

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Academic Program Review**

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM**  
**Performing Arts and Social Justice**  
**College of Arts and Sciences**

**EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS**

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**CAMPUS VISIT:**

April 27-29, 2016

The review team read the *Self Study* written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were also provided with a variety of materials about the College and the University.

**1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee’s rating.**

The reviewers gave the program a rating of “very good” (p. 3). The report notes that the Performing Arts and Social Justice (PASJ) program was listed in *American Theatre*, “a preeminent publication in theatre arts”, as “one of the only three undergraduate programs in American universities that provide students with practical and theoretical tools for social action and civic engagements through the arts” (p.3). The program “has the potential” to be an “excellent program” with additional “support from the university” and increased “structure from the department” (p.3).

**2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

- According to the report, the PASJ curriculum “sets the pace for other departments” (p.5), and “does a very good job of educating students in the values and kinds of knowledge particular to each constituent discipline” (p. 4). The PASJ “curriculum supports” the “admirably ambitious” instructional outcomes of the program (p. 7).

- The review team describes PASJ's facilities as being the "Achilles heel of the department" (p.6). The challenges associated with the facilities are what was "primarily responsible for bringing the program's rating down to "very good" from "excellent" (p. 7).
- In their report, the reviewers describe the faculty as "distinguished" and "very productive" (p. 8). The reviewers stated that the faculty are "very committed to their students" and are conducting "creative and innovative research" (p. 8).
- The balancing is appropriate between Music, Dance, and Theater, the three subspecialties within PASJ; the integration between Dance and Theater is more successful than with Music.
- The reviewers noted the PASJ curriculum has a "lack of technical courses and technical requirements" (p. 4). In their report, the reviewers observe that this means that students "receive preparation to be artist/activists, but the techniques that would be expected for preparation for a professional career in dance, music or theatre are not the priority" in the same way they would be in a "conservatory-oriented department" (p. 11).
- The department needs to have a concrete plan for the professional growth of junior faculty.

### **3. What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

The reviewer team developed 9 recommendations to improve the Performing Arts and Social Justice program:

- Facilities* : The review team noted that "everyone with whom we spoke" agreed that "substandard facilities were the biggest challenge the department faced as well as the geographically decentralized spaces" (p. 13). In "the short term", the report recommends that "resources should be given to support the production program" including the "dressing rooms, costume shop and Studio Theatre should be upgraded" to provide "quality in the level of production already occurring" (p. 13). In the "long term", "the university needs to develop a dedicated, centralized space with room for all three concentrations to teach, rehearse, and perform" (p. 13).
- University Leadership Engagement*: The review team "strongly urges the President, Provost, CFO and Board of Trustees take the tour of the PASJ facilities that the team took" (p. 13). Through the tour, the reviewers believe the administration will "truly" understand the "substandard and in some cases dangerous conditions under which PASJ attempts to create performances" (p. 13), and will in turn, "be moved to do what would be necessary" to make the facilities "the jewel" they can be (p.13). Additionally, the review suggests that the Board of Trustees "identify community members who are dedicated to the performing arts, and invite them to join the Board" (p. 13).

