Executive Summary: Department of Theatre

Mission
The Department’s mission is to explore and integrate the study, practice, and teaching of theatre in order to achieve an international reputation for excellence. We teach our students to observe and interpret the world through the lens of performance. We mine the liberal arts for approaches to the creation and reception of theatre with the unique ability of oral and visual story-telling to reflect upon, and inform the world, about itself. We are also here to train “thinking” artists and prepare future scholars with B.A. and B.G.S., B.F.A design and theatre/voice, M.F.A in scenography, M.A. and PhD degree programs.

Faculty
The Department has 13.5 tenured or tenure-track faculty. Thirteen (13) are 100% appointments in Theatre. One is a joint appointment (50/50) with the Program in Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. The standard allocation of effort for full-time faculty is 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) typically teach 15-20 sections (usually at the 100 or 200 level) per semester under the supervision of a faculty member. We serve non-majors in a variety of classes in Introduction to Theatre (100), Acting (106), Children and Media (404) and Popular Culture (380). All faculty are productive scholar/artists on campus, nationally and internationally. The Academic Analytics "Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index" had us 6th nationally for PhD Programs in Theatre in 2006, and 10th nationally for PhD Programs in Theatre in 2007. But since then, they haven't published their rankings. The Department also operates a production unit, the University Theatre (UT). The UT produces an annual season of 8-10 fully produced plays and musicals. Productions are directed and designed by faculty, students, and guest artists (through our highly visible “Scene Partners” program).

Bachelor’s Degrees (BA, BGS, BFA (Design and Theatre Voice)
As of Fall 2010, there were 84 undergraduates who had declared a Theatre major. The majority of these (approximately 60) were either BA or BGS students in Theatre, with the balance pursuing BFA degrees in either Theatre Design or Theatre/Voice. Following the campus-wide emphasis on “Graduate in Four,” the theatre faculty undertook a major overhaul of our BA and BGS curricula, reducing the overall number of hours required in the major and allowing students greater flexibility in how they fulfill those hours. The BGS degree is now being developed into a BFA degree to follow current trends in theatre education. In addition to work or further study in theatre, many of our graduates use their undergraduate education as a springboard to graduate school and/or careers in other fields, including law, education, and social services. KU-trained actors have performed with professional theatre companies in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Austin, and Denver (to name just a few) as well as numerous touring companies, and have appeared in local and national films, television shows, and commercials. Recent graduates have also founded their own theatre companies, including Title:Point (New York), Buran Theatre Company (New York and Los Angeles), Incubator Arts Project (New York), and others.

Master’s Degrees (MA, MFA)
Theatre MA graduates have been admitted to the following PhD programs in theatre and performance studies: Cornell University, Northwestern University, CUNY-Graduate Center; Arizona State University. KU has one of the only MFA programs in Scenography in North
America, and the only such program among our peer institutions. KU-trained designers have worked in the commercial and not-for-profit theatre around the country, as well as in film, television, and industrial design. While many of the MFA Scenography graduates choose to follow this path, several have also secured academic placements at institutions that include University of Nebraska-Omaha, Waldorf College, Austin College, Texas Christian University, Marquette University, Drury, and Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Doctoral Degrees (PhD)
Compared to other PhD programs in Theatre at public research universities, the Theatre Department’s research and teaching capacity at the doctoral level is very strong. Beginning in the Fall of 2006, the Department made a concerted effort to clear the “backlog” of ABDs and other graduate students who were not making satisfactory progress toward the degree. Through a combination of intensive mentoring of dissertations to completion, improvements in student evaluation and record keeping, the Department can now report that there are no graduate students on its rolls who entered the University prior to 2005, and only two graduate students who entered prior to 2007. Current students receive an annual written evaluation which includes a faculty generated assessment of their progress toward degree, and the majority of current students are making satisfactory progress in this regard. The majority of students who earned PhDs in Theatre over the last decade have moved on to full-time teaching positions in higher education.

Changes as a Result of the Review Process
The undergraduate program was recently reconfigured to 40 credit hour degrees in line with the graduate in 4 initiatives. This has caused significant enrollment drops (since less classes are required), especially for the BGS degree. The department currently has developed an ad-hoc curriculum committee and is discussing new trends and ideas for our undergraduate degrees, to better enhance the program for the future and create opportunities for increased enrollment in all classes. Some initiatives are currently very successful such as the addition of THR 380 “Popular Culture of…” courses, which consistently see high enrollments and THR 106, the Acting I class has seen amazing increased enrollment since achieving Principle Course status. The department consistently scores high in student surveys and the quality of production in the University Theatre is also consistently high. We are a “new” department (separated from Film) and in developing a clear strategic plan, we will of course ensure that we are working towards our future. The fact that our University Theatre program is so dependent on box-office income is indeed an issue. With dwindling audiences over the years (mostly due to economic downturns and the fact that we cannot always program for popularity of show), we have taken great strides to booster our ticket sales with such programs as Curricular Connections, new trends in advertising and marketing in the web (such as Facebook, Twitter and e-mail blasts) and will continue to develop long range plans in this area.

