

CHAPTER 17—ACTORS STUDIO DRAMA SCHOOL

The Actors Studio Drama School enrolled its first students fall 1994. It is the culmination of the Actors Studio's long exploration of the sources and methods of the craft of acting. Founded in 1947 by Group Theater alumni/ae Elia Kazan, Robert Lewis and Cheryl Crawford, it was designed to be just what its name implies: a studio, a protected workshop where actors, playwrights and directors could practice their craft out of the limelight and free of the commercial pressures. Collectively, the Studio's actors, directors and playwrights have received more than one hundred and fifty Oscar, Tony and Emmy awards.

In 1993, then Studio President Paul Newman and members Ellen Burstyn, Carlin Glynn, Lee Grant, Norman Mailer, Peter Masterson, Robert Wankel and Arthur Penn joined a Actors Studio committee under the chairmanship of James Lipton to create a three-year Master of Fine Arts program that embodied the Studio's rich legacy. The new partnership built upon the New School's theatre tradition, going back to Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop in the 1940s, where Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler taught for the first time, and Marlon Brando, Walter Matthau, Tennessee Williams and Shelley Winters began their training.

Mission

The mission of Actors Studio Drama School is to translate the fifty-five year experience of the Actors Studio to a three-year Master's Degree program that trains its actors, playwrights and directors side-by-side in a coherent program organized around a central principle: the Stanislavski System. With every core course taught by an Actors Studio member, the School's goal is to provide every graduate in each of the three disciplines with the tools necessary to define his or her unique talent and promise.

In the course of three years of full-time study, every student acquires what Stanislavski called "a common grammar" that enables the three disciplines—acting, writing and directing—to communicate readily, freely and, most important, specifically with each other—in the Drama School, and ultimately in the professional world outside. This rigorous technical training combined with the ethical culture of the New School teaches *life* skills that are applicable in many circumstances.

The Master of Fine Arts degree is the only degree offered. Enrollment has grown steadily from 61 students in fall 1994 to a program high of 242 in Fall 2000, followed by sustained enrollment of 203-209 each term thereafter. Fall 1996 marked the inaugural term with a full compliment of first, second and third year actors, directors and playwrights, corresponding faculty, courses and curriculum, and in spring 1997, the first Repertory Season was produced and the first M.F.A. degrees were conferred upon 77 members of the first cohort (87 entering students), a remarkable 89% graduation rate.

Significant preliminary program enhancements include publishing a program *Catalog* and *Student Handbook*, restructuring administrative positions, creating positions in all areas, including an Associate Dean, Director of Admissions, Director of Professional Development and Director of Academic Support Services (net staff increase from 5 to 10), appointing department chairs and directors, hiring general tutors and student assistants and improving program visibility and outreach with a presence on the Web and international television distribution of *Inside the Actors Studio*, establishing Cohort Councils and a Student Senate, and also convening an active Diversity Task Force and Dean's Advisory Council. In addition, the Drama School established mechanisms for on-going institutional self-study and planning aimed at increasing the program's effectiveness.

STUDENTS

Fall 2002, the Actors Studio Drama School enrolled 210 degree seeking students (77% Actors, 11% Directors and 12% Playwrights); of the 210, 44% are male, and 56% are female. Approximately 24% of all students self-identify as members of U.S. minority groups (9% African-American, 9% Latino, 5% Asian-American, .5% Native American and 2% Multi-Ethnic), and 18% are international students from countries including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Columbia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, and Venezuela. Combined, international students and students from U.S. minorities represent 42% of the student body, as compared to 24% in Fall 1996

With the exception of three or four classes, all courses meet Monday through Friday during the hours of 9 am to 6 pm. Students range in age from 21 to 55 years old, with the majority of students in their mid-to-late 20s. Each cohort moves together through a progression of courses in sequence and 89% of students finance their studies with school-based partial scholarships and loans, with the vast majority also working a minimum of 20 hours a week.

Recruitment and Admission

The Drama School does not run a full-scale admissions office and has met enrollment targets for 17 consecutive semesters. Demand summaries reveal that presence on the Web increased the number of requests for applications by over 100%, with a substantial increase in international inquiries and students enrolling from a variety of countries and regions beyond the Northeastern United States. Candidates are better prepared for auditions and interviews, having had a chance to review additional information available on the Web, above and beyond the (basic) *Catalog*, and Strategic Planning Data indicates that each year, the program is recruiting, admitting and enrolling a higher percentage of top-ranked applicants.