- c. *Develop On Campus Partnerships:* If PASJ would like to “raise their campus profile and become more visible”, the review team suggests the “best way to do that is to be of service to campus” (p.13). The review proposed several possibilities: “partner with Greek organizations to present work on sexual assault on campus”, “partner with student organizations involved in local social justice”, and “invite relevant departments to be more than an audience for on-campus productions” (p.13). The reviewers encourage PASJ shows to “have talkbacks” that feature “a faculty member from outside PASJ” who discusses “the larger context of the work”(p.13).
- d. *Write a Strategic Plan and Construct Bylaws:* The review team encourages the department to “construct bylaws and a collective strategic plan for the next five years” (p. 13). In their report, the reviewers note “that the various constituencies of the program were pulling in different directions”, and that a more “clearly articulated vision” will “help” the program (p.14).
- e. *Define Role of Chair:* The team suggests articulating a “stronger, more defined role for the chair in leading the department” (p.14). While the union does not permit “faculty to have a supervisory role over other faculty”, the reviewers suggest, “allowing the chair more room in which to lead the department creatively”, while still honoring “consensus” (p.14).
- f. *Curricular Revisions:* The review team believes that a ‘curriculum revision’ is “an excellent idea” (p.14). According to the report, the department should “reshape the spine” to promote “unity between the different concentrations as well as greater flexibility within the concentrations” (p. 14). The team encourages the department to find “an optimum balance between social justice and artistic skill” (p.14). This revision represents an opportunity to make the department “a single department with three branches” rather than “three programs under a single umbrella” (p. 14).
- g. *Communication:* According to the review team report, the department “needs to better communicate across the board” (p.14). The department should ensure the dean is “better informed of activity within the department” and “approached when genuine needs are felt” (p.14). The Dean should also better communicate “ways in which the institution can support the department’s goals” and explain the “tenure requirements for creative work” (p.14). Also, “some students” may “need to be better informed about the relationships between the curriculum’s overall goals and the reason specific courses are required” (p.14).

- h. *Additional Faculty and Staff Support for Program:* The review suggests that the department hire a “full time Production and Event Manager” who will “oversee the productions, front of house activities, box office and marketing of shows” (p.14). The review team also suggests searching for a “tenure line position that combines dance and music” (p.14). The reviewers indicate that this “joint appointment” will “further unify the program” and is an “opportunity for a diversity hire” (p.14).
- i. *Marketing Strategy Enhancements:* After hearing that “marketing could be better” the review team suggests that “the university’s media office” partner with the department to develop a “season brochure that lists all of the performances for year” (p.14).

#### **4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University’s strategic initiatives?**

The reviewers state that PASJ’s “mission and identity” are “aligned with the university’s mission and strategic priorities” (p.3). According to the review team, PASJ supports the University’s strategic initiative in the following ways:

- a. *San Francisco Location:* According to the *USF 2028* document, the university shall serve “as a social and educational agent by applying creative expression, knowledge, and research skills to promoting human development, advancing understanding, and improving the quality of life for all Bay Area residents and promoting academic engagement from the university” (*USF 2028*). The review team indicates that PASJ has “trained” “artist activists” to “bring about greater social justice in the Greater San Francisco area” (p. 3).
- b. *Academic Excellence:* The *USF 2028* document states that the university shall offer “demanding academic programs that challenge students to maximally expand and develop their intellectual capacities and transformative educational experiences that will “act” them into new ways of thinking about the world and their role in it” (*USF 2028*). The reviewers observed that students found their PASJ “education” to be “rich” and “distinctive” (p.11). The students found their experience to be “life changing” and they “describe” the program as “preparing” them to “contribute their artistic talents to society” (p. 11).
- c. *Diversity:* The *USF 2028* document states the university shall recruit and retain “ a richly diverse mix of students, faculty and staff so that the university community, as much as possible, broadly resembles the world to which our students will contribute” (*USF 2028*). The review team observes, “the student body seems fairly diverse” (p.12). Furthermore, the team notes that the faculty is “making strides towards diversity of intellectual and artistic approach, previous experience, gender, ethnicity and sexuality” (p. 12).

**5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?**

The report notes that PASJ “effectively educates leaders” who are prepared to work towards creating a “more humane and just world”, through “methods modeled by the work” they have completed in their “academic program” (p. 3).

**6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee’s recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?**

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the full-time faculty of the Performing Arts and Social Justice program to create an action plan based upon the recommendations of the review team and discussions between the administration and faculty. The Office of the Provost could assist the program by: 1) considering the review team suggestions for enhancements of existing PASJ facilities; and, 2) providing funding for an additional faculty line in Dance and Music.

**7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?**