

To: Ed Beebout, Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities
Stacey Bosick, Associate Vice President and Dean of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies
Melinda Milligan, Director, Assessment and Accreditation

From: Scott Horstein, Professor of Theatre Arts

CC: Marie Ramirez Downing, Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts

Tuesday, July 18

Dear Ed, Stacey, Melinda –

Please note that in the External Review of the Theatre Arts program, the reviewer, Prof. Bernardo Solano, writes on p.5 that “There are four full-time tenure track faculty members; three in theatre, one in dance.” Please note that there are in fact five full-time tenure track faculty members in DANC/THAR, three in theatre, two in dance. Thank you.

Scott

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS PROGRAM
EXTERNAL REVIEW-APRIL 6-7, 2023
Submitted by: BERNARDO SOLANO
May 13, 2023

Introduction

On April 6-7, 2023, the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, Sonoma State University, hosted Bernardo Solano (professor and chair of the Department of Theatre & New Dance at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona) for an evaluative visit as an external program reviewer. The visit included individual and group meetings with full time and adjunct faculty members and staff; a tour of facilities; a meeting with students in the major; meetings with the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies and the Ed Beebout, Interim Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities

Summary

Looking at the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance's curriculum and co-curricular production season, there are certain strategies that are necessary because of the size of the department and the resources available to it. The department has been very successful in their creative approaches and solutions to the challenges it has faced over the last several years; in particular, the COVID-19 pandemic. For a live performing arts-based program to pivot to a virtual mode in the middle of an academic year is a Herculean task, one that faculty, staff and students met most successfully since 2020.

I found the department to be a vibrant and engaged group of faculty and students, who are deeply committed to the teaching and practice of theatre arts. The department reaches for the very best and yet it faces obstacles that in some cases it has been able to overcome, and in other cases, these obstacles continue to impede its ability to deliver the education it aims to provide its students. These will be discussed further in this review. For clarity, it should be noted that this review only covers the Theatre program, not the Dance program, although some elements of Dance may be discussed briefly at times.

This review will cover the following SSU Guidelines for External Reviewers:

1. Curriculum coherency and currency.
2. Relevance and clarity of learning outcomes and integration with curriculum.
3. Meaningfulness and effectiveness of learning outcomes assessment and use of assessment for program improvement.

4. Sufficiency of resources and how they affect the quality of the learning experience; consider, for example, faculty, facilities, support, information resources, and research resources.
5. Understanding of students' needs, challenges, and characteristics and ability to effectively serve the program's students.

In addition, there are notes culled from the meetings with faculty, staff and students, as well from a tour of the facilities, but which are mostly already woven into the body of the External Review. Finally, Recommendations/Action Items and a concluding statement.

1. Curriculum coherency and currency

The program's Self-Study section on "Curriculum" demonstrates ambitious efforts, of which there are many laudable examples. There are three concentrations for students to choose from: Acting, Technical Theatre, or Theatre Studies. The core courses that all students are required to take cover a range of subject matter that exposes them to all three concentrations.

Enhancing the potential for student success, the department works to individualize opportunities for students; for example, by planning production assignments up to one year in advance. Also, of note, is the scaffolding of offering course content that directly relates to upcoming productions.

Recognition should be given to the department's invitation to perform at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in 2023. This is an honor which demonstrates a high level of quality in its production-related curriculum.

The department's ongoing relationship with the Green Music Center is truly a unique and special opportunity for students to engage with a wide range of professional artists. More on this later in the report.

Regarding Curriculum Currency, a strength is the department's commitment to cultural identity, anti-racist and community-based practices which it recognizes are critical to its success. One notable course that supports this effort is THAR 160 A/B Humanities Learning Community. Further discussion of this in Recommendations at end of this review.

The department had for many years used a "block" system in its Acting concentration curriculum, resulting in multiple 1-unit courses. Since 2017, the department has been moving away from this system—they correctly determined that it was no longer serving student success as originally intended. However, remnants of these 1 and 2-unit courses still exist. To its credit, the department continues to reevaluate unit distribution. See Recommendations at end of this review.

Of note is the program's use of alumni to direct readings and other leadership roles with students in the department which model current professional standards and provides early career development for these young artists. Its productions of contemporary plays that address issues of today are incredibly important as they provide SSU students the opportunity to engage in multiple national conversations. These examples of engagement are embedded in the program's curriculum.

