

Overview

Professors Antonio Horne, Brigitte Rogers, and I met on Wednesday, May 12 to discuss the assessment for our department. During the discussion, we reviewed the reflections and student practical work for the practicum over the last few years (direct assessment), the feedback from the Hendrix Players productions (indirect assessment), and the Senior Surveys from the last three years (indirect assessment.) We also discussed the Senior Seminar from the last two years as a direct assessment. The discussion was productive. We were struck by the outcome in particular of the Senior Survey, which led to the discussion of the Senior Seminar. The learning goal for this year involves the practical work for productions in particular. Two factors affect the current outcomes. The first is and will probably continue to be, Covid-19. The second, the more surprising for us, the lack of a full-time faculty position in production. Fortunately, this position has been filled as of April 2022. We are better informed by our assessment how to guide our curriculum and our program as we re-build.

1. Demonstrate commitment through rigor and care through work on productions and in the classroom.

- Direct assessment of Practicum with Rubric to provide assessment of students' practical work along with student reflection.
Practicum
- Indirect assessment through Google form for Hendrix Players Productions.

Demonstrate commitment through rigor and care through work on productions and in the classroom.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT—Practicum Rubric

A brief explanation regarding practicum in our department. There are four areas of practicum: TARA P21 Assistant Stage Manager/House and Publicity/Properties, TARA P22 Acting/Stage Managing/Dance Captain, Sound, TARA P23 Scenery and Lighting, TARA P24 Costume and Make-up. Each of the areas carries a .25 credit. For the major and minor in theatre and the minor in dance each area is required. Students who are not majors or minors can enroll and receive credit as well. Practicum provides students the hands on experience in theatre production. It is a long-standing practice in theatre and dance curriculum, and one that is essential to the Liberal Arts in particular as it provides the breadth of the discipline as opposed to a particular focus.

The rubric gives the students the expectations and guidelines to complete the practicum successfully. It accompanies the document. The prompt and excerpts from the examples of the student reflections follow:

- What did I do?
- How did I respond to the assignment? If challenged, how did I respond? If not challenged, how did I respond?
- Now what can I do with the experience? What do I take away from the experience that is useful? Even the negative experience is useful.

“My experience this semester during theatre practicum has taught me how to help run a successful production, build my communication skills, work well with others, and has given me a much deeper understanding of theater as a whole system. By completing this practicum, I feel that I have grown personally and professionally by working with others to develop and complete large projects. I feel that this experience has contributed to my future and will be useful to me as I go forward in life.”

“I operated the light board for the show, *Orlando*. I also helped program some of the light cues for the show. I worked specifically with the stage manager and the lighting designer to program the cue list and call the cues during the show. The work did pose some challenges, but I felt that it was within my capabilities. Through working on *Orlando*, I gained significant experience contributing to the technical aspect of a theatrical production. Specifically, operating a light board and communicating with other members of the crew during the show.”

“Through this practicum, I was able to create/perfect the properties for the play. I also created a poster for the dance ensemble concert and served as an usher for one of the plays. It was great getting to work alongside others, going through several trial-and-error runs.... Troubleshooting problem areas became easier because we could bounce ideas off each other. I love designing things, so I really enjoyed getting more practice in the designing software. I’ve never made a poster before, so I was able to use my creativity for something new while learning new tricks to use in my other design endeavors. I appreciated getting to be an usher because I love performances. I’m not too familiar with theatre, but I love being a part of it, behind the scenes, and learning more about the production and publicity that no one really thinks about. In everything there is some level of growth that happened for me, whether it be teamwork, software skills, removing/solving creative roadblocks, dealing with the public, and uncovering the unseen processes for productions.”

“I created sound and music cues for the show. This involved researching sounds that fit the director’s vision and then mixing and cutting those sounds on Audacity. I also worked on creating scenery for some of the shows.

My job was challenging because there were many sound cues that consisted of multiple layered sounds. It took a lot of trial and error to get those cues to sound balanced. Some sounds needed to be jumbled and others needed to blend together as one. This meant many hours playing around with the timing of each little section. Sometimes the pitch and the loudness needed to be adjusted for the bits to sound right with each other. It could get overwhelming, but if I ever felt like I was not getting anywhere I would put the computer away for a while. I was in communication with the director in making sure I understood the qualities of the sounds that were wanted. I tried to send my work back as fast as possible to get any feedback on it to correct it swiftly if need be.

