

Creative Arts Program Review

In 06-07, faculty in the Creative Sciences Division conducted Program Review in the following program areas: Division Office, Arts, Drama, and Music.

Support team members who participated in these reviews include Diane Boynton, Caroline Carney and Susan Steele.

Program Strengths and Support Team Commendations

Support Team members noted that all members of the Creative Arts Division are committed to integrating a comprehensive curriculum with professional involvement in the arts. As the self-study's Preamble says, 'It is our conviction that while the production aspect of the Division could theoretically exist without the educational component; the educational aspect of our offerings could not legitimately exist outside of a vital culture of professional level involvement in the arts.' This dual focus enriches the cultural life of the Monterey Peninsula, with high quality plays, concerts and exhibits. It also creates a rich mix in Creative Arts classes of students intending to transfer, vocational ~~student~~ students, practicing artists who desire to enhance their skills, and life-long learners, all segments of which the faculty is committed to serving. The contribution of the Creative Arts Division to MPC's positive reputation in the community and to the recruitment of students is enormous.

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Challenges

All programs in Creative Arts noted major and critical challenges with the quality of their facilities and with the inadequacy of their financial resources to buy supplies and materials. The state of the facilities presents health and safety concerns across the board. Constraints on supply and material budgets have differential impact. In the case of Art, it has required that the funds generated by the semi-annual sales – originally intended to cover workshops and student scholarships – must be used to cover necessities. In the case of Drama, it curtails the ability of the program to offer what it believes is a full production schedule. (The program currently offers four shows a season, down from a high of six.) In the case of Music, it constrains the number of performance groups.

The Music and Art programs also stated that they find it a challenge to recruit and retain adjunct faculty. However, the Art Program incorrectly states that the 'MPC administration has limited adjunct faculty to teaching one semester length class each term.'

Finally, the Division Office noted the need for a 'coordinated, professional marketing plan for its many productions and exhibits.'

Goals

Although they are not presented as clearly as they might be, the Division has the obvious goals that would arise from the challenges outlined above:

- Improve classroom and studio space
- Stabilize operational budgets at adequate levels
- Develop a professional marketing plan

However, perhaps because of the level of these challenges, the program review does not delineate any broader programmatic goals.

Issues

The Support Team offered the Division constructive criticism on a first draft of the program review. However, the only sections which were revised in response are the summary of findings on page 3 (which were reworded to be more impactful), a change in emphasis on page 44 about the external factors affecting the drama department, and an added introduction to the Music Department's Summary statement. In addition, one item in the Music Department's list of recommendations was moved and rewritten.

The Support Team found the program review inadequate for the following reasons:

First, the Division makes a big point of its profitability by comparing program budgets to the dollars associated with the FTES. While we understand the motivation for including a financial calculation in the program review – the Creative Arts are seldom viewed as revenue centers – we were unconvinced by this analysis, since it excludes any consideration of operational costs (e.g. utilities, building maintenance, etc.)

Second, only Art included any serious discussion of its student base and how the curriculum and course sequencing is intended to meet the need of this demographic. The issue of course repeatability – which was noted at a number of points – would appear to affect only part of the student base. We did not find an equal level of attention to the question of whether the curriculum is structured to support students intending to transfer.

Third, the data tables required in all program reviews (regarding enrollment, average class size, grade distribution, etc) were inserted with no comment in the case of Music and with little more than a restatement of some of the data in the case of Art and Drama. In Drama, the restatement seems to be inconsistent with the data tables. For example, Drama's self study states, "FTES/FTE ratio has varied from a high of 35 to 1 in summer of 2002 to a low of 13.8 to 1 in summer of 2005." But the data table shows closer to 10 to 1 in summer of 2002 (36.5 FTES/3.4 FTE) and 8 to 1 in summer 2005 (27.1 FTES/3.4 FTE.) From the perspective of the Support Team, the data tables raise a number of issues that should have been addressed:

- 1) Grade Distribution. The tables on course grades show that a majority of students in all programs either get 'A's or credit. This distribution may be appropriate, but the program review offered no rationale. It is reasonable

to ask what the grade distribution implies about student evaluation and program quality.

