

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

**2010 Assessment of Drama Instruction
Graduating Student Exit Survey Results**

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Student Learning Outcomes for Bachelor of Arts in Drama

1. Encourage an appreciation for the skills, contributions, and importance of theatre to development of one's community.
2. Gain knowledge of the history of theatre.
3. Increase creativity in thinking and writing.
4. Discover deeper critical and analytic thought about the world through the study of theatre.
5. Use one's collaborative skills in order to communicate effectively.
6. Develop curious, compassionate, and engaged world citizens.
7. Effectively engage in performance and production.

Curricular Alignment

Required Courses	Outcome #1	Outcome #2	Outcome #3	Outcome #4	Outcome #5	Outcome #6	Outcome #7
10	X	X		X	X	X	X
15	X	X		X	X	X	X
30A-B-C	X		X		X		X
40A-B-C	X	X		X		X	
50A-E	X		X		X		X
120A-B-C	X	X		X		X	
101's	X				X		X
103-129	X	X	X	X		X	

Drama 10	Production Theory
Drama 15	Performance Now
Drama 30A-B-C	Acting (studio)
Drama 40A-B-C	Development of Drama (survey)
Drama 50A-B-C-D-E	Design – 3 quarters - lighting/scenic/sound/costume/stage management (studio)
Drama 120A-B-C	Development of Theatre (survey)
Drama 101	Theatre Production - 8 units
Drama 103 – 129	Periods and Genres/ Performance and Culture - 4 courses (survey)

Evidence of Student Learning

Direct Measures	Indirect Measures
Capstone assignments	Course evaluations
Research papers/reports	Student surveys
Oral presentations	Job placement
Performances/auditions	Student written self-reflections

INTRODUCTION

In the Drama Department at the University of California, Irvine assessment is ongoing process. With the opening of each theatre production – main stage or workshop - the faculty engages in discourse regarding all areas of student work. Students with the support of faculty mentors, engage as designers, actors, stage managers, and backstage support collaborating and investing in the creation of a ‘capstone’ project – a show!

The question we asked was how do the students perceive their learning upon completing the degree. We also wanted to find out how well the acting series prepared our students for the audition process – a mainstay in the professional life of an actor.

The purpose of this report is to present findings from the 2010 Assessment of the BA in Drama program.

This study used two elements:

- Exit-survey for graduating seniors (winter, spring, & summer 2010)
- Assessment of the undergraduate actors during the fall quarter mega-auditions

The first tool – a drama graduate survey – was emailed to 112 drama graduates from Winter, Spring, and Fall quarters in 2010. The sixteen survey questions were designed to compare faculty-developed learning outcomes with the student perspective and experience. Additional open-ended questions, offered students an opportunity to expound on their personal views of the program and its curriculum. The survey request was emailed multiple times over the summer. Of these senior drama majors, 41 responded via email to the online EEE survey post-graduation, a return rate of about 35%.

The second tool – the acting rubric – was implemented September 21 and 22 at the fall quarter ‘mega’ acting auditions. These annual auditions, open to all drama majors, are employed to cast the department’s main stage season productions. This is often the first encounter freshmen and incoming transfer students have with the acting and directing faculty, offering the faculty a chance to create an initial assessment of new students as well as re-evaluate returning student actors. Over 225 students auditioned, with about 50% being evaluated by Cynthia Bassham, Head of Undergraduate Acting, and three current graduate acting students. All the assessors teach 30A-B-C, the beginning acting series required of all drama undergraduates.

RESULTS: GRADUATING SENIOR EXIT SURVEY

The seven questions regarding faculty-developed learning outcomes received positive responses from the graduates. The answers to the open-ended questions involved honest, thoughtful input and revealed more specific points of contention within the curriculum for future consideration and examination by the faculty.

Drama Learning Outcomes

Each respondent chose to what extent – large, some, small, or none – their Drama education fulfilled the learning outcomes. Those answering each question ‘to a *large* extent’:

1. Encourage appreciation of the skills, contributions and importance of theatre...66% (88%)
2. Further knowledge of history of theatre...78% (100%)
3. Increase creativity in thinking and writing...39% (90%)
4. Deepen critical and analytical thought about the world...44% (93%)
5. Teach them to use collaborative skills to communicate effectively...41% (85%)
6. Develop them into a more curious, compassionate, and engaged world citizen...49% (88%)
7. Help them effectively engage in performance and production...59% (81%)

When combining ‘to *some* extent’ and ‘to a *large* extent’, the percentages increase significantly, as indicated by the second number. These results suggest that the expected learning outcomes are aligned with the Drama curriculum.

Student Capstone Experiences

Capstone experiences promote the demonstration of expertise through a project, internship, research, or performance using in their training and education in a specific discipline. Although Drama does not require capstones, we were eager to discover how often these opportunities were afforded our students. Four survey questions pondered these high-level experiential opportunities. Respondents answered either Yes or No.

