Executive Summary
The team appointed to conduct the review of the Texas Tech Graduate Program in Theatre and Dance in 2012 received instructions from Associate Dean Clifford Fedler at a dinner meeting on April 18. On the following day, we conducted separate interviews with Chair Fred Christoffel; with Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts Carol Edwards; and with the faculty as a whole as well as touring the theatre facilities including the Maedgen Theatre mainstage and Lab theatre. On April 20, we met with the graduate students, followed by exit interviews with Professor Christoffel and Graduate Advisor Linda Donahue.

The overall impression was of a department already well beyond its capacity, both in terms of the workload being carried by all personnel and with respect to the facilities within which the work is being performed. Moreover, the department appears to have been carrying on at this level for many years and to be seriously demoralized by having their urgent, repeated, and fully justified requests for improvements to the facilities go largely unmet, review after review.

Program Overview and Vision (very good)
The Graduate Program in Theatre and Dance offers three graduate degrees: MA in Theatre Arts; MFA in Theatre with emphasis in Arts Administration, Performance and Pedagogy, Design, or Playwriting; and a PhD in Fine Arts with a Theatre Arts major. All three of these degree programs give equal emphasis to the academic study of theatre and to theatrical practice, which is conceived as unique among PhD and even MA programs although quite typical for MFA programs. Because each degree program has slightly different goals and outcomes, this report will address the specific vision for each of the three graduate degree programs separately in discussing their separate curricula and programs of study.

The Theatre and Dance Department has 13 full-time faculty, 2 of whom comprise the Dance faculty and do not teach graduate classes. Although this portion of the department falls outside the purview of this review although it does serve both BFA and MFA students of performance, I would note the success of the Dance program, which has experienced triple digit growth in the past five years with no additional resources allocated to support the expansion, and its potential to become a valuable addition to graduate education at TTU.

As explained more fully in the “Review Process” section at the end of this report, exact figures concerning enrollment must be surmised on the basis of contradictory data, and here again figures for each particular graduate degree will be discussed separately in discussing their separate curricula and programs of study. The general summary, however, is quite simple: this program has been growing steadily and is already over capacity. There is absolutely no room to increase enrollment without adding faculty, and no room to expand the faculty without remediating the shortage of classroom, laboratory, and office space.

The strategic plan for the PhD in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Theatre, in concert with the rest of this multidisciplinary doctoral program, calls for an increased enrollment resulting in the graduation of 15 PhDs per year by 2020. This is impossible given the current faculty and current facilities. Whether satisfactory placement would be possible for that number of graduates is questionable—it’s highly unlikely within the academy, but perhaps more feasible for a multidisciplinary PhD with more diverse
career paths. The strategic plan states no targets for enrollment or graduation at the MFA level.

**Curriculum and Programs of Study: MA in Theatre Arts (good)**
The goal of the MA in Theatre Arts is to prepare students for admission to a doctoral program.

Course work begins with 9 semester hours of core courses (Advanced Directing, Survey of Theatre History, and Seminar in Theatre Research Methods). 15 hours of elective courses are distributed across the various areas (one course each in Design or Technical Theatre, Acting or Directing, Arts Administration, Playwriting, and History/Theory/Criticism. A minimum 6 hours of thesis writing are required to complete the MA. Because the requirements for this degree are flexible (that is, in most cases concerned with distribution rather than specific courses), students do not encounter difficulties in taking the courses required for their degree. As a generalist degree, the MA has no areas of specialization.

The MA Comprehensive Examination comprises a four-hour written test, divided equally among the five areas. Each Area Head is solely responsible for writing the question(s) for the respective area and grading it on a pass/fail basis. This degree requires a thesis, written under the supervision of a committee and defended orally.

The MA in Theatre is a degree with an uncertain future. Some programs, such as Texas Tech and Florida State University, offer both an MA and a PhD. Others, such as the University of Georgia, require an MA or MFA for admission to their PhD programs but do not offer an MA, requiring their students to earn that degree elsewhere. Some other programs, such as the City University of New York PhD Program in Theatre, accept students with a BA or BFA as well as those with an MA or MFA but grant a certain amount of transfer credit for courses taken in masters programs. The generalized nature of the MA at TTU appears to be appropriate preparation for a student wishing to continue his or her studies in the TTU Fine Arts PhD but might not be adequate preparation for a more traditional doctoral program at another university; however, the requirement to complete both a comprehensive exam and a written thesis exceeds the expectations of certain comparable programs—FSU, for example, gives its MA candidates a choice of either exam or thesis.