Regarding the Technical Theatre concentration, there is solid foundational course content. The external reviewer is puzzled about the title of the concentration. The word "technical" by itself implies that technical skills are the emphasis of the concentration, when in fact many "artistic" skills are also being taught through Scenic, Costume, Lighting Design, among other fields. Why not call it "Design and Technical Theatre" (or some other more expansive title) as in other programs in the CSU and elsewhere?

Certainly, one of the strengths of the concentration is its interdepartmental collaborations and opportunities offered to its students with the Department of Music and the Green Music Center.

Regarding the Theatre Studies Concentration, it provides a strong combination of professional theatre training, liberal arts education, dramatic literature, dramaturgy, playwriting and directing. As it was once called the "General" concentration, it continues to offer students additional areas of study that they can pick and choose from. The department's self-study points out several courses in this concentration that have either been cut or re-revamped to address recommendations from previous external review. Congratulations are in order for these adjustments.

The Theatre Minor is solid in its distribution of required courses in relation to electives to meet the total 24 units necessary. It can be noted that other CSU campuses stipulate a higher number of required courses, with fewer electives, as well as dividing required courses between lower division and upper division. However, the relative flexibility inherent in the department's minor is a strength.

Furthermore, the department also supports all the above curricular considerations through its Mission, Vision and Core Values which are:

Vision

Our vision is for a world where the artist is transformative, essential and engaged.

Mission

The Department of Theatre Arts & Dance offers students a home where they can develop their potential and find their voices as artists through rigorous coursework, and collaborative making and production of live performance.

Core Values

- *Student-centered: We believe in creating experiences that serve our students' needs in the classroom and beyond with skill-based learning, a supported production season, and opportunities to engage with guest artists and professionals in the field.*

- *Rigor: We believe that robust training in performance and theatrical artistry can inspire us to the highest standards of professionalism and personal achievement.*
- *Full Engagement: We believe in making work that has value beyond the dance and theatre world and that directly engages our campus and local community.*

The Program's alignment with SSU's Mission, Mission & Values and Strategic Plan is thorough and well-considered; it provides a solid "road map" for how the department can and should approach curricular and programmatic issues over the coming years.

In conversation with faculty during the review process, it was mentioned that the department is considering eliminating the concentration structure. This reviewer does not recommend this course of action presently. Contemplating this possibility, the question quickly becomes "What would it be replaced with?" The current concentrations provide a curricular framework that students can easily identify and work within. If part of the intention is to give students more choices, then perhaps adding a concentration could fill in whatever gaps the department seeks to address. But adding a concentration shouldn't be interpreted as having to suddenly add many courses and complicate things further. What it could provide is an opportunity for the department to develop an area/concentration of distinction that is already percolating—whether it be a long-standing discipline or something that's new and harnesses one of the directions where theatre is headed in the future. It could also have the effect of a boost of adrenaline for the department overall.

2. Relevance and clarity of learning outcomes and integration with curriculum

Overall, the program demonstrates a high degree of relevance and clarity of learning outcomes and integration with curriculum.

THAR Program LO #1: Critically analyze live theatre performance

Numerous courses utilize live theatre performances to address critical thinking and analysis. Students see recorded performance and engage with print and online library resources that reinforce and amplify students' ability to critically analyze performance practices. These examples also are aligned with WASC Core Competencies: Critical Thinking, Information Literacy.

THAR Program LO #2: Incorporate non-Eurocentric and diverse American theatre traditions in the creation of performance for a diverse audience

This is a growing strength of the program, as coursework continues to incorporate and expand student exposure to non-Eurocentric and diverse American theatre traditions. Multiple courses and production work attest to this critically important development in the teaching and practice of theatre in this country. It also enriches alignment with WASC Core Competencies: Written Communication, Oral Communication, Critical Thinking.

THAR Program LO #3: Develop a clear artistic voice and take artistic risks

The teaching and doing of theatre are all about developing a clear artistic voice and taking artistic risks. The program thoroughly recognizes this and provides many opportunities in coursework for students to develop these skills. It directly addresses and delivers the WASC Core Competencies: Written Communication and Oral Communication.

