



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Department of Theatre and Dance

Academic Review and Planning  
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

Signed by:  
*Ann Stevens*  
A18C4579D6C4482...  
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date  
1/9/2026

## Contents

AY 2024-25 ARPAC Members – 3

Process Overview – 5

Past Reviews – 5

Unit Analysis – 6

Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment – 6

Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence – 7

Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows) – 8

Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students – 8

Inclusivity and Unit Culture – 13

Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes – 13

Recommendations – 15

Required Follow-Up – 17

# Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC)

Suzanne Anderson, Professor, Department of Geological Sciences  
Lorilai Biernacki, Professor, Department of Religious Studies  
Ellen Do, Professor, Department of Computer Science  
Nancy Emery, Associate Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology  
Jota Samper Escobar, Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Design  
Casey Fiesler, Associate Professor, Department of Information Science  
Paul Hammer, Professor, Department of History  
Arne Höcker, Associate Professor, Department of Germanic & Slavic Languages & Literatures  
William Penuel, Professor, School of Education  
Elias Sacks, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies  
Robert Shay, Professor, College of Music  
Jingshi Shen, Professor, Department of Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology  
Scott Shriver, Associate Professor, Leeds School of Business  
Scott Skinner-Thompson, Professor, Law School  
Anand Sokhey, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Leah Sprain, Associate Professor, Department of Communication  
Jillian Turanovic, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology  
Gabrielle Wiersma, Associate Professor, University Libraries  
Maria A. Windell, Associate Professor, Department of English

**Non-voting members**

Scott Adler, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education and Professor of Political Science

Katherine Eggert, Senior Vice Provost and Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Assessment and Professor of English

Sonia DeLuca Fernández, Senior Vice Chancellor for Leadership Support and Programming

Amy Hutton, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management

Michele Moses, Vice Provost and Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs and Professor of Education

Erika Randall, Interim Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and Professor of Theatre and Dance

Fernando Rosario-Ortiz, Interim Vice Chancellor and Executive Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management and Professor of Civil, Environmental, and Architectural Engineering

Massimo Ruzzene, Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation and Dean of the Institutes and Professor of Mechanical Engineering

**Staff**

Andre Grothe, Office of Academic Planning and Assessment

Samantha Hertenstein, Office of Faculty Affairs

Emmanuel Melgoza Alfaro, Office of Faculty Affairs

## Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Department of Theatre and Dance (THDN) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over March 31 and April 1, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

## Past Reviews

Recommendations to the unit from the 2016 ARPAC report and subsequent actions and challenges are as follows:

1. Continue advocating for an administrative structure that brings the Department of Theatre and Dance into closer cooperation with other arts units, builds visibility, and assists the units in meeting their strategic objectives. Be flexible in considering what units should participate, so as to include the College of Music and the College of Media, Communication, and Information (*now named the College of Communication, Media, Design, and Information (CMDI)*) as well as the College of Arts and Sciences.

**ARPAC notes that as of 2025, THDN has continued to grapple with its administrative structure and has made scant progress in building ties to other appropriate units on campus.**

2. Establish ties with the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) and the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), including contributing [to] the associations' data analysis efforts. Consider carefully whether accreditation by either or both bodies would be desirable;

**ARPAC believes this to be a less pertinent goal as of 2025, as THDN deals with immediate identity, mission, and funding issues. NASD/NAST membership may be less valuable if THDN moves away from pre-professional Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) undergraduate degrees.**

3. Establish priorities among the many needs and good ideas described in the self-study (*now comprised of the two-part unit submission degree program report and goal setting exercise*). Regarding new initiatives, establish strategic goals and determine which possible new initiatives best serve these goals. Include an analysis of what high priority opportunities and needs could and should be addressed by redeployment of existing resources from lower priority activities. Second, prioritize facilities needs, distinguishing those that pose health hazards, accessibility problems, and other potential liabilities, as well as which equipment is "mission-critical." Ensure that problems at the Gateway facility (a storage space on the CU Boulder South Campus) receive particular attention.

