Unit Plan
Chabot College Theater Arts: Be More Alive

Prepared by
Rachel LePell
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This document is update of our previous Unit Plan, submitted in December of 2006. It includes a “preamble” of sorts, that incorporates our current philosophy on teaching and learning, and the evolving need to account for student learning through SLOs, as well as a reflection on the Unit Plan process itself.

Most important points of our plan: our most urgent concerns for 2008-2009

I: A full-time classified staff position—scene shop foreperson.
Rationale: Our current faculty member who runs the shop needs to be able to devote his professional skills to building our program in innovative ways, such as building our connection to a film program, developing curriculum, establishing a theater major, writing grants, and serving on college committees. A shop foreman could instruct and oversee students who are learning basic carpentry and other shop skills, as well as assist in other technical aspects of theater productions, such as lighting a sound, two areas where we are greatly deficient at this time. We have long been asking for such a position and we know that the PAC staff support this request fully because their programs often need the shop to be in top working condition to successfully mount the visiting performances.

II: An increase in our supplies and personnel budgets for 2008-2009.
Rationale: We have had to use our “co-curricular” money for Royalties and for supplies as well; in order for us to produce A Children’s show, a large scale musical or play, and two pieces in the fall, we must increase our supply budget to keep up with inflation and demand.

III: Increased marketing resources, including web presence for shows.
Rationale: We need the resources for a high end brochure that will market both our shows and our academic program. We also need Internet presence either through the Chabot web pages or separately. But we must be able to advertise our shows online somewhere, somehow, and not as “random Myspace” accounts. This could be a line item in our department budget (if we add additional money) or come from a more general college fund.

IV: Exploration of Distant Education Options
Rationale: We may want to increase our productivity by adding one or more online classes, seeing as how this is becoming part one of the waves of higher education.
Preamble

It is with some hesitation that I submit this Unit Plan.

Notice that I say “submit” this Unit Plan. It is not the doing of it, the self-reflection and analysis that I object to. In fact, I am one of the spokespeople around here who cry for substantive dialogue about our work. It is not only necessary for professional growth, it is imperative as critically thinking citizens in a complex world. I “submit” it for another reason. I do it for compliance.

Compliance is important – we are participants in a large system, a system, that while being imperfect, still manages to function. I fully accept the necessity to have continuous accountability and analysis of our professional work. I fully accept that reflecting upon all aspects of our educational program is valuable and can lead to rigorous discourse, discussion, and possible improvement.

But…
I have now composed 2 complete unit plans, along with a program review document a few years back, and have not once had a substantive conversation with one of the readers of these documents concerning these documents. In fact, they become “academic” in the worst sense of the word; they seem to fall into a distant file of “completed, checked off.”
I have expressed my concern about this on not just one occasion, by writing directly to the IPBC committee, by writing to the top administrators of the college, and to my colleagues as well.
Again, no response.

Now, I’m not naïve – I don’t expect an administrator to sit down with each faculty member and have hours of discussion about the state of his/her programs. This is, of course, impossible at a place as extended as Chabot College. One short meeting to discuss the salient points perhaps, one short email that reveals a reading and thought process of some sort—these would likely suffice.

So…The truth, that I am very much resisting, is this: I do this for compliance. The “c” word, which, perhaps, on a second thought, is not as egregious as all that.
Much has changed for us in the realm of SLOs and the concept of The Learning College since the inception of this Unit Plan. The following will encapsulate some of those changes, but it is important to note that I am constantly engaged in active discussions about student learning in the theater, as well as in the arts as a whole, and indeed, in terms of learning throughout the college. I engage in these discussions not out of compliance or academic drudgery; I do it because it is my lifeblood here, it is one of the fires in the cauldron of my spirit. If I did not look at learning—thinking—exploring—changing—I would be lost.

Backstory: When I first approached the “Learning College” concept, I came with eyes wide open. Hooray, an institution that explores learning in addition to dispensing information. I jumped in, started splashing around, and making a mess. When one of my learned colleagues did more holistic research on the heuristic nature of the Learning College, I began to lose some of my playful enthusiasm. Suspicion and cynicism lurked only slightly around the corner. Soon, my pool of water looked a little murky, felt a little more sticky.

Trying to sort out fact from fiction, advertising from editorials, the water not only grew more opaque, it began to weigh more like quicksand. Soon “evidence” of learning began to sound like it belonged in a courtroom drama, with the taxpayers and politicians (and therefore top education administrators) lined up on one side of the judge, and a few “whiners” on the other.

