

TO: Dr. Chris Evans
Interim Provost and Vice President Academic

Charles Falzon
Dean, Faculty of Communication and Design

FROM: Dr. Peggy Shannon
Chair, School of Performance

DATE: July 8, 2016

SUBJECT: Program Review and Follow-Up

The Program Review submitted by the School of Performance (formerly known as the Theatre School) was approved by Senate in June 2015. The following points describe the steps taken to address specific issues raised in the report.

Facilities

Ryerson University has made it a top priority to provide new, adequate, facilities to house the School of Performance. Beginning in June 2016, the School of Performance began moving out of 44 Gerrard and will be completely out of this building by the end of Fall 2016. New facilities include offices and classrooms for audio, costume, and lighting in the Student Learning Centre (SLC); dance and performance studios in the basement of the SLC; two new acting studios and a music studio in Kerr Hall; and new offices and student work areas in the Atrium at Bay. While these new facilities are well designed, the physical fracturing of the School into many locations around campus is concerning. Also, the placement of the Dance Program underground is seen as a potential challenge for recruiting Canada's top dancers, many of whom are accustomed to training in rooms with windows and fresh air. Ryerson's administration acknowledges this relocation as Phase One of its plan to support the School of Performance. Phase Two – which may not occur for 5-8 years – will be the building of a “home” for the School of Performance to house Acting, Dance, Production (and other new areas of concentration that may come on line for the School of Performance) under one roof.

Vision, Goals and Strategies

The PRT suggested that the School of Performance review its upper-level course offerings in order to give students a broader choice. A review has begun but due to budget constraints and a focus on the relocation, no new courses have been developed at this point. There have been ongoing meetings with the Performance Curriculum Committee and with Chairs of RTA School of Media and Creative Industries to develop two new concentrations: Music Industry Performance and Production and Live Entertainment. These two new areas of concentration will

provide a broader menu of courses and career paths for our students. The recent hire of a new two-year LTF for the School of Performance (set to begin on August 1, 2016) will aid tremendously in the development of the Live Entertainment area of concentration. Ongoing discussions between Performance, RTA School of Media, and Creative Industries to offer a Music Industry Performance and Production BFA hope to yield the launch of a new degree program in 2017 or 2018.

The PRT suggested an examination of assignments and course content to identify and resolve gaps and overlaps

In Fall 2015, for the first time in the history of the School, all of the CUPE (numbering over 50 instructors) and RFA faculty of the School of Performance attended a one-day retreat to discuss course content, course assignments and culminating projects in order to identify potential gaps/overlaps. It was a healthy first step. Once Performance is fully relocated into its new facilities, additional such retreats will be organized to more fully examine our current curriculum and plan holistically for the future.

Progress on the development of new minors

The School of Performance successfully launched its Acting/Dance Studies Minor (for RU students at large) and a new Acting/Dance Studies Module (for Creative Industries) in Fall 2015. The Minor is quite popular and courses are full. Once the relocation of the School has fully occurred, the Curriculum Committee will begin considering and/or additional Minors for Performance.

RTS Student Recruitment and the Undergraduate Experience

RTS competes for students with programs throughout North America. It is a very popular choice for students interested in studying Acting and Dance. At the moment students must travel to Toronto to audition for the Acting Program or submit a recorded audition (which cannot be considered ideal) if they live more than 420 km from Toronto. The same holds true for Dance. The PRT agrees that Performance must ensure the expansion of future student bases and seek to accept only top tier students. A national audition tour (similar to the one undertaken by the National Theatre School of Canada or Julliard of New York) would help ensure Ryerson remains competitive on a national level.

The PRT recommended that Performance institute a national audition tour as soon as is financially feasible. This is currently under discussion with the senior faculty and program directors of the three areas of Performance (Acting, Dance, Production). In the meantime, a new “Summer Boot Camp” for high school dancers preparing to go into Grade 12 will be offered in Summer 2017. The final week of the month-long Boot Camp will include auditions for students wishing to be considered for the Performance Dance program in 2018. Performance is working with Admissions to establish an early-admission protocol. Also, the School has launched The Global Stage, a new producing entity for performances occurring outside of the academic year. These productions of theatre, dance, and music will have performances in Toronto and are also intended to tour throughout the GTA. This will increase the School of Performance brand throughout Ontario.

Concluding Remarks

Acknowledging the School's history of training theatre, dance, and technical production artists, while looking to the future to include additional areas of concentration and degrees, the Theatre School was renamed School of Performance ("Performance") and this name was adopted by Senate in 2016. With new facilities and offices in place for the 2016/2017 academic year; a new two-year LTF in Performance Production; ongoing discussions with other FCAD schools to develop a new shared degree program in Music Industries Performance and Production; the development of a new concentration in Live Entertainment; and with increased international classes and training opportunities for School of Performance students in Greece (open to all FCAD students), Croatia (Acting); Cuba (Dance), Prague (Technical Production and Design), and the USA (all of Performance); to increased SRC grant dollars and research; to year-over-year enrollment increase in our Summer Programs (2016 will have over 300 enrollees); and with the launch of The Global Stage - the new, semi-professional summer producing entity intended to reach a broad audience outside of the Ryerson community, the School of Performance is addressing many, if not all, of the observations and recommendations raised in the PRT report to the Academic Council.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Shannon".

Peggy Shannon
Chair and Professor
Ryerson University, School of Performance
Phone: 416-979-5000 Ext. 4614
