

Theatre Arts Department 2025 Program Review Report

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A. Introduction: A Brief Overview

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the work of the Theatre Arts Department since completing our last 7-Year Report in 2019. Like the college at-large, we've had rich successes and perplexing challenges. We've ridden through the Covid-19 period, budget cuts, and worrisome enrollment clouds, but we have also continued to create and present high-quality educational and performance experiences for our students. Recent seasons have sported overflowing, packed houses; high student and audience satisfaction; and rich experiences for students, faculty, and the local community alike.

We commence this report with two anecdotes. They are far from quantifiable, but they do point to the reputation, quality, and vision of the program, and in fundamental ways illustrate the department's character more than much of the data presented here, and also speak to the intangible values of the arts in general and our department in particular. Recently, visiting Assistant Professor Dr. Madeline Fanton shared that in a workshop at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Department of Theatre and Dance, Theatre and Spanish Professor Dr. Leo Cabranes-Grant said, "it's amazing that the most innovative theater in Santa Barbara is coming out of this small Christian College." Then, more recently, following a student matinee of the departmental production of *The Wind and the Willows*, a Providence High School student remarked to Abbie Pryor, her teacher and herself a Westmont grad: "The play reminded me of when I was little and my mom used to read stories before bed. I left the show feeling happy, safe, and loved."

Theatre Arts Departments do a lot. They educate on many levels, to many constituencies, and hatch outcomes both tangible and intangible. Most of this report considers data developed over the past seven years, yet our story is incomplete without these anecdotes. One displays a story of innovation and exploration, which exemplifies the long-standing reputation of our department in the community; and for the other, how audiences are built and cared for by our department. Both are valuable. They go beyond the story that we will tell here, and provide a glimpse of the communal, aesthetic, and spiritual values of the department.

In the following pages, please find the Theatre Arts Department's 7-Year Report, which tells stories relative to student learning, departmental health, and pedagogical successes of the department from 2019-2025.

1. Mission Statement

(<https://www.westmont.edu/departamental-program-reviews/program-review-theatre-arts>)

Theatre Arts Mission Statement

The mission of the Theatre Arts Department at Westmont College is to develop students' creativity, technical skills, and disciplinary knowledge within a rigorous, collaborative environment. Rooted in an incarnational perspective on theater and faith, the Theatre Arts Department helps prepare students for lives in the professional, educational, and/or community theatres; provides distinctive artistic experiences for Westmont and the immediate Santa Barbara communities; and offers opportunities to all students for developing personal, social, and artistic skills essential for life-long learning and creativity.

2. Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

(<https://www.westmont.edu/departamental-program-reviews/program-review-theatre-arts>)

Program Learning Outcome 1

Students display appropriate skill in creation, development, and presentation of theatrical performances.

Program Learning Outcome 2

Students apply discipline-specific research methodologies in crafting effective writing about theatrical practice.

3. Key Questions and Goals from past six-year review cycle (2019 report)

In the 2019-2020 Six-Year Report, the department offered the following Key Questions to guide the department's work for the next six years. The questions were considered and worked on in various ways throughout the intervening period. Please find the questions, and some of the work accomplished for them, in the following:

- How can we align the language that we have about the program (mission, aspirations, PLOs) to where the department is now? How do we create synergy in these areas in order to encourage the flourishing of students and faculty?
 - In 2019-2020 the department added a track to its major – the so-called “Theatre in the Liberal Arts” track, which required fewer units and allowed more students to add a second major or minor. The “Theatre in the Liberal Arts” track requires only one course in the Theatre History sequence – Theatre History I (TA120) or Theatre History II (TA121). This created issues about where to assess the Core Knowledge PLO, since that PLO was previously assessed through *both* Theatre History courses. In 2020-2021 the department removed its Core Knowledge PLO, with the intent to revisit the Core Knowledge issue, or create a third, new PLO (See Part B.1 Student Learning).
 - 2020-2021 also saw substantive work accomplished on a new Mission Statement. Work on both (PLO and Mission), however, were tabled relative to the impending and then eventual retirement of Dr. John Blondell, with the intention that a new fulltime faculty member would help in the visioning of departmental Mission, PLO's, and curricular changes.

- How do we become more centrally important to the life of the college? How can theatre arts make more of an impact? How can we better allow the college and community to have a better sense of who we are?
 - In 2024, Theatre Arts partnered with several different departments on campus (Math, Computer Science, History, and Education) through an Interdisciplinary Reading Series. Two plays were put on that connected drama with these disciplines and faculty from the corresponding departments joined the cast and audience in conversation after the performance to discuss questions and connections raised by the plays. We hope to continue this program in the future, which will increase our campus visibility and create low stakes opportunities for non-theater students to get involved in our programming.
 - The department diversified its production season by offering musicals on a bi-annual basis, more well-known classical plays (i.e. *Romeo and Juliet* in 2024), and family-oriented material (i.e. *The Wind in the Willows* and its annual Fringe Festival, both 2025.)
- How can we better support our students, faculty, and program in our ambitious theatre season? What human resources are necessary to continue to grow the program and to ensure the health of current faculty and staff? Since the last report, the department has:
 - Established three student workers to support engagement with prospective students, current students and alumni while building out Administrative support and publicity development.
 - Shifted Jonathan Hicks to more teaching duties and added a part-time Technical Director.
 - Redistributed the costume shop staffing to include three part-time employees: Costume Designer, Shop Supervisor and Cutter/Stitcher.
 - Maintained engagement with adjunct instruction from working professionals in design, playwriting and choreography.
- What means are available to us in order to meet significant challenges in our facilities, spaces, and production costs? How do we best steward our lighting equipment during this next cycle?
 - In the summer of 2019, Jonathan Hicks developed a plan for our transition to LED lighting systems ([See Appendix 17](#)).
 - Jonathan Hicks successfully secured a \$7,500 grant in 2024 and 2025 from the Towbes Foundation for the Performing Arts to support our production costs for *Romeo and Juliet* and our annual Fringe Festival ([See Appendix 18](#)).
- How do we create a more diverse department in the stories we tell, the students we serve, and the perspectives we explore?
 - Beginning in 2020, One of our core courses, Great Literature of the Stage has shifted curricular focus towards engaging the traditional dramatic canon alongside diverse adaptations by women and people of color. For example, we still teach the medieval religious drama *Everyman* but pair it with Brandon Jacobs Jenkins' contemporary *Everybody* to investigate how the work translates across time and identities.
 - In Spring 2025, our Theatre History I curriculum was revised away from traditionally male-dominated Western theatre history to include influential female closet-dramatist Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and early global theatrical cultures of Japan and India.
 - In the summer of 2025, the department participated in a grant writing project to expand our storytelling initiatives, and we are very excited about the ways this project will unfold.
 - See section B.5 Contribution to Diversity for a fuller explanation of this question of a more diverse exploration of perspectives, student service and storytelling.

- How can we continue to increase our numbers of majors, minors, and highly involved students on campus? How can we promote and develop a thriving theatre culture on Westmont's campus?
 - The department has explored recruiting campaigns with companies like Accepted; however, those investments didn't quite see the return we hoped for.
 - In 2019, the department began hiring a part-time staff member to engage our digital media, social media and public marketing campaigns.
 - In 2025, the department hired Andrea Di Maggio, who has brought with her an advanced organizational format for engaging with prospective students.
 - In 2024, the department began developing a K-12 program to engage our local community and in 2025, began to develop a summer children's theatre program. Both of these programs aspire to engage with local communities that may become prospective students of the college and enhance the educational experience of our current students and our potential future students while also sharing our resources with local schools and community theatre makers.
 - In addition, the department has developed several new GE courses (see section C below) along with holding open auditions to attract a broader population of the student body to our department. In fact, the data demonstrates that a majority of our majors/minors come to the department through these courses, audition calls and especially to our Fringe Festival ([See Appendix 45](#)).
 - Despite these efforts, the department recognizes that its numbers of majors are declining.
- How can we better educate students to allow for them to make connections between their personal faith and their artistic work?
 - Students in our Senior Seminar class (TA196) spend the semester reflecting on Parker Palmer's book on Christian Vocation. Palmer reminds us that there is a life that wants to live in each one of us, and asks the difficult questions, "What am I meant to do? Who am I meant to be?" For their final essay in the course, seniors bring together during the semester, and reflect on their ongoing relationship with your vocation, theatre, career, personhood, and the Christian spiritual journey ([See Appendix 19](#)).
 - The department has discussed the addition of a PLO that concerns faith and artistic work integration, but has decided to table this until a full-time replacement for John Blondell has been found.
- How can we enhance internship and professional training opportunities for students to better prepare them for post-college work and career?
 - In 2025, a Stage Management course was offered to increase student awareness of internships and professional training opportunities. The course focused its first large assignment on a curriculum developed by the Colleges Career Resource Center ([See Appendix 20 & 21](#)).
 - During the 2024/2025 academic year, Jonathan Hicks conducted work to revamp the Technical Production course (TA060 & TA160), which has been in its current form since the early 2000s. The first offering of this new curriculum will commence in the Fall of 2025 and is intended to prepare students for technical and production internships.
 - Please see [Appendix 14](#) for additional narrative about internship development.

4. Program Review Committee Recommendations

The 2019-2020 PRC response provided the following recommendations

- Think more deeply about and create an action plan for faith integration (see in section 3 above).
- Revise the departmental mission statement (see in section 3 above).
- In collaboration with the PRC Revise the Written Communication PLO and locate an effective measurement tool (in collaboration with the PRC).
 - See in section B.1 Student Learning
- Strengthen the GE courses, especially those that focus on academic writing:
 - Most recently, Theatre History I (TA120) focused on building research and academic writing skills through a historical research paper. The assignment was scaffolded throughout the semester, beginning with an archival research project in partnership with our area librarian, Diane Ziliotto. Students then submitted research questions from which they developed thesis statements and rough drafts. Rough drafts were revised through peer and instructor review comments towards a final paper.
- Explore adding musicals or contemporary straight plays to the repertoire:
 - In every production season, the department has accomplished both since the previous 7-year report ([See Appendix 23](#)).
- Consider adding technical or production internships to the curriculum (see in section 3 above).