Of the individuals admitted to Cohort IX (Class of 2005) who actually enrolled, the majority (23%) discovered the program through *Inside the Actors Studio* and by virtue of the reputation of the Actors Studio proper (23%), with the next highest percentage (19%) referred by college professors or professional instructors/advisors, followed by (16%) who heard about the program from Drama School faculty, students or recent graduates, (12%) who learned about

the program through personal research on the internet and (6%) from *American Theater*. A remaining 3% were scene partners recruited at the time of auditions. Applicants' profiles range from young adults with recent Bachelor's degrees, to working (theatre arts) professionals, to older adults pursuing a second career. Strong candidates demonstrate independent initiative in the arts, commitment to artistic endeavors and a unique talent and a thorough understanding of the program's philosophy. Historically, 75% of each admission decision is tied to audition and interview rankings.

Program Size and Quality

Startling enrollment growth in the first six years was welcomed by the university. By its third year, the school became the country's largest graduate drama school, which was a mixed blessing. Because of the university's dependence on tuition revenue, the Drama School was urged to grow too large and too quickly. Intensive professional training can only happen at the highest level in small-class relationships with master teachers. To meet higher enrollment targets, the selectivity ratio rose to 66%, with new student enrollment reaching a program high of 102 in fall 2000. The appearance of exclusivity was compromised and had a significant impact on attrition from fall 2001 to fall 2002, as a cohort of 102 re-enrolled only 75 members, creating a radical increase in overall attrition from 3% to 13%, highest in program history.

Enrollment targets are now set back to the mark established in fall 1994 of 80 new students to combine with enrolled students for a general population of 203-209 each year. Within this population, the Director of Admissions seeks to maintain a balance of new male to new female actors, while also working to increase the representation of women and members of U.S. minorities within the roster of directing and playwriting majors. Maintaining proportioned enrollment of approximately 63% actors and 37% playwrights and directors is essential for providing a diverse pool of actors with a full repertoire of new playwrights' work to explore, and a solid base of directors to lead a viable Repertory Season of those works. In addition, these adjustments to cohort size and composition afford more opportunity for addressing the individual needs of students, particularly within the first year of study, which demands the most of the program's resources in terms of number of classes, advising, course material and faculty contacts.

An acceptance rate of 20%, or one out of five applicants accepted for admission, is the standard the Drama School seeks to reach. Next steps toward enhancing the applicant pool and increasing selectivity include revising the admissions application deadline to align this date with that of many top-ranked programs. Fund-raising is planned to increase scholarships to attract and compete for top candidates and the Director of Admissions will continue outreach to individuals who advise talented emerging actors, directors and playwrights, with particular efforts to network with those who advise emerging performing artists of color. Another goal is to fully implement admissions evaluations. Evaluations serve to track the progress of first semester students as well as to assess the admissions applicant ranking system. Continued expansion will improve service to applicants and admitted students, and allow quality assessment.

Academic Standards

Improving admissions standards and dismissing students unable to meet standards are two concerns of the faculty and administration. The Drama School has achieved a level of maturity in this regard (establishing clear academic policies, assisting instructors to exercise effective grading), and the number of students placed on probation each term is steady (four to eight), with an additional two or three students dismissed each year. Enrolling students with stronger academic and performing backgrounds establishes a base upon which to build. In the future, the Drama School will track student progress not only by reviewing academic transcripts, but also by examining information from admissions evaluations, newly established on-going instructor summaries and (pre-graduation) exit interviews. In addition, a jury system of evaluation initiated by the Voice & Speech Department will serve as a cross-discipline jury to evaluate each student's (comprehensive) performance at the end of each term.

Attrition and Graduation Rates

Attrition currently averages 7% overall. To identify retention problems, the associate dean conducts individual interviews with any student who files for a Leave of Absence or Withdrawal from the program. Each year, the associate dean surveys financial aid awards to determine what role unmet financial need may play in student recruitment and retention. For example, we know students of color do not take Leave or Withdraw to a greater extent than other students.⁷²

Creating the sense in students of an artistic "home" enhances the in-school experience while building a foundation for out-of-school collaboration. Also, the sense of community creates alumni loyalty. If the school is too big, then students move in cliques or pairs and the communal feeling is lost. Again, such a phenomenon occurred over the course of the 2000-01 academic year within Cohort VII, the largest cohort (102) ever enrolled. For the first time since fall 1996, "Dissatisfaction with the program" was the primary reason for student attrition. Despite the fact that student activities were enhanced in 2000-01, or that individual class (course) size remained small, or that students had on-going direct access to faculty and consistent access to administration, including regular meetings with student councils, students could not reconcile the marketing of the program as elite with the cohort size of 102 and program size of 239. In addition, as suggested earlier, low attrition may be related to insufficient academic rigor, affecting the overall educational experience for students as well as the academic reputation of the school and, in turn, students' self-image.