Overall Evaluation
The Department of Theatre has an exceptional faculty, strong teachers and exceptional artists. Students are afforded the opportunity to work in a state of the art theatre with an exceptional staff. The Department has a strong balance between production work and scholarship, which affords both undergraduate and graduate students to not only study, but to practice the craft of theatre. Upon graduation, students are well educated to enter the field, continue into graduate school or in the case of the PhD students, teach at the University level.
Program Highlights

Highlights: Department of Theatre

- The BA, BGS, BFA (design and theatre/voice-with School of Music) are highly respected in the state and the region for consistency in teaching and a strong performance program. The MA degree remains strong and most students go on to PhD programs.
- MFA degree in scenography has been very successful in recruiting over the past five years.
- The PhD degree has consistently grown over the past five years (since the separation from Film).
- Interactive Theatre Troupe has been engaged by the Associate Vice-Provost for Diversity and Equity to perform at selected events throughout the 2010-2011 year as part of the Office of Diversity and Equity’s “Difficult Dialogues” model.
- *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism.* *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (JDTC) was founded in 1986 at the University of Kansas. The Journal publishes full-length articles that contribute to the varied conversations in dramatic theory and criticism, explore the relationship between theory and theatre practice, and/or examine recent scholarship by a single author.
- *Curricular Connections* is an annual listing sent to instructors across campus that announces upcoming University Theatre productions and suggests classes for which attending the play might prove valuable to the course’s mission.
- *Scene Partners.* Each year, numbers of guest artists, researchers, and master teachers spend days—even weeks—on campus, giving our students further opportunities to work with theatre professionals and learn from leading theatre scholars. *Scene Partners* is a program of the Department of Theatre, but it reaches beyond theatre to benefit both University and Lawrence communities by bringing greater professional and educational enrichment to the arts.
- Compared with other institutions of learning, KU Theatre ranks very high in terms of scholarly productivity and creative activity. Since 2007, faculty have collectively produced 9 books, 24 essays, 26 minor publications and 170 creative activities.
- The University Theatre consistently wins awards for excellence at the American College Theatre Festival. Our production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Original Pronunciation (the first in North America) garnered national and international attention. The UT also produced the world premiere of a new musical written by a Tony Award winning composer.
- Alum Randy Adams received the Tony Award for producing best musical, *Memphis* on Broadway.
1. Departmental Statement

1.1 Summary sketch of the Theatre Department

1.1.1 Why Are We Here?

Because the world has stories to tell, and through analysis and production, we work toward a greater awareness of who we are, where we’ve been, and where we are going.

*The following mission statement is adapted from the Strategic Plan drafted by the Department of Theatre and Film and approved by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in Fall 2006.*

The Department’s mission is to explore and integrate the study, practice, and teaching of theatre in order to achieve an international reputation for excellence. We are in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to teach our students to observe and interpret the world through the lens of performance. We mine the liberal arts for approaches to the creation and reception of theatre with the unique ability of oral and visual story-telling to reflect upon, and inform the world, about itself. Human beings have told themselves stories, aloud and in public, since the dawn of time, and the study and practice of that tradition from its earliest roots in theatre to its more modern incarnation in film, are essential parts of the Humanities curriculum of any world-class university. We are also here to train “thinking” artists and prepare future scholars.

1.1.2 Current Configuration

The Department has 14.5 tenured or tenure-track faculty. Fourteen (14) are 100% appointments in Theatre. One (Ajayi) is a joint appointment (50/50) with the Program in Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. The standard allocation of effort for full-time faculty is 40% teaching (two courses per semester), 40% research, and 20% service. Some faculty may have “differential allocation” (course release) for administrative appointments or other special circumstances. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) typically teach 15-20 sections (usually at the 100 or 200 level) per semester under the supervision of a faculty member. Support staff include a full-time receptionist/administrative associate and a part-time undergraduate advisor who is paid by and reports to the Office of Student Success.
The Theatre Department offers BA and BGS (Bachelor of General Studies) degrees in Theatre, as well as a BFA in Theatre Design. At the graduate level, the Department offers the MA and PhD in Theatre, as well as the MFA in Scenography. Course offerings span the range from practical classes in acting, directing, design, voice and speech, movement, theatre for young audiences, and musical theatre to scholarly courses in theatre history, dramatic literature, theory and criticism, and performance studies.

