

New Proposal

Date Submitted: 10/01/25 5:43 am

Viewing: : Immersive & Interactive Theatre, BA

Last edit: 10/30/25 12:38 pm

Changes proposed by: Nicole Turner

In Workflow

- 1. U Program Review
- 2. Gen Ed Review
- 3. 1883-THEAT Committee Chair
- 4. 1883-THEAT Head
- 5. KR Dean
- 6. University Librarian
- 7. COTE Programs
- 8. Provost
- 9. Senate EPC
- 10. Senate
- 11. U Senate Conf
- 12. Board of Trustees
- 13. IBHE
- 14. HLC
- 15. Catalog Editor
- 16. DMI

Approval Path

- 1. 10/06/25 12:42 pm  
Emily Stuby  
(eastuby): Approved for U Program Review
- 2. 10/06/25 4:04 pm  
Melissa Steinkoenig (menewell):  
Approved for Gen Ed Review
- 3. 10/07/25 3:29 pm  
Jeffrey Eric Jenkins (jej): Approved for 1883-THEAT Committee Chair
- 4. 10/07/25 3:43 pm  
Valleri Robinson

(valleri2): Approved  
for 1883-THEAT  
Head

5. 10/07/25 3:48 pm  
Nicole Turner  
(nicturn): Approved  
for KR Dean

6. 10/07/25 3:51 pm  
Tom Teper (tteper):  
Approved for  
University Librarian

7. 10/07/25 4:10 pm  
Suzanne Lee  
(suzannel):  
Approved for COTE  
Programs

8. 10/08/25 2:16 pm  
Brooke Newell  
(bsnewell):  
Approved for  
Provost

## Proposal Type

Proposal Type: Major (ex. Special Education)

## Administration Details

Official Program Name	Immersive & Interactive Theatre, BA	
Diploma Title	Bachelor of Arts in Immersive and Interactive Theatre	
Sponsor College	Fine & Applied Arts	
Sponsor Department	Theatre	
Sponsor Name	Valleri Robinson	
Sponsor Email	valleri2@illinois.edu	
College Contact	Nicole Turner	College Contact Email
nicturn@illinois.edu		

College Budget Officer	Greg Anderson
College Budget Officer Email	gnanders@illinois.edu

If additional stakeholders other than the Sponsor and College Contacts listed above should be contacted if questions during the review process arise, please list them here.

KR Dean

Does this program have inter-departmental administration?

No

### Effective Catalog Term

Effective Catalog Term	Fall 2026
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Effective Catalog	2026-2027
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### Proposal Title

Proposal Title (either Establish/Revise/Eliminate the Degree Name in Program Name in the College of XXXX, i.e., Establish the Bachelor of Science in Entomology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, include the Graduate College for Grad Programs)

Establish the Bachelor of Arts in Immersive & Interactive Theatre in the College of Fine and Applied Arts

Does this proposal have any related proposals that will also be revised at this time and the programs depend on each other? Consider Majors, Minors, Concentrations & Joint Programs in your department. Please know that this information is used administratively to move related proposals through workflow efficiently and together as needed. Format your response like the following "This BS proposal (key 567) is related to the Concentration A proposal (key 145)"

### Program Justification

Provide a brief justification of the program, including highlights of the program objectives, and the careers, occupations, or further educational opportunities for which the program will prepare graduates, when appropriate.

Immersive entertainment, including immersive and interactive theatre, is a rapidly growing industry. In 2024, the U.S. immersive experiences market reached nearly \$4 billion, growing over 20% annually since 2019, driven by evolving audience desires for interaction, agency, and storytelling (Habo Studio, 2025). The popularity of experiences such as Punchdrunk's Sleep No More, interactive art installations like Meow Wolf, escape rooms with immersive acting such as Strange Bird Immersive's The Man from Beyond, and theatrical actual-play performances like off-Broadway's Twenty-Sided Tavern demonstrates the increasing audience demand and cultural momentum around immersive and interactive experiences. Concurrently, interest in developing these types of performances is growing steadily, both globally and within the Department of Theatre.

Students in University of Illinois Theatre programs have actively sought opportunities to engage in immersive and interactive performance, both through elective courses and practicums. Despite limited availability of relevant offerings, courses such as THEA 402: Escape Room Design and GSD 390: Theatrical Tabletop Role-Playing Game Design continue to grow enrollment. This demand highlights students' desire to explore audience-centered storytelling and design meaningful, participatory experiences. Now is the time to formalize these interests into a focused undergraduate program that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to launch careers in this expanding field.

The transdisciplinary BA in Immersive & Interactive Theatre will offer a rigorous exploration of this evolving field, bridging traditional theatrical practices with emerging methodologies in audience engagement. Situated within the Theatre Studies area of the Department of Theatre, the program blends critical inquiry with creative experimentation to prepare students for leadership in a field characterized by its dynamic integration of narrative, design, technology, and interactivity. Within a multidisciplinary cohort, students will examine the historical, theoretical, and practical contexts of immersive and interactive performance while redefining the relationships between performers, audiences, and spaces.

Graduates of the program will be prepared for advanced academic programs such as an MFA in design or directing, or an MA/PhD in Performance Studies, as well as careers in experience design, narrative design, video game design, playable theatre, escape room creation, and LARP and role-playing game design. The program's transdisciplinary focus and flexibility ensure students can tailor their studies to align with their specific interests and goals. With 13 hours of GSD courses, approved in advising and discussion between student and advisor, and an estimated 21 hours of free electives students will have the opportunity to engage in specific minors, certificates, or varied areas of interest to build their degree path.

FAA 250, FAA 450, and THEA 385 are all fully approved and attached below.

## Instructional Resources

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Will there be any reduction in other course offerings, programs or concentrations by your department as a result of this new program/proposed change?

No

Does this new program/proposed change result in the replacement of another program?

No

Does the program include other courses/subjects outside of the sponsoring department impacted by the creation/revision of this program? If Yes is selected, indicate the appropriate courses and attach the letter of support/acknowledgement.

Yes

Courses outside of the sponsoring department/interdisciplinary departments:

GSD 101 - Intro to Game Studies & Design

Please attach any letters of support/acknowledgement for any Instructional Resources. Consider faculty, students, and/or other impacted units as appropriate.

[iSchool Dean Letter of Support.pdf](#)  
[Director of Informatics Programs - BA in Interactive and Immersive Theatre proposal support.pdf](#)

## Program Features

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Academic Level Undergraduate

Does this major have transcribed concentrations? No

What is the longest/maximum time to completion of this program?  
4 years

What are the minimum Total Credit Hours required for this program?  
120

CIP Code 500599 - Dramatic/Theatre Arts and Stagecraft, Other.