- 2) Average Class Size and Concurrent Enrollment. The average class size over the period covered in the data tables is 13 for Music and 12 for Art. This is below the number required by the ~~state MPC/MPCTA Contract~~ and, hence, demands comment. Our understanding is that many Creative Arts courses are concurrently enrolled with other courses. So, these numbers may ultimately not be an issue, but ~~the programs cannot assume that their structures are transparent to the external reviewer~~. However, the issue of concurrent enrollment is not without controversy and the Division is not well-advised to sidestep it.
- 3) FTES/FTE Patterns. The FTES/FTE patterns in both Art and Drama over time raise issues that should have been studied. In Art, the Spring 03 FTES was 200 and the total FTE was 15; the Spring 06 FTES was 198 and the total FTE was 17. This would suggest the equivalent of two more full-time instructors in 06 generated about the same FTES as in 03. Was this an anomaly or was it purposeful? In Drama, FTES was relatively constant at 70-75 from Fall 2003 to Spring 2005 (with one small blip in Spring 2003), while the FTE ranged from 4.4 to 6.7. In Fall 2005 the FTES surged to 108 and surged again to 142 in Spring 2006. At 5.8, the FTE in Fall 2005 was in the range of the previous semesters, but in Spring 2006 it jumped to 7.9. It would be useful for planning and allocation of resources to know what was happening in 2005/2006 to cause enrollments to surge and whether the increase in FTE was required to sustain it.

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Comment [j1]: This is an excellent point that applies to the entire self study. Perhaps we should consider making such a statement globally earlier in our comments about the deficiencies of the report (?) Or, perhaps stated more positively, about how the report could be improved.

It may be that the Creative Arts Division perceives that these data are not the only measures that should be used to gauge their programs' effectiveness or that these data are not relevant to their operation. If a sense of irrelevance is the basis of the lack of attention paid to the data in the program review, a better response would have been to present the alternative measures and to provide data relevant to them. However, the College needs to be able to have a basis of comparison across divisions, regardless of a program's uniqueness, so there must be a core of shared data. Making sense of the data may be challenging for those not trained in this type of analysis, but the Division could have asked for help and/or implemented some of the suggestions made by the Support Team.

Support Team Recommendations

The support team endorses the Division's goals in regard to improving classroom and studio space, stabilizing budgets, and professionally marketing its productions and exhibits.

The support team finds that some of the inadequacies in the Division's program review are institutionally based. The data provided to units beginning their review process is not

packaged so as to make it easily accessible to those unaccustomed or averse to manipulating numbers. In addition, there is no manual to guide units in the development of their review nor is there an explanatory workshop at the beginning of the process. The support team recommends that the College attend to these issues.

Comment [j2]: This should be one of the overarching issues.

The bottom line, however, is that the support team does not believe that the Creative Arts Division will be well-served by this program review as the College works to align annual action plans with the goals established in program reviews. Thus, the support team recommends that the Division prepare a revised program review. The review should include

Comment [j3]: Is resource allocation implied here? Does it need to be more explicitly stated?

1. A clear statement of programmatic goals for each of the programs in the Division and for the Division as a whole.
2. A discussion of the student base in each program and an explanation of how the curriculum meets the needs of its various segments or a discussion of what kinds of modifications would be worth considering
3. A consideration of the grade distribution in Creative Arts courses and an explanation of the relationship between this and program quality.
4. An explanation of class size and concurrent enrollment, including how it is possible to meet the course objectives of two or three different courses simultaneously.
5. A serious consideration of the relationship between FTE and FTES in each of the programs.

6. Does the self study address the curriculum revisions taking place to replace special topics and what impact the division expects this to have in FTE/FTES ratios?
7. Do we need to include a statement indicating which programs have completed their curriculum review and which have not?

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Overarching Issues

A number of the issues identified in the Division's self-study are not division-specific.

- a. Since the appropriateness of supply budgets for departments and divisions has not been confirmed after the budget reductions that took place in fiscal year 2002-2003, the support team recommends that the College develop a plan to address supply and equipment budget needs for all divisions to ensure that they are consistent with college goals.
- b. At least a portion – hopefully, a significant portion – of the campus' facility needs should be met under the College's facility renovation plan. The support team, therefore, underscores the importance of improving classroom and studio space. The planned remodel of the Creative Arts complex represents a great opportunity for the College to make the necessary improvements on both of these counts.

- c. A timely and professional institutional marketing plan should be developed and implemented. This plan should promote a positive image of MPC, apprise the community of the wide variety of programs and services available through MPC, and promote MPC news and events.