The Department also operates a production unit, the University Theatre (UT), supervised by the Artistic Director. The Artistic Director is a member of the Department faculty and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Chair. The UT produces an annual season of 8-10 fully produced plays and musicals in two theatres. Productions are directed and designed by faculty, students, and guest artists. Ordinarily, two additional productions are mounted in the summer under the banner of Kansas Summer Theatre and/or study abroad. The UT includes a large professional staff, including full-time technical director, stage manager, scene shop supervisor, costume shop supervisor, costume shop cutter/draper, audience services manager, director of public relations, and receptionist/administrative associate. The Managing Director of the UT also serves as the Budget Officer for the Department. The UT accountant also handles accounting for the Department as a whole. A large number of students (undergraduate and graduate) are employed on a part-time hourly basis to support production.

1.1.3 Historical Overview

KU has a long and rich tradition of instruction and production in theatre and performance dating back to the 1880s and proceeding through numerous administrative reorganizations. The Department of Theatre’s earliest incarnation, the Department of Speech and Dramatic Art, was inaugurated in 1923, and the University has offered bachelor’s degrees in theatre continuously since 1927. The Master of Arts in Speech and Drama was first awarded in 1941, and graduate education in theatre has been maintained continuously for the ensuing seven decades. The Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Voice has been offered – in conjunction with the School of Music – since 1958 and the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Design – in conjunction with the Department of Art – has been offered since 1959. KU’s first PhD in Theatre was awarded in 1964, and the program has awarded nearly 100 doctoral degrees since then. The Master of Fine Arts in Scenography degree was inaugurated in 1980, and was offered with and through the School of Fine Arts until that
administrative entity was dissolved in 2009; it is now offered under the
direct auspices of the Theatre Department.

The roles of Department Chair and Director of Theatre were separated
from one another in 1952, and for the next 50 years the academic
Department and the University Theatre functioned as separate
administrative units, each having its own budget and staff, with the
Director of Theatre reporting directly to higher administration. By custom,
members of the theatre faculty were jointly appointed in both units. In
2002, by direction of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the
University Theatre was combined administratively with the (then)
Department of Theatre and Film, so that the academic and production
arms of the program would be administered as a single unit, with the
Director (now Artistic Director) of the University Theatre reporting to the
Chair of the Department. Vestiges of the older structure may occasionally
be seen in the accounting, work flow, and reporting procedures within the
current Department.

The Department of Theatre in its current form has existed only since July
2009 when, as part of a larger reorganization of the arts at KU, the
Department of Theatre and Film was split into two separate departments:
1) Theatre; 2) Film & Media Studies. Readers of this Self-Study are
advised that the Office of Institutional Research & Planning has been
unable to disaggregate theatre student from film student data (e.g. major
counts and enrollments) for years prior to the reorganization, so it is
difficult to identify long-term trends in these areas.

Additional historical information may be found in Appendix 5.

1.1.4 Current Governance Structure

Below follow excerpts from the Department of Theatre Bylaws, approved
October 22, 2009. The full text of the Bylaws is included as Appendix 3.

Voting Membership. The voting membership of the Department of
Theatre, hereafter, “the Department”, shall consist of all faculty holding
tenured or tenure-track appointments of .50 FTE or greater in the
Department; two elected representative of the Department’s unclassified
or university support staff; one elected representative of the Department’s
graduate students; and two elected representatives of the Department’s
undergraduate students.

By majority vote, the Department Meeting establishes policy and
expresses the will of the Department in all matters brought to it for action.
Matters such as recommendations for faculty hires, curricular changes,
and departmental procedures or regulations must be brought before a Department meeting.

**Officers**

(a) **Chair of the Department of Theatre.** This person is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Ordinarily, candidates for this office are nominated and voted upon by the Department and recommended to the Dean for a term of three to five years. Only tenured members of the Department faculty are eligible to serve as Chair.

The Chair guides day-to-day and longer-term activities of the Department of Theatre, and officiates at Department meetings (unless noted otherwise). As its chief administrative officer, the Chair is responsible for the operation of the Department within the guidelines set forth in these bylaws. The Chair represents the Department in all appropriate external forums and exercises direct supervision over the internal functions of the Department, delegating such authority where appropriate. As an appointee of the Dean of the College, the Chair is responsible for communicating College policy to the Department, and for bringing before the Department for appropriate consideration and timely action all business originating from the College or University. In accordance with College and University policy, the Chair serves as the Budget Officer for the Department, and is responsible for oversight of the use of all State and KU Endowment funds at the Department’s disposal.

(b) **Artistic Director.** This person is recommended to the Chair for appointment from among candidates evaluated by the voting membership. The Artistic Director serves at the pleasure of the Chair. The Artistic Director is responsible for the implementation of the pedagogical, artistic, and research missions of the Department in the context of theatre production. Only tenured members of the Department faculty are eligible to serve as Artistic Director.

The Artistic Director, with the assistance of appropriate department staff, is responsible for supervision of the theatre production facilities and the full range of activities undertaken by the University Theatre. These include staging of performances, fundraising and publicity for Department-sponsored public events, and interaction with other units of the College and University and the general public as a representative of the Department. In consultation with the Chair, and with the advice of the University Theatre Committee and appropriate faculty, the Artistic Director determines production assignments for Department-sponsored performances. Subject to approval by the Chair, the Artistic Director shall have broad discretionary authority in dispersal of the funds allocated, collected, or otherwise obtained for the purposes of theatrical production.
Additionally, the Artistic Director acts as a counselor to the Chair, serving as his or her representative as needed.