Is this program part of an ISBE approved licensure program?

No

Will specialized accreditation be sought for this program?

No

Does this program prepare graduates for entry into a career or profession that is regulated by the State of Illinois?

No

## Program of Study

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Provide detailed information (course rubrics, numbers, and credit hours) of how a student could obtain 40 credit hours of upper-division coursework.

THEA 403 - 6 hours

THEA 436 - 3 hours

FAA 402 - 3 hours

'Select 6 hours from' THEA electives - 6 hours

'Choose 1' Theatre design elective - 3 hours

FAA 450 - 3 hours

Remaining 16 advanced hours will be completed from: GSD Electives (10 hours), Additional THEA or additional courses (9 hours), or Free electives (Estimate 18 hours)

Attach Program of Study related information here.

[THEA 385\\_ Theatrical Tabletop RPG Design.pdf](#)

[FAA 450\\_ Interdisc Design Lab II.pdf](#)

[FAA 250\\_ Interdisciplinary Design Lab I.pdf](#)

[Sample 4 Year Sequence - BA in Immersive & Interactive Theatre - +GSD-1.pdf](#)

## Catalog Page Text - Overview Tab

Catalog Page Overview Text

The BA in Immersive & Interactive Theatre explores how performance, design, writing, directing, and management can come together to create experiences where audiences step inside the story. Students work collaboratively to design interactive worlds, craft meaningful audience experiences, and experiment with new ways of blending theatre, play, and participation.

Graduates are prepared for leadership in the rapidly growing field of immersive and interactive entertainment, as well as for creative roles in game design, experiential marketing, escape room creation, live-action role-playing, and other interactive experiences. The program builds skills in collaboration, creativity, and storytelling that support success across the arts and in a wide range of professional settings.

Statement for  
Programs of Study  
Catalog

Graduation Requirements

Minimum hours required for graduation: 120 hours.

University Requirements

Minimum of 40 hours of upper-division coursework, generally at the 300- or 400-level. These hours can be drawn from all elements of the degree. Students should consult their academic advisor for additional guidance in fulfilling this requirement.

The university and residency requirements can be found in the [Student Code](#) (§ 3-801) and in the [Academic Catalog](#).

General Education Requirements

Follows the [campus General Education \(Gen Ed\) requirements](#). Some Gen Ed requirements may be met by courses required and/or electives in the program.

Composition I	4-6
Advanced Composition	3
Humanities & the Arts (6 hours)	6
<a href="#">THEA 122</a> and any other course approved as Humanities & the Arts	
Natural Sciences & Technology (6 hours)	6
Social & Behavioral Sciences (6 hours)	6
Cultural Studies: Non-Western Cultures (1 course)	3
Cultural Studies: US Minority Cultures (1 course)	3
Cultural Studies: Western/Comparative Cultures (1 course)	3
Quantitative Reasoning (2 courses, at least one course must be Quantitative Reasoning I)	6-10

Language Requirement (Completion of the third semester or equivalent of a language other than English is required)	0-15
<b>Major Requirements</b>	
<a href="#"><u>FAA 101</u></a> Arts at Illinois	1
<a href="#"><u>THEA 284</u></a> Introduction to Immersive and Interactive Theatre	3
<a href="#"><u>THEA 122</u></a> Theatre Foundations: Theory and Practice	3
<a href="#"><u>THEA 123</u></a> Theatre Foundations: Production	3
<a href="#"><u>THEA 200</u></a> Practicum II (taken twice for 1 credit hour each time)	2
<a href="#"><u>THEA 403</u></a> Topics in Immersive & Interactive Theatre (taken twice for 3 credit hours each time)	<b>6</b>
<a href="#"><u>THEA 436</u></a> Engagement & Alchemy of the Audience	3
<a href="#"><u>FAA 402</u></a> Experience Design for Immersion & Interaction	3
Total Hours	24
<b>Theatre Electives</b>	
Select 6 hours from:	6
<a href="#"><u>THEA 384</u></a> Experimental Collaborative Lab (may repeat up to 2 times)	
<a href="#"><u>THEA 300</u></a> Practicum III	
<a href="#"><u>THEA 400</u></a> Practicum IV	
Select one course from:	3
<a href="#"><u>THEA 402</u></a> Designing Immersive Adventures: Escape Rooms	
<a href="#"><u>THEA 385</u></a> Theatrical Tabletop Role-Playing Game Design	
Select additional THEA or courses in other units, as approved by advisor	9
Total Hours	18
<b>Game Studies and Design Electives</b>	
<a href="#"><u>GSD 101</u></a> Introduction to Game Studies and Design	3
GSD electives (200 level and above) or other courses, with approval of advisor	10
Total Hours	13
<b>Collaborative Studio Practicum</b>	
<a href="#"><u>FAA 250</u></a> Interdisciplinary Design Lab I	3
<a href="#"><u>FAA 450</u></a> Interdisciplinary Design Lab II	3
Total Hours	6
<b>Bachelor of Arts in Immersive and Interactive Theatre</b>	



General Education	
Theatre Core	24
Theatre Electives	18
Game Studies and Design	13
Collaborative Studios	6
Free Electives	
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>120</b>

A minimum of 40 credits at the 300 or 400 course level are required

At least 45 semester hours of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign credit

At least 21 hours must be 300 or 400 level courses of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign credit

Corresponding Degree	BA Bachelor of Arts
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# Program Regulation and Assessment

## Plan to Assess and Improve Student Learning

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(b)(1)(D) Provision is made for guidance and counseling of students, evaluations of student performance, continuous monitoring of progress of students toward their degree objectives and appropriate academic record keeping.*

### Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze the historical, cultural, and theoretical foundations of immersive and interactive performance.
2. Apply game design and experience design principles to create engaging audience interactions.
3. Develop and present immersive narratives and performances through experimentation, iteration, and feedback.
4. Collaborate effectively across disciplines to produce innovative immersive and interactive work.
5. Demonstrate readiness for graduate study or professional careers in immersive theatre, game design, or experience design.

Describe how, when, and where these learning outcomes will be assessed.

Describe here:

Learning Outcome 1:

Direct measures include research essays, presentations, and exams in history/theory courses, graded using faculty rubrics for critical analysis.

Indirect measures include student self-assessments and reflective essays on how theory informed their creative work.

Learning Outcome 2:

Direct measures include project evaluations in design-focused courses using rubrics that assess mechanics, interactivity, and audience engagement.

Indirect measures include peer and audience feedback surveys after public presentations or playtests.