In creating some of the props, I got more opportunity to work alongside others by simply doing the same task next to each other and by helping each other with power tools. Working with our hands to physically build something was very rewarding, and it was nice to share that feeling with everyone else.

I only had a few experiences working with Audacity before, so this process definitely strengthened my abilities in using the software. I am more confident in making smooth cuts and how to get two pieces of sound to transition into each other. Everything I learned and the skills I was able to perfect are useful to me as I have to cut and mix music frequently for dance pieces. I really enjoyed learning how to operate some of the tools, and I hope I can use that experience to get creative and make something of my own one day. My father builds things, so this is possible for me to do.”

“For the Hendrix Players production of Thornton Wilder’s *The Happy Journey from Trenton to Camden*, I served as the Assistant Stage Manager as well as a temporary position as Stage Manager. Under the direction of Andy Vaught, I helped with line memorization, stood in for absent actors, took notes, and provided overall moral support for the cast and crew.

I served as a crewmember for shows only once in high school as a student director/light board technician. So, this new experience was exciting for me! Now that I’ve had this experience, I feel much more comfortable pursuing crew/technical positions in any future productions I participate in. Not only that, but also this show taught me how important it is to communicate with your supervisor whenever you’re distressed or overexerted.”

The reflections offer insight into the students’ experiences. We are able to gauge the challenge for the students by the work itself; the opportunity to develop and appreciate strong communication; the opportunity to develop collaborative skills; and the development of strong work ethic—reliable attendance, completing the task, willingness to learn a new skill.

While accumulation of hours is a part of the grade, the students’ performance in the practicum itself is also considered. It is an ideal opportunity to utilize the career competencies. We agreed that to improve our assessment we should provide the students with clear aspects of the experience that address professional life in theatre. In August, we will review these reflections and discuss the rubric with an eye toward incorporating language reflecting the competencies.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT: Feedback forms for the Hendrix Players Productions.

Each student who participates in a Hendrix Players' production receives a link to a feedback form through Google. There are two areas: Acting /Stage Management and Technical/Production. A student may be in both areas, and if this is the case, the student will be able to respond for each discrete area.

The questions:

1. I developed skills that I will use in other areas of my work.
2. Overall how was your experience working on _____?
3. How would you describe the rehearsal and/or production process?
4. Were you able to offer creative input? You may have been part of a problem solving solution that caused you to be creative. We can all be creative thinkers.
5. Are you interested in participating in a Hendrix Players Production again?
6. What can we do to encourage you?
7. What would you like us to know about your experience?
8. If you are a practicum student: The process contributed to developing a strong work ethic.

We have utilized the indirect assessment for three years.

Overall respondents for five productions: 43.

Breakdown of questions pertinent to the learning goal are 1, 4, and 8

1. I developed skills that I will use in other areas of my work.

Strongly agree: 26 Agree: 13 Neutral: 3 Disagree: 1

4. Were you able to offer creative input? You may have been part of a problem solving solution that caused you to be creative. We can all be creative thinkers.

Yes: 30 Maybe: 6 No: 5

8. If you are a practicum student: The process contributed to developing a strong work ethic.

Strongly Agree: 15 Agree: 14 Neutral: 3

The responses above indicate a positive reaction to the experience for the students. The responses to the feedback form are positive overall are positive. The specific information that contributes most significantly to our assessment comes from the qualitative responses. The negative accounts are those that were never brought to our attention during the rehearsal or the run of the play. Without knowledge of the issues, we cannot address them after the fact. The times when this occurs tends to be with our guest directors. It is not true that negative experiences happen only with guest directors. Instead, it seems that the students are more willing to speak to faculty and staff than to the guests. We are can implement a check in for each production that allows the

students to give feedback earlier. The only consistent issue, and it is less than eight times, is the workload and the amount of time required to participate in the production especially from the acting and stage management point of view. There are policies that we can implement to address this issue. There is some reluctance because it imposes on the director's method of conducting rehearsals. Implementing a schedule that allows the students to have some free time will be part of the coming year's production schedule.

Below is a response from a student who was new to the program. It is important because it highlights our program's inclusive nature. Students with many levels of experiences and from all disciplines participate in our program. It is co-curricular. Students who cannot take the classes because of demands from the major are able to participate in every aspect of the program whether they are in the courses or not. It is a learning and teaching experience.