THAR Program LO #4: Develop communication and collaboration skills to become a vital member of a creative and production team

Theatre is one of the most obvious art forms that heavily rely on communication and collaboration skills. Without the collaborative process that occurs in nearly every aspect of theatre-making, there wouldn't be theatre. These are skills, which are baked into nearly every course, are ones that students will utilize for the rest of their lives, irrespective of which field they eventually dedicate themselves to. They thoroughly address WASC Core Competencies: Written Communication, Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning.

THAR Program LO #5: Understand performance as a form of everyday social interaction

Coursework fulfills this LO through performance theory and teacher training. Performance theory views performance as a vector of social interaction and signification and explores the existence of "performance" structures and dynamics in sites and situations outside of traditional performance venues, including performance as a basic social mode of being and meaning. This understanding of performance informs training in arts teaching practices, combining conceptual and experiential pedagogy of concepts in music, dance, and theater; they satisfy WASC Core Competencies: Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, Written Communication.

4. Sufficiency of resources and how they affect the quality of the learning experience; consider, for example, faculty, facilities, support, information resources, and research resources.

Faculty: There are four full-time tenure track faculty members; three in theatre, one in dance. The newest faculty member is on the Acting/Voice/Performance side; it is important to note that just as she started, the other Acting concentration faculty member retired. Because at least half of the department's majors are in the Acting concentration, it is not in the best interests of the students (or the faculty member) to be the sole full-time professor in the concentration. It is recognized by this faculty member and students alike, that students benefit more from a diversity of instructors and methodologies. Yes, adjunct Acting & other performance-based instructors can and do help address these issues. But adjuncts are contractually bound to teach just their classes; they are not paid to be advisor/mentors, nor sit on committees, nor are they expected to provide the sort of continuity of in-depth instruction that only a full-time faculty member can provide.

There is also the matter of the full-time tenure-track faculty member on the Design and Technical Theatre side of the department. As with the Acting/Voice faculty member, there is only one person in this position who is expected to teach across the spectrum of Design and Production courses. In many Theatre departments across the CSU, there are at least two (if not three or four) faculty members who have expertise in the various specialties (Scenic, Lighting, Costume, Sound, Props, Stage Management,

Production Management, Technical Direction to name the principal ones). More on this later in Recommendations.

Regarding the use of adjuncts, it is clear they provide critical assistance in teaching the department's curriculum. And yet, due to SSU's budgetary challenges, the department has had no choice but to eliminate courses and the hiring of these very instructors. This is a critical problem for multiple reasons—among them putting the department in the position of not being able to offer students the full range of fundamental courses in their areas of specialty. Imagine graduating an engineering student without having taught them how to properly design and build a bridge. Or a technical theatre student operating equipment 30 feet in the air who didn't learn proper techniques because the class that covers this didn't get taught that year [this is an example, not an actual occurrence.] All this to say that adjunct faculty teach critical skill sets, expose students to professionals working in the field, and provide additional feedback and networking opportunities. The university's decision to radically reduce funding in this area does so at its own risk.

The program's Self Study provides notable successes that were made possible by members of the faculty. They span across areas of Research, Creative and Scholarly Activity, with direct benefit to students, the program, and the university. These successes should be recognized and celebrated.

Staff

Staff support in the department is an ongoing issue. Beginning in 2018, the School of Arts & Humanities reorganized the Center of Performing Arts and drastically restricted the annual IRA (Instructionally Related Activity) production funding. These actions led to the elimination of at least seven staff positions. Under any circumstances the loss of these positions could cripple a performance-based theatre department's ability to offer a successful production season. Faculty, students, and remaining staff heroically continued producing quality work, but it took a toll on everyone in the department. Thankfully, the School of Arts & Humanities has restored some of the lost positions since 2022. There is now an Operations Manager who is fully engaged in production management for the department, a full-time Costume Shop Coordinator and a full-time Marketing Coordinator shared with the Department of Music. These are all good steps in the right direction of achieving adequate staffing, but because there are still important unfilled positions, it has created an imbalance in the department's ability to provide an optimal learning experience. Students are being used to fill in some of the gaps in the Scenic and Costume shop and other technically related duties. While it does provide students valuable hands-on experience, it also puts enormous pressure on the few remaining technical staff to adequately train and supervise those students. And the students, wanting "the show to go on," sometimes agree to take on tasks they themselves are not sure they are adequately prepared for.

