WESTMONT COLLEGE
THEATER ARTS DEPARTMENT
Department Self Assessment
Futures Project
August 1998

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General Introduction

First of all, I am happy to send you this report of the Theatre Arts Department’s activities for the past eight years. It has been an enjoyable and valuable project that has resulted in a clarification of the department’s vision and mission vis a vis student learning outcomes.

Basic Assumption

It is the belief of this department that the world created by God was a good creation, and that it is completely worthy of celebration and enjoyment. We also acknowledge that in rebellion against God, humanity took upon itself a world of complexity and evil, a world in which there is often an admixture of evil with the good.

The Departmental View of Theatre

We view theatre as one of the most effective attempts by humanity to understand itself and the world. Our participation in this human, artistic endeavor increases our understanding of the human condition, expands our awareness of the needs of humankind, provides opportunity for play and celebration, offers creative activity for development of expressive gifts, and provides a means for articulating our Christian world and life view. In all our artistic endeavors, including classes and productions, we affirm our commitment and responsiveness to the Lordship of Christ.

Classes and Productions

Not all campus productions and classroom subject matter are chosen to represent the Christian faith directly. Some are. Others portray dimensions of humankind’s fallen condition which must be confronted by Christians before they can hope to respond to
its needs. That confrontation is an important function of theatre. The primary purpose of theatre is not to indoctrinate, to decree, or to pronounce; but rather, to engage both the mind and the senses, enabling students and audiences to ask questions, to view alternatives open to them, and to explore in depth the many dimensions of life. There is a world of truth within the world of theatre which needs to be explored by our students, student actors and our audiences. This world of truth involves the process of exploration and results. We seek a balance between the two. Exploration leads to results. There is value in both.

Moral and Aesthetic Integrity

Moral and aesthetic integrity sometimes demands that playwrights, directors, and actors allow characters to behave in ways which are not, in themselves, God-honoring. However, a play should not be judged by any one of its parts alone but must be evaluated as a complete entity. Thus, when one considers smoking, drinking, dancing, and potentially offensive language, one should first ask whether or not the play as a whole is morally and esthetically worthy. If not, the play will not be further considered for production here at Westmont. On the other hand, if the play is deemed worthy, one must ask if the potentially offensive behavior is necessary to maintain the integrity of the play. If the answer to both questions is “yes”, then the play may be considered for production at Westmont College. When there are specific concerns, and there have been a few in the past, the Provost will be consulted in the initial stages of the production.

We aim to provide our students and our audiences with experiences in stage art appreciation, with entertainment, and with dramatic insights into the human experience.
Diversity Standard

Primary Student Learning Outcome

General Statement

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a
day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and
freedom for their souls. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, other-
centered men can build up."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made that statement many years ago and ever since then I
have taken on the statement to make it my own. Since then, I have begun a personal
healing from the conditions of racism via my marriage and family. A large portion of
my adult life has been spent in trying to overcome the sin of racism to become a
centered man. My unexpurgated past's relentless grip on the present has not made
me bitter. I have had to unlearn the terrible devices of this world which dull the
imagination and destroy creativity. I should like to see this healing process carried
over to our department where racism sometimes still permeates. The questions I have
for this healing of racism process are:

1) What will it take for us to get something like this started?
2) Where should this process fit in?
3) Are there barriers that will prevent it?
4) And are there any solutions to the barriers?

At the present time we have no answers to these questions.

In regards to the Primary Learning Outcome vis a vis diversity, we do not have a
5 mechanism (curriculum) to help us in this direction. There are a myriad of complications to encouraging sensitivity to and awareness of and desire for diversity. They range from the fundamental undergirding of a diverse college community population to difficult hurdles that confront the department in selecting appropriate materials. For example, in an effort to incorporate women's plays and their unique perspective on gender concerns, we looked and looked for plays by women concerning women's issues but had a terrible time finding something appropriate because women's issues and the ways women's concerns are communicated in plays seem to be so offensive to the Christian community.

On a more positive note, the three of us (John Cochran, John Blondell, and Melissa Cochran) create a nice balance to the department: African-American/ethnic perspective, dominant group perspective, and gender diversity. The chemistry among the three of us creates an atmosphere of openness, concern, and anticipation toward diversity and its benefits in the life of our department, our school, and in the lives of our students.

Specific Student Learning Outcomes

[For descriptions of specific learning outcomes, please refer to your Guidelines and Standards instructions for this report which are located in Appendix A.]

1a) The strategy is teaching that beliefs, values, ideas, and practices are influenced by social class, gender, ethnicity, culture, and historical moment through History of Design very deliberately and instructing students: "We have examined how the structure and beliefs of society in each major period of history informed the art, architecture, theater, and stage design. You must now examine yourself and your societal influences and express these in your design project [acting or directing
project, or exam]."

b) However, students are so hampered by lack of technique that very little evidence emerges that they are achieving this outcome. Some specific assistance needed are the following:

1) A classroom with adequate natural and indoor lighting and space.

2) A drawing table for each design student. We have had 1 - 8 students in Design for the Theatre and Stagecraft. They each need a drawing table in class for instruction.)

3) A lighting lab for instruction in lighting design.