Studies show that students leave because of stress related to the high cost of living in NYC and rising student loan and credit card debt, interest in professional opportunities and "seeking a break," although individuals confronting these issues generally opt for a Leave of Absence, not Withdrawal. In addition to reducing cohort size and improving the ratio of actors to directors and playwrights, strategies for addressing attrition include appointing senior

⁷² Recent national statistics (1995) reveal that 9% of all Master's degrees in performing and visual arts are conferred to students from U.S. minorities. The Drama School has surpassed this average every year since it began conferring degrees: 17%, 23%, 17%, 16%, 17%.

instructors to Year #1 courses; continued strategic use of financial aid; sustained outreach/support by strong administrative team; intervention with students who are not meeting academic standards; integrating student access to services available through newly established Office of Professional Development; outreach to students on Leave; hiring for a new position, Director of Academic Support Services.

Student Services

Students benefit from services offered within the Office of University Student Life, the Office of Professional Development, and a newly defined, Office of Academic Support Services, providing on-going advising and programming relevant to students' academic success and quality of life. First year students demand the most of program resources in terms of number of classes, advising, course materials and faculty contacts, and the Drama School is concerned with their needs. Despite staff vacancies, on-going services to date include part-time advising from the student/faculty liaison, "Money Search" Workshops to assist students in identifying and applying for external grants and fellowships for cost of education and (professional) projects, the hiring of general tutors and tutors for students for whom English is a Second Language, and the hiring of note-takers for students with disabilities.

In addition, the Diversity Task Force was established in January 1997 to assist administration to plan and implement faculty/staff development practices and approaches to the recruitment and retention of students under represented in higher education in the arts. The result has been five years of on-going faculty, staff and student participation. Other programming in this area includes co-curricular events developed by the Diversity Task Force co-sponsored by the University Diversity Initiative, student council-hosted cross-cohort performances and receptions, and "Chat and Chew" mid-semester faculty meetings to share feedback on student discipline and/or academic challenges.

The appointment of a Director of Professional Development in December 2000 consolidated efforts to expand and enhance all aspects of career services and professional development at the Drama School. The Office of Professional Development is responsible for general and industry audience recruitment for the Repertory Season and Industry Showcase, career colloquia, internships and alumni outreach. The Repertory Season is students' calling card to the community and the professional performing arts industry and remains the ultimate statement of our commitment to cultural diversity with, as Dean Lipton notes, "every point of view front and center, firm, unequivocal and self-assured in an environment of mutual respect, exploration and pride."

Under the leadership of the Director of Professional Development, industry representation at the Repertory Season has more than doubled since the first season in 1997, increasing the concurrent placement opportunities for students and graduates along with that. Nonetheless, survey results indicate disappointment with the program's ability to place graduates directly within their chosen fields. To what extent an academic institution should or can be expected to provide career placement *per se* is a topic of on-going debate at the Drama School.

Being a new division, the Drama School is only beginning to formulate an alumni network. The Director of Professional Development tracks the progress of graduates and will be giving priority to this task within the coming year despite lack of university services in this area. What is clear is that increased level of loan debt and industry slumps are raising the stakes for alumni, and it is essential that the school determine how to offer more support to, and engender lifelong creative partnerships among, graduates. The Office of Professional Development will continue to work one-on-one with students, facilitate “Conversations with Playwrights” and colloquia led by producers, casting agents and artistic directors and direct new resources toward activities to increase communication, develop mentoring networks and cultivate access to on-going relationships within the professionals within the performing arts industry. Such activities include enhancing the Alumni Newsletter, developing an interactive website, hosting colloquia to address inter-disciplinary topics and organizing (employment) strategy sessions and social events. Goals include enhancing services appropriate to the educational, personal and career needs of students, increasing number of graduates with agent representation upon graduation, increasing number of graduates employed within their fields within nine months of graduation, enhancing roster of graduates within professional organizations such as Actors’ Equity Association, the Dramatists Guild, Directors Guild, Screen Actors Guild and the Writers Guild of America and increasing representation of members of color at the Actors Studio.

As more students are seen and signed, the reputation of the Repertory Season, the school—and future graduates—will be enhanced. Students are invited to audition as a result of having been seen on *Inside the Actors Studio*. In addition, of the 405 graduates of our first six cohorts, 65 have been admitted to life membership in the Actors Studio.

