



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Academic Program Review**  
**Performing Arts and Social Justice**  
*(Theater, Music and Dance)*

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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CAMPUS VISIT: April 1-3, 2009

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 Dean and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the department's self-study and other university materials.

**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 felt that Performing Arts and Social Justice (PASJ) “could be one of USF’s signature programs with the proper investment.” However, at this early time in its development, the reviewers rated the department as ‘adequate’. The review team noted that throughout their review the “lack of adequate facilities clearly emerged as the department’s largest weakness”.

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

1. SPACE: The review team noted “the lack of adequate facilities clearly emerged as the department’s largest weakness”. Given the University’s commitment to social justice, they asked, “What justice is there in some faculty being relegated to offices in trailers without bathrooms?” The “glaring disparity” between PASJ facilities and other departments also “suggests to students that their education and needs are less important than their peers”.
2. DEPARTMENT PLANNING: One of the most urgent priorities for the department is to develop a five-year strategic plan. The reviewers urged the department to organize a retreat with the goal of addressing the “sustainability of the PASJ program” and what procedures and policies need to be in place to ensure its smooth operation.
3. PUBLICITY AND MARKETING: In the opinion of the reviewers, “publicity is crucial for a department that creates a season of performance” since “performing for an audience and receiving feedback from an audience is one of the central ways that students learn.” More attention also needs to be given to boosting the department’s web presence and marketing events.

4. **ADJUNCT FACULTY:** Steps need to be taken to redress the balance between full-time and adjunct faculty. The reviewers noted that not all adjunct faculty were fully supportive of the department's mission and direction and that there seemed to be "inconsistency in the quality of the learning experience in classes taught by adjuncts".
  5. **MUSIC PROGRAM:** The review team urged the continued development of the music curriculum by "adding a tenure track line for an ensemble director".
3. **What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

#### ***Faculty***

- Greater faculty involvement in professional organizations.
- Assign junior faculty members mentors inside and outside the department.
- Take care not to overburden junior faculty with administrative work.
- Address the imbalance in the ratio of classes taught by full and adjunct faculty – too many classes are taught by adjuncts. For those that do teach in PASJ, more effort needs to be made to integrate them into the program, to have them learn from each other and they need to be more systematically reviewed.

#### ***Students***

- Establish a clear advising system where all full time and term faculty are familiar with the academic requirements of each discipline.
- Create a student advisory group to serve as a liaison between majors/minors and faculty.
- Update the PASJ Handbook.

#### ***Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment***

- Compared to other liberal arts colleges and universities, "USF does not offer the depth of study that constitutes a major in dance, music or theater" and the uniqueness of the program is the "focus on social justice issues and how they can be addressed".
- There are a number of gaps in the curriculum that need to be addressed;
  1. More course work needs to address the skills necessary for creating/devising/generating performance material with various communities.
  2. Students need basic training in group processes and facilitation.
  3. The curriculum lacks content related to the history of the discipline in the US (for example, courses related to the history of performing arts engagement with social justice in the US; or a history of the current community-engaged arts movement; or a course that engages students in the ethical issues of working in communities).
- Students were confused about the sequencing of courses and the reviewers noted that there appeared to be little continuity in courses that logically followed one another.
- There are problems with the current capstone course. First, there is concern that the curriculum does not provide the skills required to successfully participate in a capstone course. Second, the capstone does not fully integrate all three disciplines.
- In classes where student learning is experiential, "current class sizes are thwarting the learning goals".
- The integration of each of the constituent disciplines needs further attention with a renewed concern with interdisciplinarity.
- Core curriculum classes need to be taught by full-time faculty.
- Courses need to have clear content requirements for all instructors to follow.
- In the long run, PASJ should consider the development of a masters program.
- There should be an expansion of course offerings in the area of music and social justice and a tenure track faculty member should be hired in music.

- Assessment tools already in place need to be fully utilized, more direct and indirect measures need to be used, course evaluations could be expanded and collaboration with the Office of Institutional Assessment might provide more data relevant to departmental decision-making.

### ***Facilities and Support Services***

- Lack of adequate space is the department's biggest problem and ideally the department should be in one shared facility. More specifically, the department needs;
  1. More centralized offices.
  2. Storage space since "proper costume, set and properties storage space is imperative".
  3. Music practice rooms since there are currently no designated spaces for music students to practice. Four practice rooms are the minimum requirement for the program.
  4. Classroom and rehearsal spaces are needed immediately.
  5. Production facilities need to be improved (particularly costume storage).

### ***Production Process***

- Allow the production manager to create and maintain a unified production calendar.
- Reallocate resources to augment the department's current promotion and publicity efforts on and off campus.
- Create a unified performance season.
- Re-evaluate the talents and skills of current faculty and staff to see if some are being underutilized.
- Determine the relationship between the performance season and the broader social justice mission.

### ***Publicity***

- The reviewers were concerned that there was "no unified and systematized publicity process for the department" and they argued, "effective publicity and promotion are crucial to the department's ability to fulfill its mission".
- Resources need to be devoted to the department's website.
- They need to create a streamlined process for publicizing the full season (individualized performances and performances with thematic 'hooks').
- A full time position needs to be devoted to generating publicity and promoting departmental performances
- Faculty need to be engaged by creating curricular 'tie-ins'.

### ***Program Administration***

- The department administrative assistant should focus primarily on the curricular aspects of the program.
- Additional support staff (.5FTE) should be hired to work as a communications and marketing manager.
- Invest in more website development.

### ***Future Directions***

- Consider postponing admission to the major until the end of the first year.
- Develop relationships with other departments, particularly in social service and social justice settings.
- Make a long-term development plan for a graduate program in PASJ.
- Consider developing courses about community engaged arts practices and offer them as summer intensives for working artists over the summer.

**4. In the opinion of the external review committee is the program following the University's strategic initiative in that it is;**

- a. Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.
  - In the opinion of the review team, the “department is placing itself on the cutting edge of the community engaged arts movement”.
  - All PASJ faculty “are active within their respective disciplines as artists and scholars”. Furthermore, the “level of creative and scholarly work is of a high caliber and par with top tier liberal arts institutions”.
- b. Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.
  - An “enthusiastic student body...is on board with the clear mission of connecting the performing arts to social justice issues”.
  - The department is “making an important contribution to this field by offering a unique undergraduate program”.
- c. Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.
  - The reviewers noted that the “faculty, as a group, is cohesive, cooperative, supportive and collegial, with students’ best interests truly at heart. They are committed to augmenting student learning experiences and continuing to develop the PASJ department”.

**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 reviewers felt that “all faculty members are deeply committed to the mission of the University and the social justice mission of the department”.
- In addition, “the faculty members appear to have excellent rapport with San Francisco based artists and this is a tremendous asset to the department”.

**6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the AVP's office do to appropriately respond to the review?**

- Provide a timetable for addressing and solving the serious space problem that is beginning to impact academic quality and programmatic development.
- Hire a full time tenure track faculty member in music with an emphasis on ensemble performance.
- Provide resources for the department to address strategic planning and publicity and marketing.

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

- Without question, the most pressing issue for the department and its future development is space.