**Curriculum and Programs of Study: MFA in Theatre Arts (good)**
The goal of the MFA in Theatre Arts is to prepare students to work in professional theatre and/or to teach. This is a terminal degree, sufficient for teaching at the university level (BA, BFA, and MFA programs).

The MFA program offers 4 areas of specialization (Playwriting, Arts Administration, Performance and Pedagogy, Design) and requires 60 hours of coursework, with the specific requirements dependent upon the area of specialization. Each area lists a combination of required courses in the specialization (from 30-33 hours) and Theatre Arts electives, and each requires the Seminar in Theatre Research Methods. All required courses are offered at least once during a three-year rotation, ensuring that students will be able to meet these requirements although not always in the same sequence. The faculty noted that size of the faculty limits the frequency with which courses can be offered, and that the students would benefit from expanded course offerings.

A diagnostic exam taken during the first fall semester of a student’s enrollment assesses the student’s knowledge of dramatic literature and writing skills with respect to Theatre Arts, with deficiencies to be compensated as part of the degree plan. No final examination is required, but the work of each student is evaluated every semester. The MFA culminates in a thesis, which is most often a creative project such as an original full-length play or a major acting role, design, or directing project. Students may elect to write a thesis, which would most usually be undertaken in connection with rather than instead of a creative project. To earn an MFA degree based solely upon a written thesis (but not a play) might be appropriate for the Arts Administration area but would be surprising for any of the others. Presumably the option to write a thesis but not complete a creative thesis project exists in order to meet this need, but there is no explicit differentiation between areas with respect to the thesis requirement.
The generalization of TTU’s MFA in Theatre Arts is quite unusual. Most similar programs in peer institutions grant a degree specific to the sub-discipline; that is, in Acting, Directing, Administration, Playwriting, or Design. This somewhat more broadly conceived MFA degree might be attractive to a small college that needs to employ a theatre generalist adept in several capacities. In other cases, graduates with this degree would likely be assessed on the basis of their individual curriculum vitae and demonstrated expertise. That the Texas Tech MFA program does not provide clear “packaging” categories for its graduates is perhaps a minor inconvenience only.

Curriculum and Programs of Study: PhD in Fine Arts, Theatre Arts major (very good)

According to the catalog of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, the goal of the PhD in Fine Arts is “to make candidates aware of the full scope and educational interrelatedness of the arts” and “to provide both depth and breadth in a course of study most likely to develop leadership in the arts.” Theatre is one of the majors available within this multidisciplinary doctoral program, together with Art and Music.

Students in all three majors are required to complete a core of five courses, at least one each in Art, Music, and Philosophy (aesthetics). The required FADP core courses are offered every year, with one course in each discipline every semester. Students can easily complete the core requirements during the first year of coursework. Theatre Arts majors are further required to take 4 Theatre courses distributed across 4 of the department’s 5 areas (Acting/Directing, Arts Administration, Design, History/Theory/Criticism, and Playwriting), a course in research methods, and at least 1 elective. If the student has previously passed a graduate course in research methods, then 2 electives are required. Beyond the Fine Arts core, PhD students with a Theatre major choose two specializations (“tracks”) in Theatre Arts, and take 12 hours of coursework in each of these tracks along with 6 hours of foundation courses (Seminar in Theatre Research Methods and Theatre History Survey). 12 hours of dissertation work complete the 60 hours required for the PhD. Doctoral students take the same courses as do the MFA students; therefore, the same availability pertains. The Acting/Directing track corresponds to the MFA in Performance and Pedagogy. The only additional track available for specialization by doctoral students is History/Theory/Criticism, and it is possible to avoid this area in a program of doctoral study beyond the foundation courses. The self-study document provided to the review team revealed very little about the content of the graduate courses in Theatre Arts. Syllabi available online for courses in the History/Theory/Criticism area indicate course content comparable to that in any traditional PhD program in Theatre. Where available, course syllabi for the other areas are typical of MFA courses.

The multidisciplinary Fine Arts doctorate requires a Core Exam. Sample questions available on the FADP website indicate that this exam is well designed to meet its stated purpose; that is, “to test the student’s general understanding of concepts and materials implicit in the program of core courses (minor). The goal is to demonstrate an ability to relate general issues and concerns common to all the arts.” Within the Theatre Arts major, doctoral students are required to pass a written comprehensive examination on dramatic literature based on a reading list of 125 plays and another written exam based upon a different reading list. This exam structure has changed from what the department handbook describes and thus cannot be fully evaluated. The reading lists give a good grounding in modern theatrical practice and in dramatic literature from the Greeks through the twentieth century. These materials focus exclusively on European and American theatre and drama.