4) Additional lighting equipment: more and newer instruments, colorizers, gobos, gobo rotators.

c) Assessment is measured by the extent that they articulate this outcome in the presentation of their projects and reflect awareness during field trips and, afterwards, in discussion.

2a) Strategies to encourage students to bring the dimensions of social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture to the discussion and analysis of issues within their disciplines are the choice of plays, field trips, and projects to incite discussion and analysis of influence of social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture.

b) Students are beginning to demonstrate this ability in discussions in Stagecraft, Design for the Theater, History of Theater, Acting and Directing as well as in departmental meeting discussions and on their exams.

c) Assessment techniques have included a department meeting specifically on gender issues, listening for evidence of this outcome in discussions and watching for it on exams.

3a) Strategies for teaching that knowledge transmitted is affected by the gender, social class, ethnicity and culture of the writer, artist, etc. include discussion of textbook
authors and what influenced their perspective, examining the background of a playwright and its influence on their message, and adding personal knowledge and experience to the knowledge presented in the textbook.

b) Evidence for this outcome is revealed through relationship between student and professor: how the student treats the professor, how that relationship changes as the student comes to understand the effects of gender, social class, ethnicity, and culture on the knowledge understood from their textbook compared to the knowledge and experience transmitted by the professor. Evidence is exhibited in the student's changing feedback in discussions and in their answers on specific exam questions intended to incite a sensitivity to diversity.

c) Assessment techniques to measure this kind of recognition by the student include projects, exam questions, and provocative discussion questions. However, it should be noted that we do not grade on diversity awareness, but simply look for an awareness and sensivity to diversity issues.

4a) Students really do not have an understanding of the complex effects of cultural diversity in today's world. This is so vast a subject that it must be handled quite deliberately through curriculum.

As long as courses are based on a traditional view of "Western Theater" without the "Western"; in other words, as long as what is thought of and taught as "Theater" is actually only the Theater of the Western World, then the complex effects of cultural diversity on today's world will only be covered sporadically and because of the instructor's personal perspective and experience. However, a course, for example, on "Race, Class and Gender on the American Stage" will deal primarily with such effects.
5a) This outcome is what theater is all about, but students are not gaining increased cross-cultural communication and adaptation skills because the college, in general, and the department specifically lack certain requirements to bring it about. These requirements are: a diverse student population; projects, such as play choices that compel such a learning outcome (and such plays need a diverse student population for casting and production assignments as well as acceptance and support from the college community); and finally community interactive projects to provide other social contexts. Communication and adaptation skills are tied into what we do as professors when we teach our craft, but we do not have much diversity.

6a) Because of the lack of diversity in the college community, students tend to reflect the extremes from narrow-mindedness with an almost complete inability to make ethical Christian choices within multicultural contexts to an almost completely unbounded frame of reference that leads them to try everything, judge nothing and no one, and to attempt to enter into any and every cultural context to gain experience, exposure, and to "try it on".

7a) Students having an understanding of the Christian church cross-culturally is not an outcome being achieved in the Theater Arts Department. The department does not have a mechanism in place for this. However, students seem to be getting it from their church and interdisciplinary contacts.

8a) There is a real need and concern in Theater Arts for students to be achieving at least an intermediate competency in a second language. It used to be common for a college student to be in the process of becoming competent in another modern language other than their primary language, thereby learning that there are other
thought patterns and perspectives that one learns only through learning another language. Also, language reflects the values of another culture and has a humbling and opening effect on the student.
Written and Oral Communication Standard

Specific Student Learning Outcomes:

1a) The strategies that the department uses for students who demonstrate a full range of abilities from lower to higher order thinking skills are:

   Language, i.e. - the explication of a play before production, i.e. the meaning of a play.

   Text analysis - interpreting a play from its emotional/subjective point of view, then moving the interpretation to the more rational/objective and logical point of view. This process is achieved in the department's classes and performances.

b) What evidences of students' achieving these outcomes? We provide an atmosphere that will create a foundation for students to have input and make their own discoveries. We find our results in classroom examinations, journals, discussions, and through the production of plays, senior projects and the field trips. We demand writing in complete sentences. The one process I am particularly fond of is the use of verse in the spirit of the plays. The plays that are written in verse have a purpose: the length of the line carries the voice, the beat and the rhythm help to establish the domination of the actor. This is one way of establishing evidence in an acting class that is focused on styles.

c) How do we assess the students' abilities in speech and writing from lower to higher order thinking? Theater is a process that takes words on a page (ideas, images, impressions) and manifests them on a stage (movement, sound, composition). The students interpret the plays and present these ideas in a living form.

2a) Students are able to speak and write with rhetorical effectiveness.
department attempts to create an environment which demands total discipline from everyone. A student who is completely committed to this process usually surpasses and outruns a less committed student, sometimes because the latter is over committed in his or her schedule, lazy, or superficial (an actor settling for the easiest choices). Theater is a communal adventure. The soloist can perform alone in the theater - we can’t! The better the play, the more we need an ensemble venture. We need each other’s ideas and strengths. We need each other’s trust. We must serve the play by serving each other. An ego maniacal “star” system is only self-serving and hurts everyone including the person who is trying to be a star.