The 2019-2020 7-Year Report, External Reviewer provided the following changes as essential to the health and quality of the program. The PRC recommended that the Theatre Arts Department foster dialogue about the following recommendations with the Provost and other appropriate parties.

- Add a new tenure track faculty member (preferably a woman of color):
 - This was discussed in-house, but with Covid, budget cuts, and other campus wide missional directions, this was not accomplished.
- Increase the number of adjunct units:
 - The number of adjunct units decreased during the last 6 years because the position of Technical Director (11 units) moved from a faculty to a staff position in 2024. Otherwise the units have stayed relatively the same.
 - 37 units in 2019-2020
 - 32 units in 2020-2021
 - 38 units in 2021-2022 and an additional 9 for Film Studies minor this year
 - 35 units in 2022-2023 and an additional 9 for Film Studies minor this year
 - 31 units in 2023-2024 and an additional 13 for Film Studies minor this year
 - 22 units in 2024-2025 and an additional 12 for Film Studies minor this year
- Increase the technical budget (specifically, money for a LED lighting upgrade):
 - See ensuing Part B.4 Department Sustainability and Adaptability for a full description of this issue.
- Hire a full-time office manager (if not one full-time person, two part-time people). This request was supported by our external reviewer and then Provost Mark Sargent.
 - This request was looked upon favorably by Mark Sargent and seemed likely in 2019. Soon after, Mark left mid-year, and then Covid hit and austerity measures were put in place, and then no new hires until a new provost came.

- Secure an endowed chair for Professor John Blondell
 - The department submitted a proposal for this to the college, along with the initiative for the Global Professor position for John Blondell. Initially, President Gayle Beebe had communicated his goal to secure funding for every department to have an endowed chair, but this has not materialized at the college.

The 2020-2021 PRC response provided the following recommendations

- We encourage your department to continue the good work you are doing related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - See B.5 Contributions to Diversity for a detailed description of the successes and achievements relative to this recommendation.
- Please report on your use of student diversity data uploaded to your Program Review Archives in future annual reports. We believe that this data will help you create equal learning opportunities for diverse groups of students in your program and support your good work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - See B.5 Contributions to Diversity for an example of use for this kind of data.

The 2021-2022 PRC response provided the following recommendations

- Consider creating a rubric that outlines more clearly expectations and levels of performance for students' creation, development, and presentation of theatrical performances related to the semester end interviews.
 - The department discussed this issue, and decided that it is presently content with the nature and methods of assessment for its Performance PLO. Questions have emerged about the best place for the Performance PLO to be assessed – in its Senior Projects, which is presently the case, or in and through the departmental Fringe Festival. Please see Part B.1 for a detailed description of PLO assessment and the emerging questions.
- Please include all data from assessment methods referenced. In this case, the self-assessment papers were not included.
 - Thank you for the note. We will be sure to include them in the future.
- Please expand the department's reflections on use of the evidence collected. In what ways were the faculty satisfied with this core PLO? The evidence included from the senior project review seemed to indicate that the student's process and execution of the project failed to meet expectations. It would be helpful to know how the faculty view this evidence and what if any departmental changes could be proposed to address these issues.
 - See B.1: Student Learning for commentary about how faculty view more recent years' Senior Project data and evidence.
- Given the small sample size for senior projects, consider using multiple years of data or including minors to more clearly evaluate trends in the theatrical performance PLO.
 - See B.1: Student Learning for how we used this recommendation for this report, and will use it in ensuing annual reports.
- In any given year you need only respond to the previous year PRC's recommendations and report on the assessment of a PLO or address a key question. While you're welcome to do both, that's not required.
 - Thank you for this clarification.

The 2022-2023 PRC response provided the following recommendations

- Any future direct assessments: please include numbers and/or percentages with your results. These can be displayed as an appendix to the report.
 - See Part B.1: Student Learning for departmental use of this recommendation.
- Please describe exactly what you found in your assessment, your thoughts on the findings, and your future plans based on your findings.
 - See Part B.1: Student Learning for departmental use of this recommendation.
- We look forward to seeing the results of this academic year's efforts to revise your department's mission statement.
 - See response to Key Question in section 3 above for a brief narrative about the status of the departmental Mission Statement.
- We will be very interested in the results of the exploration of your Key Question (planning for the upcoming retirement of one of your department's faculty members).
 - See Conclusions & Vision for the Future for departmental responses and planning.
- We are impressed that you are already considering the new JRD component of the GE and are very interested in the results of any discussions of this or programming changes you might undertake.
 - We intend to submit two courses for JRD approval in 2025-2026 (to take effect in 2026-2027). Race and Gender on the American Stage, which also fulfills the Working Artistically GE, will explore dramatic representations of race and gender across the 20th century, interrogating the role of the stage as both a venue for identity formation and sociopolitical resistance to oppression.
 - The World Theater curriculum will be redesigned to focus on postcolonial performance cultures and the role they play in restoring gaps in cultural memory resulting from colonial suppression.
- For additional help with instructing Theatre Arts students on the use of the MLA format and style, we recommend seeking out assistance from the library.
 - Thank you for this recommendation.

The 2023-2024 PRC response provided the following recommendations

- The PRC would like to recommend that John Blondell consider developing a holistic syllabus for TA 140 Race and Gender on the American Stage for JRD approval so that a visiting professor could teach that course in the interim period after John Blondell's retirement and before completion of a new full-time tenure track hire.
 - See directly above regarding departmental intents for JRD submission.
- In preparation for the seven-year report, look closely at the student diversity data provided by Tim Loomer.
 - See Section B.5: Contribution to Diversity for departmental response to this recommendation.
- Bring budget concerns to the Provost's office and make these budget requests sooner than later. Emphasize the structural concerns, not just as impacting the TA dept but as a campus safety concern.
 - See Section B.4: Program Sustainability & Adaptability for departmental response to this recommendation.

- Secure the visiting professor position to ensure department stability after John Blondell's retirement.
 - This has been accomplished. Dr. Madeline Fanton will work fulltime for the college in 2025-2026 – 5/6 in Theatre Arts and 1/6 in English.

Brief Conclusion

The previous six years have witnessed significant growth and development in many areas of the department. However, it is true that the department development was hampered to some extent by John Blondell being away from the department one semester per year beginning in the 2020-2021 academic year, when the department created initiatives in diversity and global theatre, which will be discussed in the next section of this report. Nevertheless, departmental pilots, projects, and initiatives have attracted new people, ideas, and training to the department, which situates it confidently for another phase of growth and development.

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

1. Student Learning

In 2020-2021, we did not assess a PLO as we were coming off our 7-Year Report Year.

In 2021-2022, we assessed PLO 1: *Students display appropriate skill in creation, development, and presentation of theatrical performances.*

Brief Discussion

The Westmont Theatre Arts Department is “performance-based” – theatrical performance is the beating heart of its vision, programs, teaching, and projects. What do we mean by this? Every Theatre Arts program in the US, whether they be in major universities or small liberal arts colleges like Westmont, features performances. Live theatrical performance is the feature of any program. However, what distinguishes our program from others (and indeed which makes us unique), is that we don't merely feature students in faculty-led projects. Rather, we cultivate *theatre-makers*, and teach students how to conceive, develop, and present performances *themselves*. We don't merely develop actors, directors, designers or managers in siloed artistic categories. We think of theatre as a holistic, integrated, and unified theatrical experience. The teaching in our program privileges a multi-disciplinary approach to the theatre. Students integrate skills in acting, directing, design, writing, and management, so that they can conceive, create, and develop their own unique artistic visions for the theatre, and develop the techniques to realize what they imagine.

Our program is scaffolded so that students initiate their skills in lower division classes, develop them in upper division ones, and display mastery in Senior Projects, which are required of every senior to graduate. We complement our teaching with a rich season of theatrical performances, in our on-campus performance spaces and also – to increase local engagement and accessibility – the Community Arts Workshop in downtown Santa Barbara, and on occasion other Santa Barbara spaces such as the New Vic Theatre, the Center Stage Theater, and Trinity Episcopal Church, to name a few.

We offer a season of two faculty directed plays and/or musicals, senior/student projects, a new student film festival, and the Westmont Fringe, where students create work for a short-form festival of original works, mentored and curated by departmental faculty. Each festival features 25-35 new works for the stage, is consistently well attended, and is anecdotally termed the *sine qua non* for many Westmont majors and minors during their time at Westmont. *Original* performance is the hallmark of the Fringe, featuring new work by Westmont students, and also an inter-institution new-play development program called the Hive. The Hive features MFA playwriting students from a variety of major universities across the country, who collaborate with Westmont student directors toward the creation of original 10-minute plays that are featured on the Fringe. Through the Hive, the department has commissioned over 100 new original works in the 12+ years of its life, all of which (except during the Covid Lockdown) have been fully produced in the Fringe. In several cases, we have invited Hive writers back to campus to develop Senior Projects, and teach our writing for performance or playwriting courses. Departmental curriculum, faculty-directed productions, The Fringe, The Hive, Senior Projects and the Montecito Student Film Festival work together in a constantly evolving web of influence and teaching, where students gain the abilities and affections necessary for a life-long engagement in the art form.