I have come to agree that the SLO movement is not about learning at all, but about accountability. I have grown to see “accountability” as a political buzzword, a cultural zeitgeist, a slightly disabled bandwagon onto which taxpayers are jumping full force. It has already infected K-12 education in America, and it will do the same to us. It will do it in a specious and insidious way – by making us “responsible” for our own assessment, thus eliminating our gripes with the powers above us, making us “cut our own throats” as it were. Of course, this is on a bad day. On a good day, we are in charge of our own assessments—writing and composing our SLOs like the good schoolchildren that we are—and believing that this is a step toward the autonomy that we all crave and deserve, being in higher education and all.

Now there are products to buy to assist us in these assessments—software, conferences galore, workshops, training sessions, allocations of government money in the form of grants, etc…Of course—capitalism will not miss a beat when it comes to opportunity for profit.

Here’s another angle: the taxpayers are tired of hearing about college professors and other educators wasting their precious dollars on self-indulgent lectures and self-serving lesson plans. They need re-assurance that “those people are not just doing the same thing over and over and over and never changing anything.” This is a legitimate gripe about any profession. And in the public sector, we are subjects of the body politic. Accountability is the perfect panacea. Americans want bang for their buck—they’ve throw billions of dollars to public education for a few generations now and what is the bang they’ve received? Complaints of “failures” are on every newspaper page in the country. They want proof. They demand results. Thus, the SLO movement, disguised as “The Learning College.”
We swallow it…blind and happy…to be “investigating learning” with all kinds of new toys—from software to rubrics. Like we’ve somehow managed to avoid thinking about learning all these years….hum…

In the meantime, we write our SLOs and our assessment techniques. We participate in the cycle.
But I will not “go gently…”
Thus, this note.

I have submitted our SLOs to the SLO committee.
I wrote my SLOs as directly and honestly as I could have. And I have discovered new-found assessments within my own work—I have discovered that I am “assessing” my students’ learning for roughly 90% of the time in class, just by observing how they sit, what expressions change or don’t change on their faces, do they tip their heads slightly to the side, do they sit up straighter, or slouch more, is there a slight flush of pink on their cheeks as they listen, watch, read, or speak?

Do I measure these? Damn straight I do. Do I adjust my teaching accordingly? Damn straight I do. Do I have charts of data about this?
No.

By working in Theater Arts – I aspire to make my students be “more alive” and nothing less. Will this be sustained beyond the present moment?
Will this serve in the Office of Records, somewhere in Sacramento? Not likely. But it’s the truth.
Part I Description of the Unit (same as before)

Theater Arts: Be More Alive
The Theater Arts Department at Chabot College is a vital, integral, and active participant in the creation and maintenance of the cultural vibrancy of the college.

The Theater Arts Department is dedicated to educating the community college student as a whole theater artist, with an emphasis on story-telling as key to the art of the theater: story-telling has been and always will be central to the health and evolution of our culture, as our values, our ideas, our very identities shape--and are shaped by--the stories we tell in various forms. Embedded in these stories, are always resonant and often timeless questions that demand reflection, invite exploration, and invoke possible change. And so, our goals in theater are often no less than this: we aim to change the audience, and we start by changing ourselves.

Theater Arts supports and produces original plays, as well as a more traditional season of work. We produce Emerging Work, a series that is dedicated to developing new work; this is linked to our dramatic writing course, which is the first stage in this process. We also produce previously published plays (classics and contemporary work), small and large musicals, as well as children’s shows and plays for teenagers. We have produced an average of 13 shows a year for the past decade.

We cultivate and practice creative work, while we simultaneously demand critical thinking. Sometimes these two activities appear to run counter to each other. But they can be, and perhaps should be, merged in the mature artistic endeavor. Creativity is not void of critical thought, and critical thought need not be void of creative expression.

Story-telling is not “child’s play.” In our classes and in our productions, we ask these questions: What does the story mean? How is it being told? Why is it being told? Who’s telling it and to whom is it intended? How do the lines, the actors’ choices, the lights, the set, the costumes, the props, the very poster and program designs contribute to the audiences’ ability to receive this story in its fullness and complexity? Why bother telling this story? What’s at stake if we fail to tell it? What does this story have to do with me, with others, with the community in which I live? How does this story connect to other aspects of our lives, are there analogies, metaphors, echoes of meaning?