Our department attempts to achieve “character” in the moral and ethical sense, both of which are made of the intellectual virtues of mutual respect, courtesy, kindness, generosity, trust, attention to others, seriousness, loyalty, as well as those necessary attributes of diligence and dedication.

3b) What evidence do we have that students are achieving these outcomes? Well, from the outset, the department attempts to break down all the areas in which the student can work and search for realities in themselves which serve the character and the play. In the classroom, rehearsals, and performances we evaluate how the student has avoided commenting on the play, character, circumstances, symbols, or message. We judge how they have put their instincts and their sense of truth, their understanding of human realities to use while probing and grappling with the contents and the roots of the material. If they are specific, focused, clear and real in their actions then they will communicate the artistic statement we are looking for.

Also, in the classroom, the evidence is demonstrated in essay exams, journals,
character analyses, research papers and different group projects. We demand proper writing skills; when this does not occur we allow the student to rewrite their papers until it does, diminishing in points during the process. A lot of the evidence is gained while experiencing with the students, i.e.: observations, discussions and conversations.

3c) The department has little when it comes to quantifiable evidence that the student is achieving these outcomes. In the classroom, the assessment techniques include the assignment of group projects, research, writing, acting, and design projects. We assign material that will challenge the way they see themselves. And, in particular, for the student actor, in order to reveal what’s at stake for his character on the deepest level and allow for pertinent communication to the audience, he must make himself, for ultimate expression, more vulnerable than in life. He must remove the mask normally used for cover. How does one quantify that and is it something we should attempt to quantify?

4) Historical and Cultural Awareness
Somewhat - and only in Western Theater. We have had discussions regarding women playwrights, African American Theater and Hispanic Theater, but we have not been able to implement any of the ideas that come from these discussions. There are many reasons for shying away from these ideas: women playwrights are too controversial. We don’t have enough African American and Hispanics in our community to produce such play. These problems can be solved. We desire to pursue these plays in order to create historical and cultural awareness for our department.

5) Christian Faith In Relation To Learning Without Reliance On Popular Cliches
a) The department uses strategies of modeling conversations, mentoring, and developing relationships. There have been times when a student will use a popular cliche in relation to Christian faith. This happens especially during prayer times before and after rehearsals or a class: the student will use a term that is hackneyed and maudlin, such as "God will make a way for the success of this production."

c) The assessment techniques for this kind of outcome were all experiential: direct contact with students, discussions, conversations and observations.

6) Students are able to achieve cross disciplinary integration in both speaking and writing: No! We have no strategies in place for cross-disciplinary integration. It has happened several times since 1990 but there is no conscious mechanism to achieve it.

7a) Yes! The department feels our students are capable of mature, critically insightful self-assessment and peer assessment of both writing and speaking. Again, this is what we do when we teach as Professors of Theater Arts. The strategy is requiring the student to participate in constructive, non threatening, critical dialogue in both writing and speaking. We teach the student to suggest rather than comment when they offer criticism.

An example is "I wonder if this might work", and then carefully spell out a plan of action. The recipient will probably not be upset because the person who has given the criticism has not actually attacked a personal, creative choice but rather entered into the creative process with them. For those being criticized, we encourage them to look at this as a free gift that can make them better if it is perceptive and can really do them no harm if it is not. But if the person who is criticizing says, "That's the wrong way, do it
this way," then the recipient will feel defensive and effectively closed to communication.

If a fellow student suggests doing a scene a certain way and another student thinks of another way, we in the department encourage them not to say no to the suggestion. Instead, we encourage them to say, "that might work" or "how about this?" and then offer their suggestion. We feel that this is one way the student can feed off one suggestion, advance another, and make it possible for the next person to advance their ideas, until they have creatively and cooperatively arrived at the best solution. We strategize the development of these practices by developing models of conflict resolution and being open minded and fair.

7b) Most of the evidence we have is gained via the experience we go through with the student, i.e., conversations, discussions, observations and mentoring of students.

7c) Assessments techniques for this learning outcome include critique of scene work (acting class, directing class, design class, "post mortem" discussion of production work), and written work (exams, character analyses, reviews, journals, and 10-minute writing reflections).
Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement Standard

It is the departments use of small and large scale collaborations that has impacted the instructional input to produce the qualities in our students of asking thoughtful questions, giving honest feedback, working with a group and being tolerant of differences. When we see the results of our collaborations we see an entire work of art. If it moves us, makes us laugh, or makes us think, it does so as a whole and complete artistic event; it seems, or should seem, absolutely seamless in its construction. But it isn’t! The small and large scale collaborations are a composite artistic process made up of many elements: acts and scenes, plot and character, art and entertainment. An analysis of these collaborations is a study of its multiple elements. I will elaborate on one or two elements.

The first of these elements has to do with ethical behavior. Be good colleagues to one another! Never tell each other what to do or what not to do. The students should make themselves responsible for serving the project and their colleagues. They are reminded that egomania has been one of the chief causes of something being rotten in the state of theater.

Punctuality is another element: respect each other’s valuable time. There are no excuses for tardiness! Come prepared to classes and rehearsals! Don’t expect others to do your work for you.