Learning Outcome 3:

Direct measures include faculty-graded performances and prototypes across courses; final Collaborative Studio project evaluated by a faculty panel using a rubric.

Indirect measures include student reflections documenting iteration, challenges, and lessons learned.

Learning Outcome 4:

Direct measures include faculty observations of teamwork, structured peer evaluations, and rubrics for group projects in multiple courses where collaboration is essential.

Indirect measures include student surveys or reflection essays on teamwork skills and the impact of collaboration on creative outcomes.

Learning Outcome 5:

Direct measures include a professional Seminar, assessed via faculty-reviewed presentations, application materials (resume, statements, sample work or documentation), and reflection on career/graduate preparation.

Indirect measures include graduate school acceptance rates, job placement prior to or immediately following graduation, and alumni s

Identify faculty expectations for students' achievement of each of the stated student learning outcomes. What score, rating, or level of expertise will signify that students have met each outcome? Provide rating rubrics as necessary.

Learning Outcome 1: Analyze the historical, cultural, and theoretical foundations of immersive and interactive performance.

Expectation: Students can critically discuss major movements, theories, and historical works and apply insights to their own creative practice.

Direct Assessment Rubric (Essays/Exams/Presentations):

Exceeds: Demonstrates deep, nuanced understanding of history and theory; integrates multiple sources; insightful application to creative work.

Meets: Accurately identifies and explains key concepts; applies theory to practice in a meaningful way.

Approaching: Demonstrates basic understanding but misses key concepts or connections; limited application to creative work.

Learning Outcome 2: Apply game design and experience design principles to create engaging audience interactions.

Expectation: Students design interactive experiences that successfully engage participants, using principles of play, mechanics, and experience flow.

Direct Assessment Rubric (Projects/Playtests):

Exceeds: Interaction is highly engaging, well-balanced, and demonstrates sophisticated integration of design principles.

Meets: Interaction is functional, engaging, and demonstrates a clear understanding of design principles.

Approaching: Interaction shows limited engagement or inconsistent application of design principles; needs refinement.

Learning Outcome 3: Develop and present immersive narratives and performances through experimentation, iteration, and feedback.

Expectation: Students produce polished performances or prototypes that reflect iterative development and incorporation of feedback.

Direct Assessment Rubric (Collaborative Studio / Performance Projects):

Exceeds: Demonstrates high-quality, coherent narrative or performance; iteration evident and feedback skillfully integrated.

Meets: Produces coherent narrative or performance; iteration and feedback are incorporated satisfactorily.

Approaching: Narrative or performance is incomplete or inconsistent; minimal evidence of iteration or feedback integration.

Learning Outcome 4: Collaborate effectively across disciplines to produce innovative immersive and interactive work.

Expectation: Students contribute actively, communicate clearly, and integrate ideas across disciplines to support project goals.

Direct Assessment Rubric (Peer and Faculty Evaluation of Collaboration):

Exceeds: Consistently demonstrates leadership, initiative, and constructive communication; fosters innovation in the team.

Meets: Works well with others, communicates clearly, and contributes to team success.

Approaching: Limited engagement or inconsistent participation; communication or contribution needs improvement.

Learning Outcome 5: Demonstrate readiness for graduate study or professional careers in immersive theatre, game design, or experience design.

Expectation: Students demonstrate professional presentation skills, awareness of career paths, and preparation for graduate study or work.

Direct Assessment Rubric (Professional Seminar):

Exceeds: Presents professional materials with clarity and polish; articulates clear career/graduate goals; demonstrates readiness and confidence.

Meets: Presents materials adequately; communicates goals; demonstrates sufficient readiness for next steps.

Approaching: Presentation or materials need significant improvement; goals unclear; readiness not fully demonstrated.

Explain the process that will be implemented to ensure that assessment results are used to improve student learning.

Assessment results will be collected from student projects, performances, and presentations, each semester. Program faculty will review the data to identify strengths and areas needing improvement, and make targeted adjustments to course content, teaching methods, and assignments. These changes will be implemented in subsequent courses, with ongoing monitoring to ensure that learning outcomes are being met. All results and improvements will be documented and shared among faculty to maintain consistent quality and support continuous student learning.

Program

Description and

Requirements

Attach Documents

## Delivery Method

This program is  
available:

On Campus - Students are required to be on campus, they may take some online courses.

# Admission Requirements

Desired Effective      Fall 2026  
Admissions Term

Provide a brief narrative description of the admission requirements for this program. Where relevant, include information about licensure requirements, student background checks, GRE and TOEFL scores, and admission requirements for transfer students.

Due to timing of workflow approvals, we anticipate this program will be on the undergraduate admissions application for Fall 2027. There is no talent requirement for this program (unlike the BFA Theatre prorams), but students have the option of submitting a supplementary material (portfolio, writing sample which reflects interests, script sample, a Youtube video (3 minutes or less) or any other materials that showcase work you've done in your interest area).

Inter-college transfers: 2.0 GPA plus option to submit supplementary material. ICT students may begin in either the Fall or Spring Semester.

Off-campus transfer students: 2.0 GPA, 2nd level LOTE, QR1, RHET 105, plus option to submit supplementary material. OCT students may begin in either the Fall or Spring Semester.

## Enrollment

Number of Students in Program (estimate)

Year One Estimate	5	5th Year Estimate (or when fully implemented)
60		

Estimated Annual Number of Degrees Awarded

Year One Estimate	0	5th Year Estimate (or when fully implemented)
15		

What is the matriculation term for this program?  
Fall

## Budget

Will the program or revision require staffing (faculty, advisors, etc.) beyond what is currently available?

No

Additional Budget  
Information

Attach File(s)

## Financial Resources

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How does the unit intend to financially support this proposal?

Amber Dewey Schultz has already been hired and is a Teaching Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies and core faculty of the Game Studies & Design program.

No additional financial resources are required to initiate the launch of this program.

Will the unit need to seek campus or other external resources?

No

Attach letters of  
support

What tuition rate do you expect to charge for this program? e.g, Undergraduate Base Tuition, or Engineering Differential, or Social Work Online (no dollar amounts necessary)

FAA Differential, Undergraduate

## IBHE

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## Institutional Context

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**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

**Describe the historical and university context of the program's development. Include a short summary of any existing program(s) upon which this program will be built.**

Explain the nature and degree of overlap with existing programs and, if such overlap exists, document consultation with the impacted program's home department(s).