Facilities

This reviewer visited most of the department's facilities. While it has multiple performance and classroom venues, some of them have fallen into disrepair to an unfavorable degree. The Evert B. Person Theatre Scene Shop is where students, staff and faculty regularly convene to build scenic elements for department productions, as well as costume construction in other rooms close by. Apparently, the heat in this part of the building works erratically at best—averaging between 52-60 degrees. This is clearly not conducive to a good learning environment. In the theater, where an

orchestra is placed below ground level, is called the Pit. Currently there is nothing covering the pit which would prevent accidental falls. Theaters usually cover this area for that reason. A pit net would be an ideal solution to remedy this safety issue.

The Ives Building houses department offices, classrooms, and performance venues. Many aspects of the physical building show the wear and tear of years of neglect. Whereas many buildings on campus are either relatively new or have recently undergone upgrades, Ives currently falls short when compared to the rest of campus. And as it serves not only the department but also the School of Arts & Humanities and the university as a whole, it should be one of the showplaces for the university. The Green Music Center is a shining example of what the university is capable of when it presents itself to the greater community.

A note regarding the Warren Auditorium, which was the original main stage venue before the Person Theatre was built and is now primarily a lecture hall. This is a space that is ripe to be reinvigorated. Whether it be new artistic programming that involves interdepartmental collaborations, or community-engaged work that invites regional participation, or more student-led initiatives.

Support

It is assumed this category refers to support the department receives from the School of Arts & Humanities, as well as from Sonoma State University. The competitive Koret Scholar grants and School of Arts & Humanities travel grants are examples of such support for faculty. However, it is not enough, and such competitive grants often favor the most skilled grant-writers, not necessarily the most qualified applicants or those for whom additional support could lift them to the next level of their academic and professional careers. At Cal Poly Pomona (where the reviewer is a faculty member), the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences allots \$1,200.00 per full-time faculty for Professional Development each academic year until the money in that stream runs out. Faculty write a justification to their department chair; the chair approves it and is almost always approved by the Dean because they trust the department chair has properly vetted the proposal. There have even been years when all the allotted money is not used. See Recommendations.

Faculty are periodically offered short-term creative work outside of the university as guest-artists, directors, choreographers, designers, actors, dramaturgs, etc. These jobs play a key role in faculty creating and maintaining professional networks and course currency that they bring back to students and the classroom. However, to accept these jobs often means faculty have to take a DIP (Difference in Pay) to reduce work hours. If there could be a mechanism which supports faculty so they don't have to take a DIP, that could result in more faculty (and SSU) exposure in the professional realm and thus raise the program's reputation and positively impact the needed rise in enrollment, would be a benefit to all parties.

Information resources

The Schulz Information Center/University Library provide sufficient support for scholarly and research needs of students and faculty. The departure of an "embedded" librarian who lectured on library resources and research methods in multiple courses is felt and it is the reviewer's hope that the Library assigns another librarian to this noteworthy and helpful position. Perhaps the following source has

already been investigated by SSU, but a recommendation would be Digital Theatre Plus, which offers a wide range of filmed live theatre productions, analysis, study guides, interviews, documentaries, and lectures about international theatre, delivered virtually. There is a respectable inventory of American plays and theatre artists represented there and is being used by universities around the world.

Research resources

A notable aspect of the program is its Arts Integration Program which is a joint initiative between the School of Arts & Humanities and the Green Music Center that uses arts events as teaching tools. This is an incredible information resource that very few universities can offer. Apparently, there were academic integration grants from the GMC to create and perform professional work, and which the program was able to participate in. If this program were reinstated, it would certainly support co-curricular and professional creative scholarship for faculty and students.

See “Support” for additional comments that dovetail with Research Resources.

5. Understanding of students’ needs, challenges, and characteristics and ability to effectively serve the program’s students.

It seems fitting that this topic can be addressed via notes taken at a meeting with only the reviewer and department students present. They demonstrated an elevated level of commitment and have high hopes for the department. They, like students across the CSU, face many challenges that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 fallout. The following italicized bullet points are observations, suggestions and issues identified by the students, narrative after each bullet point is from the reviewer.