Presenting small scale collaborations in class and receiving criticism without the pressures imposed by the final communication of a finished product before an audience help to exercise the craft for the student via the glorious freedom to fail, the
daring to try and the risk.

1b) The strategy used for determining student outcomes is via classroom debates, and requiring journals. We really try to accomplish this in our acting and directing classes by requiring ensemble process.

1c) The assessment techniques for this outcome are mostly experiential: that is, direct contact with the students. We have conversations and discussions and there is a great deal of observation. The assessments techniques are centered around the relationship we build and the trust that is developed in the small and large collaborations.

2a) The department's conclusion is that drama is about broad sympathies for people in conditions of confusion, suffering and vulnerability. Again, working in collaboration and mentoring, we can get the student to identify with the play's situation. For example, the play I have chosen for the spring, OEDIPUS REX, tells the story of an ancient absolute ruler of Thebes who, seeking the murderer of his predecessor, discovers that he is the murderer and, worse, that his predecessor was in fact his own father and the widow whom he has married is his mother. Oedipus is a play that treats the student to a series of revelations - revelations about the past, which are known as exposition, as well as revelations about the future, which will be referred to as prophecy. The revelations are made to Oedipus which means the events of the play are placed beyond the awareness and control of Oedipus. He does not know of his own tragic plight as the play's action begins; therefore, he is powerless in the context of events he himself has unwittingly set in motion. He shares one vital characteristic with all of humankind: ignorance. He is one of us; and because we know of his
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ignorance in the face of tragic circumstances, we sympathize.

2b) The evidence we have of students' achieving this outcome is the way the students make strong choices and the conclusions they come to that bring about the play's message. Other evidence includes the growth in perceptiveness that students exhibit over time and how they incorporate their own experiences and thoughts into the material.

3a) Are students equipped with tools to continue learning throughout their lives? All of us in the theater department have passionate beliefs and opinions about the methodological technique we use to bring about tools for continued learning for our students. The learning process is never over. The possibilities for growth are limitless. The strategies we use are found in the approach to the creative work process we teach them, teaching students how to research, and showing them how people behave in real life.

3b) These are a few topics which are a part of our methods of approach: prayer, moral standards, dressing for the part (i.e., costume concepts), how to talk to an audience, how to find work, overacting. We actively present these elements as a major part of our curriculum to be digested, explored and tested.

3c) We have no mechanism in place to assess the above techniques. As in other learning areas, we gain assessment via experiences and relationships.

4) Regarding Christian Vocation, we in the department feel that this is not a conscience goal for us. However, we do achieve a sense of Christian vocation via
The department spends a great deal of time in the area of rhetorical effectiveness. The first thing that comes to mind is the rehearsal process, where all involved are giving and taking. In the rehearsal process we create an atmosphere that is safe so that everyone can risk getting beyond their comfort zones. If a student feels unsafe in a safe environment, he is encouraged in a caring way to present his case. The student uses words that are effective so as to influence the direction and outcome which he desires. In the classroom, there are ten-minute writing assignments immediately after reading a play and the results are presented verbally to the entire class. The student can get a great deal out of what their peers are thinking. The result is a clear, cogent thinking on the chosen subject.

b) The evidence we have for this area are the results from play analysis, research papers, senior project papers, journals, essay exams, written debates, and oral debates.

c) The department has no assessment technique in place to gather the above evidence; albeit discussion, oral projects, group projects, and observation are other modes of assessment that we do automatically.

3a) Student’s speaking and writing display the intellectual virtue of fair mindedness, openness to ideas, openness to criticism, judicious and patient use of reasoning and creativity at the deepest levels.

Again, the process of creating theater is advancing the student to high levels of development for cultivating and displaying intellectual virtues. We take huge risks while creating characters for the stage which demand an imaginative approach to the material that we are working with. Now, because of the very nature of the theater profession, some students will develop slothful rather than disciplined habits. The
modeling, mentorship and testimonials.

5a) The Theater Arts Department does teach skills and motivation outcomes that allow the student to become faithful citizens and participants in their community. “What does it mean to live in community?” is the primary question we pose in our projects. While in community, every student of theater finds a personal method for finding solutions to the varied problems in stage art. When the student explores fully the reality of any given object, he or she comes up with greater dramatic possibilities. On stage it takes the peculiar mentality of the student to give herself or himself to imaginary things with the same kind of fullness that we ordinarily evidence only in the giving of ourselves to real things. The student has to evoke that reality on the stage in order to live fully in it and with it. This strategy is used to get the student to be fully committed to the created community.

5b) The evidence is mostly observed, it is found in relationship. We can test some of this knowledge in the classroom, i.e., history of the theater as it relates to our faith. Again, the evidence is gained through being with the students: observing them, having discussions, etc.

5c) The assessment techniques we use are analyzing societal situations and analyzing relationships. The technique is primarily experiential, and they are centered on the building of relationships and the dependency on one another in the rehearsal situation.
Westmont College Theatre Arts Department
Department Self-Assessment
Futures Pilot Project
Prepared by John Blondell

The following report includes the Theatre Arts Department's consideration of the Christian Orientation, Critical Thinking, and Technology Standards, as part of the Futures Pilot Project.