Interest in immersive and interactive theatre has steadily increased among both Theatre students and those across campus seeking transdisciplinary training in games and performance. In 2021, Theatre faculty partnered with Game Studies & Design to establish a "Theatre pathway" within the undergraduate Game Design minor and the graduate minor in Game Studies. While this initiative drew strong student interest, it also revealed structural challenges: BFA Theatre students had limited flexibility to complete a minor due to their already high credit requirements, and some students expressed interest in pursuing immersive and playable theatre as a primary area of study rather than as an adjunct to other training. These factors demonstrated the need for a stand-alone degree program.

The proposed BA responds to these needs by providing students with focused, interdisciplinary training that bridges theatre, performance, and game design. While the program draws on resources from across campus, it does not duplicate existing offerings. Instead, it extends them: Theatre brings expertise in performance, storytelling, and production, while GSD electives will bring interactivity, systems, and audience engagement.

The director/advisor/coordinator of this program is a Teaching Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies and core faculty of the Game Studies & Design program.

## **University of Illinois**

Briefly describe how this program will support the University's mission, focus and/or current priorities. Demonstrate the program's consistency with and centrality to that mission.

This program provides students with a transformative undergraduate experience by combining rigorous study in theatre and performance with innovative practices from game design, technology, and experience design. Students will not only engage critically with history and theory but also gain hands-on, transdisciplinary training that prepares them to be leaders in a rapidly expanding creative economy.

By equipping students with the ability to design and produce immersive and interactive experiences, the program aligns with the university's commitment to discovery and engagement, fostering skills that are increasingly valuable in industries ranging from the arts to education, healthcare, and corporate training. Graduates will be prepared to contribute both locally and globally, advancing Illinois' role as a leader in preparing students for meaningful careers and impactful lives.

Discuss projected future employment and/or additional educational opportunities for graduates of this program. Compare estimated demand with the estimated supply of graduates from this program and existing similar programs in the state. Where appropriate, provide documentation by citing data from such sources as employer surveys, current labor market analyses, and future workforce projections. (Whenever possible, use state and national labor data, such as that from the Illinois Department of Employment Security at <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/> and/or the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/>).

Graduates of the BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance will be well-prepared for both advanced study and diverse career paths. Students may pursue graduate programs such as MFAs in design or directing or MAs/PhDs in Performance Studies, but they will also be highly competitive in rapidly growing fields such as video game design, experience design, experiential marketing, museum and exhibit design, and immersive theatre production. Because the program integrates training in both theatre and game design, graduates will bring a distinctive combination of storytelling, design, and interactivity skills that are in high demand across creative industries.

National labor projections underscore the strong employment outlook for these pathways. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects continued growth in software and video game development (+9% through 2032), as well as strong demand in marketing and market research (+13% through 2032). Meanwhile, the experiential economy continues to expand, with companies such as Meow Wolf announcing new locations nationwide, Broadway productions like Cabaret integrating immersive staging, and theme parks introducing interactive experiences such as Disney's Galactic Starcruiser and Knott's Berry Farm's Ghost Town Alive! This momentum signals a rising need for graduates trained in immersive performance and audience engagement.

In Illinois, no existing theatre or game design programs offer an integrated focus on live, immersive, and interactive performance. While BFA and BA Theatre programs emphasize acting, directing, and design, and game design programs focus primarily on digital development, none combine these disciplines into a cohesive curriculum centered on audience-centered, playable experiences. With an estimated graduating cohort of 15–20 students annually, this program will provide a small, highly specialized group of graduates uniquely equipped to enter and shape the rapidly growing field of immersive and interactive entertainment.



What resources will be provided to assist students with job placement?

Students in the BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance will receive robust support in preparing for professional careers. The program will actively encourage students to pursue internships or summer employment in theatre, game, and experience design industries, providing both advising and connections to help secure placements. Courses will integrate guest lectures and workshops from leading professionals in immersive theatre, game design, and experience design, giving students both networking opportunities and direct exposure to current industry practices. In their final year, students will take a Professional Seminar that focuses on career readiness, including resume and portfolio development, interviewing, and graduate school preparation. Students will also have opportunities to showcase their work through public performances, exhibitions, and collaborative studio projects, which serve as portfolio-quality experiences.

Students will have access to FAA Career Services, as well as the centralized Career Center office, which provide information on access to Handshake (job search platform, individualized coaching for interviews and career searches, resume and cover letter reviews, and more. FAA Career Services sponsors events related to career exploration and preparation, as well as one-on-one appointments with a career services professional to provide students with support for their career search.

If letters of support  
are available attach  
them here:

### **Comparable Programs in Illinois**

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Identify similar programs and sponsoring institutions in the state, at both public and private colleges and universities. Compare the proposed program with these programs, and discuss its potential impact upon them. Provide complete responses, do not reference website links.

Across Illinois, several institutions offer strong undergraduate programs in theatre or game design, but none provide a fully integrated focus on immersive and interactive performance. Traditional theatre programs at schools such as DePaul University, Millikin University, and Columbia College Chicago emphasize acting, directing, and stagecraft, preparing students for conventional theatre careers. Similarly, programs in video game design or interactive media, such as those at Bradley University and DePaul, train students in digital production, programming, and interactive storytelling, but they do not integrate these skills with live performance. In general, these programs operate in parallel rather than intersecting, leaving students who want combined training in theatre and interactive, playable experiences without a clear pathway.

Illinois State University (ISU) comes closest to a transdisciplinary approach through its Creative Technologies programs (BA or BS offered), including the Game Design and Interdisciplinary Technologies sequences. These programs provide students with opportunities to explore interactive media, game engines, animation, sound, AR/VR, and other digital technologies, and they allow flexible, cross-disciplinary exploration. While valuable, these programs are primarily technology-centered and focus on digital media applications rather than live, audience-centered performance, limiting their alignment with the unique practices of immersive and interactive theatre. Tuition for AY 25-2026: \$12,066.

One program outside the state of IL with a relevant program is Northeastern University in Boston, MA: BS in Design and Theatre. This program is design-focused rather than immersive/interactive with many courses in art and design, so while there is an aspect that focuses on the audience is still differs in its core from the proposed program. AY Tuition: \$33,995.

The proposed BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance fills this gap by explicitly combining theatre training with game design principles to prepare students for live, participatory, and audience-focused experiences. By emphasizing playable theatre, escape room creation, LARP, and interactive performance design, along with a Collaborative Studio and Professional Seminar to support hands-on project experience and career readiness, the program occupies a unique niche in the state. This approach ensures graduates are not only trained in theory and practice but are uniquely qualified to enter and lead in the growing fields of immersive and interactive entertainment.