**In conversations with ARPAC in 2025, the THDN chair conveyed optimism about strategic planning in progress. Given the nature of the challenges as of 2025, and considering the**

**unit's new leadership, THDN should be given ample time to establish its long-range plans/strategic goals.**

4. Discuss faculty interest in, and plans for, future leadership. Be mindful of putting undue service burdens on female faculty members. Provide mentoring for associate professors. Work with the college to adjust full professor compensation
5. Make a plan for prioritized fundraising to meet unit needs.
7. Determine whether the Musical Theatre BFA should be eliminated or suspended. Include discussion with the College of Music of its role in the program and the interests of its faculty. Follow through as appropriate.
8. Investigate relations between theatre BA and BFA students, and act to improve those relations as appropriate. Consider in particular what role faculty attitudes may play in the situation.

**In relation to recommendations 4, 5, 7, and 8, ARPAC notes that these all seem like recommendations that could be repeated, with few changes, in 2025. As stated above, the department now needs more time to develop and implement a potentially different vision for the future.**

6. Analyze the appropriate scale for the unit's educational programs, graduate as well as undergraduate, with the aim of meeting program needs and maintaining or increasing quality within prevailing resource constraints. Consider the balance among current, new, and proposed programs. Pay particular attention to the new Experience Design MFA.

**ARPAC observes that as of 2025, THDN is giving renewed attention to the number of students it would like to serve per its mission and the number that can be served by its current faculty (not likely the same number). Faculty roles (teaching vs. directing, major vs. non-major teaching) need to be reconsidered, considering diminished faculty resources. Serving more non-majors (in larger enrollment classes) may improve THDN's budgetary position, but plans must be carefully developed in concert with the Division of Arts and Humanities (AHUM) and College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) leadership. The Masters in Experience Design has been suspended and is no longer being offered.**

## Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Department of Theatre and Dance is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at

<https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in August 2024, reflecting the state of the Department of Theatre and Dance as of the academic year (AY) 2022-2023.

## Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

The Department of Theatre and Dance offers the following undergraduate and graduate degrees:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Theatre or Dance
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Theatre [tracks in Acting; Design, Technology, and Management; Musical Theatre] or Dance
- Master of Arts (MA) in Theatre

- Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Dance
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Theatre

THDN appears to be in the process of rethinking its mission and reorganizing its teaching enterprise. The loss of faculty and graduate part-time instructor (GPTI) lines is hindering THDN's ability to maintain its current offerings, and admission to the PhD program has been suspended. THDN faculty recently voted to suspend parts of the bylaws, create an ad hoc "Big Picture" committee, and consider the sustainability of all degree programs. A past overreliance on GPTIs to generate non-major student credit hours (SCH) has led to THDN's occupying the bottom position among AHUM units in the generation of non-major SCHs. The load time of full-time faculty is needed to teach upper-level majors and graduate students, but this is something that could change as a result of curricular revisions.

While THDN should engage in the necessary campus-wide projects of learning outcomes assessment, other granular projects to gauge the effectiveness of the unit's many degree programs seem almost a secondary concern at this time. The focus needs to be committing to certain programs and right-sizing program numbers at all levels, from non-majors to tenured/tenure-track (TTT) faculty.

## Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

The research culture of THDN reflects the dual discipline nature of the unit. While a few members of the Theatre Program publish scholarship and research in the form of books, journal articles and book chapters, the bulk of the department's output is in the form of creative work. This often takes the form of production credits for theatre faculty (e.g., for acting, directing, or costuming specific productions) and performances or works of choreography for dance faculty. The heavy emphasis toward creative work by members of THDN can be seen in the unit profile data compiled in August 2024. Activities recorded in the annual Faculty Report of Professional Activities (FRPA) reports of individual faculty members, show that THDN faculty produced an average of 0.1 monographs and 0.1 edited books per faculty member between 2016 and 2022 (with the average based upon the number of unit faculty rostered in November 2022). The corresponding figure for refereed articles and chapters is 1.9, but the figure for creative works is 42.8. The central importance of creative works for THDN's research culture is likely to be even more apparent in the coming years. As noted in the department's goal setting report, THDN has recently lost two publishing scholars and will soon lose a third.

