



# Four Year Report (2020)

## Dramatic Arts Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2015/16)

### A. Summary of Review

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

1. The academic programs offered by the Department of Dramatic Arts which were examined as part of the review were:

- BA in Dramatic Arts (including Co-op programs)
- Concurrent BA/BEd in Dramatic Arts
- Certificate in Drama in Education and Applied Theatre

2. The Review Committee consisted of: Susan Bennett (University of Calgary), Jenn Stephenson (Queen’s University) and Michael Winter (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 13-15, 2016.
4. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on November 9, 2016.
5. The reviewers assigned the programs an outcome category of “Good Quality”.

|                   |              |                            |            |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Excellent Quality | Good Quality | Good Quality with Concerns | Non-Viable |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------|

6. The next review of the undergraduate programs in the Department of Dramatic Arts will be in 2023/24.

## B. Recommendations

### Recommendation #1

Convert the current LTA and ILTA into continuing faculty positions.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. It is expected that the program will proceed through normal channels of advocacy regarding the faculty complement.

#### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

#### Comments:

In 2018 the performance LTA was converted to a Tenure-Track position. The ILTA continues to be renewed. A tenured faculty member resigned as of July 1, 2018 and this position has not been replaced. Another tenure-track faculty member resigned to take a position elsewhere. It became a Drama in Education/Applied Theatre LTA for 2019/20 and permission to post and a tenure-track commencing 2020/21 has been granted. Currently our full-time to part-time instructor ratio is near 50%.

### Recommendation 2

Arrange for a workload audit of DART and lead discussions for a go-forward plan with faculty and staff.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. The Department is encouraged to assess workload issues as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

#### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

#### Comments:

On an annual basis, in preparation for requests for positions, we calculate the ratio of full-time to part-time positions. Usually part-time instructors teach more than 50% of our courses.

**Recommendation 3**

Establish better mechanisms for tracking alumni and use that data to prepare graduates for a broader vision of employment opportunities (i.e., beyond theatre and teaching).

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. Although the Department chose to reject the recommendation, there is evidence that it is working with the Office of Alumni Relations and the Office of Marketing and Communications.

**Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Responsible for approving:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                               |
| Responsible for resources:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                               |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department, Dean of Humanities                               |
| Timeline:                       | Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2017/18 |

| Actions Taken   | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Action #1<br>DART does include information regarding careers in our MIWSFPA ViewBook, and webpages.   | 2017                | 2017                  |
| Action #2<br>DART website and printed material contain alumni news and careers content for many years. DART social media posts career and work-related opportunities.   | 2018                | Continuing            |
| Action #3<br>Alumni and careers-related webpages have been redesigned. Information submission form has been updated.  | 2018                | 2018                  |
| Action #4<br>More emphasis on our alumni is presented to students who attend our day-long collaborative audition process. Previous designs of DART Invitationals included invited alumni and presentations of their post-DART activities.   | 2017                | Continuing            |
| Action #5<br>The Chair and Administrative Assistant have met with Alumni Relations to become conversant with polices and procedures. Due to privacy policies “mechanisms for tracking alumni” rests with that Office. We have hired an alumna to liaise with Alumni Relations in order to | 2019                | Continuing            |

|  |      |            |
|--|------|------------|
| appropriately reach out to DART graduates in order to update our alumni webpage and to create an alumni banner for recruitment purposes.   |      |            |
| <b>Action #6</b><br>DART faculty continue to collaborate, engage, support and liaise in DART alumni endeavours. We have hired and continue to hire alumni as instructors.  | 2017 | Continuing |
| <b>Action #7</b><br>In the past we have held career days for fourth year students. Since it was decoupled from a course assignment. Our Undergraduate Program Officer along with our student reps are examining a new viable standalone configuration. | 2020 | Continuing |

**Comments:**

While DART is committed to addressing these recommendations and has done so over the past 4 years, we believe that we do not have the resources to meet the goals set without additional external support to conduct such tracking on an annual basis. We believe that the alumni office is better equipped for such an undertaking.

**Recommendation #4**

Attend promptly to the variety of geographical challenges listed in [Reviewer Report Section] 6 above and meet with faculty, staff and students mid-way through the Fall Term (2016) to assess success or otherwise.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department and the Dean will proceed through normal channels of advocacy to address the geographical challenges raised by the reviewers. It was noted that the Faculty of Education faces similar geographical challenges with its Hamilton campus and that a joint discussion might be worthwhile.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**No Comments**

**Recommendation #5**

Senior administration/university-level planning and guidance to provide appropriate support (leadership, funding) for further enhancement of DART’s contributions to the social and cultural life of St. Catharines.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources. The Department is encouraged to include this issue as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Comments:**

The Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (School) and its Director have taken on some of this responsibility. For example, Suitcase-in-Point’s *Rhizomes* project takes place in our facilities in the Spring. Leadership and funding other than the Director’s involvement in this and other projects has been minimal. In 2018 an additional IATSE position was approved to increase collaborations between the School an external arts organizations including The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.