THE FACULTY

Actors Studio Drama School is a partnership between New School University and the Actors Studio. There is one full-time faculty member who also serves as Chair of the Acting track working with forty-six part-time faculty in areas ranging from playwriting to voice to set design. Instructors who teach core courses, which represent 80% of the curriculum, (Basic Technique, Workshop, Scenework, Directing, Playwrights, Actors and Directors Labs and Process Units, and Classics, Period and Style), are required, by contractual agreement between the university and the Actors Studio, to be life members of the Actors Studio. Movement curriculum is led by Alvin Ailey Dance Center and taught by seven instructors on site. The school faces a special challenge: to support part-time instructors who are professionals in the performing (theater) arts. A review of vitae for faculty members who teach non-core courses indicates that while an advanced degree is not a requirement to teach, a demonstrated record of excellence in the field, as well as five to six years teaching experience—with adults, preferably in an academic setting—are essential. The current faculty represents more than 250 years of Actors Studio membership and experience, fulfilling the goal of “professionals producing professionals.”

The Drama School has established an outstanding faculty and courses are full year. Individuals who constitute part-time faculty are not the characteristic “commuter” team one might expect. Their investment in the success of the program and the work of their students is

exemplary, there is minimal turnover (historically, less than four new faculty appointments in any given year since fall 1996), and many part-time instructors, once on board, seek careers at the university. Although conventional wisdom suggests individuals would be more attracted to full-time teaching appointments rather than part-time, this has not been the case in terms of *initially* recruiting outstanding candidates to teach. Lack of availability due to professional conflicts is the most frequent obstacle to faculty recruiting and hiring, particularly with respect to faculty of color—and faculty recruitment remains the most challenging aspect of the diversity initiative with representation of faculty of color fluctuating between 11% to 18% in any given year (including Ailey instructors).

Faculty Development

Many faculty members identify themselves as professionals “who also teach.” Historically, teachers have neither expected nor demanded much in the way of faculty development opportunities; rather, they have solicited help with teaching skills (curriculum and syllabus development, grading issues and pedagogical strategies). Additional efforts have been for administration to distribute available information on funding sources available either through the university (the Faculty Development Fund), or outside funding agencies. Faculty accomplishments are noted on a central bulletin board: *Home Team Highlights*, and in the online *New School Observer*, but this is not enough. The faculty is expressing interest in funding work at conferences, workshops and other theatrical events; however, no support exists for such projects now, nor is there funding for sabbaticals or course release.

The Drama School wants to enhance faculty development. One goal is to coordinate workshops in which teachers share information on external grants and fellowships, discuss strategies for presenting their work and how to benefit from contacts within their network as well from university resources and contacts. In the future, school administrators will assist faculty to take advantage of university academic exchanges, promote active participation at events across divisions and assist with matching faculty interests with those of faculty in other divisions. Establishing additional full-time positions is an important goal.

Faculty Governance, Hiring and Review Policies

Academic authority remains within the Office of the Dean, with policy formulated to the greatest extent as a result of ad-hoc consensus building or (divisional) committee review and recommendation. Although faculty and course evaluations have been in place from the onset, departments lack standard policies and procedures for hiring and review. For the first five years, the Drama School had assigned the title of chair within the acting, directing and playwriting departments, but nowhere else. Other non-major departments did not yet have provost and board- approved representation, although department leaders were selected by the dean to serve on school and university committees, participate in curriculum review and hiring decisions. The appointment in fall 2000 of department chairs and directors was an important step forward and provides a rational division of labor in an effort to assist the dean to supplement university faculty hiring and review policies as well as to examine and enhance structures to formalize the role of faculty in school decisions.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum treats all aspects of the dramatic arts as a unified process, with a guiding central methodology and common language. That language is based on the concepts of Stanislavski's important works: *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character* and *Creating a Role*, books that serve as a template for each student's program of study. The Drama School does not duplicate the curriculum of established graduate programs. All three disciplines, acting, writing and directing, train side-by-side. Every student, including directors and playwrights complete a rigorous sequence of courses in Basic Technique, Vocal Training, Alexander and Dance Movement and Theater History, and they attend workshops led by eminent theater practitioners. Students are afforded Observer privileges at the Actors Studio, providing an experience permitted rarely, even to the professional community.