- *Could department initiate a concentration in Arts Education and/or Education Minor?*

This topic is discussed in the Self-Study (pg.6) regarding current coursework in Performing Arts for Children and developing relationships with Creative Sonoma and Santa Rosa’s 6th Street Playhouse to create pathways in teaching for department majors. With the relatively recent state approval of a theatre credential (CA did not have one for many, many years), this is an excellent suggestion that could eventually lead to a credential program in Theatre/Drama before or alongside other departments in the state.

- *Need more student led and student created production opportunities.*

Students are hungry for more support, encouragement and structure to create and produce their own work.

- *Would like more attention given to students considering M.A. and M.F.A degrees.*

There exists among some students a perception that the department does not give the pursuit of advanced degrees as much attention as it could.

- *What about a certificate program?*

Certificate programs are already common in California Community Colleges. Offering them (either in addition to BA degree or as stand-alone areas of study) could be an important and attractive alternative, benefitting the department and SSU.

- *Academic Advising is inconsistent.*

This is a concern that should be addressed by the department. If students don't feel adequately advised and supported by faculty, they run the risk of burnout, frustration and worst-case scenario of dropping out of school altogether.

- *Department website needs to stay current.*

Not surprisingly, this is an ongoing concern for any department.

- *Diversity of classes-need variety of instructors*

This comment supports issues raised by the dearth of instructors in the department of late.

- *THAR 302 or 303. Technical students receive 3 units per production, but then are asked to give many extra hours to work on other productions without extra unit compensation.*

Even though students are offered extra credit that can boost grades in specific courses, they perceive the offer as being taken advantage of by the department in order to get productions up and running.

- *Cancellation of courses and having to substitute other courses isn't acceptable because they are not being given instruction in important subject matter*

This is a stopgap measure the department has had to employ in order to make up for courses it has had to cancel due to low enrollment and budgetary restrictions imposed by the university. In some instances, this is a reasonable approach when it considers which specific concentration students are in and substituting courses for. But in others, it does a disservice to students who really need particular course content. However, this is not the department's fault; they are put in this position when the university forces it to cancel courses. In fact, many specialized theatre courses are much more effective when taught for a class size that matches resources and course content.

- *Why not combine courses and with other departments like music?*

This is an interesting suggestion and merits further discussion across departments. Cross-listing courses can go a long way in resolving enrollment issues and also enriches student learning. It also addresses the issue of too many courses in the program overall.

- *Would like more communication from department in a transparent way. For example, knowing how certain decisions are made.*

Obviously, students can't be part of every decision a department makes, but it could certainly help them understand why certain decisions are made and could also increase a sense of ownership and commitment to the department.

- *Classes need to be CURRENT*

Some students have the perception that not all their classes are current in course content.

- *Staff need more help (in technical work)*

This supports need for more staff. Students are aware of the small staff being overworked.

- *Intimacy Coordinator- Needs to be present more, maybe they can train the faculty.*

This is one of the most current trends in American Theater and needs to be supported because it acknowledges and protects students (as well as professionals) from potential trauma. And yes, faculty do need to be trained in these practices as well.

- *Students willing to get more involved in areas such as Season Selection*

This dovetails with students' desire for more open communication between them and the department. Something like season selection is a good idea—the specific process can be modulated to serve both the faculty and the students.

Other elements of the external review visit:

Course Visits

Several class sessions were observed: THAR 203-02: Introduction to the History of Drama & Dance: 1800 to Contemporary, THAR 420D: Devised Theatre, and THAR 344: Advanced Design. All three courses are taught by Full-Time Tenure-Track faculty. The range of these courses offer an excellent view of what a theatre department should offer in a program: lecture, studio/lab and design/technical hands-on training. The classes were very effective and displayed many excellent pedagogical approaches including use of technology, small group work, discussion, critical thinking, introductory and advanced technique (depending on the level and focus of the class), intense preparation and participation, collaboration, direct correlation/synthesis with departmental productions, learn-by-doing and safety practices. The faculty observed all clearly demonstrate expertise, passion, and commitment to student learning.

Meetings with university leadership

Meetings with Stacey Bosick, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies and Ed Beebout, Interim Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities were friendly and very informative. They both have esteem for the department and its mission. They also both expressed genuine desire to help the department reach its ultimate goals.