It difficult to determine this program’s compatibility with similar programs in peer institutions, because other PhD programs in United States universities are more strongly focused upon traditional scholarship even when theatrical practice is included within the program of study. This program would seem more in line with the PhD in Practice as Research that has developed primarily in the United Kingdom. There are a few comparable programs in the United States: UC Davis offers a PhD in Performance Studies that combines academic and practical research, and Wayne State University offers a PhD in Theatre for Scholar-Directors. Both of these programs require a significant number of courses that fall on the academic side of the discipline—that is, courses in history, theory, and literature. The latter program lists
recent dissertation titles roughly comparable to those completed at TTU.

**Faculty Productivity (good+)**
The sole faculty member teaching History/Theory/Criticism has a substantial record of peer-reviewed scholarly publication. One member of the Performance and Pedagogy faculty also has a significant publication record, some of which is peer reviewed. The rest of the faculty research is represented largely by creative production, with some of this again peer reviewed.

The faculty without exception counts their directing and design for departmental productions as peer-reviewed creative activity. Peer institutions have differing policies in this regard: some follow this practice and others count in-house creative activity as teaching, requiring professional activity outside the university for promotion and tenure. Given the geographical isolation of Lubbock and the heavy workload of the faculty in this department, one can understand the difficulty that the faculty would face in maintaining an active professional engagement beyond their work in the university. One can also appreciate the difficulty that a blind peer-review process would entail, given the small community of peers within the region qualified to evaluate the faculty’s creative work. In spite of its advantages, though, the present system seems to result in some degree of insularity as well as competition for creative opportunities that works to the disadvantage of graduate students.

The regular teaching load for full-time faculty is three courses (9 hours) per semester, with 3 hours of course release for a directing assignment or for administrative duties. When a member of the faculty has more than one obligation of this type—which is clearly the rule rather than the exception—no additional release time is provided beyond the initial 3 hours. This teaching load is heavier than typical for peer institutions. The members of this faculty perform a tremendous amount of service. The Graduate Advisor, for example, also directs plays regularly, serves as head of the Arts Administration area, supervises the front of house staff, teaches two courses each semester, and directs a large number of MFA theses and PhD dissertations.

**Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates (very good)**
The enrollment data provided by the Graduate Program Review 2005-2011 is so inconsistent and contradictory that a meaningful analysis is not possible; for example, the charts indicate that no students are enrolled in the MFA programs, which is clearly not the case. Professor Christoffel provided the HEADS report prepared in 2012 for the accrediting body, National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). This data more reliably reflects what was observed during the site visit in April 2012 but does not include information such as GRE scores, nor does it provide a picture of trends over the past six years.

The Graduate Program in Theatre does not actively recruit applicants but instead relies upon students to find the program. This appears to be effective, since there has been no shortage of applicants. If the data can be taken seriously at all, average GRE scores for incoming students are somewhat low for the MA and PhD programs in comparison with peer institutions and have declined slightly since 2005; however, the program’s focus on creative praxis makes this metric less useful than the other materials required for admission such as auditions, portfolios, and writing samples.

Graduates of the program have enjoyed a good level of success, with those holding the Fine Arts PhD finding employment in smaller colleges throughout the region and quite often moving quickly into positions as department chairs or deans.

Student creative productivity has been limited both by the inadequate facilities and by certain department policies. Only faculty direct productions on the Maedgen Theatre main stage, of which 4 are scheduled each year, because this is the primary venue for their professional creative activity. Students are allowed to direct only in the Lab theatre, which in itself is not as serious a limitation as the fact that only 3 of these
Productions are scheduled each year (excluding dance performances). The current season scheduling practices also seriously limit the opportunities for graduate students in Playwriting to have their work produced. All of the 11 students enrolled in the MFA program with a Performance and Pedagogy specialization as of Fall 2011 are required to direct at least one production, the 2 students specializing in Playwriting must have a fully supported production of an original play, and all of the students expressed a desire to do more than this minimum requirement. A significant number of the 41 students enrolled in the PhD program also need opportunities either to direct or to see their plays staged. Obviously, not every student needs this sort of production slot every year, but one can extrapolate a need for at least 4 student-directed productions and 2 original student plays annually—and very likely more than this, even with the current enrollment levels. Exacerbating the shortage of production and rehearsal space, the policy has been to keep the space “dark” when not in use for classes or for rehearsal and production of the season’s shows. Apparently, independent and unfunded creative projects are actively discouraged. For a variety of reasons, the Summer Rep program does not appear to provide a workable alternative outlet.