In addition, each graduate has 48 experiences, over the course of three years in the program, to be taught face-to-face and hands-on by the most renowned theater and film artists of our time in the Drama School's course, the Craft Seminar, seen on television as the award-winning series, *Inside the Actors Studio*. And every graduating Master's Degree candidate is provided with Working Finalist status at the Actors Studio, the final step to life membership.

During the first year, while the playwrights and directors master a new theatrical vocabulary, they are trained in their own craft. First-year directing and playwriting classes enable them to fulfill demands made in the Playwrights and Directors Lab, which begins with the first sessions of the second year. The second year features specialized training and all three disciplines move onto parallel tracks; in the third year, the three tracks re-converge. Spring of the final year, students in all three disciplines are united in a unique, professionally-produced, eleven-fifteen week Repertory Season in which the theses of the graduating playwrights, directors and actors are performed free-of-charge to the New School University, New York City and professional communities.

Actors Studio Drama School differs from many schools at New School because the heart of its curriculum—all acting and directing classes, as well as the movement and voice classes—are courses in *technique*, employing terms of art that are often as subject-specific as the terminology of the disciplines of medicine, physics and law. This requires faculty members who are not only versed in the theatre arts, but in those theatre arts as they have been developed over the past fifty years at the Actors Studio, within the context of what the world knows as the Studio's Method. The challenge is to develop a common technical language while, at the same time, encourage diverse perspectives. This is accomplished by virtue of the eclectic backgrounds and views of the faculty whose training incorporates the entire panorama of contemporary theatrical theory and practice from Stanislavski to Vakhtangov to Meisner, Adler, Lewis and Clurman.

Important curricular debates are ongoing. Should Sense Memory be taught beyond the first year? Is the performance model of a Repertory Season adequately meeting educational goals—and should there be (produced) public performances prior to the third year? How to best structure the Playwrights and Directors Unit? Does program mission have an evident through-line across disciplines and does curriculum consistently support the synthesis of core disciplines? In what capacity is script analysis emphasized throughout the six-semester

progression and is the integrity of the progression in tact across disciplines? Should screenwriting be added to the playwriting curriculum to keep pace with market impulses? In addition, questions prevail with respect to how to assist students to examine the contributions of all Americans to American Theater and encourage faculty to expand beyond the traditional American curriculum, *where possible*, and where not possible, assist students to identify sources and resources to enhance this knowledge.

OTHER CONCERNS

School Governance

The faculty tries to form a student *community* that includes all students of each cohort, and excludes no one. That unity of work and purpose is essential to the Repertory Season; to succeed, students must face all their problems and aspirations *together*. The school is governed, contractually, by two bodies: New School University and the Actors Studio. Several responsibilities are, of course, identified contractually as collaborative endeavors with New School University, subject to approval by the institution's normal budgetary, administrative and academic authority.

The governance of Actors Studio Drama School is overseen by the Advisory Committee, which is composed of the Studio members who created the program Ellen Burstyn, Carlin Glynn, Lee Grant, James Lipton, Norman Mailer, Paul Newman, Arthur Penn and Bob Wankel. This committee, chaired by the dean, meets annually. The Board of Governors of Actors Studio Drama School meets quarterly. While it does not have authority over the curriculum, faculty or administration, the board serves as a useful sounding board. With the recent creation of Theater and Scholarship subcommittees, it has a growing influence on the practicum year, of which the Repertory Season is the center, and the makeup of the student body, where scholarships are essential to enhancing both quality and diversity.

The administrative staff of Actors Studio Drama School is a team consisting of the Dean, the Associate Dean and the Director of Professional Development working in close contact with a Director of Academic Support Services, Director of Admissions, Administrative Program Coordinator, Program Assistant, the Production Supervisor of the Repertory Season and the Student/Faculty Liaison in addition to staff.

All faculty are part-time but for one full-time faculty member. The faculty is led by newly-minted department chairs and directors but members are encouraged to participate directly at every level of their own department and program governance.

Faculty, staff and students are participants in a full-time, day-time, degree-granting program and faculty, staff and students work in close proximity all day, every day, Monday through Friday. Administrators are here all hours when students are here with 90% of the faculty teaching a minimum of three days a week. In addition, student mailboxes are situated outside the main office and are, therefore, accessible all hours the 66 West 12th Street building is open; faculty, staff and students are constantly able to share feedback and information. The faculty and course evaluation process, conducted at the conclusion of each semester, is the

primary way student needs are voiced. Reasons for student exits (Leaves and Withdrawals) are solicited in a required exit interview and reported to the University Budget Committee each term. In addition, in order to further enhance participation and support institutional change and renewal, several important structures exist.