Summary Statement

Three dominant impressions remain following the Theatre Arts Department's consideration of the Futures Pilot Project.

1) It has been a rich and valuable experience to have the department discuss these standards and outcomes. It has given us a sense of renewed purpose; has helped clarify our mission and vision; and given us a great deal of information about how the department thinks about, and pursues, teaching the art of the theatre. This has been wholly welcome and exciting.

2) It is the department's conclusion that we attempt to achieve many, though not all, of the standards. We feel fortunate that the theatre, being a collaborative art form, presents a unique opportunity for the development of our students. We spend a great deal of time with them through the development of productions and projects; consequently, we have teaching opportunities that perhaps not all departments and faculty do. We feel blessed and fortunate to be able to teach in this fashion.

3) It has become apparent to the department that though we say that we are attempting to achieve these outcomes, the evidence of student achievement is not immediately available to us. For many of the outcomes, our present assessment techniques do not generally lead to quantifiable results. Many of these techniques are based on the development of mentor-like relationships, where the method of assessment comes through discussion, conversation, sharing, etc. At present, we have no written documentation -- notes, workbooks, portfolios, etc. -- that clearly identifies the achievement of many of these goals. Though there are certain outcomes (Christian knowledge, for example) that can be tested in more traditional ways, we do not systematize a way of "testing" the achievement of Christian practices (for another example).

Moreover, it has also become apparent that the department is ambivalent about developing an outcomes model of teaching. Theatre is a process oriented art form: we are primarily interested in creating a fertile ground for study, exploration, and personal and group development, where learning and creating is more about the asking of the right questions, rather than the achievement of certain results. Indeed, this is the way that the
department tends to think about the theatre in particular and teaching in
general. Of the numerous particular questions that come out of this study,
the essential nagging question remains: does the systematic quantification of
outcomes eliminate the potential for discovery and mystery that teaching can,
and should, embrace?

Christian Orientation Standard

A. Knowledge

At present, the Theatre Arts Department attempts to achieve the
Knowledge outcome of the Christian Orientation Standard, though with
some qualification. The department views the various outcomes of Christian
knowledge -- familiarity with scripture, Biblical scholarship, Christian
doctrine, church history, and world religions -- as windows into the study of
theatre and drama: they are ways into the field of theatre that clarify,
elucidate, and broaden the theatre experience. In turn, the study of the
theatre is meant to deepen, challenge, and add varying perspectives on the
Christian faith. It must be said, however, that Christian knowledge is not a
focal point for our major; it is used as a vehicle moving toward a certain
destination, rather than being the destination itself.

The following is a short compilation of methods that our department
uses to help our students toward deeper and broader Christian knowledge.
This is not in any way an exhaustive compilation; nor is it a complete
overview. Rather, these strategies are a sampling of ways that we think about
the Christian Knowledge outcome with respect to the study of Theatre Arts.

1) Our use of scripture will frequently open and inform issues of the
material being studied: for instance a study of Genesis I may reveal issues
related to both human and divine creativity.

2) John Cochran tends to use Biblical scholarship more than John
Blondell does. For instance, Cochran may discuss Frances Shaefer's concept
of the "whole human" and how this concept may be synthesized with acting
methodology in order to create a Christian perspective on acting process.

3) The department does not consciously explore issues of Christian
doctrine in any systematic way.

4) The department does tend to place an emphasis on church history as
it relates to theatre history. For instance, theatre history classes do present a
thorough study of how theatre grew out of, and was later opposed by, the
church and how a relationship of mutual antagonism reveals not only the
shape and contour of western theatrical history, but also the elements of
Christianity that have always been antithetical to the theatre.

5) We don't spend much time on world religions. We do, however,
have plans of instituting a world theatre course, which will cover Kathakali,
Kabuki, Noh, and other non-western forms. This study will be informed by
the cultural and religious forces that help make up these performance traditions.

Challenging and Informing the Faith

It is the department's sense that the major constantly challenges and informs the faith -- through the study of acting process; the study of various theatrical periods, genres, styles, and ways of producing theatre; the study of the ideas and themes that come out of a study of the drama; and the process of rehearsing plays that frequently come from the secular world. All of these areas of study provide rich and varying perspectives relative to the theatre and Christian life. We are committed to thinking holistically about the Theatre and Christianity, studying both points of contact and points of departure.

Many of our strategies revolve around the issues relevant to the Christian/Secular dynamic of theatre and drama. Through the production of plays and projects, the seeing of live theatre, the study of the formal properties of drama, and the relation to individual, cultural, and spiritual forces, the department focuses on the tension that frequently exists at the heart of a Christian perspective on the theatre. How can a play by a secular writer deepen and inform the faith in a meaningful, provocative manner? The department actively engages students on a variety of topics relevant to this issue, including: important themes, issues, ideas of the drama being presented, produced, created, or seen; conversations about play choice, appropriateness of certain kinds of stage behavior, including issues of sexuality, language, and idea. We actively attempt to present these issues as tensions that constantly need to be explored, tested, probed, considered, and reconsidered.