- See [Appendix 23](#) for departmental seasons for the past six years.
- See [Appendix 25](#) for data about Fringe Description and Mission, organizational structures, and recent student involvement.

As evident in the appendices, the department is tireless in its production season. It is in and through the Fringe, however, where the department deviates from other programs, whether they be in small liberal arts colleges like Westmont or in large D1 universities. In the department's experience and knowledge, however, no other theatre program in the country (and perhaps the world) commits to a festival of new student work the size and scope of Westmont's. We may be wrong, believe it or not it has happened before, but this is where the Westmont program is truly unique. We are trailblazers and innovators in terms of the presentation of original student work, in a festival format, and we have done it for over 20 years! Like Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we are small but feisty. We acknowledge that this kind of data is not required for this particular report, but it is incumbent upon ourselves to include it. It is important that our colleagues on the PRC know what we do, and it is absolutely integral that our external reviewer know the ins and outs of the program, what we do, how we do it, and the many immeasurable opportunities we provide our students.

The department assesses its Performance PLO in its Senior Projects, where students – guided by two faculty mentors – create original capstone projects. Though not all students choose a performance project, the vast majority of students do. Students begin planning their projects during their junior years, develop them over the summer, and create and perform them during the theatre season of their senior year.

Students are provided a syllabus and prompt, and meet with faculty mentors who suggest best practices, answer questions, and provide guidance and inspiration. Students submit an Intention Paper, develop and perform their project, and write a final self-reflection essay. Students receive oral and written feedback from faculty mentors in three specific categories: Intention, Process, and Execution. Faculty mentors assess how students conceive and describe their project's Intention, evaluate how it is carried out through practice and Process, and determine the aesthetic, communal, and interpersonal features of the project's Execution. Students provide a thorough self-reflection paper regarding their own evaluation of the Intention, Process and Execution of the project.

- See [Appendix 26](#) for the Senior Project Syllabus and Prompt.

During 2021-2022 the department assessed the Senior Project for one graduating senior. In PRC recommendations from that year's annual assessment report, the PRC suggested that on the occasion that annual assessment constitutes relatively few students, we should aggregate results and responses for several years. In that spirit, and for the purposes of this 7-Year Report, the department deemed it an excellent and timely exercise to aggregate Senior Project responses for 2020-2025, results of which you can see below.

Assessment highlights from Theatre Arts Senior Projects 2020-2025

- See [Appendix 27](#) for data and tables relative to the past six years of Senior Projects here.

Observations and Trends

- The 20 projects analyzed from 2020-2025 display a remarkable range in the types and kinds of projects developed – 15 different projects out of 20 total projects. This suggests that students gain the expertise, desire, and vision to tailor-make their projects relative to their own visions, skills, values, and personhoods.
- Nine different projects related to new plays, which suggests synergy between Directing, Design, and Writing for Performance courses at Westmont.
- Five different projects related to film, which suggests successful synergy between the Film Studies Minor, the Theatre Arts Major, and Mitchell Thomas's TA 153 – Contemporary Theatre and Film Performance course.
- Five different projects related to Design or Stage Management, which shows the significant development of the Design and Management program at Westmont, and the successful synergy between the Design program and the rest of the performance division.
- Three different projects used interview-based methods, which suggests the successful synergy between Race and Gender on the American Stage and Great Literature of the Stage, when John Blondell uses Anna Deveare' Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles* as an important text for the course, and which uses interview techniques in the creation of theatre pieces known as "verbatim theatre."
- Two different projects involved collaborations between three seniors, which suggests that students rely, are motivated by, and are inspired by one another toward the completion and development of their projects.
- In short, the senior projects show the successful integration of all elements of our performance program – from acting to writing to design to directing to management, and from theatre to film. The departmental faculty are struck by the diversity, quality, level, and range of Senior Projects, and we are pleased with the assessment instrument, student growth, and how the Senior Projects provide diversity and flexibility for our programs and productions. Students display fluency in the requirements and possibilities of theatrical creation, development, and presentation, and prove that through a series of diverse, high level, and varied senior projects.
- See [Appendix 28](#) for Faculty Remarks for three Senior Projects.

In 2022-2023 we assessed PLO 2: *Students apply discipline-specific research methodologies in crafting effective writing about theatrical practice.*

Brief Discussion

As well as performance, the department assesses written effectiveness, relative to core knowledge, historiography, and critical thinking about theatrical practice and performance. The department assesses the written effectiveness of the student in the department's theatre history sequence: TA 120: The Stage's Use of History from the Greeks to the Renaissance, and TA 121: The History of Acting and Directing. Both courses are Writing Intensive Courses.

During the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the department entertained two projects relative to the Writing PLO. First, the department held extensive conversations about whether the department's Written Effectiveness PLO could or should be changed in order to more fully exhibit a range of effective writing in theatre and drama. The department considered two major issues: 1) whether Written Effectiveness might be displayed in the department's creative courses; and 2) Since Professor John Blondell has shouldered the load of assessing student writing, could the department more equally share the assessment load between individual faculty members?

The department discussed both issues at length, and engaged Professor Sarah Skripsky (English Department Professor and Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator) to help the department weigh the various issues in the proposed change to its Written Effectiveness Outcome. Following lengthy discussions and considerations, and a working lunch with Professor Skripsky in April 2023, the department concluded that it is best to assess Written Effectiveness right where it is – in the Theatre History sequence. Departmental conversations relative to the Written Effectiveness PLO were rich and rewarding. The department enjoyed significant discussions within the department, and with Sarah Skripsky who helped guide our conversations. The department made clear and logical decisions about how to move forward with disciplinary writing in our department.

While closing the loop on this topic, the department developed data that suggests more time might be spent during the course regarding:

- 1) What constitutes Written Effectiveness for a Theatre Arts major.
- 2) How to craft thesis statements and provide coherent arguments/discussion for the exploration thereof.
- 3) How to better equip students in writing that uses MLA format.

In the PRC's recommendations to the department's annual assessment report for 2022-2023, the PRC requested that the department include the *numbers of essays evaluated*, and *the grades students received during the writing and evaluation process*. Toward that effect, the department re-analyzed data for this 7-Year report from 2022-2023 and analyzed data from 2023-2024 relative to written effectiveness, to check in with how students did relative to the writing PLO.

Findings

In Spring 2022-2023, John Blondell taught Theatre History I (TA 120). The instrument for Written Effectiveness concerns the creation of a stage history for four (4) productions of a single Shakespearean play from the last 25 years or so.

- See [Appendix 29](#) for the assignment for TA 120.
- See [Appendix 30](#) for Syllabus for TA 120.

Essays are assessed through the use of a departmentally-created rubric and a key to the rubric. Faculty submit a marked-up rubric to the student, along with written narrative responses.

- See [Appendix 31](#) for Rubric and Key for TA 120.
- See [Appendix 32](#) for faculty narrative responses to student writing.

Assessment Instrument & Learning Outcomes for PLO 2, Disciplinary Written Effectiveness

- One 2500-word essay where students – using primary sources – create a stage history of four (4) important (or not so) productions of the last 25 years from the local, regional, national, or international stage. Source material includes reviews, interviews, drawings, designs, program material, archival material, photographs, and video of the performance in question.
- For the 2500-word essay, students receive a letter grade and specific feedback on work submitted, both in written and oral form. Students use the feedback to prepare revisions of the essays, which are due on the dates indicated. At that time, more written feedback will be offered, and students have, as an option, the opportunity to continue revising their work. In other words, all students will revise each written assignment at least one time during the course of the semester, and may revise essays as many times as they wish, at least until the hour glass of the semester runs its course.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students develop a precise thesis and fully developed arguments in their writing.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students produce accurate discipline-specific research in their writing.

Findings

In Spring 2023 five (5) Theatre Arts majors completed writing requirements for Theatre History I (TA 120).

In the written responses from Professor John Blondell, students were encouraged to create more specific, concrete thesis statements. A comment for Student 1 is as follows: *“In addition, perhaps you can make a more concrete and vivid thesis statement. Your essay seems to focus on revolutionary, ground-breaking performances that say as much about the time of the performances as the play itself. Kean’s production indeed marks a highpoint of pictorialism in the theatre.”*

In addition, students were encouraged to cite their material properly. A comment for Student 4 is as follows: *“Second, blocked quotes are single-spaced; you should provide some little commentary that indicates why you decide to quote at length. Also, make sure that your material is cited properly.”*

Students received the following grades at the draft stage:

Student 1 – C+
Student 2 – C-

Student 3 – C+
Student 4 – C
Student 5 – B-

Most students were encouraged to create more precise thesis statements, and cite their material correctly.

Students received the following final grades:

Student 1 – A
Student 2 – C-
Student 3 – A
Student 4 – B+
Student 5 – B

Brief Discussion

In first drafts, students have trouble creating clear thesis statements and arguments. Following encouragement about how to develop more precise thesis statements, student writing improved, which is reflected in their grades.

3 out of 5 students were vague about how to use MLA style for their essays, including proper citations and Works Cited pages. In most cases, proper MLA use improved, though in one instance there was no improvement and in another case there was no Works Cited page included in the research essay.

Rubrics and faculty feedback seem to help the writing, though it seems apparent that more attention can be given to the proper use of MLA style in research papers about Theatre History. The PRC recommended that the library can be of use in helping students improve in the proper use of documentation, citations, and organization, relative to MLA style.

The department was curious about how student writing fared in the 2023-2024 academic year.

John Blondell taught TA 121: The History of Acting and Directing. The instrument for TA 121, in which written effectiveness is assessed, concerns the contributions of a significant 17th, 18th, or 19th century actor.