Comparable  
Programs in Illinois  
Attach Documents

IBHE is charged to develop a strategic plan to address the present and future aims and needs and requirements of higher education in Illinois (110 ILCS 205/6) (from Ch. 144, par. 186) Sec. 6). Illinois Administrative Code:

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically justified based on the educational priorities and needs of the citizens of Illinois Respond to the following questions about how the proposed program will support the three goals of A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth Strategic Plan.

## Equity

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Describe institutional-level plans to close equity gaps in access, progression, completion, and attainment and the implications for the proposed program. More specifically, provide institutional-level plans for attracting, recruiting, retaining, and completing a diverse group of students including working adults, students of color, transfer and low-income students and implications for the proposed program. Explain how progress will be monitored.

[Provost's Office will enter institutional info here]

The proposed program is a Bachelor of Arts degree, in compliment to the current Bachelor of Fine Arts degree that the Department of Theatre currently offers. Its admissions requirements allow for students to submit materials which showcase their interests, but does not require a portfolio or audition. This will enable students from all backgrounds and interests to apply and be considered for the program, with the goal of increasing access and equity for students to enroll.

Describe program and institution-based high-impact practices and wrap-around student support services ensuring equitable access and success for students enrolled in the proposed program.

The University of Illinois College of Fine and Applied Arts recognizes a broad and inclusive concept of diversity as a springboard toward mutual understanding. Diversity encompasses complex differences and similarities in identities and perspectives among members of our college, as well as among individuals who make up the broader global community.

The BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance integrates high-impact, experiential learning practices to ensure student success and equitable access. Students engage in hands-on, collaborative projects through the program's Interdisciplinary Lab course, where they design, build, and present immersive and interactive performances, providing practical, portfolio-ready experience. Courses emphasize iterative experimentation, audience-centered design, and multidisciplinary teamwork, giving students repeated opportunities to apply theory to practice. Faculty provide individualized guidance, and peer evaluations alongside structured feedback sessions ensure all students develop collaboration, creative problem-solving, and professional competencies. The program actively encourages internships, industry guest lectures, and public performance opportunities, giving students equitable access to real-world experiences and professional networks that support long-term success.

All incoming students will engage in a college orientation class, FAA 101, taught by an Associate Director in the college office. This unites students across majors and departments and introduces them to resources at UIUC, as well as opportunities to explore.

Students have access to their Degree Audit Reports (DARS) which is a listing of completed coursework and progress towards degree requirements. It is an invaluable aid in maintaining progress towards completion of the degree in a timely manner.

In addition to the staff designated for this major, the Department of Theatre also has an Office Manager, Academic Advisor/Assistant to the Head, and Director of Undergraduate studies who provide wrap-around support for all students.

The FAA Undergraduate Affairs Office includes four staff members focused on student services: the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and the Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Academic Success. These staff members closely monitor and provide support for all students who are reported as not engaging in classes, have extenuating circumstances impact their academic success, or who are on academic probation. An embedded mental health counselor is available for virtual sessions for FAA students and who offers virtual drop-in hours each week. Additionally, FAA Career Services offers virtual workshops and online appointments to support the professional development and goals of all FAA students.

Explain institutional strategies being implemented to increase and retain faculty, staff, and administrators of color and the implications for the proposed program. Explain how progress will be monitored.

[Provost's Office will enter institutional info here]

The University of Illinois College of Fine and Applied Arts recognizes a broad and inclusive concept of diversity as a springboard toward mutual understanding. Diversity encompasses complex differences and similarities in identities and perspectives among members of our college, as well as among individuals who make up the broader global community.

The College of Fine and Applied Arts leadership team includes an Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This leadership role connects the college to campus diversity efforts through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OVCDEI). This presence of the Associate Dean also demonstrates a commitment to diversity within the College of FAA. The Associate Dean, working together with the College of FAA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Committee, consisting of faculty, staff, and student representatives, also coordinates diversity-focused training and workshops for members of the College of FAA community.

The Department of Theatre, in conjunction with the Counseling Center, hosts INNER VOICES social issues theatre, which addresses complex, timely and often difficult social issues that connect deeply to the university community(ies) and beyond, through performances followed by post-performance audience dialogues.

The College of FAA has launched a number of projects and initiatives to advance diversity, inclusion, equity, and access while recognizing the deep and rich work and visions offered by our artists, designers, performers, scholars, architects, and activists.

The College of FAA has continued to take steps for affirming the role of public engagement as a form of scholarly work, recognizing the importance of such work for the research, teaching, and service of historically underrepresented faculty members.

Describe strategies and initiatives the institution plans to implement that makes the proposed program and college more generally affordable for students and their families, including those who have been historically underserved.

[Provost's Office will enter institutional info here]

The BA in Immersive and Interactive Theatre will be open to transfer students (inter-college and off-campus), with a more flexible path to complete degree requirements than the BFA in Theatre. With a robust set of course courses, but that can be taken flexibly in multiple semesters, and a set of game studies and design electives and free electives many off-campus transfer students will still be able to graduate on a four-year timeframe. This BA program eliminates some barriers through offering a 120 hour degree and with a designated advisor, who has demonstrated experience in the pedagogy of the program and in student support services. Students who have been historically underserved or even underrepresented in theatre will find this interactive and immersive theatre program an affordable, supportive, and empowering program to graduate from and launch their career.

The College of FAA shares the commitment of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois System to access and affordability. The College awards over \$1,3 million a year in undergraduate scholarships to new and returning students.

Provide tuition cost analysis for comparable programs and institutions in Illinois.

Illinois Wesleyan University  
BA in Theatre Arts (no immersive/interactive focus, no game design component)  
AY25-26 tuition for IL Resident: \$59,226

Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
BA in Theater (no immersive/interactive focus, no game design component)  
AY25-26 tuition for IL Resident: \$9,638

Columbia College Chicago  
BA in Game and Interactive Media Design (no theatre component)  
AY25-26 tuition for IL Resident: \$17,749

Governors State University  
BA Theatre and Performance Studies [no Game Studies & Design component]  
AY25-2026 Tuition for IL Resident: \$10,740

Illinois State University  
BA or BS, Creative Technologies: sequence in Game Design or Interdisciplinary Technologies [technology-centered and focus on digital media applications]  
Tuition for AY 25-2026: \$12,066.