THDN expresses some concern about the legibility of its research and creative work to the broader campus community. In particular, the Theatre Program seeks to "persuade" college, campus and university administrators "that theatre and performance-making is a form of research and community building, equal in value to published scholarship." The Dance Program is also concerned that research and scholarly and creative work should help to augment social justice efforts. Hindering such legibility is the absence of strong curricular ties to the department's productions, as reported by the chair.

The concern about the broader legibility of creative works and performance-making by the faculty and students of THDN is not unique to the department. Other units on campus that also emphasize creative work have expressed very similar concerns. This indicates that the perceived value of creative works within the campus context is a concern that goes beyond a single department and perhaps warrants further conversation at the college and campus levels.

## Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2022-2023, faculty personnel in Department of Theatre and Dance consisted of 13 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, 8 teaching-track faculty, and 7 “other” faculty (hon/lec/visit/adj.).

THDN has lost five TTT lines over the last eight years and worries about further losses with four retirements on the horizon. While a lack of new hires has reduced attention to mentoring, faculty mentoring can occur at multiple faculty life-cycle stages. An endowed position was awarded to the new department chair rather than an external senior hire. These things said, any new hiring plan would need to flow from forthcoming long-range planning. The nature of faculty needs and duties could change.

No changes in staffing were reported by Theatre and Dance in their required documents or the external review report.

## Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

### Undergraduate Education

THDN currently offers Theatre classes in the BA and BFA degrees. The BA in Theatre is intended to offer great flexibility to students (“the ‘build-your-own-adventure’ degree”). By contrast, the BFA in Theatre is a more structured and professionally oriented degree, with each cohort of BFA students progressing through a multi-year skills-based curriculum of production practicums, studio work, and performance opportunities. While the BA offers a broad program of theatre practice and study, students in the BFA in Theatre pursue concentrations in Acting, Theatre Design/Technology, or Musical Theatre. Students can apply to enter the BFA from the BA, with the exception of those in the musical theatre track (for which applicants are auditioned when they first apply to CU). All BA majors and BFAs in Theatre are required to have a professional internship as part of their degree. Students can also complement involvement in the department's productions with the student “Sandbox” series of entirely student-run productions.

According to THDN's degree program report, majors in BA in Theatre jumped from 59 in 2020 to 82 in 2021, but the number of majors has subsequently declined each year thereafter. Theatre majors dropped to 62 in 2022, to 51 in 2023, and to 47 in 2024. In fall 2025, the number rose slightly to 54. Student credit hours for the BA (and BFA) in Theatre have also dropped considerably since 2020. In 2020, SCH totaled 5,114, but subsequent years have seen the total drop sharply to 3,210 in 2021; 3,702 in 2022; 3,785 in 2023; and 3,597 in 2024. Most of the SCH for BA courses in Theatre derive from non-majors (84% in 2023 and 2024). The number of BA degrees awarded in Theatre each year has typically been below 10 but increased to 12 in 2024.

In contrast to declining BA numbers, student enrollments in the BFA in Theatre have held up relatively well over the past five years. In 2020, there were 59 in the BFA in Theatre. This dropped to 40 in 2021 (when the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted performance classes), but rebounded to 51 in 2022, 53 in 2023, and 64 in 2024. The number of BFA degrees awarded in Theatre each year has oscillated in the past five years from 20 in 2020 and 2023 and 24 in 2021 to 10 in 2022 and 12 in 2024.