- See [Appendix 33](#) for specific assignment for TA 121.
- See [Appendix 34](#) for the Syllabus for TA 121.
- See [Appendix 35](#) for faculty narrative responses for student writing.
- The TA 121 essay is assessed using the same departmental rubric and key as used for TA 120.

Assessment Instrument and Learning Outcomes for PLO 2, Disciplinary Written Effectiveness

- Using primary and secondary sources, one 10-page essay that investigates an important 17th, 18th, or 19th century actor. The purpose of the essay is to analyze primary sources for significant contexts, important means and methods, and guiding principles for an actor's work, and – through the help of secondary sources – create a narrative interpretation that develops the central

artistic contributions of the actor in question. For this essay, students receive a letter grade and specific feedback on work submitted, both in written and oral form. Students will use the feedback to prepare revisions of the essays, which are due on the dates indicated. At that time, more written feedback will be offered, and students have, as an option, the opportunity to continue revising their work. In other words, all students will revise each written assignment at least one time during the course of the semester, and may revise essays as many times as they wish, at least until the hour glass of the semester runs its course.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students develop a precise thesis and fully developed arguments in their writing.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students produce accurate discipline-specific research in their writing.

Findings

In 2023-2024, two (2) Theatre Arts majors took Theatre Arts 121, and provided writing toward the successful completion of the course.

In written responses, Professor John Blondell provided the following sample response about the effectiveness of Student 1's thesis: *"I also like how you develop a theory or approach to his acting based on how you understand neoclassical theatre in relation to his focus on the natural."*

In written responses, Professor Blondell provided the following sample response about proper MLA format: *"First of all, you need to cite the material that you use who was created by others. There are few too few notes and citations here. Please fix those. Similarly, the essay has far too many secondary sources, but you can fix that by looking at some paintings or engravings and describe what you see and how that might fit into your thesis."*

Students received the following grades at the draft stage:

Student 1 – C

Student 2 – D

Students received the following Final grades:

Student 1 – A

Student 2 – F (Student 2 failed to submit the revision, failed the project, and failed the course.)

Final Commentary

At this writing, in August of 2025, it should be stated that the Theatre Arts Department has changed considerably, as John Blondell has (Finally, for Heaven's Sakes!) retired, and Dr. Madeline Fanton will, at least for 2024-2026, teach courses where Written Effectiveness is evaluated and assessed. During the intervening period, between 7-Year Reports, the department was satisfied with the assessment strategies used for this departmental PLO. Instruments, evaluations, rubrics, and keys were all satisfactory and useful. As the department moves forward, however, new discussions will no doubt ensue, with new opinions and perspectives about how and where to discuss Written Effectiveness for departmental majors.

PLO 3: Core Knowledge (Discontinued)

For many years, the department used three (3) PLOs – Theatrical Presentation and Performance, Core Knowledge, and Written Effectiveness. Core Knowledge was assessed in the department's Theatre History Sequence (TA 120 and 121), taught by John Blondell, where Written Effectiveness was also assessed. Several years ago, the department added a new track – Theatre in the Liberal Arts, which requires only one Theatre History course. This upset established methods for assessing Core Knowledge. Previously, we used *both* courses in the Theatre History sequence to assess Core Knowledge. With the addition of the Liberal Arts track, *most* students took that track, so students took only *one theatre history course*, thereby developing knowledge the department deemed as “core” for a relatively circumscribed period of Theatre History, either the Greeks to the Early Modern Period, or for the period of the 17th Century to Postmodernity. The department then began to question: how can we assess Core Knowledge depth and breadth when that depth and breadth have been removed for a substantial number of students in the curriculum? Please see B.3 Curricular Review for more discussion for tracks in Theatre Arts.

Also, the department wondered about new ways to conceive of Core Knowledge for its students. Is Core Knowledge only achieved in more cognitive ways, as developed in theatre history courses? What about the Core Knowledge developed in practical courses such as acting or design? What about affections, values, and virtues of the human individual as they relate to theatre knowledge and practice? Could they also be considered “Core?” We had no easy answers but in the meantime decided to eliminate this PLO, with the idea that a new one would take its place. For a variety of reasons, a new PLO has not been named and assessment methods developed for it – one of a number of tasks that need to be accomplished once a new faculty member is hired to replace John Blondell.

In addition, an important ongoing question for the department is also how to equitably balance PLO assessment leadership among theatre faculty. We are aware that courses taught by John Blondell have been primary assessment collection and oversight locations for two of three departmental PLOs. This will be important to consider with a new hire and a potential new PLO on the horizon.

In addition to the above PLO work, the department participated with other arts departments on the 2023-2024 (findings early in the 2023-2024 school year) Working Artistically ILO, and will provide a discussion of its findings here.

Working Artistically ILO

For the Working Artistically ILO, the department worked closely with members of the Theatre, Art, and Music departments, led by GE Committee member Dr. Felicia Song, who did an exemplary job navigating differences between departments, professors, courses, and instruments. She asked thoughtful questions and cultivated a collegial, stimulating, and useful working environment. The Theatre Arts Department found the work productive and invigorating.

For this assessment, the department used an instrument from TA 001 Great Literature of the Stage, taught by John Blondell. TA 001 satisfies requirements for theatre majors and minors, and is a GE option for Reading Imaginative Literature and Working Artistically. The course is always full and turns away many students each semester; it attracts theatre majors and minors, and students using the course for GE credit. Students display a great range of prior theatre experience – some have participated and seen many plays, others have never participated or seen a few or none.

As a Working Artistically course, some degree of *making* is required for satisfactory completion of the course. Since there is a wide range of course material to cover, Professor Blondell uses a compact, focused instrument for students to experience a process of interpreting, rehearsing, and performing a scene from a play. This is the making aspect of a course – students *act*, they make a scene. The instrument has been used by John Blondell for many years. The assignment is embedded in the course, and though there was a degree of extra work related to a rubric eventually accepted by the other arts departments, the work, reflection, and interpretation of the data were not onerous. The instrument is described as follows:

On Our Feet: Though many of our sessions will be comprised of lectures and discussions relative to developing what the language of the theatre is and how it can be used, we also have many sessions that are “on our feet,” where we explore key moments like actors and directors would in a rehearsal space. Through these exercises students participate directly in the processes of enactment that characterize the art of the theatre. As part of this requirement, students participate in a 10-minute scene from one of the plays in the course, for which students rehearse four (4) times for one hour, and then present their scene to the class. This is the “making” part of the course, where we learn how plays sound, and how they might be staged, in an exploratory, improvisational atmosphere.

- See [Appendix 36](#) for the Working Artistically ILO assessment assignment.
- See [Appendix 37](#) for the Syllabus for TA001, where the Working Artistically ILO was assessed.
- See [Appendix 38](#) for the Working Artistically ILO rubric for assessment.
- See [Appendix 39](#) for Working Artistically ILO numbers and data.

Analysis and Discussion

21 of 27 students displayed Highly Developed or Developed scores for the project, or 77% percent of the course. Upon reflection and discussion, the department is satisfied with the assignment, instrument, and achievements of students in the course. There are a variety of reasons why students did not achieve 3's in either artistic or interpretive categories. In some cases, poor attendance resulted in the students' lack of requisite understanding, models, or examples upon which to base their work. The amount of prior experience may also contribute to scores less than 3.

More substantively, however, this assignment plays out over the course of the semester, in relation to the various plays that students read, see, and are explored in class, and is associated with a chronological unfolding of achievement and expertise. The assignment is not performed, all at once, at the end of the course where students might have used the techniques and methods gathered over time. Rather, students perform a scene early in the course, and John Blondell provides commentary, leads discussion, and works with the students on different ways to conceive, make, and rehearse the scene. Then, a week or two later, another scene plays, with John Blondell contributing similar commentary and rehearsal approaches, and so on. Consequently, students who perform scenes later in the course tend to do better than students who perform earlier, though this is not always the case. In other words, students learn over the course of the semester! This is – rather than a concern – a validation that the teaching, assignments, assessment instruments, and student learning are satisfactory for a Working Artistically course in the college's General Education program.

Closing the Loop

To conclude work on the ILO, departments met for a final meeting to provide feedback, share data, and discuss findings. Departments and faculty were grateful, satisfied, and impressed with the work, insights, and leadership of Drs. Song and Nazarenko. The department continues to use this tool, and the insights and information gathered from the assessment process of this ILO, to continue work in the Working Artistically category of the Westmont GE. Spring of 2024, however, was the final time that John Blondell will teach Great Literature of the Stage (TA 001) on campus at Westmont. With the closing of that chapter, and the hiring of a new faculty member, new ways to teach and assess student learning, for this course and others, will no doubt be explored and developed. In fact, to close the loop is actually to open it up again, in which new methods, orientations, teaching principles, and artistic methods will lead to new knowledge and learning for our students.

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

2. Alumni Reflections 2024

Brief Discussion

In the fall of 2024, the department surveyed graduates who majored or minored in theatre arts from 2019-2024. We included minors, since most of those students participate extensively in departmental productions in addition to courses, and can provide useful feedback based on their experiences in the program. We used the suggested survey instrument from the Office of Educational Effectiveness, which uses the Lime Survey. This survey has mandated questions for a college-wide response and then allows for the creation of a few discipline-specific questions for the department, as well as some comment areas. The survey worked fine for our purposes, but we would like to note that Lime Survey is lacking in user-friendly layout and presentation. The data that was collected was difficult and cumbersome to access, make charts of, and present in a way that was quickly and readily usable and informative. We have created charts on our own by exporting the data, so it is easily readable and comparable to the 2018 feedback results.