The community and public school requests for our services and facilities continues to grow. While the new strategic plan calls for community engagement, the burden of these request fall upon individuals as additional service loads.

Individual Faculty members continue to have extensive and significant relationships with a number of theatrical and service organizations within the region including Niagara Folk Arts Centre, Start Me Up Niagara, Public Health Niagara, Stolen Theatre, Suitcase in Point, SOFIFRAN, Canada Summer Games 2021, Women’s College Hospital, Niagara YWCA Women’s Shelter, Sunnybrook Hospital and a number of local teachers and their students.

**Recommendation #6**

Review the budget options for the operation of venues within the School, to take account of rapidly increased materials costs.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Comments:**

The University has changed its policies and procedures regarding this item, rendering it moot.

**Recommendation #7**

Appoint a Webmaster to provide leadership for the School and to chair a committee concerned with promotion of events, marketing and fund-raising initiatives.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to have two parts.

a. The Committee considers the recommendation to appoint a Webmaster to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee’s jurisdiction.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Comments**

The School has provided assistance for web design and promotion of events. The Chair continues to be involved. The School’s Communications Coordinator/MIWSFPA has been a welcome addition and the School’s intern has assisted in the updating of our web pages and Facebook presence. The Communications Coordinator resigned in June, 2019 and the position is under review as of late 2019.

b. The Committee considers the recommendation to improve promotion and recruitment through various initiatives to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Responsible for approving:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Responsible for resources:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Timeline:                       | Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2016/17 |

| Actions Taken   | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Action #1<br>Graphic/publications design and advertisement buying/design is now done by a MIWSFPA Graphic/ Systems/Web Graphics designer  | 2017                | 2017                  |
| Action #2<br>Since September 2017 the MIWSFPA Recruitment Officer develops and successfully manages recruitment activities at the School and in the field. Outreach and engagement activities with young students and | 2017                | On-going              |

|   |      |      |
|---|------|------|
| colleagues of the regional Boards of Education have achieved new collaborations, hosted events and celebrations to promote brand-awareness and increased recruitment. This position has been renewed for 2020/21. |      |      |
| Action #3<br>DART has an updated brochure that articulates our course progression by concentration. This is now distributed at all recruitment events.  | 2018 | 2018 |

**Comments:**

- DART members participate fully in all University recruitment activities. Its day-long collaborative audition process, called an Invitational continues to receive strong reviews from who attend (approximately 80 per year).
- DART does not consider fundraising to be part of its mandate, nor does it have the resources to undertake it.
- Our brochures are informative and provide a detailed outline of our program and course offerings.

**Recommendation #8**

Appoint an undergraduate program officer, supported by a one-course teaching release per year over a three-year term.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee’s jurisdiction.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Comments:**

With the support of the Dean an Undergraduate Program Officer is in place for 2019/20. The Department must annually find funds to make a .5 course release financially viable.

**Recommendation #9**

Undertake a curriculum review, led by the undergraduate program officer, to examine ways to streamline current offerings, increase class sizes modestly so as to reduce the number of sections for some courses, and to achieve a more holistic view of curriculum that represents the experience of the majority of students in DART’s undergraduate program.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to undertake a curriculum review to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The commitment to undertake a curriculum review is acknowledged by both the Department and the Dean. Such a review should take place regardless of whether it is led by an undergraduate program officer, but more importantly that it involve all faculty contributing to the programs.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Responsible for approving:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Responsible for resources:      | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department, Dean of Humanities                                   |
| Timeline:                       | Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2016/17 |

| Actions Taken  | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <p>Action #1<br/>Curriculum review has been a continued retreat item over the past four years and this guides our fall submissions to the undergraduate Program Committee (UPC)</p>  | 2017                | 2018                  |
| <p>Action #2<br/>A major UPC change has been submitted that reduces to the number of required courses in the major to 12. We have made the Praxis Concentration a common core and have removed it as a concentration. The three remaining concentrations align with the general honours major. The program is now more similar to comparator undergraduate programs at Brock University.</p> | 2018                | 2019                  |

**Comments:**

DART continues to review and update its course offerings on an annual basis. However, due to the multi-faceted nature of theatre making, requiring a range of skill sets and background knowledge, we find that our students are less prepared to meet the expectations of fourth year courses.

**Recommendation #10**

Appoint two faculty members (as part of their service load) to develop and design seminar-based 3P97 and 3P98 courses, to be brought to the Department for approval.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. The Department is encouraged to assess workload issues as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.



**Comments:**

None

**Recommendation #11**

Develop Departmental policies for more transparent day-to-day management and sharing of information among all constituencies within DART.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as existing departmental policies exist which should be circulated and reviewed by members annually.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Comments**

DART believes that we are very transparent in reporting day-to-day management and sharing of information among all constituencies within DART. Minutes are available upon request.