One issue for the BFA in Theatre concerns the program's musical theatre concentration. The College of Music also offers a musical theatre program, so there is duplication between the two programs. THDN also notes that supporting its musical theatre program is "an expensive commitment," not least because the department "feels compelled" to devote one of its limited number of (costly) theatrical productions each year to musical theatre to support that program. A goal in THDN's goal setting exercise emanating from the Theatre Program suggests that the BFA in musical theatre should be considered for elimination in the future.

THDN also offers Dance classes in both the BA and BFA degrees, as well as part of the interdisciplinary Hip-Hop Studies Certificate. The department emphasizes that classes for the BA in Dance are designed to be accessible to all students, with no audition required for entry. The BFA in Dance, on the other hand, is designed as a more conservatory-like stepping-stone toward the professional world of dance. Great emphasis is placed upon the interaction between faculty and BFA students ("The BFAs know their faculty and their faculty know them") and upon social justice and "supporting each student's individual voice and aesthetics."

According to THDN's degree program report, majors in the BA in Dance have hovered in the 30s since 2020. Majors peaked at 39 in 2022, dropped to 30 in 2023, but increased back to 35 in 2024. SCH for the BA in Dance dropped from a high of 3,414 in 2020 to 2,143 in 2021 and 2,913 in 2022 but again exceeded 3,000 in 2023 (3,246) and 2024 (3,131). Only a small fraction of the SCH associated with courses for the BA in Dance are taken by majors: majors accounted for 15% of the SCH in 2021 and 2023, but only 10% in 2022 and 9% in 2024. The great bulk of the SCH is therefore produced by non-majors (85-90% since 2020). The relatively small number of Dance majors is reflected in the number of degrees awarded. Since 2020, the highest number of degrees awarded in a single AY was eight in 2023.

As suggested by the comments cited above, the BFA in Dance is an intimate program, with degrees conferred each year being in the low single figures (2 in 2020, 3 in 2022 and 2023, and 5 in 2024). Enrollments are correspondingly small. In 2020, the BFA in Dance enrolled only 6 students, but the numbers increased to 13 by 2022 and 18 in 2023. There were 12 students in 2024, but only 9 in 2025.

THDN offers contrasting views on the current requirements for their undergraduate degrees. The 47-48 credit hours required for a major in the BA in Dance are described as being too high, especially in comparison with some other majors offered in the Arts and Humanities. The high credit-hour requirement inhibits students from taking Dance as a double major and is arguably off-putting to some potential majors. By implication, the Dance Program within THDN seems to want to reduce the credit hours requirement. At the same time, the 48-credit-hour requirement for a major in Theatre in the BA is described as reflecting a significant reduction from the previous requirement of 60+ credit hours and making it easier for students to double major. This seems slightly at odds with the comment on the same credit hours for Dance.

The requirements for the BFA degrees in both subjects are considerably higher, reflecting a conservatory-style teaching model. The BFA in Theatre currently requires 67 credit hours, while the BFA in Dance requires 72-76 credit hours.

ARPAC notes that undergraduates are not currently awarded course credit for participation in productions, a fact that may disincentivize students from majoring or minoring in theatre or dance given the heavy workload required for all kinds of production roles.

In fall 2022, 16% of THDN's undergraduate SCH were taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty. Teaching professors taught another 27% of the undergraduate SCH. No less than 43% of the SCH were taught by graduate instructors (GPTIs) and teaching assistants (TAs). The size of sections in AY 2022-2023 shows that TTT faculty averaged 16 students, teaching professors averaged 25 students, and graduate instructors averaged 32 students. This trend reflects the involvement of TTT faculty in specialized classes with smaller enrollments (i.e., "the experiential and conceptual nature of theatre and dance education"), but it also illustrates THDN's heavy reliance upon graduate student instructors teaching large numbers of undergraduates in classes with large sections. This accords with the acknowledgement in THDN's goal setting exercise that the department has depended upon graduate students to teach large lecture classes and that faculty have "limited ... experience with large-format teaching."