What evidence do we have that students are achieving these outcomes? Indeed, this is the question. At this time, the department believes that it is creating a ground for students to make their own discoveries and come to their own conclusions, aided by the guidance of the department's teachers. We say that we are doing it, but we do not have any quantifiable evidence that supports this position. We can test some of this kind of knowledge in the classroom -- church history, as it relates to theatre, for instance. But other standards -- scholarship, doctrine, scripture, etc. -- we either do, or can, not. The evidence is gained thorough "experience," as it were -- observations of students, discussions and conversations with them.

So some interesting questions arise: how do we assess Christian knowledge as it pertains to Theatre Arts? Is it the department's responsibility to develop Christian knowledge more deeply than we have been, or is that someone else's job? How do we assess Christian knowledge as it pertains to areas of the field that initially appear only distantly related (stage design, for
instance)? Is it in fact desirable to search for these kinds of outcomes in an acting class or a series of acting classes, or will this kind of outcome modify the study of acting in ways that circumscribe the study of acting in a tight, narrow fashion?

**Familiarity With Variety of Devotional Resources.**

Developing a knowledge of devotional resources as they pertain to theatre has not been a focus of the department; however, depending on the play and the director, thoughtfully created devotional experiences have been sporadically developed. For instance, the production of *Everyman* had a formalized devotional component, in which the students and director created devotions based on issues relevant to the themes of the play, or the group process. For this project, there was a conscious effort to create a culture of prayer and devotional material related to issues in the play and the needs of the group. Though this has not been a practice of the department for any sustained period of time, there is interest in developing and furthering our work along these lines.

The dominant strategy for achieving these ends has been for a faculty member to lead a devotional, and then have students follow in kind. The intent is to model how students can bring their own thoughts and experiences to the material being covered. I was quite taken with the devotionals that the students brought in; the students' responses were thoughtful, engaging, articulate, and evidenced a good deal of reflection and preparation. The assessment techniques for this kind of outcome were all experiential: direct contact with the students; discussion; conversation; observation. The assessment techniques largely orbit around the building of relationship and trust in the rehearsal situation.

Neither of the professors indicated that the developing of a breadth of devotional resources would be a focus of most classroom work, but the rehearsal/studio situation of acting classes and play preparation is a natural context for this kind of outcome to be explored.

**B. PRACTICES**

Initially, the members of the department felt hard pressed to identify ways in which the department attempted to cultivate Christian practice in specific, conscious ways. Yet on deeper reflection, we realized that collaborative work -- nearly all theatre work, in other words -- is about individual and group process. Indeed, these very practices are embedded within the structure of creating theatre pieces. Collaborative work demands the cultivation of habits of integrity, self reflection, justice, peacemaking, service, and stewardship. Excellent ensemble work needs to have these practices apparent if the group is going to function effectively and fruitfully.
We strategize the development of these practices by developing models of conflict resolution, stressing the necessity of being accountable to one another, behaving fairly and open-mindedly, etc. How do we assess and evaluate? Once again, the question is difficult to answer. In a theatre piece, an excellent ensemble of students who practice these principles find a great joy in working together; in being with one another; in striking deep and lasting personal relationships. For a director/teacher, the teaching outcomes are not always concrete and quantifiable: rather, they are discerned through observation, direct contact, conversation, and working through periods of stress and difficulty as well as comfort and joyfulness.

C. AFFECTIONS

The department also attempts to achieve the Christian Orientation outcome with respect to affections. In a very fundamental way, theatre is about exploring the depth, breadth, and diversity of human behavior and personality, evidenced not only in the dramatic literature that is studied but also in the nuts and bolts behavioral context of developing theatre pieces collaboratively. Students do recognize ways in which the subject matter increases their sensitivity to and enriches their enjoyment of God and other people. They have greater sensitivity when they leave here: they have a sense that, through the study and experience of analyzing human motive, action, behavior, consequence, and emotion, they become richer, more varied human beings. By the ends of their years here they evidence greater depth and complexity of characterization; greater variety in their stage, classroom, and studio work; and greater self-reflectiveness. Though the evidence is all anecdotal, observed, and relational, the students do exhibit greater tolerance, open-mindedness, forgiveness, and embracing the differences of others. They tend to be good at conflict resolution and possess a greater sense of the complexity of people.

Interestingly, I don’t know if the department can honestly say that we consciously set out to do this. Rather, these outcomes "come with the territory," as it were, and lends me to think that the group, collaborative process is one of the most actively powerful experiences that we can offer students as a way to help shape Christian practice and affection.

2. The department approaches all the arts in general, and the theatre in particular, with the belief that the purpose of great art is to make our common experience strange, so that it can be re-assessed, re-perceived, and re-examined. Consequently, a deep study of theatre and drama constantly challenges our habitual modes of attention. A study of Oedipus, for example will always ask us to confront notions of justice, honesty, and purity. Indeed, the horrific consequences of this play result when these principles are not followed. And similarly, the notion of beauty can be examined when we note
the structural beauty of the play's form. In short, the theatre constantly blasts students out of zones of habit and comfort, asking them to confront great moral and ethical questions and issues.