**C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation**

1. To what extent has the Unit achieved the improvements suggested by the reviewers?

As noted above, we believe that we have exceeded what was requested and even addressed items that were suggested by reviewers but not recommended by the Academic Review Committee. Some recommendations rested elsewhere, i.e. Alumni Relations and we reached out to meet the spirit of the recommendation.

2. What overall impact has it had on the Unit's programs?

We have improved our understanding of our program and how its various courses interrelate. We have continued to develop and evolve our curriculum in ways that keep us abreast of developments across the range of fields represented by our instructor complement, and in ways that serve student need. This refinement and evolution of our identity has assisted in our recruitment efforts. Additionally, this increased clarity has assisted in the efficacy of our student advising. Since moving to the Marilyn I. Walker complex, we have had our student advisor here two days a week to further assist students in navigating through our program.

3. Is the Unit adopting a process of continuous quality improvement for its programs?

We continue bi-weekly meetings and with annual retreats at which we regularly re-examine our priorities and our methods of program delivery. Smaller committees often undertake to fulfill smaller tasks of review and planning that are then reviewed and executed by the departmental committee as a whole.

4. How well do the programs now align with Brock University strategic priorities?

- Offer a transformational and accessible academic and university experience
  - Our recruitment activities and advising processes assist student in choosing a route that meets their unique needs and interests. Students can choose among three concentrations or take a more general assortment of courses. Our Spring offering, DART 1F01 attracts approximately 40 non-DART students per year and our context credits DART 1P91, 1P92, 1P94 and 1P95 bring in a large number of students, some of whom become majors and minors as a result of these experiences. Some students take 1P97 and 1P99 as free electives. In D3 of 2020 30% of students were registered for free electives.
  - We have streamlined course prerequisites to assist in making some courses more accessible to non-DART majors.
  - We have a significant number of ConEd students who wish to teach drama as a subject and/or as a learning medium.
  - Our cross-listings with other departments help to address our mutual needs with a number of gaming students enrolled in scriptwriting.
  
- Foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization
  - All faculty members have a strong commitment to social justice and espouse inclusivity in the courses that they teach. Our Applied Theatre courses address a wide range of social issues and our praxis courses question the western canon exploring issues of decolonization, ethics of representation, the problematics of intervention and appropriation, among others. We offer a course in Indigenous Theatre and we are exploring ways of making this required for all of our majors.
  - A number of faculty are active with the Social Justice and Equity Studies program teaching courses and being supervisors and committee members on theses and major research papers.
  - A number of faculty are members of the Social Justice Research Institute and have received research grants from the Institute.
  - Our Walker Cultural Leader events have featured artists who address indigeneity, race, transsexuality and the environment.
  - In addition to coursework, faculty member's creative works foster a culture of inclusivity, including work with Essential Theatre Collective on immigration and refugees, Mirror Theatre's work on cultural humility and person-centered care, Aiding Dramatic Change in Development productions with major brain injury artists, feminist issues with Stolen Theatre and circus work challenging the notion of "freakery". Faculty members all have a strong social justice underpinning that they infuse into their works. Some projects involve current students and alumni.
  
- Build research capacity across the University
  - Research outcomes include acting in and directing of public performances, published books, articles and chapters, theatre reviews, workshops in schools and with community organizations, hosting of publicly accessible

websites. Many include the works of students in such research, thereby furthering their research capacity.

- A number of courses have public outcomes through which students come to know themselves as producers of knowledge.
  - Faculty have been successful in obtaining external and internal grants to support their creative and scholarly work.
  - While we have no graduate program, faculty have taught in other graduate programs providing our expertise to other academic units.
- Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond
    - Due to the public and participatory nature of our work there is considerable overlap among our pedagogy, our research outcomes and our service to the community. Public performances, workshops in schools and with community organizations, involvement with local companies and supporting and/or co-hosting local theatrical events all enhance the life and vitality of our region.
    - Attendance at local theatrical events through field trip supports and celebrates the work of a number of local artists.
5. How does this review and its results position the programs as the Unit moves into the next review cycle?

A reduction in required course load has had a negative impact on our fourth years courses as students are less prepared than they were in the past to undertake some of the capstone experience we require of them in our programs.

We are a small Department and some recommendations have added to the already stressful workload of an under resourced Department. While we are committed to maintaining excellence, as previously noted, certain institutional policies and practices, to which we comply, in our estimation inhibit the degree of greatness to which we aspire.

## **D. ARC Final Summary**

In final summary of the 2015/16 cyclical academic review of the programs offered by the Department of Dramatic Arts, ARC has determined the following:

1. The Reviewers' Recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.
2. The Unit has established a direction for next steps as it prepares for the next review cycle.
3. The Unit has achieved a broad-based, reflective and forward-looking self-assessment.