Provide a supply and demand analysis for the proposed program that, at minimum, does the following: a) Provides evidence of student interest in the proposed program including any strategies to incentivize students to stay in Illinois.

b) Identifies and provides evidence of a high-quality credential with viability for future careers.

a) Student interest in immersive and interactive performance has grown steadily, as evidenced by enrollment in related courses, minors, and practicums at the University of Illinois, including the Theatre pathway in the undergraduate Game Design minor and the graduate Game Studies minor. Feedback from students indicates strong demand for a program that integrates theatre and game design, particularly for those interested in immersive and playable experiences. To retain students in Illinois, the program will provide unique, in-state opportunities unavailable elsewhere in the country, including access to a Collaborative Studio, Professional Seminar, and public performance projects.

b) Immersive entertainment is experiencing significant growth across various sectors, driven by evolving audience preferences and technological advancements. In 2024, the U.S. immersive experiences market reached nearly \$4 billion, growing over 20% annually since 2019, driven by evolving audience desires for interaction, agency, and storytelling (Habo Studio, 2025). This growth is reflected in the success of companies like Meow Wolf, which opened new locations in 2023 and 2024, with a total of five active locations. They are set to open locations in Los Angeles in 2026 and in New York soon after. All of these locations require designers and staff with skills, knowledge, and experience in immersive and interactive storytelling. Those with knowledge of theatre, games, immersion and interaction would be competitive for such roles as Show Coordinator, Exhibition Technology Specialist, or Designer Fabricator, depending on which electives and practicum experiences they choose, with salaries starting at \$53,000 (Meow Wolf Careers).

Experiential marketing is another sector experiencing rapid growth. The global experiential marketing industry is projected to reach \$1.2 trillion by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 8.5% from 2025 to 2033 (OpenPR, 2025). This growth is driven by brands seeking innovative ways to engage consumers through immersive and interactive experiences.

While growth in the video game industry has moderated recently, the global market is projected to hit \$266 billion by 2028, expanding at a 5% CAGR between 2024 and 2028 (Boston Consulting Group, 2024). This expansion is accompanied by increasing demand for professionals who are specialized in weaving compelling stories into immersive and interactive digital experiences through writing, performing as voice actors, directing, managing, and designing.

The Twenty-Sided Tavern, a live performance, inspired by Dungeons & Dragons, allows audiences to choose characters and paths via their phones, blending gaming and live theatre. It ran for a year off Broadway (including three extensions) and is currently touring nationally. The production has garnered attention for its innovative approach to audience engagement and has been featured in major publications such as Forbes (Forbes, 2025). This highlights the opportunities for success for productions that integrate performance, games, and interaction

and for those who have the knowledge and skills to produce, design, direct, manage, and perform in such work.

With such growth in these industries bringing attention to immersive and interactive work, students in University of Illinois Theatre programs have actively sought opportunities to engage in immersive and interactive performance, both through elective courses and practicums. Despite limited availability of relevant offerings, courses such as THEA 402: Escape Room Design and GSD 390: Theatrical Tabletop Role-Playing Game Design continue to grow enrollment. This demand highlights students' desire to explore audience-centered storytelling and design meaningful, participatory experiences. Now is the time to formalize these interests into a focused undergraduate program that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to launch careers in this expanding field.

The transdisciplinary BA in Immersive & Interactive Performance will offer a rigorous exploration of this evolving field, bridging traditional theatrical practices with emerging methodologies in audience engagement. Situated within the Theatre Studies area of the Department of Theatre, the program blends critical inquiry with creative experimentation to prepare students for leadership in a field characterized by its dynamic integration of narrative, design, technology, and interactivity. Within a multidisciplinary cohort, students will examine the historical, theoretical, and practical contexts of immersive and interactive performance while redefining the relationships between performers, audiences, and spaces.

Graduates of the program will be prepared for advanced academic programs such as an MFA in design or directing, or an MA/PhD in Performance Studies, as well as careers in experience design, narrative design, video game design, playable theatre, escape room creation, and LARP and role-playing game design. The program's transdisciplinary focus and flexibility ensure students can tailor their studies to align with their specific interests and goals.

Explain how the program engaged with business and industry in its development and how it will spur the state's economy by leveraging partnerships with local, regional, and state industry, business leaders and employers.

The proposed BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance has been shaped in consultation with leaders in the immersive entertainment and game design industries. Program development discussions have taken place at professional conferences, allowing faculty to gather feedback from top practitioners and better align the curriculum with industry needs. The program will further engage business and industry through guest lectures and mentorship opportunities, providing students with direct access to current professional practices. Internship placements, Collaborative Studio projects, and public showcases will connect students with local, regional, and state employers, preparing them to contribute immediately to creative and commercial enterprises.

By training graduates in immersive and interactive performance, audience-centered design, and game-based storytelling, the program strengthens the workforce pipeline for Illinois' growing experiential economy, supporting sectors such as themed entertainment, live events, exhibition



and museum design, and interactive media. These connections not only promote student career readiness but also stimulate the state's economy by supplying highly skilled creative professionals capable of leading innovative projects and expanding Illinois' presence in the immersive entertainment industry. The BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance expands access and opportunities for students through multiple high-impact, experiential practices that prepare them for professional careers and further study. Students have the option to pursue internships or summer work in immersive entertainment, experiential marketing, and interactive media, with the program providing guidance and support; past students have completed summer placements with the award-winning CU Adventures in Time and Space escape room in Urbana, IL. Courses such as THEA 402: Designing Immersive Adventures - Escape Rooms, engage students in client-driven projects with organizations like the Museum of the Grand Prairie, the Molecule Maker Lab Institute, and the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, giving them hands-on experience designing audience-centered immersive experiences for real clients. Additional high-impact practices include mentorship from faculty, guest lectures from industry leaders, and public presentations of student work, all of which create pathways to careers, graduate study, and professional networks. By providing these experiential, field-based, and career-focused opportunities, the program ensures that students have equitable access to meaningful learning experiences that develop professional skills, creative expertise, and industry connections.

The Department of Theatre does have a THEA 490 Professional Internship course and THEA 496 Professional Exploration course which allow students to engage in experiential, community work or certification opportunities recognized as academic credit on the transcript after academic assignments and faculty mentorship.

Explain how the proposed program will expand its models of teaching and learning, research, and/or public service and outreach that provide opportunity for students to succeed in the work of the future.

The BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance advances innovative models of teaching and learning by integrating live performance, interactive systems, and game design into a single, transdisciplinary framework. Students develop skills in experimentation, iteration, and audience-centered design, learning to create experiences that are both artistic and technically sophisticated. The program encourages student-led creative projects that explore emerging forms of immersive storytelling and interactive engagement, generating new knowledge and methods in the field. Public presentations, community partnerships, and collaborations with external organizations extend learning beyond the classroom, giving students opportunities to contribute to local and regional creative economies. By combining these approaches, the program prepares students to thrive in future-focused creative industries where the ability to design participatory, interactive experiences is increasingly in demand.