(c) **Director of Graduate Studies.** This person is appointed by the Chair of the Department from among candidates nominated by the voting membership, and serves at the pleasure of the Chair. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for oversight of all matters related to the Department’s graduate programs. Only faculty who are members of the KU Graduate Faculty in Regular or Dissertation Status are eligible to serve as Director of Graduate Studies, though untenured faculty may serve in this capacity.

Additionally, the Director of Graduate Studies acts as a counselor to the Chair, and may be asked to represent the Department both on and off-campus in matters particular to graduate education.

**Standing Committees**

The provisional membership of committees shall be announced at the first meeting that takes place after their appointment. Approval by the Department, by majority vote, shall be required. The Faculty Evaluation Board shall be determined by lot and shall not be subject to vote.

Standing committee or *ad hoc* committee members, except student members of search committees, have full voting rights in that committee. The chair of a committee votes only to make or break a tie vote.

(a) **Faculty Evaluation Board (FEB).** This consists of three tenured faculty members drawn by lot who serve two-year, staggered terms. They are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the tenure and promotion protocols of the College. The FEB is responsible for evaluating the portfolios of all tenured and tenure-track faculty members on an annual basis in February. The Chair of the Department serves as the FEB chair ex-officio. (See Faculty Evaluation Plan, Appendix I.)

(b) **Promotion and Tenure Committee (PTC).** This consists of all tenured members of the Department. In cases involving promotion to the rank of Full Professor, voting is restricted to Full Professors. The Chair of the Department serves as the PTC chair. The PTC is responsible for evaluating candidates for third-year review, tenure, and promotion in rank. For each such candidate, the Department Chair appoints an *ad hoc* committee of faculty that gathers and evaluates relevant material, and presents a report to the PTC. In the event of a favorable decision the *ad hoc* committee assists in the preparation of materials to be submitted to the College. The *ad hoc* committee must include one tenured faculty member from a department other than Theatre within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
(c) **University Theatre Committee (UTC).** This consists of four faculty including the head of the design program, and at least two staff members including the managing director and the technical director, appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with the Artistic Director. In addition, there shall be one undergraduate student representative and one graduate student representative elected annually by their peers. The Artistic Director has the option of serving as the chair of this committee. On routine matters, UTC’s actions take the form of non-binding recommendations to the Artistic Director. However, on questions involving the selection of Department-sponsored theatrical productions and other public programs conducted in Departmental theatre spaces, the recommendations of the committee are submitted to the Department for consideration and action. In matters involving confidential student information, student representatives shall be excused from the meeting.

(d) **Direct Hire Search Committee (DHSC).** This consists of three faculty members appointed by the Department Chair, plus a non-voting graduate student representative elected annually by the graduate students in the Department. The DHSC is responsible for proposing direct hire candidates who qualify under the Equal Opportunity Office’s guidelines for minority status to the Department.

(e) **Allocations Advisory Committee (AAC).** This consists of four faculty members, including the Department Chair, the Artistic Director, and two elected members, in consultation with appropriate staff members. The Managing Director and the Accountant serve as *ex officio* members. This committee advises the chair on the allocation of funds and grants awarded to faculty and staff (including Kimbell grants and travel funds), guest artists and lectureships. The committee advises the chair on issues of budget, including standard allocations, other expenditures, and rescissions. This committee meets bi-monthly.

(f) **Scholarships and Awards Committee.** This consists of three faculty members appointed by the Department Chair. This committee is responsible for evaluating and recommending to the Department students for general University scholarships and departmental awards, except for grants secured by individuals with specific administrative requirements.
1.2 Unit Strengths

The Department’s current strengths are high standards of scholarship for faculty and students, a wealth of teaching experience at all levels, leadership on campus and in the discipline (faculty have held significant administrative positions), and a thriving production program that regularly involves large numbers of students in faculty research. The production program has also built a group of highly experienced staff specialists whose talents and efforts allow the University Theatre to function as a laboratory in the best sense of the word.

The Department makes clear its relevance to the College and University through not only traditional works of scholarship, but work that seems to have more currency in the 21st century: community and university service, public outreach, and the ability to put a very public face on the College and University as a whole. The synergy between praxis and study that flourishes in Theatre makes our department a truly remarkable vantage point from which students may view the world. The faculty is passionate about its mission and demonstrates this through teaching and research in creative and academic venues. We prepare our students for life beyond the classroom, and ability to excel by giving them practical, hands-on experience in the field. With knowledge in both production and studies, our undergraduate students receive an extraordinary amount of individual attention, working closely with their professors. When they graduate, the undergraduate students are competent to compete in the professional world; highly prepared for graduate school in a variety of disciplines; and can enter a number of professions outside the major with the experience received during their undergraduate education.