While in the Drama program students:

1. Worked on a project/ production with a drama faculty member...78%
2. Conducted research with a drama faculty member...32%.
3. Engaged in a student project as a designer, director, actor, or stage manager...78%.
4. Participated in an internship or professional drama experience...44%.

Overall Course Quality

The final two quantitative questions asked about the overall quality of the two kinds of courses offered in drama – lecture and studio.

Respondents found:

- Academic drama courses intellectually stimulating...88%.
- Studio drama courses artistically stimulating...98%.

Qualitative Responses

Perhaps most informative were the free-form short answer questions. Graduates could choose to share personal thoughts about their Drama experiences and the influence these opportunities have on their lives – past, present, and future.

Students' extra curricular activities included:

- Undergrad / grad director workshops.
- Live Nude People
- Commedia dell Arte in Arezzo, Italy.
- Hillel events
- Pipeline Players Ensemble
- Multi-cultural events
- Dance classes
- Voice lessons
- The New York Satellite Program

Students' answers about what they found most valuable about the Drama education were varied. Analytical and writing skills, history courses, the Business of Showbiz class, musical theatre courses, stage management – all were mentioned with admiration and thanks. Many felt the knowledgeable faculty prepared them well for the professional world of theatre. Students felt their education “opened doors” and provided an “opportunity to create art everywhere I go!”

Question 15 asked students to connect their Drama education and their future plans. Grads noted that they could have used more training in their craft, but more felt “adequately prepared” with “more passion/appreciation” for the art of theatre. One student noted “All the opportunities I have had to work professionally in the theatre are a direct effect of the UCIrvine theatre program!”

To encourage constructive criticism, the last question asked for input regarding the Drama undergraduate experience. Students wrote candidly, sharing concerns about grad student casting, outdated programming, student workshop support, need for faculty-taught acting classes, required crew hours, and limited transfer student-faculty contact. They also expressed the desire for more elective upper-division studio courses. These comments bring valuable information for our faculty to consider in the year ahead. In these difficult economic times, faculty and students can search for solutions together.

Often graduates expressed their appreciation as this student's final remarks demonstrate:

“I absolutely cherish my time at UCI. In addition to receiving a great academic education, I gained an incredible network of teachers, peers, and professionals in my field and a greater understanding of the industry as a whole. I had the opportunity to work with passionate and gifted instructors who gave me the guidance and stepping-stones needed to launch into my professional career. After graduating UCI, I feel completely prepared, inspired and supported.”

ACTING ASSESSMENT

Most Drama students enter the University planning to become actors. The Fall Quarter ‘Mega’ Auditions provide an opportunity for all students to be seen by the directors of the year’s major productions. Each actor is given 2 minutes to perform 2 monologues – a classical and a contemporary piece as well as a 16 bar musical theatre song if they are auditioning for the musical.

At the 2010 auditions, the Head of Undergraduate Acting Cynthia Bassham and three graduate acting students agreed to assess two days of auditions. We discussed the categories and designed the rubric together. This assessment measures five elements of acting – concentration, imagination, physical action, vocal expression, and impact/impression – those most critical to an actor’s audition success. On September 22 and 23, the four-member team joined the directors and designers in the auditions and assessed 138 student actors – 40 men and 98 women. The student’s name was included in the rubric, but we did not consider year in school or theatre experience. These factors may be important to include in follow-up studies.

NAME:

DATE:

Concentration	Imagination	Physical Action	Vocal Expression	Impact/Impression	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally immersed in the character and in the style of the scene. -Actor and character are completely integrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in the “magic if,” endows work with vocal/physical ideas and communicates a depth of character’s wants and behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Puts character’s behaviors “in the moment” and propels them by character motivation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent projection; diction is thrilling and appropriate; voice is integrated with character and space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Highly effective engagement of audience •Very neat, pulled-together appearance, •Confident, cordial, polite when in the audition room
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains focus throughout the scene. • Maintains own character’s unique vocal and physical expressions. • Works toward the style of the scene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the text of the scene and creatively invents vocal and physical behaviors that support the idea of the character. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All vocal and physical actions are intentionally encoded to propel the textual conflict, subtext, and style. • Blocking has the appearance of being character generated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good projection; good diction • Appropriate use of voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Appears confident and mostly engaging • Appearance is neat • Mostly appropriate and polite behavior in the audition room
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mind seems to wander and begins to watch own performance. • Loses uniqueness of his character. • May not grasp the scene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly plays the conflict and may not manifest behaviors of a 3-dimensional role (a stereotyped character). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is not always playing what the character wants. • Actions are confusing. • Plays the blocking as blocking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some difficulty with projection • Some diction problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Seldom conveys confidence or believability •Seldom polite •Appearance unkempt /not pulled together •Somewhat inappropriate behavior in audition room
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actor’s eyes watch audience. • May miss lines or blocking. • Has difficulty staying focused. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Says lines only. • Little characterization is communicated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May misuse the stage. • Blocking movement is unmotivated. • Stands on stage facing audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to understand and/or cannot be heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Unprepared and self-conscious • Completely unkempt appearance • Rude when in the audition room.