The department's assessment techniques include writing, acting, and design projects that challenge their habitual ways of thinking. We frequently study great material that is outside out students' direct experience as a way to come to grips the multitudinous possibilities inherent in human choice, action, and being. Other modes of assessment include discussion, observation, and oral/group projects.

At present, the department has little quantifiable evidence that the students are achieving these outcomes. Indeed, we find that students find it very difficult to study material that "they can't relate to." Nevertheless, we keep teaching in this manner with the hope that it will engender alternative ways of thinking on the part of our students.

D. Virtues

The department attempts to cultivate Christian virtues in two fundamental ways -- through the process of group creation and group study; and creating an environment for the healthy discussion of difficult, challenging issues.

1) Again, the process of creating theatre is ripe for the cultivation and display of Christian virtues. Indeed, the entire process of making theatre asks us to be courageous on stage -- to practice a kind of self-disclosure through the process of rehearsal and performance. In addition, an actor must constantly exhibit self-control for the good (and safety) of the group; must be prudent in action, demeanor, and relationship; should have hope and trust in the project and the other actors; and show love through the display of accountability to one another as well as constantly "giving" to and of one another on the stage. In many ways, performance necessitates expressions of Christian virtue which are cultivated through the group theatre-making process.

2) In addition, in all of our classes we attempt to create an environment of safety, open-openness, and tolerance where students can explore potentially incendiary topics such as sexuality on stage, profanity, questionable stage behavior, and play choice and relevance for a Christian. These are all topics that are constantly explored by the department, and if they are to be fruitful conversations they must be explored in a situation where, even if people vehemently disagree with one another, the practice of Christian virtue will constantly be present in the discussion and exploration.

At present, we have no quantifiable methods of evaluation for this standard: rather, we attempt to create an environment -- the ground -- for the
exploration of difficult issues. We do not, not can we imagine, concrete means for evaluation of this kind of behavior and growth in our students.
II. Critical Thinking Standard

The department uses numerous types of critical thinking in its development of a methodological orientation to the field. In addition to some of the general critical thinking outcomes indicated in the standard, including the ability to frame appropriate questions; to think abstractly; to test definitions; etc., the very interdisciplinary dimension of theatre forces students to undertake a wide variety of thinking modes, and to fuse them in complex, multi-faceted ways. Some, though not all, of the critical thinking modes essential to the theatre include synthetic thinking (synthesizing history, theory, and practice); the development of imaginative thinking; dialectical thinking; visual thinking; spatial thinking; analytical and interpretive thinking; meta-thinking; self-reflective thinking; and what I might call behavioral thinking, or thinking about stage behavior and how it relates to dramatic interpretation and character analysis. The creation of theatre is a process that moves from the level of abstraction -- idea, image, impression -- to concretization -- behavior, movement, sound, picture, composition, etc. In other words, a student translates ideas about plays into methods of presentation which show these ideas. The department, then, is constantly attempting encourage all of these kinds of thinking simultaneously, and to bring about their fusion in the minds of our students.

Possible methods of assessing these kinds of thinking are legion. Let me outline three of them as examples.

1) A study of Oedipus Rex will include a study of Aristotle’s principles of tragedy in relation to catharsis. Here we have a form of drama -- the play -- that attempts to bring about a certain kind of experience in an audience. Aristotle’s idea of catharsis, the purging of pity and fear, remains on the abstract level until we read the play, imagine the play, see the play, or even produce the play. The student is then asked to synthesize a wide variety of information -- including theory, play analysis, and individual perception. A project that includes this play may involve a review, paper, or oral report that reveals how well the student synthesized the material.

2) A study of Oedipus Rex may include the development of a scenic design of a production of the play. In this kind of thinking, the analysis of the play leads to a kind of thinking that involves image, space, color, volume, texture, rhythm, etc. -- or in other words, the translation of abstract ideas into concrete visual signifiers.

3) Oedipus Rex requires a deep level of self-reflection on the part of the actors. In order to arrive at stage behavior for the play’s characters, actors must constantly examine their own assumptions about the play, the role, the
choices of action appropriate to a successful rendering of the part, etc. This is an ever-growing, every changing process of self-reflection and analysis.

The methods of evaluation for this kind of thinking are also legion, but they include oral and written reports, collaborative discussion and conversation, design and acting projects, historical and theoretical research, and the public performance of work. The theatre is great, and a bit scary at times, in that the outcomes of work are frequently tested in the court of public opinion. We can "see" the depth of thinking that a actor has pursued when she is on-stage playing a role in front of a public. Evidence usually exists in the quality of the work — be it a written paper, a report, an acted role, or a realized design.

2. Interdisciplinary thinking lies at the heart of theatre which brings together a vast array of fields and disciplines: performance, literature, art, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, business, music, and technology to name but a few. Our students do extensive research in order to build characters; they examine their motives for behavior; they study the prevailing forms of a period's paradigm; they explore the historical forces at work in the culture from which a writer comes; and they learn how to walk in breeches and panniers. Indeed, the theatre creates itself from a variety of disciplines.

The methods of assessment are mostly the same as for #1 above.