We educate the whole theater artist. We educate students in acting, writing, design, research, technical theater, directing, and management. We do not “train” actors in a particular school of acting, but emphasize the whole of playmaking, so that when students leave our program, they are inspired and educated to make theater happen or use the theater as a way of learning, a way of exploring ideas. Therefore, students in our program practice all parts of theater. They may apply these skills to a theater program in a 4 year school, or they may apply these skills within their future jobs, or they may find a career in the theater or a related field.
Whatever their paths, these students will have a solid foundation of practicing the art of theater, of story-telling; therefore, they may live deeper and more enriched lives.

Part II  Accomplishments and Goals

Accomplishments in 2008 that reflect the college strategic plan of becoming a Learning Centered College, with an emphasis on student learning outcomes (SLOs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Activities Undertaken</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Strat. p1. ref.</th>
<th>Finished?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SLOs at course level</td>
<td>Draft for TA 1</td>
<td>Goal #1</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SLOs at program level</td>
<td>Discussion (recorded)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning Communities</td>
<td>Springboard participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exploration of Learning in a Dramatic Form</td>
<td>Production of <em>It Falls</em>…</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Springboard participation in Learning Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outreach to African American students</td>
<td>Springboard participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
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</tbody>
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Goals for 2008 that reflect the strategic plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Str. Pl. ref.</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SLOs assessment methods</td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>5/08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2  | Exploration of Reading as College-wide Learning Goal | #1  
|     | i. Meetings and curriculum changes | Sp 08                      |               |          |
|     | ii. Participation in Staff Development |                            |               |          |
| 3  | Early Development of a play that explores Learning | #1  
|     | Meetings/discussions/readsings     |                             |               | ?        |
| 4  | Community visibility               | Musical                     |               | Sp 08    |

The next page of goals includes the above, plus the other accomplishments and goals of our department.
A more complete list of Accomplishments and Goals for Theater Arts

1. Staff meeting/discussion and draft of SLOs for Introductory Course
2. Staff meeting/discussion of Learning Goals for the Program
3. Traveling to National Conference with a play that explores learning: *It Falls…*
4. Participation in Springboard, development of Learning Communities
   a. Theater Arts 10 and English 102
5. Continued framing of theater projects as Learning Communities.
6. Increased productivity – reduction in staff and course offerings
7. Successful season of shows (classic and contemporary)
8. Increase participation in the KC/ACTF regional acting competition
9. Curriculum Development – acting for camera, revision of rubric
10. Collaborations with other departments
    Digital Media: Creation of animated short, “E-Girl” (Mark Schaeffer and Rachel LePell, co-creators)
    Music department – planning for musicals
    Art Gallery – Student original play in gallery
    “Art Matters” – Learning Community established within art history, humanities, theater arts.
    “Work Experience Grant” proposed and granted for Theater, Electronic Music and Digital Media
11. Strategic plan draft for department
12. Production Book for all members of production
Goals: 2008

1. Increase visibility to community by increasing ticket sales and marketing
2. Begin development of new play that explores the unique community of Hayward
3. Compose a brochure.
4. Establish a theater arts major
5. Establish a Summer institute that includes one-act plays for high school students and directing opportunities for Chabot Theater students.
6. Improvement of Graphics and Department marketing strategy
7. Curriculum development – new courses and configuration of TA 50
8. Continued presence in the KC/ACTF conference
9. Re-visit the Season selection
   a. Develop outreach show for teens, perhaps Shakespeare
10. Production of Musical – raise visibility and success
11. Look for grant and/or grant writer to help with children’s theater funding
12. Improve efficiency of Costume Shop
13. Hire students through work-study for front of house
14. Collaborations
   a. Business: marketing season and/or shows
   b. “Art Matters” discussions of important ideas in material
   c. English Department: using plays as curriculum
   d. Finding “stake-holders” in new material outside of theater arts
   e. Work on the Work Experience Grant
15. Establish ongoing contact with San Jose State for articulation
16. Establish contact with Cal State East Bay
17. Increase participation in all courses
The Theater Arts faculty has engaged in several discussions, both recorded and unrecorded, regarding SLOs and The Learning College concept.

We have an array of opinions about the ability to “measure” and “assess” certain aspects of our program. We agree that there are some discreet skills that can and should be assessed, and these are technical in nature: i.e. do students know certain terms, can they demonstrate critical thinking in their analysis of material, both written and performed.

However, because our program is designed to educate the whole theater artist, we also agree that Student Learning Outcomes are often too reductive in exploring the maturation of the student artist and encouraging creative work.

We are not being “lazy” about accountability – quite the contrary. We are rigorously exploring what we do, why we do it, how we do it, and how we will assess it, as educators.