The 2021 Senior Exit Survey for THDN drew on a limited number of responses (N=9, which is a 35% response rate), so the results need to be treated with considerable caution. That said, the responses tended to praise the quality of faculty and instructors (with scores in the 75%+ range), but also to criticize the curriculum (33%) and its value as preparation for employment or graduate school (38%). The availability of desired courses also emerges as an issue of concern for graduating seniors.

THDN students benefit from ongoing partnerships with on-campus arts events such as the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. ARPAC urges the unit to continue work to establish and strengthen relationships between the department and local and regional theater, dance, and arts performance groups in order to expand student opportunities; this work potentially includes establishing ties with the Sundance Film Festival, which will be held in Boulder beginning in 2027.

### Graduate Education

THDN offers graduate training through the MA and PhD degrees in Theatre and Performance Studies (TAPS). Graduate students in Theatre can also complete a graduate certificate in Applied Shakespeare, in partnership with the Department of English and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. Although THDN's website also still lists an MFA in Experience Design as part of the Theatre Program (albeit linking to a result of "Page Not Found"), this degree has been suspended.

The MA in Theatre and Performance Studies can be taken on either a thesis or non-thesis track, with the latter culminating in a major project instead of a thesis. The MA in Theatre and Performance Studies is also offered as part of a dual MA/Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in partnership with the Leeds School of Business. A third MA degree path is the Bachelor Accelerated Masters (BAM) model, in which CU majors in Theatre begin taking MA coursework in their fourth year as an undergraduate and complete the MA in the following year. The PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies is a more conventional doctoral degree, combining advanced coursework with the writing of a substantial dissertation.

Enrollments in the MA in Theatre and Performance Studies have been declining in recent years. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of students in the Theatre MA was in the low double figures (10-13), but the number declined to 5 in 2023 and 7 in 2024. Data from the Graduate Admissions report on the D&A website offers additional detail on new admissions to the Theatre MA (i.e., these figures exclude continuing students). This shows that 14 students were admitted to the program in 2020, but only 7 enrolled. Admissions in subsequent years show a continuing gradual decline: 12 new students admitted but only 2 enrolled in 2023, 6 admitted but only 4 enrolled in 2024, and 3 admitted and 2 enrolled in 2025. This data also indicates a dramatic reduction in the number of

applicants, from a remarkable and atypical post-Covid peak of 58 applicants in 2021 and 38 in 2022 to only 8 in 2024 and 4 in 2025.

Enrollments in the PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies show a similar pattern of consistently low numbers. Total PhD students ranged between 7 and 9 between 2020 and 2024. Only one or two new students joined the program each year between 2020 and 2023. In 2024, no new students were admitted or enrolled into the program. This reflected a deliberate decision by THDN to suspend new entrants to the PhD in Theatre. THDN's degree program report stated that this decision was taken as a result of the department's budget not being able to support PhD students at the required 50% appointment rate for four years beyond those students who had already entered the program.

THDN also offers graduate training in dance through the MFA degree in Dance, with an optional Somatic emphasis. The MFA in Dance includes the study of dance and choreography and is a terminal degree in dance. The degree includes some tailoring to accommodate students who are already working as professional dancers. The Somatic emphasis targets a very different group of graduate students. Somatics is a field of study which focuses on the body and bodily sensation and includes practices such as Alexander Technique and Pilates.

Enrollments in the MFA in Dance have gradually declined since 2020, when there were 15 students. There were 8 students in 2022, 7 in 2023, and 6 in 2024. It is not clear if these totals include the MFA in Somatic Emphasis. Graduate Admissions data from the D&A website indicates that only a few students are admitted to the program each year (2-4 students since 2021). Most of these admitted students subsequently enroll in the program (1-3 new students each year). The graduate admissions data also indicates that the number of applicants seeking admission to the MFA in Dance has been fairly consistent since 2021 (15-20 applicants each year).

