THEATER ARTS VISION COMMITTEE

Second Meeting of the Theater Arts Vision Committee, May 26th, 2010 12:00pm-3:00 pm Women’s Studies Research Center

Present: Chiu, Dibble, Edmiston (Chair), Hyland, King, Krstansky, McKittrick, Schoonmaker, Webber, Wong
Absent: Williams

Summary of Discussions

Discussion at this meeting opened with the reviewing of the mission statements of the School of Creative Arts, Brandeis Theater Arts and the Brandeis Theater Company. The members of the committee discussed how these statements related to those of other universities, including Tufts, Emerson, BU, Yale, and Brown. The members discussed the challenges and rewards of sponsoring both a liberal arts education (BA) and a professional training program (MFA), and how they sometimes support and sometimes compete with each other. There was further discussion of what distinguishes the undergraduate and graduate experiences at Brandeis.

This led into a discussion of the history of the theatre arts department, from its inception through the present day, and the changes that have occurred, as well as the reasons for those changes. It was acknowledged that the department’s evolution was shaped by changes in university leadership and faculty, styles of theatre education, trends in national theatre (LORT movement), growth in theatre across Greater Boston, emergence of new technology, and Brandeis’s unique values, culture, and mission. The central focus of the conversation was identifying how the department’s current curriculum and productions/programming were shaped by many of these factors. There was agreement that the recent changes in the department, and need for the committee, were not the results of “mistakes” by the department. Educational practices and theatre as an art form are in a constant state of change, and this is an opportunity to reexamine some practices and procedures that may no longer be serving our students. Members expressed a desire to be more progressive and aligned with the future.

The committee then broke the discussion into the three major categories outlined by Dean Jaffe: undergraduate curriculum, MFA acting program and the Brandeis Theater Company. Members brainstormed on areas of strength, areas of weakness and ideas for change. The members compiled a preliminary list of some potential constituents who could be of help to us in future consultations.

Discussions for Next Meeting

The committee will discuss the three main areas of focus in greater detail, identifying priorities, and looking for common themes and connections. The next meeting will begin with a focus on the undergraduate curriculum. Members were invited to develop some potential questions on the three main categories. Members have also been asked to consider ideas for new courses that could be offered in the undergraduate curriculum.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15pm