June 15, 2010

Attending: Edmiston, Dibble, Wong, Webber, Chiu, Williams

Topics: Undergraduate Theatre Collective and MFA Acting Program

The committee discussed the nature and function of the UTC in relationship to the theatre department. Some members of the community perceive the UTC to be more “connected” to the student community, which brings it a certain vitality. The committee acknowledged that the UTC productions offer different student opportunities – directing, producing, designing, acting in larger roles – than are offered at BTC. Their plays are usually selected by undergraduates themselves from the more popular repertoire. Many students enjoy the social aspect of UTC and won’t commit to the time and rigors asked by a BTC production. Discussion focused on:

- Structural links and better communication between the two theatre entities, such as regular meetings between the UTC leadership and department leadership; offering a departmental advisor; an ongoing concern is technical safety.
- Shared sustainable production resources. Common casting practices. The possibility of a co-production.
- Whether or not undergraduates might direct, design, choreograph, or “associate produce” a department production.
- Ways in which the department can better engage new students who tend to become attached to the UTC community in their first year due to fewer immediate opportunities in the department.

The discussion shifted to the graduate acting program. The committee discussed the mission of the program – should the focus be on careers in New York, regional theatre, “created” theatre, teaching? How essential is the careerist model of showcases and agents? Is there an alternative model for an MFA acting program that would be unique to Brandeis? Could graduate students take more electives both within and outside of the department? How can the MFA actors become better engaged with the larger Brandeis community? Should we cultivate their teaching skills more during their first and second years? The program’s relationship to professional Boston-area theatres was discussed. There was a perception that the current curriculum is strong but is very intensive and doesn’t provide time for much flexibility. It was agreed that members of the acting faculty and current grad actors should be consulted for input and suggestions. Committee members will also research MA in Theater/Drama programs, which could bring other graduate students to department courses.
What does form mean in this context?