Given the small number of faculty who publish scholarly work, it is not surprising that the program’s doctoral students are not publishing, nor are they attending academic conferences although there are some travel funds available from the department, the College of Fine Arts, and the Graduate School. This sort of activity has become standard for doctoral students, who should be encouraged to pursue both of these activities. The program provides no regular professional development activity and has no graduate student organization, both of which are standard features among peer institutions. The doctoral students noted that possibility of combining scholarly research with creative work is what attracted them to this program. They expressed the need for broader support in their scholarship and dissertation planning. The program provides no regular professional development activity and has no graduate student organization, both of which are standard features among peer institutions. The doctoral students noted that possibility of combining scholarly research with creative work is what attracted them to this program. They expressed the need for broader support in their scholarship and dissertation planning. Adding faculty lines would go far to meeting this need, because at present many areas are handled by a single member of the faculty—this is the case for Playwriting, History/Theory/Criticism, and Arts Administration.

Financial support for graduate students is on the low side in comparison with peer institutions, and the program loses promising applicants to institutions that can provide more support—many schools, including UGA, waive tuition for those students receiving assistantship funding. The forthcoming tuition cap of $600 for students in a terminal degree program will help and absolutely must include MFA as well as PhD students. Like the faculty, the graduate students work hard. Because each student receiving funds as a TA or GPTI must not only perform the teaching or other duties to which they are assigned but also audition for every show and perform if cast, their working hours are irregular and in some cases untracked. Because assistantships are also broken up across several different areas, students sometimes end up faced with conflicting demands. Rehearsal and work schedules do not follow Equity regulations, which is standard for MFA programs at peer institutions. The demands seem excessive.

Facilities and Resources (poor)
The existing space does not meet the minimum requirements necessary to support the program as it currently exists, let alone to support the growth that TTU desires. The two theatre spaces are functional, pleasant, and adequate in audience seating capacity. A flexible black-box space with seating for approximately 200 would be a desirable enhancement and alleviate the conflicting needs of faculty and graduate students for performance space. The department also needs the rehearsal studios that constitute research laboratories for this discipline. For a graduate program in Theatre Arts to have no dedicated rehearsal space is unheard of. Regular classrooms in other buildings are not an adequate substitute, nor is the Lab theatre. Movement and voice training requires a sizeable studio space with an appropriate floor surface. Acting classes require flexible laboratory spaces with storage for rehearsal props, costumes, and the blocks that typically fill in for furniture.

Crucial as these needs may be, they are of less importance than certain other requirements absolutely essential to ensure the health and safety of faculty, students, staff, and audiences. In addition to more work and storage space, the costume shop needs ventilation for the dying areas, and the scene shop needs...
ventilation and a mechanism to remove sawdust from the air and thus remove the danger of explosions. Currently most of the scenery construction and painting must be carried out on the stage itself, an inefficient arrangement that also removes that space from other more appropriate uses when construction is going on. These activities would be much better accomplished in a shop. Especially given the history of fires in the Maedgen Theatre building, fire exits are notably inadequate. During the review committee’s tour of the facilities, the second door providing egress from the costume shop to the street was locked.

Graduate students indicated dissatisfaction with the library holdings in their areas of study, and noted that the librarian for the area had not proven to be of much help.

The program needs at least one additional clerical position and would benefit greatly from a targeted grant writer.

The Review Process
The team faced several difficulties in conducting the review and in evaluating the information provided to us, all exacerbated by apparently dysfunctional communications between various administrative and academic units at TTU. The review was originally schedule for February 2012 but had to be rescheduled due to lack of communication between those organizing the review and the department. The external reviewers thus arranged travel and purchased airline tickets twice, carrying these out-of-pocket expenses for more than five months prior to the possibility of submitting them for reimbursement. These inconveniences did not present a positive first impression, something relatively inconsequential in comparison with the hours that we wasted in attempting to make sense of the Graduate Program Review 2005-2011 prepared by the Department of Theatre and Dance in November 2011. The central difficulty seems to be that the statistical tables were populated with data from Institutional Research and Information Management, which does not distinguish between the Master of Arts degree and the Master of Fine Arts, the latter of which is a terminal degree. As a result, the data tables showed that four tracks within the MFA program had no students enrolled, which is not the case, and numbers were inconsistent from table to table. Thus a good deal of our meeting time with the chair, the dean, and the faculty was spent in obtaining better information, which we were then unable to fully examine until all of our interviews were already completed.