"I had never considered myself a performer, but I am a creative writing major and interested in playwriting, so I decided to see what being onstage would actually be like. I found this experience extremely enriching, and immediately loved all of the talented actors I was working with! This has made me definitely want to be in more productions and possibly take some acting classes if I can fit them into my schedule."

We did not intend to use Senior Seminar TART 497 or the Senior Surveys for this Learning Goal. Our discussion makes clear that both are strong tools for assessment. Reviewing three years of Senior Seminar 2020, 2021, and 2022 we can see a decline in the student knowledge of production work. Obviously Covid-19 impacts the student practical experience. In 2020, the Senior Seminar production was canceled and only the paperwork was completed. In 2021, the only option for the students was to produce plays on a lesser scale and outdoors in order to have a live audience. In 2022, the students were again limited in their production, but Covid-19 was not the cause.

Of the four seniors in the class, one was a Hendrix 5 student, one took a leave of absence in 2021, one returned complete a degree started in 2015, and one was a true senior. Of the four only one had any experience in production—light booth, sound booth, stage management—of any significance. The same student had completed the courses including the practicum. The other three were in the process of completing practicums in their senior year and in some cases completing the courses associated with the practicum. It is true that Covid-19 impacted their experiences to some degree, however, each of the students had the opportunity to complete the requirements before Covid-19.

The result was stunning. As the instructor in the course rudimentary instruction regarding rehearsal and production protocol were required. The students require more support and mentoring from faculty and staff than is typical. After meeting with my colleagues, we were able to track the experience deficit to the time when we lost our design and production faculty member and began to rely on staff/adjunct teaching. The curriculum has lost much of the cohesion because a resident designer with faculty status was absent. The students from 2020 were the last cohort to experience the faculty member in this position. This cohort was

completely prepared to take on the Senior Seminar with confidence and experience. In the 2021 cohort, of the three one was very capable of the work in all aspects, one was very capable in most aspects, and the third was completing her degree remotely and was graduating early. Because of the remote status it is hard to know how prepared she was to take on the role. Her performance in 3.5 semesters would indicate that she would be comfortable in the role. The 2022 cohort discussed above had one student very capable of the task. Of the other three, I rate them at somewhat capable. Each had focused on one area, acting, and had not been privy to production work because of Covid-19 and a focused resident design/production faculty member.

We have known for three semesters that our bench had grown shallow (forgive the sports metaphor.) The opportunity to review the materials and discuss the student outcomes provided valuable insight. We are thrilled that the new faculty member will bring the needed concentration to technical and design work. A miracle is not expected immediately, but we are very optimistic about the future.

Regarding the Senior Survey, only two seniors returned the surveys. Of the two the responses were polar opposite. One student marking Strongly Agree for all areas, and the other student marking Disagree and Strongly Disagree in all but one of the areas. I am including the survey below.

The study of Theatre Arts and Dance requires collaboration, critical thinking, creative thinking, the ability to contextualize theatre and dance within the history of the human condition, and a disciplined work ethic that serves lifelong learning. Methods of instruction within the department are lectures, class discussion, studio classes—demonstration of a skill and instruction for executing the skill; scholarly and creative writing assignments, project assignments and presentations; participation in the production work of the Hendrix Players.

Learning Goals for the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

- 1) Acquire the art and practice of collaboration through developing and production theatre and dance performances.
- 2) Attain skills and understanding that contribute to lifelong learning
- 3) Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition
- 4) Exercise critical and creative thinking skills and intellectual depth by reading, analyzing, producing theatre and dance.
- 5) Demonstrate commitment through rigor and care through work on productions and in the classroom.