THDN is understandably proud of its graduate courses. Graduates from these programs have gone on to success in doctoral programs elsewhere or in the professional world of dance and theatre. Two recent graduates from the PhD in Theatre Studies have also won tenure-track positions at other research 1 (R1) universities. THDN has clearly made serious efforts to ensure that these graduate degrees are vital, rich, and flexible learning experiences. For the MA in Theatre and Performance Studies, for example, the department emphasizes the multiple pathways through the degree (thesis or non-thesis, as part of BAM program or as part of a dual MA/MBA degree). The BAM and MA/MBA options reflect innovative thinking about the MA and a willingness to make new connections across the campus. The practice-based "On-Stage Studies" of the PhD in Theatre Studies is a notable distinguishing feature of this program. The MFA in Dance is also characterized by flexibility, which enables some active professional dancers to enter the program.

However, THDN's graduate programs have been battling severe headwinds in recent years. Student numbers have declined, making it difficult to offer enough courses for students. Despite the multiplicity of different pathways for students to take the MA in Theatre and Performance Studies, applications, admissions and enrollments have not yet shown signs of improvement. The loss of faculty has negatively impacted both the Theatre and Dance programs, especially at the graduate level. The department now has only two faculty members in Theatre and Performance Studies who themselves have a PhD and have experience in successfully advising MA theses. One of these two faculty members in Theatre with a PhD is expected to retire "in the next couple of years," and an anticipated new hire in this field recently failed to come to fruition. The Dance Program has been similarly impacted. One sign of these negative trends is the number of SCH delivered by THDN's graduate programs. In 2020, the MA in Theatre delivered 182 SCH. This grew

to 183 SCH in 2021, 213 SCH in 2022, and 252 SCH in 2023. However, the total dropped dramatically to 97 SCH in 2024. The SCH for the MFA in Dance also shows a downward trend. In 2020, the MFA in Dance delivered 296 SCH. This slumped to 196 SCH in 2021, rebounded to 238 SCH in 2022, but declined to 197 in 2023 and 143 in 2024.

The difficulties with the graduate program directly impact THDN's undergraduate teaching. As noted above, the department has relied heavily upon graduate instructors to teach large lecture classes. The smaller size of the graduate programs in Theatre and Dance imperils this pattern of undergraduate teaching. The recent freezing of new recruitment for the PhD in Theatre Studies means that 2-4 three-credit courses per semester, that would have been taught by graduate students newly admitted to the PhD, now need to be taught by some other means or not taught at all.

Surveying THDN's undergraduate and graduate teaching, the external review committee made it very clear that they saw a need for major changes to the ways in which THDN conceives and delivers its teaching. The external review committee described the conservatory-style model of teaching associated with the BFA degrees (in both Theatre and Dance) as warranting re-evaluation: "while it serves a specific educational purpose, it is increasingly unsustainable given the growing emphasis on cost-saving measures in academia. A Liberal Arts academic environment operates under different expectations and financial pressures than a conservatory." The ERC therefore recommended that THDN work with "upper administration" to secure financial and pedagogical support for moves toward teaching larger classes, "including possible online or hybrid options." It also recommended even greater reliance upon graduate instructors (especially PhD students) to teach these new, larger classes.

The ERC's recommendations on teaching make sense within the new budget model adopted by CU Boulder, which funds colleges on the basis of SCH, leavened with some increased weighting for majors and minors over straight service teaching. That said, the changes suggested may not be easy to implement (especially if THDN is not given additional support while the changes are being introduced and tested), and they seem to challenge the current identity of the unit. It is also questionable whether an expanded use of graduate instructors for teaching large undergraduate classes is desirable or practical. The suspension of new admissions into the PhD program cuts against this suggestion. The practice of focusing faculty on teaching smaller, more specialized classes also arguably makes it somewhat harder for students in the larger classes to make personal connections with THDN and want to pursue a major there.