- See [Appendix 8](#) for the 2024 Alumni Survey Data

Findings and Remarks

The response rate of the survey was 72%, as we received 18 responses from a possible 25 survey respondents. We are pleased with this response rate, which underscores the engagement recent alumni have with our program and faculty. One item of note is that only 37% of graduates are employed in the field of theatre or a related field. This represents a decline of 13% from our last survey. One significant event in this survey period was the pandemic and its effects, which has been particularly challenging for the theatre industry, so these results are not surprising. In addition, we created two tracks of the major during the last cycle, which has resulted in more double majors than our previous survey. This may have an impact on post-college employment as well. Another item of note is that 47% of graduates have gone to graduate school or are in the process of applying to programs. Our graduates seem to be very satisfied with their Westmont education. 82% of respondents said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall Westmont education and

their theatre arts education. The 18% (2 students) not in this category communicated they were “somewhat” or “mostly” satisfied.

Each one of the department’s Program Learning Outcomes (Performance, Writing and Core Knowledge) received impressive numbers for strong or superior achievement by our alumni, with Core Knowledge and Performance receiving 89% of graduates self-assessing at the two highest levels, and writing received 79% of graduates at strong or superior. Beyond the appreciation for the education in the formal classroom, our alumni expressed a profound appreciation for experiences in the main stage season and most expressed gratitude for the vast opportunities afforded to our students through the annual Fringe Festival. Students also reported positive impacts from close relationships with faculty, abroad programs, senior capstone projects, and a variety of specific classes. In an answer to the question, “What skills have we taught you that have been most helpful to you in your current position?”, students listed skills as diverse and important as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence, thinking outside the box, quick decision making and adaptability, self-discipline, creativity, grace under pressure, leadership, spiritual strength, tenacity, and confidence.

While these are points to celebrate, the survey also highlighted areas of our program that alumni insist need improvement and development. Alumni wished our program was larger with more students so there were more productions (and kinds of productions) each year. They also were frustrated by the occasional offerings of some courses and lack of advanced levels of others due to the small size of the major. Alumni want us to continue to improve our preparation for students with Launch Pad, Senior Projects training, and internship opportunities, as well as more classes and opportunities in film.

Alumni are adamant about the need for increased diversity among full-time faculty in the department. With a high percentage of female students, an increased emphasis on global perspectives at the college, and the need to expand the canon for students in the 21st century, alumni highlight our need for a more diverse faculty. The majority of our alumni who responded in this cycle are white (88%) and female (88%). Westmont as an institution has been making progress in racial diversity that is not reflected in these numbers in the theatre department. While the department has been taking significant intentional steps in diversifying curricula and our guest artists and scholars, this hasn’t resulted in more majors and minors of color in the department.

It is perhaps not surprising that our most successful areas of the survey are found in the effectiveness of teaching, quality of classes, as well as the creativity and collaboration through our productions. Most of the alumni who responded to the survey said that they would absolutely recommend our program to a prospective theatre student, which makes us proud of the community, education, and program we are building. Our students are leaving the theatre program with confidence as artists and scholars, and our department is committed to continuing to develop and strengthen the programs and experiences that produce thoughtful and creative theater-makers.

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

3. Curricular Review

Brief Discussion

To continue the metaphor provided in B.1 (Student Learning), if Performance is the Beating Heart of the program, then the department's Curriculum is the Processing Brain. Our courses are integrated across the discipline, and provide teaching in the various arts of the stage (acting, directing, and design), dramatic literature and its performance, historiography and theory, and management. It's axiomatic that in the theatre one can't talk about one area without immediately bringing another to bear on it: one teaches acting but also directing and design in nearly the same breath; the study of historiography reveals the nature of change and the shifting perspectives of those categories across and within time; and/or the discussion of a play is frequently done in relation to its stage presentation. (For a quick bit of essential theory, "drama" is the literary aspect of the play; "theatre" is the presentation of that drama live on stage.) Our courses are designed, and the teaching implemented, to cultivate the critical thinking, aesthetic and core knowledge, and disciplinary values significant for a young Christian artist.

For many years, the department had a single BA Major track in Theatre Arts and a single Minor track. That curricular model had existed since the time of the major's institution in the mid-1980's. In 2019, we modified our existing BA Track and added a second, creating tracks in Theatre Studies (60 units) and Theatre in the Liberal Arts (44 units). In 2021, we created (largely through the work of Mitchell Thomas) a Film Studies Minor.

- See [Appendix 40](#) for Theatre Arts Curriculum Tracks

The Liberal Arts track was created to attract more students to the department, develop more majors, and allow students the time and space to major in theatre, but also have a major in a second discipline. The Film Studies Minor was a response to a similar student interest and need. Westmont has long had film programs and courses on campus, though the program was not housed anywhere or led or organized by a particular department. When Professor Mitchell Thomas created the Film Studies Minor in 2021, he integrated existing interdisciplinary courses in Film, existing Theatre Arts courses, and new courses in Film Studies, taught by Sean Pratt, Managing Director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

- See [Appendix 41](#) for data related to Westmont College graduates from 2018-2025, who majored or minored in Theatre Arts during that period.

Commentary and Brief Analysis

During that period, the Theatre Arts department graduated 25 students with some sort of major in Theatre Arts – a BA in Theatre Arts before the track addition, or majors in Theatre Studies or Theatre in the Liberal Arts following the track's addition.

One of the issues going forward will be to discuss possible impacts of the two-track system. The department sees a high number of double majors due to the lower-unit track. This enriches the department with a greater number of students with involvements across the college (other majors,

ministries, athletics, etc.). Most of our majors now feel like true "liberal arts" ambassadors, and enjoy the opportunities to explore their various passions at the college. One unanticipated drawback of the two-track system is that relatively few students are adopting the higher-unit track in the major. This is partly due to the high number of double majors or minors, but we are also seeing trends where students are trying to graduate with a lower track major in a shortened timeline (e.g. finish in 3 or 3.5 years). This also has negatively impacted the upper division elective offerings in the department, as fewer theatre students have space for or "need" the additional electives. This gives other students fewer opportunities and also limits faculty teaching breadth and range. These impacts will necessitate further discussion, and indeed possible action, as the department moves to the latter part of the 2020's.

This review provides the opportunity to discuss other curricular changes during the last six years.

- In 2021, the department instituted the Justice and Global Theatre Initiative in Theatre Arts, and the Artist and Scholar in Residence Program for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity. Both initiatives informed the department's curricular offerings from 2021-2024, though the major impact and purpose were experienced and directed toward Diversity. Please see B.5 for the discussion and findings relative to these initiatives.
- During the past cycle, the department created and instituted the following courses.
 - TA 051: Acting the Song. An introduction to the craft of the actor and singer preparing for performance. Students will develop technique in character and style through the study of musical structure, lyrics, and tempo. GE: Working Artistically (WA)
 - TA 153: Contemporary Theatre and Film Performance. Advanced training in acting and directing. Focuses on contemporary scene study and performance of texts from 21st century theatre and film. GE: N/A
 - FLM 030: Intro to Digital Filmmaking. An introduction to the art of digital filmmaking. Students will work collaboratively on film production, including conceptual work, storyboarding, storytelling, and techniques of pre- and post- production, culminating in the public presentation of their work. GE: Working Artistically (WA)
 - FLM 130: Documentary Filmmaking. Prerequisite: FLM-030. An introduction to documentary filmmaking, including professional practices, legal considerations, and ethical issues surrounding the craft. Projects require students to engage in the creative and technical aspects of developing nonfiction story ideas. GE: N/A
 - TA 037HY: Scenic Technology: Introduction to Design, Engineering, American Labor, Negotiation & Management through the exploration of the visual world and theatrical methods. GE: N/A.
 - TA 195: Special Topics: Stage Management: Develops an understanding of the qualities & functions of stage management. GE: N/A.
 - The following course is in the developmental stage. TA 039: Sound Design: An introduction to the theory, techniques, materials, equipment, and procedures employed in Sound design. Emphasis on developing creative solutions to production challenges. Includes laboratory experience. GE: Working Artistically (WA)
- In addition, the following courses were modified to meet the needs of cultural or disciplinary change.
 - In the fall of 2020, John Blondell revised the curriculum for TA 001 Great Literature of the Stage, to better mirror the role of ethnicity and gender in the American Cultural Moment post-George Floyd and the May uprising of that year.

- o In the fall of 2023, Madeline Fanton revised the curriculum of Great Literature of the Stage with a focus on diversifying the dramatists represented on the syllabus. The format of the class pairs a text from the traditional dramatic canon like Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, with a contemporary adaptation by a woman or person of color - in this case, *John Proctor is the Villain* by Kimberly Belflower. This structure ensures that students receive foundational knowledge in the discipline, expand their awareness of diverse dramatic writers, and interrogate the exclusive formation of the Western canon.
- o Presently, Dr. Madeline Fanton is redeveloping the syllabus for Race and Gender on the American Stage (upcoming, Fall 2025) which highlights the role of performance in the creation, maintenance, and subversion of diverse American identities across the 20th and 21st centuries.
- Last, the Theatre Arts would like to draw specific attention to its interests in blending the Theatre Arts department with the Film Studies “department” to make one Theatre Arts & Film Studies department with at least two tracks for students to select from.
 - o A Theatre Arts major that is similar to or the same as the two tracks we currently have.
 - o A Theatre Arts minor that would remain the same.
 - o A Film Studies major with flexibility to lean toward production or film studies.
 - o A Film Studies minor that would remain the same.

The department has done a lot relative to Curricular and Program development during the past six years, and it must be noted and stressed that the majority of it was accomplished while John Blondell was off campus for a semester per year since the spring of 2021. Mitchell Thomas and Jonathan Hicks bore the brunt of program and curricular development during that period, and they should be commended for their efforts. Their keen attention to the sometimes-hidden dimension of institutional service should not be overlooked or diminished, says the retired guy viewing all that was accomplished with the perspective of both time and space – he’s writing this in Kazakhstan, for Heaven’s Sake.