Theatre Arts and Dance Department Senior Survey
Knowledge

1. My experience in Theatre Arts and Dance courses contributed toward the development of the following kinds of knowledge

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Contextualizing Theatre and Dance performance in the history of the human condition						
Critical thinking: understanding the processes of analyzing a dramatic text.						
The basic structure of theatrical production.						
Development of Drama in the western world from Greeks to Modern						

2. Skills: My experience in Theatre Arts and Dance courses contributed toward the development of the following kinds of skills

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Work Ethic: developing a rigorous work ethic that will guide me to a successful career						
Collaboration: the ability to work collectively toward a shared goal						
Creative Thinking: my understanding of problem solving.						
Written Communicate clearly a variety of formats						
Oral Communication clearly in a variety of circumstances						

Rubric for Practicum (TARA 21, 22, 23, 24)

Number of hours worked in the specified area is 50% of the grade. The number of hours averaged with the rubric assessment will equal the grade in the course

40 hours	A
35 hours	B is the highest grade
30 hours	C is the highest grade
25 hours	D is the highest grade

Student must complete a reflection component at the end of the course. The reflection is based on the Odyssey guidelines:

What? So what? Now what? OR

- What did I do?
- How did I respond to the assignment? If challenged, how did I respond? If not challenged, how did I respond?
- Now what can I do with the experience? What do I take away from the experience that is useful? Even the negative experience is useful.

Below is a rubric outlining the expectations of the course based on four core principles: Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Competencies/Skills, Work Ethic.

	All of these things well	Three of these things well	Two of these things well	One of these things well
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with team members in a constructive and respectful fashion Uses vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and body language to convey a positive attitude about the work Motivates and encourages team members about the task and the team's ability to accomplish it Demonstrates curiosity and enthusiasm through engaging with entire creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with team members in a constructive and respectful fashion Uses vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and body language to convey a positive attitude about the work Motivates and encourages team members about the task and the team's ability to accomplish it Demonstrates curiosity and enthusiasm through engaging with entire creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with team members in a constructive and respectful fashion Uses vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and body language to convey a positive attitude about the work Motivates and encourages team members about the task and the team's ability to accomplish it Demonstrates curiosity and enthusiasm through engaging with entire creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with team members in a constructive and respectful fashion Uses vocal or written tone, facial expressions, and body language to convey a positive attitude about the work Motivates and encourages team members about the task and the team's ability to accomplish it Demonstrates curiosity and enthusiasm through engaging with entire creative process
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with untested approaches to assignment regardless of risk of failure Investment in the process, overcomes challenges, takes on opportunities, develops and articulates logical plan to accomplish project Creative Thinking—formulates ideas based on previous knowledge Synthesize—transforms ideas or solutions into new forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with untested approaches to assignment regardless of risk of failure Investment in the process, overcomes challenges, takes on opportunities, develops and articulates logical plan to accomplish project Creative Thinking—formulates ideas based on previous knowledge Synthesize—transforms ideas or solutions into new forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with untested approaches to assignment regardless of risk of failure Investment in the process, overcomes challenges, takes on opportunities, develops and articulates logical plan to accomplish project Creative Thinking—formulates ideas based on previous knowledge Synthesize—transforms ideas or solutions into new forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with untested approaches to assignment regardless of risk of failure Investment in the process, overcomes challenges, takes on opportunities, develops and articulates logical plan to accomplish project Creative Thinking—formulates ideas based on previous knowledge Synthesize—transforms ideas or solutions into new forms

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	All of these things well	Three of these things well	Two of these things well	One of these things well
Competencies/Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates willingness to attempt requisite tasks regardless of experience; • competency in executing skills throughout the creative process; • improvement in ability and commitment to learning; • knowledge of material, terminology, and working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates willingness to attempt requisite tasks regardless of experience; • competency in executing skills throughout the creative process; • improvement in ability and commitment to learning; • knowledge of material, terminology, and working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates willingness to attempt requisite tasks regardless of experience; • competency in executing skills throughout the creative process; • improvement in ability and commitment to learning; • knowledge of material, terminology, and working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates willingness to attempt requisite tasks regardless of experience; • competency in executing skills throughout the creative process; • improvement in ability and commitment to learning; • knowledge of material, terminology, and working environment.
Work Ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence to rules of safety • demonstrates respect for peers, faculty, and staff; • follows the guidelines regarding punctuality; • adherence to the Hendrix Student Code of Conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence to rules of safety • demonstrates respect for peers, faculty, and staff; • follows the guidelines regarding punctuality; • adherence to the Hendrix Student Code of Conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence to rules of safety • demonstrates respect for peers, faculty, and staff; • follows the guidelines regarding punctuality; • adherence to the Hendrix Student Code of Conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence to rules of safety • demonstrates respect for peers, faculty, and staff; • follows the guidelines regarding punctuality; • adherence to the Hendrix Student Code of Conduct