Many FAA faculty members have participated in additional summer training to enhance course delivery through the Canvas system. Meanwhile, the College of FAA is actively working to optimize all courses to comply with Title II accessibility standards, supporting a universal design approach.

Beyond workforce need, describe how the program broadly addresses societal needs (e.g., cultural or liberal arts contribution, lifelong learning of Illinois residents, or civic participation).

The BA in Immersive and Interactive Performance addresses societal needs by training students to create experiences that engage audiences in meaningful storytelling and participatory performance. By designing immersive and interactive works, students learn to craft experiences that encourage perspective-taking, empathy, and critical reflection, offering audiences new ways to understand diverse communities, histories, and ideas. These skills contribute to the cultural and liberal arts landscape of Illinois, providing residents with access to innovative performances that entertain, educate, and inspire. Through public presentations, community partnerships, and collaborations with museums and cultural institutions, students' work can directly enhance civic participation and lifelong learning, ensuring that the program benefits both the local community and the broader state population.

A Thriving Illinois:  
Higher Education  
Paths to Equity,  
Sustainability, and  
Growth - Attach  
Documents

## Program Description and Requirements

Illinois Administrative Code:

*1050.30(b)(1) A) The caliber and content to the curriculum assure that the objectives of the unit of instruction will be achieved; B) The breadth and depth of the curriculum are consistent with what the title of the unit of instruction implies; C) The admission and graduation requirements for the unit of instruction are consistent with the stated objectives of the unit of instruction.*

*1050.30(b)(3): Appropriate steps shall be taken to assure that professional accreditation needed for licensure or entry into a profession as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction is maintained or will be granted in a reasonable period of time.*

*1050.50 (a)(2)(C) Requirement for Programs in which State Licensure is Required for Employment in the Field: In the case of a program in which State licensure is required for employment in the field, a program can be found to be in good standing if the institution is able to provide evidence that program graduates are eligible to take the appropriate licensure examination and pass rates are maintained as specified in the objectives of the unit of instruction. If there is no such evidence, the institution shall report the program as flagged for review.*

## Program Description

Provide a description of the proposed program and its curriculum, including a list of the required core courses and short ("catalog") descriptions of each one. (This list should identify all courses newly developed for the program).

Provide Program Description here:

The BA in Immersive & Interactive Theatre is offered as an in-person, 120 credit hour undergraduate degree. The major explores how performance, design, writing, directing, and management can come together to create experiences where audiences step inside the story. Students work collaboratively to design interactive worlds, craft meaningful audience experiences, and experiment with new ways of blending theatre, play, and participation.

Graduates are prepared for leadership in the rapidly growing field of immersive and interactive entertainment, as well as for creative roles in game design, experiential marketing, escape room creation, live-action role-playing, and other interactive experiences. The program builds skills in collaboration, creativity, and storytelling that support success across the arts and in a wide range of professional settings.

The required courses for this program are (\* if newly developed for program, otherwise have been offered already as a special topics or permanent offering):

FAA 101 Arts at Illinois, 1 hour

Explores the history and theory of immersive and interactive theatre. Students will examine key historical movements, major productions, and critical discourses that have shaped the field. Through readings, discussions, and written reflections, students will engage with different historical developments in immersive and interactive theatre, including site-specific performances, live-action role-playing (LARP), playable theatre, and digital immersion. The course emphasizes historical evolution rather than practical application.

THEA 122 Theatre Foundations: Theory and Practice, 3 hours

Focuses on understanding the historical and contemporary creative practices of playwrights, directors, and dramaturgs. Provides a brief overview of theatre history and theory for understanding critical concepts and approaches that inform contemporary theatrical practices. Students will develop creative projects as well as critical analyses in support of course objectives.

THEA 123 Theatre Foundations: Production, 3 hours

Provides an overview of historical and contemporary production practices focused on designing, building and managing a theatrical performance. Students will consider what performance production means within its social and historical context and develop a theatrical vocabulary essential to participating in the production process and in conducting research into production practices.

THEA 200: Practicum II, taken twice for 1 credit hour each time

This course is designed for students to acquire an introductory understanding of technical theatre roles, learn new skills and apply new knowledge in a hands-on, experiential learning setting. Students will work on a live performance project in a supporting position on productions of varying scope and scale to both gain an opportunity to practice new skills and an

opportunity to learn more about the various areas of technical theater production.

**\*THEA 403 Topics in Immersive & Interactive Theatre, 3 hours**

Explores the evolving landscape of immersive and interactive theatre, examining how these forms engage audiences, break traditional theatrical conventions, and create dynamic, participatory experiences. Each offering of the course will focus on a topic within immersive and interactive performance, allowing students to engage with theoretical, historical, and practical perspectives.

**\*THEA 436 Engagement & Alchemy of the Audience, 3 hours**

This lecture and lab class will investigate, analyze, and activate the role of audience in various theatre experiences that open the fourth wall to challenge audiences to step into relationship with the work past the seated role of passive receiver of a story into a range in risk and involvement from direct address all the way to the collective creation or editing of the story in progress.

**\*FAA 402 Experience Design for Immersion & Interaction, 3 credit hours**

Explores participant-centered experience design in immersive and interactive formats, including theatre, games, and other experiences. Students will examine participant journeys, build experience frameworks, and iterate on prototypes, culminating in a fully designed immersive and/or interactive experience.

**\*THEA 284 Introduction to Immersive and Interactive Theatre, 3 hours**

Explores the history and theory of immersive and interactive theatre. Students will examine key historical movements, major productions, and critical discourses that have shaped the field. Through readings, discussions, and written reflections, students will engage with different historical developments in immersive and interactive theatre, including site-specific performances, live-action role-playing (LARP), playable theatre, and digital immersion. The course emphasizes historical evolution rather than practical application.

**\*FAA 250 Interdisciplinary Design Lab I, 1-3 credit hours, required for 3 hours total**

A project-based course where students from diverse fields collaborate on creative design challenges. Working in teams, they will conceptualize, prototype, and showcase interactive experiences informed by human-centered design. Emphasizing storytelling, structured feedback, and critical reflection, the course develops collaborative and creative problem-solving skills. Each semester introduces a new design challenge, preparing students for work in game design, interactive media, and related creative industries.

**\*FAA 450 Interdisciplinary Design Lab II, 1-3 credit hours (required for 3 hours total)**

Expanding on foundational skills, students explore advanced creative territories with independence and conceptual depth. Interdisciplinary teams design innovative, playable experiences that push boundaries while remaining responsive to human needs and contexts. Through collaboration, prototyping, and iteration, students cultivate unique creative voices and

through collaboration, prototyping, and iteration, students cultivate unique creative voices and produce portfolio-quality work. Emphasizing creative risk-taking and conceptual development, the course supports emerging identities as designers while fostering artistic vision grounded in thoughtful, human-centered design.