THDN has already begun making major changes to their undergraduate teaching. The goal setting exercise prepared for this review shows that THDN is already aware of the need to balance faculty teaching of "smaller experiential classes" with "larger format teaching." The unit is reviewing the large number of degree options it offers, planning to reduce credit hours requirements to make it easier for students to major, double major, or minor in THDN, and investigating "asynchronous modalities for lecture-style courses to increase access and SCH." Faculty in the Dance program agreed over the summer of 2025 to pause the BFA in Dance, reduce credit requirements, and consider curricular changes. Theatre faculty agreed to review the sustainability of the BFA in Musical Theatre. Although painful, these decisions seem necessary initial steps towards reshaping and reimagining THDN's undergraduate teaching.

## Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy.

At a time when THDN seems to be dealing with more existential matters, progress on well-organized, embedded efforts to promote inclusivity has been slowed. The unit, however, sends many signals that it aspires to nurture a healthy culture within its teaching and operational activities. One bright spot, as reported in the discovery summary report: "Last spring, representatives from our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee ... received a Research and Innovation Seed Grant to work with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB), a non-profit organization that provides education and training to organizations on issues related to systemic racism and social justice. Three trainers from PISAB joined us for a three-day training August 18-20, which was attended by all faculty, staff and teaching graduate students."

ARPAC was impressed by the chair's visit, projecting confidence and optimism in the face of difficult times. His ability to maintain respectful collegiality and to keep people talking productively will go a long way to nurturing a unit culture that serves THDN in the future.

## Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The dual discipline nature of THDN shapes the identity and culture of the unit in many ways. Although Theatre and Dance come together in specific activities such as musical theatre, the two programs often seem to operate as separate sub-units within the department. Theatre and Dance faculty and courses are mainly distinct. THDN's goal setting exercise consists of some goals from the unit as a whole but also includes numerous other goals which were devised by the Theatre and Dance programs independently.

However, both parts of THDN have suffered from the loss of faculty and the consequent difficulties of sustaining their undergraduate and graduate teaching programs. THDN has lost five TTT faculty over the last eight years, and four more are likely to retire over the next five years. Not surprisingly, THDN has been eager to hire new faculty to replace at least some of those who have retired or moved elsewhere. In 2024-2025, THDN conducted a search to fill the Roe Green Endowed Chair in Theatre. Unfortunately, this search eventually failed, and it became clear that funding for the chair was not sufficient to permit a second national search. The Roe Green chair was therefore filled instead by an internal appointment. This ensured that the Roe Green chair did not become frozen, but it also eliminated the opportunity to increase faculty strength by adding a new external hire.

The internal appointment to the Roe Green Chair has been accompanied by a series of urgent initiatives within THDN over the summer of 2025. Possible major changes to teaching have been mooted, as noted above. In terms of governance and unit culture, the headline initiative has been the suspension of some requirements mandated in THDN's by-laws at the August departmental meeting. This enabled THDN to avoid filling separate curriculum, budget, and season-planning committees and instead create a new "Big Picture" committee for 2025-2026. This *ad hoc* committee consists of the department chair, the associate chairs for Dance and Theatre, THDN's academic and administrative specialist, and its finance manager. This group is "charged with looking at curriculum, budget, and our production season concurrently and proposing curricular and policy revisions" for a subsequent full-faculty review and vote that will streamline

undergraduate pathways, create larger lecture-style courses and reduce requirements and time-to-degree. The same committee will also review THDN's existing by-laws and merit processes.

THDN's current by-laws date from 2008, albeit with revisions approved in 2021. They delineate voting rights, require departmental meetings at least twice per semester, and define quorums and procedures for changing the by-laws. The by-laws outline the processes for choosing the department chair and the associate chairs of Theatre and Dance and the composition of six standing committees (Budget Advisory Committee, Merit Review Committee, Primary Unit Evaluation Committee, Curriculum Committee, the ACE Arts Fee Committee, and the THDN Curriculum Support Committee), in addition to the season planning; faculty hiring; graduate admissions; Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (JEDAI); awards; and student advisory committees. Clearly, these by-laws list a large number of committees for a relatively small department.

