



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Cc: Brian Cook, Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Theatre & Dance  
Colleen Metzger, Associate Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Theatre BA

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** None

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Members of the program review committee:**

Brian Cook, Associate Professor and Department Chair  
Colleen Metzger, Associate Professor

### **Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role**

UAA's mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. It is also committed to instruction at multiple academic levels, success of all students regardless of their higher education goals, and service to the diverse peoples and communities of the state. UAA's core themes are (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, (3) Student Success, (4) UAA Community, and (5) Public Square. UAA values international and intercultural education, diversity of experiences and perspectives, and the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska that comes from the Alaska Native peoples of this area.

The College of Arts and Sciences contributes to UAA's mission with a suite of programs that provide, among other things,

1. general education courses for undergraduates in CAS and other Colleges,
2. opportunities for undergraduates to pursue majors in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts, and

3. opportunities for faculty and students to pursue research and creative activities in CAS's academic disciplines,
4. graduate programs for advanced studies.

Given decreased enrollments across UAA and significant budget cuts to CAS, the challenge is to serve UAA's and CAS's missions with only 75% of the funds it had in 2018-2019. CAS's shrinking budget is especially challenging for programs that rely on state financial appropriations through CAS because the programs have a gap between (a) the total costs of everything the program does and needs, and (b) the tuition CAS receives to cover those costs. This describes most programs in CAS: most rely on state appropriates and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

CAS's Department of Theatre & Dance contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by contributing options for general education in the arts, providing students the opportunity to major in the discipline, and for faculty and students to do research and creative activity in that area.

### **Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity**

Since 2013 the program averaged about 8 awards per year, with notable peaks (like 11 in 2019) and valleys (like 4 in 2018). The 23% decrease in the number of majors parallel the drop across CAS. Offering a BA in Theatre (including a concentration in Dance) is a costly effort, involving expenses for lighting, costumes, stage construction, training, and safety. Although the Department should be commended for reducing its instructional costs since 2016, its student credit hours and tuition also dropped, and the Department has a substantial gap between its tuition and its direct costs for faculty to teach the courses. Furthermore, when the full salaries and benefits for everything faculty do (instruction, research, and service) are considered, the Department has a steep deficit that required state appropriations. (To their credit, faculty recently redesigned the program to make it more efficient in the future.) Another challenge for the Department is that it draws the attention of comparatively few first-year students: since 2013 only 53 high-school students selected Theatre as their initial major, averaging only 6.6 per year, well below the median for CAS. Lastly, with an average of 8 awards per year, the Department is in the bottom 25% of CAS programs in degrees awarded.

### **Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success**

The program has high quality. With a Student Per Faculty ratio of 9:1, students in the department experience small classes (average class size of 11), they receive hands-on training from faculty who have impressive professional, real-world experience, and they gain invaluable experience working closely with others students on performances, giving them practice in teamwork on complex tasks. The program was just redesigned to improve its efficiency and reduce its costs.

### **Program Duplication / Distinctiveness**

Whereas UA students can get some coursework in Theatre and Dance at UAF and/or UAS, the UAA program is the only one in the state that provides comprehensive training in this field. Nowhere else will UA students get a program of studies that teaches acting, directing, lighting, costume design, and set design.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

The program is commended for serving passionate and talented students with passionate and talented faculty. If the program continues it must find a way to close the gap between what it takes to train the students and the finances it has for that training. Substantial and ongoing extramural support is probably necessary. The faculty also should be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

### **Decision**

Deletion. Budget cuts are forcing CAS to offer fewer programs to students in the future. Historically, this program attracted relatively few students and was not able to operate without a steep deficit. Although unfortunate, CAS likely cannot sustain this program beyond its current cohort of students. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.