Assessment Process
The THEA 101 assessment leadership was shared by Zach Bloomfield, Nicki Blowers, Clay Kirkland, and Tammy Perkins. A pre and post test was used to determine the familiarity of students with different positions in the theatre; the process involved in creating a production; and basic cultural literacy information related to the history of theatre. This 10 question assessment (questions are included at the end of this document) was administered during the first week of class and during either the last week of class or the final exam period during the spring and fall 2008 semesters.

Results from the spring 2008 assessment made it clear that the nature of online testing invalidated results for those sections since students have greater access to course materials and cannot reasonably be expected to take an assessment as a group in a manner similar to a face-to-face class. With this in mind, a separate assessment plan for online classes will be developed in the next assessment cycle. The fall, 2008 assessment focused exclusively on face-to-face sections.

The assessment “quiz” explored core knowledge students should possess at the end of THEA 101 associated with the following outcomes:

Intended Student Learning Outcomes

- Students enrolled in THEA 101 should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the role and responsibilities of various contributors to the creation of a theatrical production (designers, playwright, actor, director, etc.)

- Student enrolled in THEA 101 should be able to demonstrate basic familiarity with significant figures associated with the theatre of the past and present (Sophocles, Shakespeare, Moliere, Miller, etc.)

Results

- With the exception of question # 9 in the fall 2008 semester, the percentage of correct answers to each question improved by approximately three to 13%. During the fall 2008 semester, correct answers to # 9 actually decreased by 2.5%.

- Question # 9 is a True or False question designed to determine if students understand that theatre is a collaborative art. Many students initially assume that a production team (director, actor, designers) views a script as an instruction manual that provides all the answers for a production. One of the concepts key to an understanding of theatre is that it is a collaborative art. Scripts are open to multiple interpretations and designs and can best be described as blueprints rather
than finished products at the start of a production/rehearsal process. Both initial and final responses to this question indicate this concept is challenging for students.

- Although the improvement percentages were generally consistent in both the spring and fall semesters, the starting percentage of correct answers was much higher in the spring semester. Initial correct answers in the spring semester ranged from 72 to 91 percent suggesting a high degree of pre-existing theatre literacy regarding core concepts. However, initial correct answers for the fall semester ranged from 55 to 76 percent. If one can assume a higher number of fall students are new to college the results suggest a higher degree of cultural literacy is achieved by the time students begin subsequent semesters. Clearly, this observation is speculative since it is based on a two-semester assessment.

Use of Results

Full time and adjunct theatre faculty bring diverse expertise and experience to THEA 101. All emphasize the core learning outcomes but do so based on diverse performance, design, writing, and research perspectives. This is one of the strengths of the theatre program at JJC. Regardless of approach, however, it seems clear that the level of cultural literacy and comprehension of the various positions within the theatre significantly improves after successfully completing the course. It seems equally clear that some students initially struggle to understand the collaborative nature of theatre while others continue to grapple with this throughout the course. Clearly, there is potential for greater emphasis on the collaborative nature of theatre. Strategies to address this will be explored in future theatre discipline meetings.

Assessment Questions

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions on the answer sheet provided. These questions are intended to determine a little bit about the theatre knowledge of students at the beginning of the semester. You will have an opportunity to answer the same questions at the end of the course. The information gathered will help faculty make adjustments to the course in future semesters. THERE IS NO GRADE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ACTIVITY!

1. Which accurately describes a function of costume design?
   A. May establish social and economic status of the characters
   B. May embody a metaphor, symbol or allegorical concept
   C. May alter an actor’s shape and appearance
   D. All of the above
   E. None of the above
2. This designer is concerned with the arrangement and organization of the performance space. In consultation with the director, she defines and characterizes the space, arranges the floor plan to aid the movement of the actors, and uses it to reinforce the production concept.
   A. Scenic designer
   B. Lighting designer
   C. Costume designer
   D. Sound designer

3. The _____ secures the finances and key personnel for a production:
   A. Stage Manager
   B. Director
   C. Dramaturg
   D. Producer
   E. Technical Director

4. The _____ coordinates all artistic elements of a production:
   A. Stage Manager
   B. Director
   C. Dramaturg
   D. Producer
   E. Technical Director

5. A career as a successful stage actor usually requires:
   A. Talent, practice, and good looks
   B. Talent, practice, and contacts
   C. Talent, practice, and personality
   D. Talent, practice, and training

6. In ancient Greek Theatre performances were presented:
   A. to demonstrate the power of Athens
   B. to raise money for civic projects
   C. to praise the god Dionysus
   D. to win the Olympic event in drama

7. The influence of commedia dell’arte performances can be seen in modern:
   A. Physical comedy, cartoons, and circus clowns
   B. Romantic film and television programs
   C. Reality television
   D. Experimental theatre movement
8. Which of the following sentences best describes contemporary theatre?
   A. Contemporary theatre focuses on comedies and musicals
   B. Contemporary theatre focuses on dramas and social issues
   C. Contemporary theatre focuses on experiments with form and style
   D. Contemporary theatre may focus on any of the above or any combination of the above

9. True or False: When the writing process is complete, a script is viewed as a finished product.

10. True or False: Audience response can seldom be fully controlled by the director, actors and designers, as audiences ultimately respond as they wish.