The faculty is actively engaged in research and participates on national and international levels in the development of our specialties. The graduate degrees are coherently designed and well executed by faculty who value and undertake research appropriate to their expertise. In the last five years, the department has strengthened and/or regained its national and international research profile due to timely hires that have addressed the departure of good faculty as well as highly-regarded publications by faculty already at KU.

The faculty also prides itself on the mentoring of graduate students and junior faculty. In the last five years, the Department has made significant improvement in time-to-degree for graduate students, and has undergone a major revision to the undergraduate curriculum designed to improve time-to-degree at the BA/BGS level.
1.2.1 Areas of Distinction

The following represents a partial list of the ways in which the Department of Theatre distinguishes itself from theatre programs at comparable institutions and/or from other academic units at KU.

1.2.1.1 Number and percentage of faculty actively involved in doctoral education. Compared to other PhD programs in Theatre at public research universities, the Theatre Department’s research and teaching capacity at the doctoral is very strong. Eleven of the tenured or tenure-track faculty – two-thirds of the department – are eligible to serve on PhD exam and dissertation committees and have served on at least one such committee in the past three years. Of these seven (7) are recognized by the University’s Office of Graduate Studies as eligible to chair dissertations, and five have done so in the last five years. As a matter of custom (but not fixed policy), faculty in the Theatre Department are not normally nominated for dissertation status until after achieving tenure.

1.2.1.2 Number and percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty actively involved in undergraduate education. All of the department’s tenured and tenure-track faculty regularly teach in the undergraduate curriculum. Tenured and tenure-track faculty outnumber GTAs, and have been both versatile and willing enough to adjust their teaching schedules to the needs of the undergraduate program. As a result the department rarely depends on adjunct lecturers, and most undergraduate majors and minors take the majority of their courses with full-time faculty.

1.2.1.3 Scenography Program. KU has one of the only MFA programs in Scenography in North America, and the only such program among our peer institutions. The Scenography Program has two philosophical principles at its core.

First, the program is based on the premise that theatrical designers in the 21st Century must be conversant in all areas of theatrical design. Thus, there are not separate programs in set, costume, and lighting design, but one unified course of study in which students study and practice all areas. The aim is to find the areas of commonality and intersection between the separate disciplines. In this way, the student masters a larger palette of contemporary design possibilities that are based upon the unique seeing process of the age.
Second, the scenography program is based on the premise that metaphor is the true language of the theatre and of theatrical design. Through a series of carefully structured projects, both in the classroom and on the stage, the program provides students the opportunity to develop the critical and artistic skills that will allow them to create design ideas that go beyond the literal surface of the play into spatial and visual arrangements that are dynamic, resonant, and poetic.

1.2.1.4 Placement record. The department has a long and respectable record of placing students in graduate programs and in the profession. The majority of students who earned PhDs in Theatre over the last decade have moved on to full-time teaching positions in higher education, as have many of our MFA graduates. We have consistently placed MA and undergraduate students in first-tier graduate programs. Many of our students choose to enter the theatre industry following graduation, and their rate of success compares favorably with graduates of our peer institutions. Additional placement information may be found in Appendix 4.

1.2.1.5 Professional Staff
The Department is fortunate to have a large and experienced professional staff. The talents and dedication of the staff have been instrumental in maintaining quality and continuity in the operations of the University Theatre.

Our technical staff includes full-time Technical Director (Peterson), Stage Manager (Weston), Scene Shop Supervisor (Wanner), Costume Shop Supervisor (Rendall), and Costume Shop Cutter/Draper (Trottier). This group is especially strong relative to comparable programs (and to many professional theatres) in terms of both number and skill level. Most hold graduate degrees and all have extensive professional experience in theatre production, collectively representing over 100 years in the business.

Administrative staff in the University Theatre include a full-time Managing Director (Pryor) who also serves as the Budget Officer for the Department, Director of Public Relations (Jenkins), Manager of Audience Services (Hope), Accountant (Ingkatanuwat), and Administrative Associate Sr (Bohmann). These “Front of House” personnel are as qualified and experienced as the technical staff, representing many decades of administrative experience at KU.

Staff support for the more traditional academic operations of the unit includes a full-time Administrative Associate Senior (Hummel) who,
while new to the Department, has nearly twenty years of experience in administration at KU, and an Undergraduate Advisor (Hulse) who is carried full-time on the roster of the College Advising Office and who devotes .25 FTE to advising undergraduate theatre majors and minors.