3. As indicated above, theatre students must be capable of numerous kinds of problem solving. It is a complex process to turn words on a page into a living, breathing, vibrant, rich, idea-filled performance that will move, excite, and nourish an audience's life. Students must analyze, interpret, create a context for, understand the background of, and study the historical forces at work in a play text. This text becomes live theatre when performers bring it into a spatial and temporal frame, solving numerous visual, spatial, rhythmic, and thematic problems along the way. Strategies of assessment include play analysis, acting and design projects, oral reports, large and small productions, field trips, Socratic dialogue, discussions, and reviews, to name but a few.

Methods of evaluation include the traditional and concrete -- written papers, graded projects, and oral reports, etc. -- and also what I may call experiential. For instance, in an acting class I may have a group of students present an animation of a sprinkler as a way of thinking about, and then enacting, the essential quality of a sprinkler as a way of moving from abstract thinking to concrete thinking and doing. The evaluation is based on how well the actors evoke a quality of "sprinklerness" through their behavior.

The major piece of evidence that we have that students are achieving desired outcomes related to thinking is that their work improves over a course of time; they become more thoughtful, imaginative, creative, and
powerful in their work. They are able to accomplish difficult ways of thinking with greater and greater ease, and it is shown in better writing about plays, better thinking about plays, better designs, better and richer acting choices, and deeper consideration of the material bases out of which theatre is created.

4. Theatre students have shown a high level of ability to collaborate with other departments, and even to collaborate with agencies from off-campus. The department's students have, in the past, forged partnerships with groups such as the Rape Crisis Center and with off campus businesses. They have collaborated with other students from the art department, business department, and music department.

5. The department concurs that this outcome has not been a conscious, directed focus in our teaching.

6. There is no hard and fast answer for this. The department does attempt to cultivate an environment where humility and charity operate, but it is not always present. Both professors acknowledged situations where they should have intervened when they felt that students were taking advantage of other students. Some methods for the cultivation of this kind of atmosphere include the following: casting a company of actors rather than a cast (which means that an ensemble of people are chosen for a play, and then only after a week or so of rehearsals are the actual parts assigned); creating group/collaborative projects; attempting to create an ego-less environment where all students feel comfortable to contribute to the discussion.

Students probably achieve these outcomes in a mixed fashion, but the evidence is little more than anecdotal. Both John Cochran and John Blondell have stories about situations where attitudes were positive, and others where attitudes were more negative, but neither have any concrete evidence to support these stories. As with many of these outcomes, we are hard pressed to say whether we really think it is wise to create concrete, quantified evidence of this outcome for our students. Any group dynamic is dependent upon the group, not merely the leader of the group, and we will always have students that take it upon themselves to test the boundaries of the situation that is set up: in other words, some students oppose the "safe" structure, frequently out of a spirit of rebellion. When those kinds of students enter the fray, the "outcomes" for other students are also significantly affected. Quantifiable evidence for this kind of outcome is difficult to imagine.
TECHNOLOGY STANDARD

General Summary Statement: The department discussed the technology standard in respect to two different ways that our field conceives of technology. One way is in relation to specific theatrical technology that is integral to the production of theatre -- including the technology of building, lighting, and rigging theatrical presentations. The other way we discussed the technology standard is in relation to more general technological issues related to software, e-mail, the internet, etc.

1. The department can not achieve the technology standard with our present staffing situation. Though we do have classes, projects, lab periods, and fully mounted productions that help to achieve a knowledge of theatre technology, all of the teachers who specialize in theatre technology are part-time, and have limited contact time with students. Though we attempt to give them a broad overview of the potential in this part of the field, in-depth work is impossible to accomplish. Methods of approaching the technology standard include the following:

   1) Classes in stagecraft which introduce students to the technology of the field, including building, lighting, sewing, and special effects equipment.
   2) Classroom projects where students must display competency in running our computerized lighting board, including lighting design, programming, running, and cueing.
   3) Classes that use Computer Assisted Design programs in the scenic design course.
   4) Field trips to local theatres and United States Institute of Theatre Technology conventions.

As Theatre Departments go, our department is not technologically well-equipped. Our lighting instrumentation is very old; we have a limited sound system; no recording equipment; limited, and old machinery; and very little possibilities for special effects. Combined with staffing insufficiency, the lack of technological support makes it difficult to meet the technology standard with respect to the specifics of the field.

Both John Cochran and myself agree that we do little, if any, work with respect to developing general technological knowledge in our students. Indeed, both of us have little knowledge of the available technological resources in the field, and do not tend to use the internet, the world wide web, or CD ROM in the classroom. Consequently, students do not develop familiarity with the types of technology that they will likely encounter in higher education; do not use electronic resources as a normal part of performing research; are not able to evaluate data acquired by electronic sources; and do not develop ethical approaches to and perspectives on
electronic technologies. At present, the department has neither a planned nor methods of evaluation for accomplishing this outcome.

The department is, however, united in its desire to learn more about the technological resources relating to the theatre and drama, and is interested in developing ways to incorporate technology into the curriculum. First, however, the department needs to know what is out there; how to pursue it; how to use it; and then how to develop competency in our students. The department is also united in its belief that there is no way that this outcome can be accomplished with the present staffing situation in Theatre Arts. Only when there is a full-time professor in Design and Technology can the range and breadth of theatre technology be studied in any meaningful fashion,