Preamble

Any consideration of assessment activities in TRFT must take into account the tumultuous state of the unit over the past several years. The RTVF and Theatre programs have been at the vortex of College restructuring schemes, abrupt changes in leadership, closure of our administrative offices, uncertainty about our departmental status and a host of related disruptions that have interfered with a consistent assessment process. Despite the unsettling nature of this environment, and in response to the ongoing mission of providing a disciplined-based, practically-oriented education in TV, radio, film and theatre production, the TRFT faculty have continued to respond to program assessment and to targeted improvements directly tied to our SLOs.

In the context of the uncertainty described above, the department has emerged with a stronger sense of unified program identity. This is validated by the recently completed Humanities and the Arts Strategic Planning process which reinstated the department as TRFT. It is timely, that we are “closing the loop” on the 2008-13 assessment cycle at exactly the time when we are stepping back to reevaluate the overall program objectives for our BA degrees in RTVF and Theatre and our MA in Theatre. We are also anticipating the 2013-14 SJSU Program Planning process leading us to a renewed and more unified identity and set of program objectives over the course of next year.

The evaluation of SLO #5 is also timely since the definition of that objective is virtually identical for RTVF and TA. In addition, the ability to conduct effective research and to use it productively is one of the obvious core values of our department in both the BA and MA programs.
Initial Evidence of Student Learning:
[FALL/2011]
TA 100W serves as the common writing course for majors in TA, RTVF and Animation/Illustration. The frequent instructors for this course were operating with the component of a traditionally oriented research paper calling for an element of scholarly research, proper citation. MLA format, bibliography, etc. Evaluation was based on a largely qualitative analysis of these assignments in addition to evaluation of SOTE and written student responses.

Change(s) to Curriculum or Pedagogy:
[SPRING/2012]
TA 100W instructors shifted the focus of the research assignment away from a traditional academic inquiry and towards a more personal and practical approach. Students were required to tie their research directly to some aspect of their scripted narrative projects (which is another of the TA 100 learning objectives). These projects, in turn, are used as the basis for culminating group projects where students create collaborative productions based on the scripts. The academic format requirements for the research assignment are the same as before, but the assignment is now fully integrated into the production process and activities.

Evidence of Student Learning after Change:
[FALL/2012]
TA 100W instructors were able to examine the student research assignments according to their earlier rubrics. Not surprisingly, the fact that the students were more closely engaged with the purposes of conducting research produced a higher percentage of assignment completion. Students understood that research wasn’t just “dry and boring” work for scholars. They saw research as an intertwined part of the creative and production process. The results of this shift have been impressive, yielded and demonstrated in a semester-ending TA 100W showcase where the students from all TA 100 sections gather in the University Theater for public presentation of their projects including the research element. This event has already become a department highlight and a validation of both the pedagogical change described above and the rich interactions between TRFT studies and production. One of these projects, including the research element, was featured in the spring 2013 Humanities and the Arts Showcase. Another was selected as the juried winner of the 2013 SJSU Film Production Society (FPS) Festival.

Postscript

The Theatre Arts MA program has suspended admissions for one year in order to focus departmental efforts on strengthening the undergraduate core. However, evaluation of the fundamental research and scholarship objective can best be measured by the high level of completion over the period of review. Thirteen graduate students completed the “culminating experience” and received their degrees. Eleven of these were Plan A Masters Theses and two were Plan B Comprehensive Exams.