

To: UPBC
From: Department of Communication and Theatre Arts
Re: Proposal to separate into the Department of Communication and the Department of Theatre Arts
Date: April 5, 2004

Proposal

At its monthly meeting on March 3, 2004 the members voted to recommend to the UPBC, the Faculty Senate, and the WCSU Administration that the Department of Communication and Theatre Arts be separated into two departments: the Department of Communication and the Department of Theatre Arts.

Rationale

1. Commonality of interest and academic purpose. The contract (p. 35, section 5.14) states that "Commonality of interest and academic purpose" is the primary reason for the existence of a department.

When the department separated from the English Department about 35 years ago, it was the "Speech and Theatre Department," and shared considerable commonality, particularly in terms of performance and analysis of speech and theatre materials. Changes in the field led to the realization that the department no longer taught "speech" except for Public Speaking, and that the bulk of the non-theatre courses were in communication, led us to change the name of the department to Communication and Theatre Arts, which better reflected what we do, but also suggested a divergence in interest. Theatre maintained its interest in performance, and began developing aspects of the production and design program. Communication began strengthening programs in Human Communication studies, and Media analysis and production.

Discussions over the last few years in regard to the construction of an Arts Building on the West Side campus to house Art, Music and Theatre has produced a new alignment of interest, and quite possibly a closer alignment of purpose among the three disciplines than currently exists between Communication and Theatre. The pending geographic separation also will make commonality difficult.

2. Separate Identities: While at one time combined Communication and Theatre departments were common in American universities, the combination is rare today. Within CSU Western has the last remaining combined department, and both departments in our sister schools have managed to thrive separately.

There is also a feeling that students in each program will develop a stronger sense of identity, which will help in both recruitment and retention. In addition, people hiring graduates, or admitting them to graduate schools may better appreciate the focus of our students' undergraduate efforts, making our students more competitive candidates.

Visible leadership with clear responsibilities and accountability

Separate departments will provide respective chairs clear leadership responsibilities. The current arrangements of reassigned time has been found to present difficulties in each discipline. The two have different students, priorities, programs, and needs. Each discipline needs a leader who can focus on one rather than two sets of problems and opportunities..

In terms of majors, faculty routinely advise students outside of their area of preparation, which usually presents few problems, other than taking more time than is necessary, but occasionally results in errors that probably would be avoided by people advising within their area.

In terms of priorities, the areas differ. The primary priorities for theatre center around preparing students for careers in performance, design, or technical theatre. The primary priorities of communication are to

prepare students for careers (or graduate programs) in human communication or media analysis and production.

In terms of program support, the production aspects of both areas rely heavily on technology which is constantly evolving, and therefore perpetually in need of upgrading. While the technical needs differ between the disciplines, it is essential that equipment be kept current (and functional), and that faculty be kept up to date on both hardware and software.

Notes

CTA is currently examining the areas that need to be addressed to make the process of separation go smoothly. These areas include, but are not limited to:

Faculty lines: Four members function primarily in theatre, and will become the faculty of the Theatre Department. Eight members will compose the Communication Department. Since one of the lines going to Theatre was originally designated to teach courses that meet the General Studies Communication requirement, the Communication department will seek to replace that position as soon as possible.

Bylaws: Each department will be responsible for creating its own bylaws, and probably will do this once the separation has been approved.

Budget: This will only be an issue if the division takes place after funds have been allocated to the CTA Department. In that case, an equitable division will be worked out between the entities.

Courses: At the March 2004 Department meeting the department voted to relabel courses as either COM or TA, except for two hybrid courses that will carry a dual label. The proposal has begun the committee review process, and should be approved by September 2004.

Additional Resources Needed: 3 SH released time to the chair of the Theatre Department.

The Theatre Department will need one part time secretary and one University Assistant to support production.