

# STUDENT LEARNING DATA

## OVERVIEW

During the 2019-2020 Academic Year, with the encouragement and guidance of the President and Provost, the Theater faculty created two new BFA programs, one in Acting & Original Works and one in Musical Theater. Each features revised program outcomes, new courses and a greater emphasis on student agency, with reduced credits in major and a shift in the balance of requirements, as directed by the college. The Theater curriculum is centered on intensive acting-based studies along with physical, vocal, imaginative and intellectual skills development aimed at facilitating student development as innovative theater makers. Students collaborate in foundational acting coursework while pursuing their specialized interests in Original Works and Musical Theater. Following a set of fundamentals classes in the first and second years, students develop their skills and advance their learning of best professional practices. In addition to their coursework, students also have the opportunity to synthesize their classwork by auditioning for and performing in productions in a range of styles.

## CLOSING EQUITY GAPS

Work over the past year included ongoing review and revision of course material to provide a more inclusive range of texts for both critical study and performance skills, including plays by BIPOC, female and nonbinary writers in acting classes, voice classes, playwriting and history/ dramatic literature classes. We worked with General Counsel Tiffany Davis both in faculty meetings and in setting up meetings with students to have open-ended conversations around equity. We are questioning assumptions about thresholds for acceptance and for continuance in the program to uncover if and where we are operating with implicit bias. Theater faculty worked together through last year and into this year to devise and implement a casting practice that stressed inclusion and to issue a statement of commitment to Anti-Racist principles. Faculty also actively participated in Anti-Racist Theater Trainings. In May 2019 we began training with Intimacy Directors International to create procedures for safe and inclusive representation of physical relationships in the classroom and in rehearsal. We continue to use the IDI Pillars as foundational training in our classwork, and have created a new course, TH 204 Stage Combat and Theatrical Intimacy, to incorporate those concepts into the curriculum. The Spring semester pivot to remote learning exposed a number of equity gaps, primarily around access to technology (equipment and connectivity) and sufficient space to practice skills for an artform that is based on relationships, and physical / vocal dynamics.

## CONTINUOUS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Program improvement focused on designing and implementing the curriculum flow in two new BFA degrees. Course proposals were approved for 31 new or revised courses, for which we developed syllabi and Canvas sites. Faculty were recruited as needed to teach new courses. New and evolved Acting/Original Works courses include a suite of Playwriting classes which will fulfill the new college Writing Intensive requirement, as well as revised Directing and Devising courses. In Musical Theater we have expanded the number of hours allocated to Dance, increased access to Private Vocal Instruction across all four years, created new singing and music theory classes, and "Scene to Song" acting courses. Reconceived fourth year Career Development courses will complement the college's new Professional Practices class. We are updating assessment rubrics, and continuing the process of mapping Program Learning Outcomes by year and course, in addition to systematizing and applying data generated by student surveys, course and production assessments, and the Student Satisfaction Inventory. Another goal is to nurture increased collaboration across programs including but not limited to: collaborative classes and project-based learning with Film and Performance Production; development of generative curriculum centered around musical theater with Dance and Music; and active pursuit of community collaborations. Given the state of the country and the projections around the return of live performance (not for some time) we are also focused on greater intentionality, clarity of outcomes and resource planning for streaming productions.

## HIGH IMPACT TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Theater produces (often in collaboration with Performance Production) a wide range of productions over the course of the year, from musicals to devised productions, from heightened classical texts to contemporary plays. Students audition and are cast through a process that includes input from performance skills faculty. In rehearsals and performances they apply what they have learned in classes while developing awareness of professional best practices. The season selection process is undertaken by a committee of faculty, staff and students from both departments, which solicits and reviews submissions of plays ideas and makes recommendations to TH/PP leadership. For example, the Fall 2019 season productions of Company, The Secret in the Wings, and A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes all emerged through this process. Fourth Year Theater students also audition or interview for internships in the local theater community. Students have interned as performers, assistant directors and dramaturgs, casting associates, literary assistants and in marketing and public relations, increasing their knowledge of the workings of a range of producing organizations, and expanding their connections outside of Cornish. Cornish Theater students have regularly held internships at the 5th Avenue Theatre, ACT Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre and other organizations.