

Department Overview

The UMBC Theatre has approximately 110 majors and 20-30 minors. These majors are in two degree tracks, B.A. in Theater and B.F.A. in Acting. Many of the majors choose to double-major and/or minor in other fields, and virtually all of the undergraduate students contribute to productions in the Department. Faculty are all actively engaged in the field, either in creative work or research, and regularly bring students and alumni to work with them at area theatres. Productions of the Department are selected to offer a range of training opportunities for students and to engage the intellect of students and faculty. During the past two academic seasons, over 4,000 tickets were sold for UMBC Theatre productions – each production involving over 100 faculty, students, and staff collaborating for months leading up to its opening night.

UMBC Theatre has eleven full-time faculty: one Full Professor, four Associate Professors, two Assistant Professors, and four Lecturers. All faculty teach their full load (5/year for Professors, 8/year for Lecturers), but the Department relies on returning adjunct instructors in acting and directing. The five UMBC Theatre staff are important members of the Department not only in terms of administrative and technical tasks, but in facilitating overall production operations, realizing creative work, and guiding students. These staff members are included in the Theatre Department's meetings.

A large percentage of the faculty are relatively new to UMBC. This rather rapid change of faculty has brought fresh energy, ideas, and updated expertise. In conjunction with the Department's move into the PAHB, it has necessitated a great deal of organizational re-vamping, and successful re-examination of the Department's identity. The professor of acting - movement retired in 2016, and a replacement for this person has been a Department priority.

Over the past several years, faculty have re-designing the curriculum by converting two of the Theatre BA degree concentrations and reorienting the structure of the BFA in Acting sequence. Now, the Theatre Department offers two major degree programs: a BA in Theatre with a Concentration in Theatre Studies (48 credits) or Design & Production (54 credits) and a BFA in Acting (69 credits). Also, a 21-credit Minor in Theater is offered. This set of degrees and concentrations was modified over the past few years to focus on student success (both while at UMBC and upon entering the theater profession) and on the goal of better aligning student training with current trends in higher education (particularly the desire for double majors).

The UMBC Department of Theatre Assessment Plan was created in 2008 and updated with a new learning outcome assessment process, in 2016. The Department of Theatre has defined four primary learning outcome goals.

- 1) Apply fundamental critical thinking skills to the analysis and interpretation of dramatic literature with particular attention to acting, designing, or technical production.
- 2) Select and use, with safety and efficiency, the tools and equipment basic to theatre production technology including those required for both set and costume construction.
- 3) Communicate to an audience through at least one of the components of theatrical art: acting, designing, stage managing, or technical production.
- 4) Function effectively as a member of a theatre production team in the preparation of regularly scheduled public productions.

All theatre majors are assigned a theatre faculty Academic Advisor in their first semester. While students may seek mentorship from any faculty member, and often do, it is helpful to have a designated advisor they can look to guidance throughout their undergraduate career. One faculty member is responsible for advising all Theatre Minors who wish to consult with theatre faculty.

Department faculty are heavily engaged in creative research. Accomplished professionals within their fields, faculty pursue research and professional work as varied as their areas of interest. UMBC Theatre faculty directors have been honored for their work by organizations such as the Kennedy Center and University Film and Video Association, have directed (and often devised) multiple world premieres, and have had work move from UMBC production to regional theatres, international Fringe Festivals, and the Kennedy Center.

The Department's vocal, directing, and design faculty have worked regionally for the Olney Theatre, Rep Stage, Center Stage, the Strand Theatre, Interrobang Theatre, Single Carrot Theatre, Everyman Theatre, Annapolis Shakespeare, Imagination Stage, Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Signature Theatre, Round House Theatre, National Players, Theatre Project, The Public Theatre (Maine), and the Camden Shakespeare Festival among others. Faculty professional work has also been featured as part of International Festivals such as, FringeNYC, Prague Festival Fringe, and Edinburgh Fringe.

Several faculty members have presented papers, served as panel moderators, panelists, or plenary speakers, or led workshops for organizations as varied as the ATHE national convention, the national USITT conference, the international Voice and Speech Trainers conference, the ACTF National Competition, the National Puppetry Festival, the American Society for Theatre Research, and Voice 4 Vision Festival among others, and have received grant support for their research endeavors.

The faculty of Theater believe that the priority for the Department over the next few years should include:

- 1) Continued Focus on Recruiting
- 2) Continued Focus on the Department's Governing Documents
- 3) Complete Current Searches & Secure New Hires: Technical Coordinator, Visiting Lecturer of Costume Design, Assist. Professor of Scenic Design.
- 4) Create Permanent Line for Visiting Lecturer of Costume Design.
- 5) Increase Department's Budget
- 6) Complete Intended PAHB Hires

External Reviewer' Comments

The external reviewers of the Theater Department had glowing remarks in describing the Department. They expressed the view that chair and the faculty are forward looking and do not shirk from addressing issues. That the Department used the possibly disruptive infusion of new faculty to enliven the Department and strength it as a whole.

They stated that the undergraduate program's goals are appropriate and connected to current models of their discipline and address student needs. They detailed how the Department meets its

goals through a robust series of classes and experiences, including high-quality public productions; and that the total experience stimulates, challenges, and inspires students. Further, they believe that the program is exceptional and on par with Theater Departments that are twice the size of the UMBC Theater Department and Departments that have graduate programs.

The reviewers had praise for the scholarly work of the faculty, stating that it is at an exceptional level.

The reviewers were positive on the “remarkable support” that the University provides the faculty in their professional development and scholarly pursuits. This includes the extraordinary physical resources at the Departments disposal.

The reviewers echoed the goals of the Department and recommended that the Department pursue accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Theater. The review concluded with the statement that the UMBC Theater program is a “hidden gem”.

The Dean has supported most of the high-priority items for the Department. In particular, he has approved the search for the new assistant professor for movement and acting and a post-doc position for faculty diversity. Also, he supports increases in the monetary support of the theater infrastructure.

The post-APR Action plan also supports the Department’s, reviewers’, and Dean’s general recommendations. In particular, it fully supported the faculty hire, however the funding requests have not been completely addressed.