1.2.1.6 Service to the University, Lawrence, and Kansas Communities
In addition to the more traditional types of “service” detailed in the appendices, the Theatre Department contributes to the life of the University in ways unique to our discipline. For example, the Interactive Theatre Troupe, conceived and directed by Professor Ringer, has been engaged by the Associate Vice-Provost for Diversity and Equity to perform at selected events throughout the 2010-2011 year as part of the Office of Diversity and Equity’s “Difficult Discussions” model. Last year, several faculty members and students staged a reading of Karel Capek’s play *R.U.R.* as a contribution to a major conference hosted by the Slavic Department. Theatre faculty and students regularly perform at university and alumni events such as Traditions Night.

The Department also serves the Lawrence and Kansas communities. Our theatre productions showcase faculty and student’s creative research to the general public, and we offer reduced ticket prices for children and senior citizens. Periodically, Theatre Department shows tour to schools and other locations in Lawrence and elsewhere in Kansas. For many years, the Department has offered free After-School Drama Classes in Murphy Hall for local elementary students. Classes are taught by Jeanne Klein and college students enrolled in THR 404, Children and Drama. Since 2008, we have partnered with the Lawrence School District USD 497 to produce an annual “3rd Grade Arts Day” that brings local elementary students to the Department for a day of demonstrations and workshops lead by KU students, staff, and faculty. Whenever possible, we serve as a resource for theatre education at Kansas secondary schools, through adjudication of productions, consultation, and other types of cooperation.

1.2.1.7 *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism.* *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (JDTC) was founded in 1986 at the University of Kansas by John Gronbeck-Tedesco and Paul Newell Campbell. The Journal publishes full-length articles that contribute to the varied conversations in dramatic theory and criticism, explore the relationship between theory and theatre practice, and/or examine recent scholarship by a single author.
Professor Scott Magelssen of Bowling Green State University is the current editor of *JDTC*, having replaced outgoing editor Iris Smith Fischer in the fall of 2010. Gronbeck-Tedesco (who was editor himself for 21 years) and Fischer still serve as the Journal's consulting editors. Theatre faculty Bial and Leon are members of the editorial board, which includes some of the leading scholars in the field.

*JDTC* is published twice each year by the Departments of Theatre and English with the support of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

### 1.2.2 Interdisciplinarity

Because the research conducted by many of the Theatre Department faculty is broadly interdisciplinary, many theatre courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels are cross-listed or taught with other programs such as: African & African-American Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, English, and Jewish Studies. Theatre faculty regularly serve on dissertation and exam committees in these and other units, including but not limited to: Dance, French & Italian, German, Spanish & Portuguese, and Music.

Conversely, theatre faculty and students benefit from a significant number of faculty in other units whose research and teaching touches on areas of theatre and performance that complement the strengths of the theatre faculty. Examples include but are in no way limited to: Iris Smith Fischer and Darren Cannady in English; Stuart Day and Paul Sneed in Spanish & Portuguese; Michelle Heffner Hayes in Dance; Michael Shaw and John Younger in Classics; Sherrie Tucker and Jake Dorman in American Studies; Peter Ukpokodu and Randal Jelks in African & African-American Studies; and Christopher Forth in Humanities and Western Civilization.

In the last five years, the Department has developed two initiatives to connect University Theatre programming to other units in and beyond the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences:

#### 1.2.2.1 Curricular Connections

*Curricular Connections* is an annual listing sent to instructors across campus that announces upcoming productions and suggests classes for which attending the play might prove valuable to the course’s mission. For example, our recent production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the first North American production of the play to use Original Pronunciation (OP), was publicized to instructors in Anthropology, Classics, English, History, Linguistics, Psychology, and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. The most recent edition of *Curricular Connections* may be found in Appendix 13.
Scene Partners. The Department of Theatre has a long tradition of welcoming distinguished artists and scholars to the University of Kansas. Each year, numbers of guest artists, researchers, and master teachers spend days—even weeks—on campus, giving our students further opportunities to work with theatre professionals and learn from leading theatre scholars. Stage directors and designers in residence bring their unique perspectives to University Theatre productions. Master teachers of acting, directing, voice, and movement complement and expand our theatre practice curriculum while visiting scholars enrich our courses in dramatic literature, theory, and theatre history. SCENE PARTNERS is a program of the Department of Theatre, but it reaches beyond theatre to benefit both University and Lawrence communities by bringing greater professional and educational enrichment to the arts.

The Department of Theatre Visiting Artists & Scholars Program is also an important source for international education at the University of Kansas. Recent guests to the program include visitors from the United Kingdom, Greece, Lithuania, Republic of Kosovo, China, and Israel. Since 2000, visitors to the department have included such international artists as Chen Shi-Zheng and Lei Guo-Hua, leading figures in Chinese Theatre; Romas Viksraitis, Artistic Director of Elfu Teatras in Lithuania, and Ireland’s Mangiare Theatre Company. American guest artists offering performances and workshops for our program have included the stage and film actor Andre DeShields; Bill Talen, known as "Reverend Billy and his Church of Stop Shopping"; prize-winning director Tazwell Thompson, and director/scholar Henry Miller.