We have formed rubrics for several courses. However, the over-arching aim of our area has more to do with the subtle emotional and intellectual development of the student artist. We agree that we cannot measure and assess whether a student sees “himself” in a role, and learns something about his own identity because of it. We cannot measure whether a student experiences a “creative inspiration, or rush” when attempting to design, direct, or execute an artistic choice. We cannot measure a student’s motivation and execution of having “something to say” and therefore writing furiously in our dramatic writing course.

This information is here in our Unit Plan because we agree it is substantive to the health of our community of learners, our community of scholars, our community of artists.

In summary: some aspects of some courses lend themselves to SLOs – Others may be damaged by reducing the education to measurable outcomes.

Below is an example of the contrasting kinds of SLOs within our area.

Theater Arts 1: Introduction to Acting:
Upon completion of the course, students will demonstrate:
1. The stage floor, including upstage, downstage, right, left, apron
2. Shorthand notes for blocking
3. Building a character
4. Playing an intention or action
5. Breaking down a scene or speech into “beats”
6. The 4th wall
7. Teamwork/Collaboration

Theater Arts 10 Theater Appreciation
Upon completion of the course students will demonstrate:
1. a clear (momentarily) vision of the theater artist’s work
2. an ability to see/hear/touch/taste/smell with greater intensity
3. an increased motivation to witness live performance
4. a synthesis of responses to a play, both synesthetic and analytic
5. a heightened awareness of the live audience contribution to a live performance
6. reflection upon the layer of the truth of their own lives – a step on their own developmental path

Part V Requests for Additional Resources (from 2006)

a. Equipment requests
b. Equipment on Maintenance Contracts
c. Supplies and Services Augmentation Requests
d. Professional Development
e. Ideas for Grants
f. Proposal for New and Improvement Initiatives
   Including Basic Skills proposal and further description of the project
Part V, part C
Supplies and Services Augmentation Request

Annual Budget from the district for the years 2004 – 2008

Personnel: 6000.00 (this is for lighting designers, sound designers, costumers, scenic design, as well as some technical coordination jobs)

Supplies: 5500.00 (this is for costumes, sets, lights, props, dry cleaning, graphics, photos)

Royalties: 1000.00 (all material requires some kind of royalty fee)

***For 2008-09, We are requesting a Cost of Living increase for our Personnel Budget of 2000.00 because we are trying to pay competitive wages and hold on to good employees. We have had to go to our “savings” in co-curricular to pay for the increased demands of our professional specialists, due to bigger and more frequent productions.

We are requesting an increase of our supply budget of 2000.00 to build the Spring musicals.

We are requesting an increase of 2000.00 in our Royalty budget because the cost of Royalty and Rentals for musicals alone exceed 2000.00 and we’d like to tap this fund for participation in our annual Kennedy Center/American College Theater Festival Fees.
D
Professional Development

We will look to SD to help fund conferences and events, as we have in the past.

Conferences funded in part by Staff Development in 2008.

1. American College theater Festival Participation
   February 2008
E

Ideas for Grants

Proposal Abstract

Project Description/Objectives:

We have two areas that need additional funding support:
1. Children’s Theater
2. The Development of a new play that explores the humanity and complexity of learning. (#2 will be further addressed in part F of this document)

Children’s Theater Grant Idea: (this will need further development in conjunction with our current children’s theater coordinator and part-time instructor, Linda Amayo, who has fleshed out a future job description and budget breakdown).

Objective: Expand our children’s theater program by 50%.

We want to expand the offerings in children’s theater by paying a stipend of 5000 – 6000 dollars to an “artistic director” for the program. Currently, the person who coordinates our children’s theater program is paid for 3 contact hours a week, when the work for producing, directing, and coordinating an audience for a show requires at least twice this amount of time.

This person, now being paid a competitive wage, could build the audience for our children’s shows by maintaining and increasing our contacts with feeder schools, primary, middle and secondary. This is our target audience for children’s theater and requires vigilant and through marketing. This person could also develop curriculum integration for this audience, therefore enriching the theater experience for both the participants in the shows and the kids who see the shows.

It is our long-term goal to have some kind of “touring” opportunities for shows that address our target audience.

Strategic Plan Priorities:

Chabot is in the process of being a cultural center and leader of the arts for this community. Having a vibrant children’s theater affords thousands of young people to come to our campus, participate in an artistic, cultural event, and bring that experience home to their families, who live in our immediate community.

As a Learning College, the theater program continues to explore learning on many levels; doing shows for kids has a clear objective: to reach, to move, and to expose young audiences to multi-cultural ideas and forms of expression. Our students in these shows would function as “instructors” in workshops with audience members.