedback around what I think could be utilized for improvements. Please know that it is because I love this organization and believe in the power of what is possible for us to create and the impact we're capable of having on the students, prospective students, one another and our community and world.

Sincerely,

Kim Wimmer