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

4. Program Sustainability and Adaptability

Brief Narrative About Personnel, Facilities, and Student Engagement and Enhancement

Over the past 6-year cycle, the department has enjoyed numerous successes and achievements in student learning, pedagogical excellence, and program development and enhancement. We have faced numerous challenges, including weathering the Covid-19 Global Pandemic, budget cuts, and the recent retirement of Professor John Blondell, who led or was a major figure in the department for 37 years. It’s clear that the department is at a turning point – the choices made in the near-term will shape the college for years and perhaps decades to come. The department needs an infusion of capital in order to maintain “this-level” pedagogy, administrative acumen, artistic excellence, and infrastructure. The department has always been something of a bumblebee – we shouldn’t fly, but we do! However, in order to sustain the department’s work, adapt to new exigencies of the 21st century, and attract and retain students, the department requires the following critical needs: personnel replacements for existing positions and new positions created for both faculty and staff, technical and facilities needs for Porter Hall or a new state-of-the-art facility, enhanced production resources, and initiatives for student scholarships.

Personnel Management & Acquisition

Several of the requests below developed as the Film Studies minor was created, and we have been tracking the ways in which we might better support the growth of the new minor and better support the operations of the existing Theatre Arts & Music departments.

- The Westmont College President, Gayle Beebe, has indicated his desire that all departments have at least three fulltime faculty members. This is necessary in the Theatre Arts Department, to share teaching, directing, curating, and administrative duties. Presently, the department has two fulltime continuing professors – tenured Full Professor Mitchell Thomas and Associate Professor Jonathan Hicks, who is not on the tenure track, but rather a multi-year contract. For the upcoming school year, Dr. Madeline Fanton will be 5/6 in the department on a one-year contract. In other words, at this juncture, only one of three faculty members is tenured or on the track. The department is nimble, and adept at flexing, but it is absolutely critical that a fulltime, tenure track position be approved so that the department can maintain its mission to the college and its students. The Theatre Arts department respectfully requests the approval of a search for John Blondell's position in the fall of 2025, so a new faculty member can be found by the end of the 2025-2026 academic year.
- In order to grow, the department needs an FTE to teach in and administrate the Film Studies Minor. Film Studies courses are well populated and we are attracting new minors in Film Studies. However, we need a fulltime faculty member to teach and administrate the program, as it is presently overseen by the Theatre Arts Department Chair. This is a lot of work! Indeed, with the program's incumbent Montecito Student Film Festival and other administrative duties, overseeing the minor is akin to overseeing an entire department. In order for the program to grow, and not overtax the Theatre Arts Department Chair, the Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments respectfully request a new FTE faculty member be hired in the next 3 to 5 years in the position of Film Studies.
- In order to operate a fully functional costume shop, the department needs to blend the three part-time positions in the costume shop into one FTE in costume design, including costume shop supervision and courses attached to that position, including costume design, hair/make-up and costume construction. The position would be conceived as a $\frac{2}{3}$ faculty to $\frac{1}{3}$ staff, which blends the technical expertise with the academic rigor that is executed in other areas of the Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments. This shift in personnel would improve communication issues resulting in a more efficient work flow for those supervising the staff and those executing the work. In addition, the costume shop employee would also be able to support the costume design and construction for the Film Studies minor and the Music department's annual spring opera thereby enhancing interdepartmental collaborations. Finally, the person in this position could be an essential personnel resource to the college's primary summer rental company, Music Academy of the West. The Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments respectfully request a new faculty/staff member be hired in the next 3 to 5 years in the position of Costume Supervision & Design.
- In order to manage the academic & production operations of the Theatre Arts and Film Studies programs, the department needs to hire an FTE Theatre Arts & Film Studies Coordinator. The position would continue to support the academic administration and box office duties of the department, as well as oversee prospective student engagement, production management, grant writing, public relations & marketing. It would be a position that mirrors the Art and Music departments coordinator positions. The Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments respectfully

request a shift of the theater operations duties from the department chair and assign those to a full-time theatre & film coordinator to begin as soon as possible.

- In order to manage the Porter Hall facility and equipment of the Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments, we need to increase the current part-time technical director's position to a full time position. The duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, overseeing the operations of our lighting, sound, scenic, props, projections, facilities and film equipment, which creates a burden on a single, part-time person to adequately oversee a high demand season of work (two to three mainstage shows, one opera, two student festivals, senior projects and student films). In addition, this position would be an essential support system and first point of contact for Music Academy of the West's annual Porter Hall rental. The Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments respectfully request the increase of this part-time position to a full time position in the next 2 to 3 years.
- See [Appendix 44](#) for personnel duties & responsibilities and a breakdown of the associated costs.

Theatre Facility Maintenance & Stewardship

The department has two spaces, a 158-seat proscenium theatre, and a small black box – both are used for teaching and productions. Frankly, the department has had to “make-do” with Porter Hall facilities for many years. We have found ways to use it imaginatively, but the space was not originally designed as a theatre, rather an end-stage in an auditorium. We have had to adapt, re-orient, and renovate the space to make it an adequate performance space, but as the college considers building out the campus, serious discussions should take place about the addition of a state-of-the-art facility on campus. A new facility would immediately attract students, and provide new possibilities and inspiration for the faculty. Until that time, though, the department needs an infusion of capital for the following:

- We currently have a \$200,000 transition to LED project underway, in compliance with the Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007. On January 1 of 2018, the State of California banned the manufacturing of incandescent light bulbs that do not meet energy efficiency standards, which includes all the light bulbs used in our theatrical lighting fixtures at Westmont College. Local theaters in Santa Barbara have already begun purchasing new LED fixtures to prepare for the transition to a more energy efficient approach to theatrical lighting (See [Appendix 17](#)).
- Our next largest capital improvement project is the refurbishment of our 158-seat audience. The current seat fabric and structural hardware is failing. The removal of old seating, installation of new seating and repair of the floor is estimated at over \$100,000.
- In addition, we are working to enhance our transportation of equipment by purchasing a department vehicle, as well as improving the air circulation in our scene shop, which currently has no ventilation system. In 2019, we completed the build out of our Audio/Visual needs, but we have not since that time been able to secure funds to assist with our ongoing capital equipment needs.
- Finally, a retaining wall that supports the back of our theater has begun to show significant signs of deterioration, and we expect it will need to be repaired and/or replaced in the near future. It is currently an unknown expense that we are seeking quotes to assess the cost of the project. Frankly, this is a hazard, and should be repaired immediately.
- This brief list is not exhaustive of our needs. We have provided [Appendix 42](#) that calls out additional facility needs to support the work of the department and the college.

Production Development

- The Theatre Arts department has not had an increase to its production budget since 2010. Considering skyrocketing costs in both materials and student staff compensation, this is rather shocking. The department has been able to make-do with its present budget of \$31,000. The fact that the department has continued to create high level productions on a static budget-line is a testament to the adaptability and quality of the Theatre Arts faculty & staff, but it also shows disparity beneath support for the arts and the development of other STEM programs across the campus. The department has indeed found success with local granting institutions, who have provided funds for production support at the downtown Community Arts Workshop, but there is no certainty that those funds will be obtained on a year-to-year basis. More financial commitment by the college will help maintain the high level of artistic and technical excellence for departmental productions.
- The department respectfully requests a \$14,000 increase to its budget to begin as soon as possible ([See Appendix 15](#)).
- See [Appendix 43](#) for production costs and solutions to make those fit within the meager budget.

Student Admission and Retention

The goals of the Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments in the short, medium, and long-term should be toward attracting students. New and enhanced facilities will help. As well as some of the strategies and growing edges below.

- Between 2019 to 2023, Mitchell Thomas developed current student curriculums & alumni engagement opportunities that could enhance our student education and career development prospects. The growing benefit of the Senior Seminar: Launch Pad course mirrored with the Alumni project: “What a Theatre Arts degree did for my career” was an immense growing opportunity for our department and provided some real world tangible opportunities for students to think about their future post graduation. Current students have significant opportunities to meet with and hear from “real world” professionals across a wide variety of arts professions and vocations (some of them Westmont alumni) to get a better sense of early, mid, and late career opportunities and challenges.
- Beginning in the Fall of 2023, Jonathan Hicks began developing a new system for engaging with prospective students, current students and our alumni. The new system focuses heavily on the support of student workers. One student is hired to work with our Academic Administrative Assistant to engage with prospective students and our Admissions team, as well as bolster our public relations and marketing strategy. Another student is hired to work with other current students and the Department Chair to enhance student experiences (access to production information, rehearsal experiences and internship opportunities). The third student is hired to collaborate with the Department Chair on alumni engagement opportunities. The system took a couple of years to develop, but is now in full swing going into the 2025/2026 academic year, and we are excited about the prospects for engaging with our three primary constituencies: prospective students, current students and alumni.