SCORES:	Concentration	Imagination	Physical Action	Vocal Expression	Overall
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Key Findings

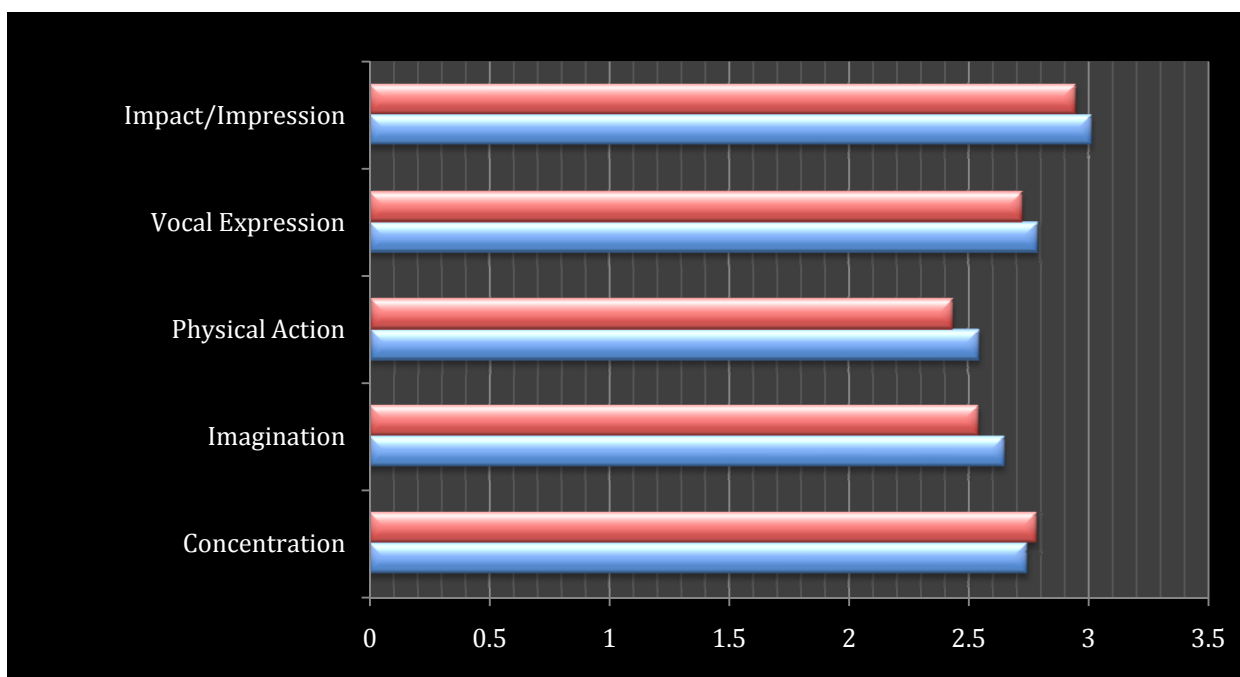
Out of a possible 20, the average total score was 13.39 (13.66 for men and 13.40 for women). A high score of 18.1 and low score of 7.5 demonstrates the range of abilities exhibited in the fall auditions.

Categories

Student actors scored lower than expected. They were most successful in creating an impact or impression on their viewers. Confidence, risk-taking, and effective engagement of the audience are demonstrated strengths of the undergraduate actors - Men (3.01) and Women (2.95). The Physical Action area, involving character generated behaviors and movement received the lowest rating (Men – 2.55 and Women – 2.46). The actors blocked their actions or misused the stage space, prohibiting the characters from appearing ‘in the moment’.

Female / Male Comparison of Category Results

Red - Female Blue – Male



The adjudicators found many of the actors to have diction problems, lack of focus, and a tendency to rush, particularly when working with the classical language. Poor posture and extraneous movement are negatives to an actor. Special note was made when an actor moved seamlessly from one piece to the next. Good recoveries, excellent projection, and character specificity brought an actor high marks in multiple areas. In addition, a friendly demeanor and ease when entering the room gave the assessors a good feeling about the actor even before they started their monologues. Clothing and shoe choices distracted the assessors.

EVIDENCE REVIEW and RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the evidence review process will be considered when revising the drama curriculum to align courses with desired students learning outcomes. The survey results articulate students’ beliefs regarding the value of their drama education. The faculty will review the results of the survey on an annual basis, modifying the survey to assess curriculum changes and to gain student input. The acting audition assessment illuminated ways in which the acting training curriculum can be expanded to better address the needs of our incoming students. The assessment provides a baseline for comparison in future years. We will consider comparing freshmen and transfer students results with the current students’ outcomes in next year’s auditions.