The Department of Theatre is fortunate to have the support of its alumni who regularly return to campus to work with current students. Among our recent SCENE PARTNERS are playwright and director Neil LaBute, author of The Shape of Things and Reasons To Be Pretty; the Tony and Emmy Award-winning actor and singer Mandy Patinkin; the Tony Award-nominated lyricist and playwright Bill Russell, who came from New York to direct his musical Pageant, and James Still, nationally acclaimed playwright and director.

From the academic world, a number of leading scholars have visited our department to share their insights with our students, including Marvin Carlson from The City University of New York, Joseph Roach from Yale University, and Eli Simon, from the University of California, Irvine.
1.2.3 **Tradition**

A less obvious but no less important strength is the degree to which the Department honors its own rich history. The intensive nature of theatrical production ensures that by the time they graduate, most theatre students have forged stronger connections to the department and its faculty than is typical in “chalk and talk” disciplines. Significant faculty and staff time is spent in developing and nurturing these connections with alumni/alumnae.

The Department hosts two annual events – a “Theatre Rally” in the fall and a “Stage Supper” in the Spring at which faculty, staff, graduates, and members of our Friends of the Theatre (FROTH) organization have the opportunity to speak with current students about KU’s theatrical legacy, and to teach them about traditions such as the Kilty Kane, an annual award that has for more than fifty years been given to an outstanding graduate. The Kilty Kane recipient list includes three current KU faculty members, one current KU staff member, and many distinguished artists and scholars, including the current president of the American Society for Theatre Research.

The Department maintains a Professional Advisory Board that meets on campus approximately once every other year. Members include alumna and alumni of both the graduate and undergraduate programs, and includes several distinguished performers, scholars, and arts administrators.

Approximately every five years, the University Theatre stages an event called “Alums Come Home” that invites all theatre alumnae and alumni to join us in Lawrence for a weekend of celebrations, performances, workshops and other events. More than a reunion, Alums Come Home also provides a forum in which past graduates can share their professional experience and connections with current students. The fourth and fifth iterations of Alums Come Home were held in 2002 and 2007 respectively.
1.3 Unit Challenges

1.3.1 Recruitment and Retention of Students

While the Theatre Department devotes significant resources to the recruitment of students, we are limited in our ability to compete for and retain the state and nation’s top theatre students for a number of reasons:

1.3.2 Location: while Lawrence and metropolitan Kansas City offer many resources for theatre artists and scholars, they cannot offer the access to “the scene” that is available at schools in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles (or even Minneapolis, Austin, and Denver). While changing the location of the University is obviously impossible, the Department is working on strategies to change the perception some prospective students have of Kansas as a detour on the road to a career in theatre. Faculty and staff spend significant amounts of time communicating with, meeting, and giving tours to prospective students, and alumni networks such as the recently formed Hollywood Hawks help KU’s out-of-state visibility and reassure potential students that “you can get there from here.”

Many mid-American theatre programs produce periodic showcases in New York and/or Los Angeles to expose their students to “the industry” and vice-versa, and the Department has explored this possibility, recognizing that such an endeavor would almost certainly be contingent on regular fundraising targeted specifically for this purpose.

1.3.3 Financial support. We often lack the ability to offer financial aid packages comparable to those of our peer (and “aspirational peer”) institutions. Favorable cost-of-living calculations do help us stretch our limited budget for graduate teaching assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships. However, much of this support, especially GTA support, is contingent on state funding, which limits our ability to guarantee aid packages for three years (MFA) or four to five years (PhD), which is the norm in the field. The Department has been seeking strategies for increasing student aid, and has run some small pilot programs such as a “top-up” assistantship supplement provided by the Hall Center for the Humanities to help recruit an incoming doctoral student (in the most recent admissions cycle, the Hall Center funding helped to bring in a highly-qualified candidate who chose KU over several peer programs to which he had been admitted). We have also begun allocating some of our differential tuition dollars to support graduate student travel to conferences and workshops, which helps with both retention and placement.
1.3.4 Recruitment and Retention of Faculty

The Department has been very successful in recruitment and retention of faculty over the last several years. Since 2005, three theatre faculty have been added and there have been no terminations (voluntary or involuntary). However, this followed a series of retirements and other faculty departures, so it is only recently that the Department has begun to approach “full strength.” In previous strategic planning sessions, theatre faculty have identified a playwrighting specialist and a Latino/a or Asian theatre specialist as top priorities for future hires. As with all units at KU, there is some concern that multiple years of flat salaries will lead the most talented faculty to seek employment elsewhere, but thus far this has not happened; whether this is due to the Department’s strengths in faculty retention, which include strong mentoring of junior faculty, excellent staff support both within and without the unit, and a collegial environment, or due to the overall national economy remains to be seen.