- In 2022, our college president, Gayle Beebe, began to prepare our institution for the enrollment cliff of the late 2020s; however, that cliff came earlier than anticipated, and we have our work cut out for us to demonstrate the value of a Theatre Arts major in the 21st Century. The reality is that the knowledge, skills and information learned while studying Theatre Arts is broadly used in a wide variety of industries. The breadth of learning in the Theatre Arts & Film Studies departments creates a workforce that is nimble and ready to take on leadership roles in industries other than and including the performing arts. A new book by Melanie Dreyer-Lude entitled “The Adaptable Degree: How Education in Theatre Supports the Economy of The Future” possesses some excellent guidance to Theatre educators that we would be wise to heed and develop a strategy to engage.
- Finally, the College and the department must provide greater opportunities for students to afford a college education by increasing its financial aid support through performance and production scholarships. As such, the department requests an increase in student financial aid scholarships, which are essential to the longevity of our programming. We currently offer ten (10) students a maximum of \$2,000 annually. We would like to offer students a minimum of \$6,000 annually, with the capacity to offer students \$60,000 annually.
- See [Appendix 45](#) for developing student admission and retention rates

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

5. Contribution to Diversity

Brief Discussion

I write these notes marking five years since the killing of George Floyd, and the cultural backlash that gripped and, at least for a time, promised to transform the nation. We felt it too, and during the last six years, created initiatives, programs, and projects to offer a picture of theatre’s relevance in a diverse world. Indeed, it’s not hyperbole to state that – other than the department’s emphasis on performance and perhaps curricular redesign and implementation – we have spent the most time, energy, and focus on programs related to diversity. Then-chair, Mitchell Thomas, spurred most of these initiatives, and his indefatigable and resilient pursuit of change in our department cannot be overstated.

This is a difficult nut to crack, because the fact of the matter is that the three full-time professors in the department were white men. Those men – Mitchell Thomas, Jonathan Hicks, and John Blondell discussed the issue, students lamented it, and we have wondered how to tackle the problem since two of those men – Thomas and Blondell – are (well *were* since the retirement of John Blondell, who pretends he is retired and is writing this report) tenured full professors.

We lobbied for an addition of a new faculty member but have not received any traction. The last 7-Year Report stressed the importance of providing an endowed Chair for John Blondell. For a time there was administrative discussion about this, but that never found any traction either. Endowing a Chair for Blondell would have freed up capital for a new faculty member, which could have addressed the diversity issue; now that Blondell has retired there is great opportunity for the department to address the programmatic, disciplinary, and pedagogical issues relative to the creation of a more diverse department.

Faculty Diversity and Analysis

As noted elsewhere, the elephant in the room in terms of diversity is that all three fulltime faculty members were – until August of 2025 – white men. The department worked hard, and still does, to attract diverse voices in its adjunct faculty, to respond to the needs of a growingly diverse student body.

- Numerous years represented above see a 50-50 representation of males and females in the teaching faculty.
- The percentages of racial diversity skew White, with People of Color represented as high as 27% once and as low as 10% once.
- The data does suggest the success of the Artist and Scholar in Residence, as the first two years of that program results in the highest percentage of faculty who are persons of color.
- This data represents some of the challenges of attracting people of color to teach in the department, both in terms of the racial diversity of Santa Barbara and also the special, Christian, mission-driven needs of the college.
- The department, however, worked hard to maintain a degree of gender and racial diversity in the department. It created a special adjunct position for Yuri Okahana-Benson, to teach and design in our program, and sought Johnny Jones and Wendy Jackson to staff the department's Artist and Scholar in Residence for two successive years.
- As noted elsewhere, and also in terms of the alumni survey, the question of diversity in gender and racial terms might become a driving force in a future and hopefully imminent faculty search.
- See [Appendix 10](#) for Faculty Diversity Data.

Notes and observations about student diversity data

Tim Loomer, Director of Research, Implementation, and Planning, and Tatiana Nazarenko, Dean of Educational Effectiveness, have provided Westmont College departments with useful data with respect to student success relative to racial and gender groups. Beginning in 2021, departments have received year-end reports relative to a review of introductory departmental courses. The project is described *verbatim* as follows:

In response to WSCUC asking schools to focus efforts on using data a) to inform best practices, b) drive program review and improvement efforts, and to c) increase attention given to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the Program Review Committee (PRC) has recommended that grades from introductory courses taught by each department be analyzed to identify patterns and trends that might be used to these ends.

In 2021, three introductory courses were analyzed – TA 001 Great Literature of the Stage, TA 010 Acting I, and Teaching 036 Design for the Theatre. Beginning in 2022 and continuing till 2025, the reports present data for TA 001 and TA 010 solely.

- See [Appendix 11 and 12](#) for complete reports from 2021-2025.

The reports provide interesting and noteworthy data, a summary of which follows: These observations are not exhaustive, but rather represent noticeable trends that the department may wish to consider as it tailors its program for new methods and demographics.

- Though not pertaining to racial or gender particularly, it's shocking to note an increase in the numbers of A+'s given to students in introductory courses in recent years. In fact, in preparation for this review, and before the 2025 data was forwarded to us, this reviewer noted 25 A+'s in 2024 introductory courses and thought it must be some kind of mistake. Then, when the 2025 data was provided, this reviewer noted 23 A+'s given in departmental introductory courses, so it's obviously NOT some kind of mistake! This is up from 5 A+'s in 2021.
- In 2021, 69.1% of courses were in the A range, with 3.6 in the D/F range. In 2025, 85.1% of grades in introductory courses were in the A range, with 0% in the D/F range.
- In 2021, 5 of 53 grades or 9.4% of departmental introductory grades were A+. In 2025, 23 of 74 grades, or a whopping 31% were A+.
- Departmental grading may be a useful topic for discussion and engagement going forward. What indeed constitutes an A? an A+? The rest of the grading along the spectrum? Grade creep is indeed an issue across the campus, but one does wonder how this kind of data might skew Westmont grading and average GPA's across the campus and its curriculum.
- Though this is a bit out of this reviewer's strengths and knowledge, perhaps other data that follow might somehow be conditioned by some of the department's methods with respect to grading. Perhaps the Department of Educational Effectiveness can partner with the department, offer some kind of Brown Bag or Forum on grading, and indeed perhaps this is a necessary topic for the entire faculty.
- In looking at diversity in particular, however, it is useful to look at two subgroups that Westmont uses to disaggregate its collected data. These groups are described *verbatim* here:

These groupings, based loosely on historic and social factors, typically have enough data points to allow statistical comparisons to be made. The HABH group consists of grades earned by Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American/Alaska Native, Black or African American, and Hispanic/Latino students. AWU group consists of grades earned by Asian, White, and Unknown students. Students in the IPEDS classification Non-Resident Alien and Two or More Races were not traditionally included in the Westmont HABH/AWU grouping. These are combined and reported in the "OTHER" row below but are not considered in the statistical analysis.

- For every year, from 2021-2025, students in the AWA subgroup show higher average GPA's than the HABH. In some years, the difference was significant – by more than half a grade point or .738. In other years, such as in 2025, the difference was less significant -- .19. Nevertheless, the trend of the AWA subgroup performing better, or at least receiving higher grades than the HABH subgroup, might show areas of attention for the department going forward.
- For 2021, male students show a slightly higher (.11) GPA than female students. Since 2022, however, females show higher GPA's than male students. On occasion, such as in 2025, the difference was not significant -- .03. In other years, such as in 2022, the difference was more significant -- .32. It was suggested in that year's report that perhaps male students struggled more that year with the return of in-person teaching.
- There is a range of data with respect to First Generation to Non First Generation students. On occasion, the difference was significant – as in 2025 when it was .41 or nearly half a grade. On other occasions, the difference was not statistically significant, as in 2022, when it was .008.

These subgroups with respect to how students identify with regards to AWA/HABH, Gender, and First Generation or Non First Generation students, might form possibilities for departmental discussion, consideration, and implementation as it forges its new identity and programs. This is

welcome information, and might provide valuable topics for the Senate and other important committees on campus with respect to grading, diversity, and student success.

Departmental programs and initiatives in diversity since the previous 7-Year Report

Beginning in 2019, in collaboration with then-Provost, Mark Sargent, the department created the Justice and Global Engagement Initiative in Theatre Arts. This grew out of the cultural moment, and recognized needs in our department, as well as career objectives for John Blondell, who desired time away from the campus in order to engage in his global theatre work abroad. The initiative contained two parts.

First, the Artist in Residence for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The goal of the residency program was to diversify the teaching faculty and amplify the Theatre Arts Department's focus on diversity, justice, global engagement, and intercultural competency. The guest faculty member, depending on their disciplinary interests, could teach, direct, design, lead workshops, and interact with the Westmont and Santa Barbara communities. Artists and Scholars from a broad disciplinary focus were welcome to apply, including directors, designers, playwrights, actors, and other theatre specialists. Responsibilities included teaching a seminar course focusing on race, ethnicity, and gender on the American stage, a Great Literature of the Stage course with a special focus on diversity, justice, and equity, and one other course or production suited to the professional focus of the faculty member and the needs of the department. The residency program was to be one semester full-time or a full year half time position.

Second, the college instituted a new title and role – the Global Ambassador for the Performing Arts, initially to be filled by Dr. John Blondell. This allowed Dr. Blondell to continue his work as an international director and Global Ambassador for the college, a valuable teaching member of the department, and allowed the department to expand its focus on diversity and inclusion in our faculty representation and curricular offerings. The Global Ambassador in the Performing Arts would engage in a wide variety of teaching, artistic, and global engagement work in a variety of different regions, and on a variety of different platforms. Some of Dr. Blondell's work included: teaching and directing in Santa Barbara, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Russia, and Asia; live networked productions with international casts; and initial work on a new international theatre group, ACT 929: The Global Theatre for Art and Activism, created to connect artists across artistic disciplines and borders. This work will feed a new course in Global Theatre Studies, which would fulfill Westmont's Thinking Globally GE requirement.

This position would be funded at a $\frac{2}{3}$ time Full Professor level, which freed up funds for the Artist in Residence position. Salary implications were fiscally neutral, since no new funds were provided for either position, and John Blondell was salaried at $\frac{2}{3}$ -time Full Professor level, with the remaining funds earmarked for the Artist in Residence.

- See [Appendix 46](#) for the proposal that created the Justice & Global Engagement Initiative.