Fall 1995, students established Cohort Student Councils. Fall 2001, the three cohort student councils of the Drama School combined to form a Student Senate. Senate members are elected by the students assuring full student representation (generally three or four representatives from each of the three cohorts). The senate meets regularly during each semester, reviewing all student issues, and bringing students' views to the administration through meetings with the dean's Advisory Council (see below), or with individual senior administrators or directly with the dean. Minutes of Senate meetings and follow-up meetings with senior administrators are distributed to the student body.

The Dean's Advisory Council, created within each school, began meeting spring 1998. Membership consists of nine students from the senate, one from each discipline (acting, directing, playwriting) within each of the three cohorts; six faculty members, one from each discipline (acting, directing, playwriting), as well as one faculty member from Theater History, Voice and Movement; and, three administrators. Minutes from these meetings are distributed to members for further distribution to their constituencies (as well as maintained by the associate dean). Faculty, students and staff are invited to serve on divisional committees, university committees and advisory boards. Every student must regularly check the program bulletin boards and personal mailboxes for important information. An *Alumni Newsletter* is now available via e-mail and is essential to enhancing communication with graduates, giving voice to their concerns and re-establishing a sense of community and "ownership" of program issues and goals.

In conclusion, academic authority remains centralized within the Office of the Dean, with policy formulated to the greatest extent as a result of ad-hoc consensus building or (divisional) committee review and recommendation. Goals include implementing regular departmental [faculty and faculty-student] meetings, increasing faculty participation and sense of ownership at all levels of governance and shifting committee focus to balance systematic policy review with case management and, where applicable, event programming. As of spring 2002, two members of the faculty have been appointed to the Executive Board of the Actors Studio, which will foster another line of communication for all members of the partnership, including students and graduates.

School Fund-raising

Since opening its doors, the Drama School remains each year within 5/10ths of one percent of projected program costs, (non-university costs) and the division's financial viability is outlined in detail within The Five Year Plan submitted to the University Budget Committee in spring 2002. The principal fund-raising activity has been, is and will continue to be, *Inside the Actors Studio*. December 2001, determined to move beyond the planning phase of fund-raising, the Drama School successfully competed for a grant from the university's Fund for New Initiatives

to hire a development officer to design and execute a fund-raising plan for two primary needs: scholarships and facilities.

Scholarships

In the eight-year history of Actors Studio Drama School, fewer than twenty-five full tuition scholarships have been given, allocated from the school's unrestricted scholarship resources. Each year, funding permits only two to four competitive (named) scholarships, generally to continuing students with substantial need, "Super Stars" with demonstrated records of excellence. At any given time, less than three students in a population of 203-209 carry a full tuition scholarship. Cohort comparisons reveal that prior to fall 1998, approximately 75% of first year students enrolled with scholarship. Fall 2001, 87% of new students enrolled with scholarship, and the total percentage of students applying and qualifying for aid remains high at 89%. Loan debt is a special concern with Actors Studio Drama School students carrying the highest private loan debt in the university. (Typical loan debt for graduates is \$65,000; monthly payments \$697.) As participants in a full-time, daytime program, students are rarely able to work full-time. Students facing financial hardship cannot reduce costs by attending part-time, or seeking full-time employment (and the health or tuition benefits many full-time positions provide). Increased financial aid, including continued University Scholars Program Scholarship support, is crucial to the School's ability to recruit and retain talented students (discussed earlier), particularly students of color, including international students.

Recommendations

Over the course of the next few years, Actors Studio Drama School anticipates welcoming a new dean, establishing an artistic home and vital theater center at a new location and mounting a Summer Didactic. To maintain excellence, the school will:

1. Design meaningful outcomes assessment, beginning with a focus on the effectiveness of the school's recruitment and admissions process admitting students whose interests, goals and abilities are congruent with the school's mission.
2. A survey to determine students' perception of their role in governance will be an important tool for setting future goals.
3. Support faculty development and governance with emphasis on opportunities for professional growth and designing a protocol for governance in keeping with established university policies.
4. Develop a campaign to raise \$8-\$15 million dollars for scholarships and facilities.⁷³
5. Undertake curriculum review to determine the viability of the Repertory Season performance model including assessment of ways to improve the thesis approval, advising and evaluation process.
6. Enhance student services by hiring and retaining senior staff to design and execute organized programs to improve academic success and professional development.

⁷³ Facilities have been a major concern and are discussed under University Facilities. The planned move to Westbeth is proceeding as of this writing.