1.3.4.1 Five to Ten Year Outlook. The Department is facing the likelihood of several retirements in the next decade. Professor Wright has announced his intention to retire at the end of the Spring 2011 semester. If Theatre is to maintain and/or grow its research and teaching capacity in critical areas such as acting/directing and theatre design, it is essential that the Department and the College work together to develop a strategy for how to replace the more than 150 years of experience that are likely to be lost to retirement in the coming years.

A similar challenge faces the Department regarding likely retirements of key staff members. Because of the highly specialized nature of production responsibilities, staff responsibilities cannot easily be redistributed in response to personnel changes. The contributions of a skilled costume cutter/drafter, for example, cannot be replaced by reassigning FTE from a master electrician or a public relations specialist, despite the fact that all three employees may appear as “Program Assistant” in the HR/EO database. A strategy will therefore need to be developed for succession planning at the staff level.

1.3.5 Time to Degree

Like all units throughout the university, the Theatre Department has had issues in the past with helping students move through their degree programs in a timely fashion. However, the Department has made significant strides toward this goal in recent years:
1.3.5.1 **Undergraduates.** Following the campus-wide emphasis on “Graduate in Four,” the theatre faculty undertook a major overhaul of our BA and BGS curricula, reducing the overall number hours required in the major and allowing students greater flexibility in how they fulfill those hours. The new majors were inaugurated in Fall 2009 so it is still a bit too early to tell how much this will impact graduation rates. The creation of a part-time staff position (paid for and administered through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) to advise undergraduate majors has significantly helped students navigate the general education curriculum and other complexities beyond the Department’s control.

1.3.5.2 **Graduates.** Beginning in Fall 2006, the Department made a concerted effort to clear the “backlog” of ABDs and other graduate students who were not making satisfactory progress toward the degree. Through a combination of intensive mentoring of dissertations to completion, improvements in student evaluation and record keeping, and some “tough love,” the Department can now report that there are no graduate students on its rolls who entered the University prior to 2005, and only two graduate students who entered prior to 2007. Current students receive an annual written evaluation which includes a faculty generated assessment of their progress toward degree, and the majority of current students are making satisfactory progress in this regard. As with recruitment, financial support is the most significant challenge to reducing time to degree. The Department is unable to offer significant non-teaching fellowships to graduate students, a lack that proves especially crucial at the dissertation stage. Some improvement has been gained by encouraging and mentoring students in seeking external funding, but there is a limit to the availability of such funding in the discipline of theatre.

1.3.6 **Financial Goals**

The Department is currently in the process of developing a Vision and Values statement to assist KU Endowment Association in prioritizing Theatre’s needs for the upcoming capital campaign. We have not reached the stage of identifying specific financial goals, but among the items already mentioned by stakeholders are:

- Improvements to classroom and production facilities and equipment
- Increased funding for graduate teaching and research assistantships including dissertation fellowships
- The development of an endowed professorship in theatre (surprisingly, given the history sketched out above, the Department has never had a named chair).
- Increased support for faculty and student research
1.3.7 Strategic Planning

The Department has not been asked to develop a formal strategic plan since the 2009 reorganization. The following is drawn from the Strategic Plan drafted by the Department of Theatre and Film and approved by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in Fall 2006 (note that progress has already been made toward many of these goals):

What do we want to do in the future?
If the cultural and intellectual resources of our university and our society are to make a meaningful impact on our students, we must find a way of discussing our “binaries” (theatre and film, studies and production) that does not assume a priori the intellectual or moral superiority of one term over the other. The ideal department is aware of the past while always looking forward to new means of expression. We need an ongoing conversation and prioritization about the relationship between the Department’s various major endeavors and its resources. We must continue to develop resources so that we will not fall behind in having state-of-the-art facilities and programs. We need high-powered research and artistic initiatives that put the synergies of theory and practice on display. Recruitment in a number of areas needs to be addressed. Specifically, there is a lack of ethnic and national diversity among faculty, staff and students that adequately reflects the country’s population. Retirements of key faculty are imminent; we must hire faculty to sustain programs, avoid loss of national reputation, enhance and internationalize our programs.

Initiatives:
Undergraduate Programs: Graduate in Four departmental task force: review of undergraduate curriculum to strengthen the synergy in the department and work towards stronger honors, interdisciplinary, international and study abroad programs. Work towards stronger student leadership. Develop BFA in Musical Theatre.
Graduate Programs: Develop strategy for more assistantships, fellowships and stipends, graduate student travel funds; possible initiative for stronger masters programs with an emphasis on performance and production.
Production Programs: Stay current with new technologies; work towards more edgy and risky production choices; develop funding opportunities; work towards co-production of film and theatre; enhance relationship between studies and production.
Facilities: Replace current production facility; develop new design and technology studio to enhance masters programs.
Resources and Fund-Raising: Develop equipment and technology fund; strengthen departmental development fund; develop student travel fund.
College and University: Become a resource as a department to the college and university through interdisciplinary work, special projects, and fund-raising.