During this time, Blondell directed in Italy, North Macedonia, Armenia, Santa Barbara, Prague, Romania, and on the Network; and led tours and residencies to North Macedonia, Poland, and Armenia. Please see John Blondell's CV for detailed information about years, places, and projects.

Artists and Scholars in Residence included:

Professor Johnny Jones, 2021-2022

Professor Wendy Jackson, 2022-2023

Professor Madeline Fanton, 2023-2024

- See [Appendix 47](#) for each Artist & Scholar in Residence CVs
- See [Appendix 48](#) for the job description and search material for the Artist & Scholar in Residence program.

From 2019-2025 the department created the following programs or made the following curricular adjustments related to diversity.

- Introduced the following Diversity Development document to better understand the various types of diversity. (See [Appendix 52](#)).
- Created a departmental anti-racism statement (see [Appendix 49](#)).
- In 2020, John Blondell directed a new play by Lila Rose Kaplan entitled *Small Enchantments*, inspired by the folk story *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. The piece focused on material and perspectives developed by women, was created for the Covid-moment, developed online and broadcast live to Facebook, and featured a cast of twelve Westmont women and the design and video work of Yulya Dukhovny.
- Nexus Staged Reading Series, spearheaded by Mitchell Thomas, first implemented by Johnny Jones, and most recently curated and directed by Dr. Madeline Fanton. The fall 2024 series prioritized plays by women and people of color, presenting *Ada and the Engine* by Lauren Gunderson and *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa Fasthorse. These plays address inclusive themes: women in the sciences and the politics of race, respectively. Additionally, each performance was followed by a “talk-back” with faculty in other departments (Math, Computer Science, and History), building coalitions of diverse perspectives and facilitating critical conversations about the plays’ themes.

Following *Ada and the Engine*, Russ Howell and Don Patterson joined us to discuss the interplay of drama, math, and computer science. The students in the audience were particularly struck by the absence of Ada Lovelace Byron from most mainstream histories of computing. The relationship between math and poetry, as expressed through the central character’s relationship with her estranged father (the poet, Lord Byron) was also of interest to the panel and audience. Rick Pointer and Andrew Mullen joined us in discussion after *The Thanksgiving Play* where a spirited debate about political correctness played out. The staged readings and talk-backs promoted critical thinking among both the student audiences and the faculty members, forging interdisciplinary conversations that raised questions about how histories of minoritarian subjects are curated, disseminated, and/or obscured.

- In the fall of 2023, Dr. Fanton revised the curriculum of Great Literature of the Stage with a focus on diversifying the dramatists represented on the syllabus. The format of the class pairs a text from the traditional dramatic canon like Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, with a contemporary adaptation by a woman or person of color - in this case, *John Proctor is the Villain* by Kimberly Belflower. This structure ensures that students receive foundational knowledge in the discipline, expand their awareness of diverse dramatic writers, and interrogate the exclusive formation of

the Western canon. This class was offered again in Fall 2024 and will be offered both semesters in the 2025-2026 academic year.

- Dr. Fanton is currently redeveloping the syllabus for Race and Gender on the American Stage (upcoming, Fall 2025) which highlights the role of performance in the creation, maintenance, and subversion of diverse American identities across the 20th and 21st centuries. It is the department's hope to submit this course for JRD approval in the fall of 2025 along with World Theatre which is not currently being offered but would be taught from a postcolonial lens.
- In the Fall of 2023, the Theatre Arts department developed a production of *Poor Clare* by Chiara Atik. This production was directed by Madeline Fanton. The cast and production team, led by Dr. Fanton, engaged with a local non-profit organization, Kingdom Causes, to bring awareness to the unhoused community in Santa Barbara and engaged in a sock drive to support our neighbors.
- The 2025-2026 season features material and adaptations by women, including *Antigonick*, from Sophocles adapted by Anne Carson (Mitchell Thomas, director) and *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott and adapted by Kate Hamil (Madeline Fanton, Director). Please refer to the Departmental Season [Appendix 23](#) for a complete list of projects developed during the 2019-2025 period.

Final Comments

The department has had a number of troubling encounters with the administration at the college in the last assessment cycle around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. When the department was crafting documents for the new Artist-In-Residence program, the interim provost at the time, Dr. Rick Ifland, went into the shared documents and changed the title of the position prior to job posting without consulting or notifying the department. In addition, during the development of program materials for a production last year, Irene Neller directed a student worker to go into the theatre program shared document and cut the Chumash Land Acknowledgement again without consulting or notifying the department. When the director pushed back on this change, Irene cited a college policy prohibiting land acknowledgements. Chief Diversity Officer Carmel Saad looked into it, and found no policy exists, so the land acknowledgement was reinstated in the program. Lastly, a theatre faculty member was called into a meeting with the Provost and the President a week before opening of a production due to the story including a character who experiences (and is bullied for) queer feelings in a fantasy game. There was concern whether the director included a kiss between two same-sex characters. It should be noted that these encounters are small examples of larger political and theological issues and conversations playing out in the United States and the church. Open communication and mutual trust are necessary to avoid creating a chilly and reactionary atmosphere at the college around justice, reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

B. Student Assessment and Program Review

6. Additional Analysis

Final Summative Thoughts

In looking at the Action Plan developed for the 2019 Program Review Report, the department has enjoyed numerous successes, and achieved some of its goals enumerated there. It made tremendous strides in diversity. It created the Justice and Global Engagement Initiative, and staffed faculty members with expertise in diversity for three years. It created collaborations with Film and Music programs, including the shooting of a film, *Winter's Tale Interrupted*, during the Covid-19 period, and it has staged four collaborations with the Music Department – *Godspell*, *The Fairy Queen*, *The Telephone* and *Gallantry*. It has created opportunities for student internships and offered students design responsibilities in mainstage shows. It created a position in digital marketing to raise the online presence of the department and promote productions.

- See [Appendix 50](#) for the Digital Marketing Job Description.

The department continues to teach and make theatre at high levels, and the department maintains a high standing in Santa Barbara's Theatre Arts community. However, several crucial items from that Action Plan of 2019-2020 persist. At that time, the external reviewer made a strong case for making John Blondell an endowed Chair, thereby freeing up capital for a fourth FTE in the department. He also made a case for increased production and administrative support. In order for the department to not only sustain its work, but thrive and flourish, we respectfully request attention to these critical areas – the necessary human and production resources for an active, vital, and important department and program.

Looking back, the department is proud of many achievements and accomplishments over the past seven years. We are also aware that it has been a period of significant disruption and challenges as well, with the departure of the Provost, the pandemic, and college-wide fiscal reductions. We look forward to collaborating with the administration, the Provost, and the entire Westmont community as we develop and build our program into this new and exciting season.

- See [Appendix 24](#) for Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the full-time Faculty for Theatre Arts.

C. Conclusions and Vision for the Future:

Theatre programs are an integral component of the Liberal Arts. They provide community, opportunities for artistic expression, and perspectives on the history of culture. They excite wonder, inspire thought and feeling, and provide a home for a wide variety of types, identities, and personalities. Theatre programs on Christian campuses are dwindling. It's necessary for those still active and vibrant to carry the torch into the future, to offer educational and spiritual opportunities for young Christian individuals to explore and enact their faith, as they mature in the discipline. Westmont's program is exemplary in many ways, and unique in some. The administration, department, and program undoubtedly have many important decisions to make in order to grow, nourish, and sustain new generations of Christian theatre professionals. The program's past is rich, and though the future is unknown, the potential exists for Westmont's reputation to increase and amplify, to be a beacon in the Western United States, and for that matter, across the country. To that end, the Theatre Arts & Film Studies department has partnered with other theatre arts educators across the country. The new program is entitled A.C.T.S (Association of Christian Theatre Schools). See [Appendix 51](#) for the new association's objectives and proposed mission statement.

The Theatre Arts Department is at an exciting time in its history. It enjoys a significant reputation in the region and in Christian higher education. It has a top-flight faculty, engaged students, and programs that cultivate the artistic, educational, and spiritual identities of young Christian theatre artists. Many of the successes and achievements of the department have been described and proven in the preceding pages. So too have some of its challenges. It has some work to do though to engage the enrollment realities of Christian Higher Education in the 2020's and 2030's, and grow a department that flourishes in all dimensions of its work and contributions to the college. Once the department has settled and stabilized and a new tenure track professor has been hired, it may consider the following topics for work, improvement, and transformation (see [Appendix 16](#)).

APPENDICES

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[*Program Review Committee Response to the Theatre Arts 2019 Six-Year Report*](#)

APPENDIX 2

[*Program Review - Theatre Arts | Westmont College*](#)

[*https://www.westmont.edu/departamental-program-reviews/program-review-theatre-arts*](https://www.westmont.edu/departamental-program-reviews/program-review-theatre-arts)

APPENDIX 3

Summary of assessment results for every PLO and their corresponding appendices are noted in the body of the report.

APPENDIX 4

Rubrics and assessment instruments for each PLO and their corresponding appendices are noted in the body of the report.

APPENDIX 5

Reports on closing the loop activities for each PLO and their corresponding appendices are noted in the body of the report.

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[*Curriculum Map 2025*](#)

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[*Faculty race/ethnicity and gender breakdown*](#)

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[*Theater Arts Department Report - Summer 2023*](#)

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[*List of Action Plan and potential Key Questions*](#)

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[Stage Management \(TA195\) Career Resource Center Assignment](#)

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[Fringe Festival Narrative & Data](#)

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[Senior Project \(TA193\) Syllabus & Prompt](#)

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[*Key to Rubric & Grading to Rubric for Written Effectiveness & Theatre History Essays*](#)

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[*Theatre History I \(TA120\) faculty narrative responses to student writing*](#)

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[*Job description and search material for the Artist & Scholar in Residence program*](#)

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