Meetings with Faculty (full-time and part-time) and Staff

These were all cordial encounters. Across the board the faculty and staff were forthcoming and willing to share their expertise, institutional memory, critiques, and suggestions. Many of their comments have been integrated into this external review.

Recommendations/Action Items

1. That SSU authorize a search as soon as possible for a tenure-track position in Technical Theatre as an Assistant or Associate Professor (to allow for a wider range of candidates and experience). This is also an opportunity to increase diversity in the faculty.
2. Soon after, that SSU authorize a search for a tenure-track position in Acting with expertise in one or more specialties in the field. Also, an opportunity to increase diversity in the faculty.
3. That SSU authorize the hiring of more adjunct faculty and staff. This is a matter of critical importance.
4. The department continues to examine program curriculum and course unit distribution in order to facilitate student learning, student success, and further support the CSU 2025 Graduation Initiative.
5. That SSU allow for more flexibility for the department to determine which courses are essential to be taught in any given semester, whether or not they meet university minimum enrollments. Especially if the department can meet FTES goals through large enrollment classes.
6. That SSU attends to the variety of physical plant needs of the department's buildings and venues through upgrades and renovations.
7. That the department be encouraged and supported by SSU to continue its commitment to cultural identity, anti-racist and community-based practices, whether it be through hires of new faculty and staff, and/or directly embedded in program curriculum and course content.

8. That the department continue to explore different funding sources, whether they be local, regional, state, federal or private foundations. And that SSU support such efforts through Assigned Time or other means.
9. More deliberate season selection to align with current student demographics, EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) considerations, and seek ways to include students in the season selection process.
10. That the department look for ways to further integrate theatre and dance in instruction and production.
11. That the department continue the ASSESSMENT work it has begun and plans to expand over the coming years. The results from this effort will provide data in order to address evident challenges, as well as to deepen its strengths.
12. That the department investigate growth opportunities such as a Theatre Education credential, certificate programs, interdisciplinary work across departments, new media, etc. and that whatever is developed, it become part of a recruitment strategy to attract new students and help establish it as a first-choice program.
13. That the department also address recruitment via concerted efforts and relationship-building with regional community colleges such as Santa Rosa, College of Marin, Napa Valley Community College and Mendocino Community College. Not to mention regional high school drama programs by hosting events such as Scene Festivals or offering workshops to high school students to increase visibility and excitement about the prospect of studying theatre near their communities.
14. Invite Adjunct Faculty to participate more fully in departmental activities and include them as much as possible in the life of the department.
15. That the department strategize with the School of Arts & Humanities how to best leverage and spend the recent, generous gift designated to be split between Department of Theatre and Dance and the Department of Music. This could lead to critical improvements to Facilities, Student Engagement, Recruitment, Equipment, and Faculty Development.
16. That the department deepen ties with the Green Music Center, expanding student opportunities via course work, employment, guest artists and other areas of interest.
17. That the department seek to make TH 375 (Race, Gender and Performance) an Area F Ethnic Studies course. It is a natural course for Area F and would increase department FTES.

18. To reduce over-extended students and/or burnout, consider reducing the number of full productions every year. Or perhaps consider converting one or more production slots into readings, staged readings and/or workshop productions that require less design and technical support. For example, new play development processes that emphasize actor and text/playwright will give student actors another important skill set as they pursue their professional careers and will most likely be involved in new play development processes.
19. That SSU consider giving Assigned time for faculty to process and plan some of the above recommendations.

Conclusion

The Department of Theatre and Dance is in a period of transition in which it has the opportunity to reinvent itself, to address the challenges and strengthen what it already does an exemplary job at. The members of the faculty, staff and students are keenly aware of the unique position they are in. They are choosing to look all the above squarely in the eye and give it 100% to create the kind of program they and the university can be extremely proud of. It also an opportunity for the university itself to recommit to the promise of what this program offers and can offer in the future, for the performing arts are a critical component of any successful liberal arts education.

It has been a pleasure spending this short time with the program's faculty, staff, and students, as well as university administration at Sonoma State University. I am confident that the department is on a positive path and should be encouraged to continue the fine work it has done, continues to do, and will carry on into the future.