The by-laws include a separate multi-page statement about the criteria for evaluating work in the reappointment and promotion of teaching faculty. This statement is described as "developed April 2023," but does not indicate if it has been approved at above-department levels. The statement describes the unique nature of THDN's heavy expectations of service for its teaching faculty: "since THDN Teaching Faculty are at once classroom teachers, contributors to the operations of our production season and of key service [sic] to many other endeavors of the unit, they have unusual workload assignments."

A separate document details the policies and procedures for reappointment, promotion, and tenure of TTT faculty. This is dated May 2019 but is described as a revision of fall 1999 and fall 2001 documents. The latter revisions were made to a policies-and-procedures document that was originally approved in April 1993.

A further document details the merit/salary process for THDN. This process is based upon assessment of faculty course questionnaire (FCQ) forms, differential workload percentages, and information from a faculty member's two most recent FRPA forms.

THDN does not seem to have a systematic process for mentoring faculty. One of the short-term goals advanced by the department is to "develop and implement a comprehensive onboarding and mentoring system for new faculty and for faculty transitioning into leadership roles."

Current by-laws provide for grievances by members of the department, but there seems to be no provision for grievances by students. This is an area where updating the by-laws would be necessary.

## Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Department of Theatre and Dance and to the offices of responsible administrators:

### To the Unit:

1. Develop concrete departmental strategies and processes for making progress on goals that have stagnated for some time or for establishing new goals due to departmental changes.
2. Take a candid look at degree and track offerings with an eye to consolidation, given that the unit no longer possesses the capacity to deliver the curriculum it has in the past.
  - a. Review the MA degree for possible conversion into an MFA in Theatre and Performance Studies corresponding with the MFA in Dance.
  - b. Consider eliminating the BFA degrees and the PhD.
  - c. Explore developing and marketing clear pathways for bachelor's students between the BA and MFA.
3. Explore new models for delivering large-enrollment classes taught by TTT and teaching faculty in order to avoid overburdening GPTIs (who may not be available anyway) and to develop relationships between undergraduate students and faculty earlier in the students' degree programs.
4. Develop a sustainable model for delivering courses and service duties with the available faculty (especially if new hires may not be forthcoming).
5. Institute stronger curricular ties between departmental productions and degree programs; for example, consider awarding course credit for participation in productions.
6. Streamline departmental committee and other service structures so that faculty are not overburdened with multiple service roles, especially in light of many faculty members' responsibilities for supporting student productions.
7. Begin discussions of how mentoring, and peer-mentoring, could improve morale in the department and lay the groundwork for successful future hires.
8. Revise the unit bylaws, bringing them in line with current campus expectations, for example adding student grievance procedures.
9. Continue work to establish and strengthen relationships between the department and local and regional theater, dance, and arts performance groups in order to expand student opportunities; this work potentially includes establishing ties with the Sundance Film Festival.
10. Collaborate with the College of Music to support one another in meeting their overlapping needs for dance instruction and other curricular offerings.

## To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

11. Review the impact of the new budget model on THDN. Consider whether THDN's unique attributes (productions, physical needs, etc.) should lead to a rethinking of the unit's budget allocation.
12. Support arts units within AHUM in developing a comprehensive strategy for engagement and partnerships with the Sundance Film Festival, including advancement, student opportunities such as internships, and campus events and performances.
13. Consider new financial structures that recognize the role performing arts productions serve in engaging the broader community.
14. Explore creating shared administrative support services for certain key functions for which individual units, especially smaller units, may not have staff personnel, e.g., graduate student administrative support, event support, budget and finance support, etc.
15. Emphasize and support the important role that THDN—and the creative, visual, and performing arts and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

## To the Provost:

16. Emphasize and support the important role that THDN—and the creative, visual, and performing arts and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

## Required Follow-up

The chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.