#### GSD 101 Intro to Game Studies and Design - 3 hours

This broad survey course will provide students across campus an introduction to interdisciplinary game studies, covering both historical/social perspectives and game design. It will explore humanities, social science understandings of play, and the social contexts from which our games and gaming practices arise, as well as the development and consequences of gaming cultures. This course will serve as a broad introduction to issues covered in greater depth in upper-level courses available for students pursuing an Undergraduate Minor in Game Studies & Design.

ELECTIVE options in the program include

#### \*THEA 384 Experimental Collaborative Lab, 3 hours

A hands-on, project-based course where students will engage in experimental experience and/or performance-making around a central topic, theme, or question. This course emphasizes ideation, prototyping, gathering feedback, and iterative design. Occasionally, the course may collaborate with campus or community groups as "clients," providing students with real-world challenges and opportunities for impact.

#### THEA 300 Practicum III, 1 to 3 hours

The objective of this course is for students to demonstrate an understanding of the principles of theatre design/technology/management, acting or theatre studies – and implement acquired skills and apply acquired knowledge in a hands-on, experiential learning setting progressing toward more independent work at a larger scope and scale. Students work on a live performance project in a lead position on a smaller scale production or as an assistant on a large or small scale production such as: Designer or Assistant Designer, Technical Director, Assistant Technical Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Scenic Charge, Crafts Head, Stage Carpenter, Actor, Dramaturg or Assistant Dramaturg, Assistant Director etc.

#### THEA 400 Practicum III, 1 to 3 hours

The objective of this course is for students to demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles of theatre design, technology or management, implement acquired skills and apply acquired knowledge in a hands-on, experiential learning setting.

#### THEA 385 Theatrical Tabletop Role-Playing Game Design, 3 credit hours

This project-based course invites students to bring theatre into the world of tabletop role-playing games through embodied storytelling and collaborative performance. Drawing inspiration from iconic plays, musicals, television, and films, students will explore how dramatic techniques, character work, and ensemble play can shape immersive one-shot TTRPG experiences. Through analysis, performance-based gameplay, and hands-on design, students

will learn to craft original TTRPGs that merge the storytelling of theatre with the mechanics of game design, creating playable narratives that feel both theatrically rich and dynamically interactive.

#### THEA 402 Designing Immersive Adventures: Escape Rooms, 3 hours

A practical introduction to escape rooms as playable immersive theatre. Students will explore player experience, narrative design, and environmental design while developing, installing, and running the theatrical elements of an escape room.

Attach Program

Description Files if  
needed

### Graduation Requirements

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Provide a brief narrative description of all graduation requirements, including, but not limited to, credit hour requirements, and, where relevant, requirements for internship, practicum, or clinical. For a graduate program, summarize information about the requirements for completion of the thesis or dissertation, including the thesis committees, and the final defense of the thesis or dissertation. If a thesis or dissertation is not required in a graduate program, explain how the functional equivalent is achieved.

Students in the BA in Interactive and Immersive Theatre are required to earn a total of 120 credit hours, including general education requirements, the university's residency requirement of 45 hours of UIUC coursework of which 21 hours are 300- or 400-level courses and a minimum of 40 hours total of upper division coursework. All courses counting toward major or general education requirements must be taken for a letter grade.

The major includes specified courses (Theatre Core: 24, Theatre Electives: 18, Collaborative Studios: 6, GSD 101: 3); 10 hours of game studies and design electives; General Education courses (estimated 41 hours); and Free Electives (18 hours). Students earn their 40 advanced hours through THEA 403 - 6 hours, THEA 436 - 3 hours, FAA 402 - 3 hours, 'Select 6 hours from' THEA electives - 6 hours, 'Choose 1', Theatre design elective - 3 hours, and FAA 450 - 3 hours. The remaining 16 advanced hours will be completed from: GSD electives (10 hours), Additional THEA or additional courses (9 hours), or Free electives (Estimate 18 hours).

### Plan to Evaluate and Improve the Program

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Describe the program's evaluation plan.

The Immersive & Interactive Theatre program will be evaluated through the Department of Theatre's established review processes to ensure ongoing quality, effectiveness, and alignment with program goals. Evaluation will focus on curriculum quality, teaching effectiveness, student learning outcomes, student engagement, faculty productivity, and career or graduate school placement.

#### Curriculum Quality:

The program will undergo regular departmental review to ensure courses remain rigorous, relevant, and aligned with industry and academic standards. Reviews will consider curricular coherence, innovation in teaching practices, and responsiveness to emerging fields of immersive and interactive performance.

#### Teaching and Student Learning:

Student achievement will be measured through faculty-assessed performances, portfolios, written work, and project-based learning outcomes. Assessment will track mastery of program learning outcomes, including collaboration, storytelling, design, and application of immersive experience design principles. Teaching effectiveness will be evaluated through end-of-course student feedback and departmental peer review processes.

#### Student Engagement and Success:

Student participation in collaborative and applied learning opportunities will be monitored, including work on faculty-led productions, community partnerships, and creative projects. Key metrics will include retention, graduation, and time-to-degree completion rates, as well as job placement and graduate school acceptance rates.

#### Faculty Productivity:

Faculty contributions to research, scholarship, and creative activity in immersive and interactive performance will be tracked through annual reviews. This will include publications, creative works, conference presentations, and community-engaged projects. Faculty achievements in teaching and service will also be documented.

#### Continuous Improvement:

Results from these evaluations will be incorporated into the Department of Theatre's regular reporting and planning processes. Adjustments to curriculum, teaching practices, and student support will be made as necessary to improve program quality and better support student outcomes.

#### Reporting:

In accordance with Illinois Board of Higher Education requirements, a progress report will be submitted in the third year of the program, detailing performance in meeting objectives, assessment results, and any program adjustments.

## **Fiscal and Personnel Resources**

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*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(5): A) The financial commitments to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are sufficient to ensure that the faculty and staff and support services necessary to offer the unit of instruction, research or public service can be acquired and maintained; B) Projections of revenues necessary to support the unit of instruction, research or public service are based on supportable estimates of state appropriations, local tax support, student tuition and fees, private gifts, and/or governmental grants and contracts.*

### **Budget Rationale**

Provide financial data that document the university's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed program and describe the program's sources of funding.

Is the unit's (Department, College, School) current budget adequate to support the program when fully implemented? If new resources are to be provided to the unit to support the program, what will be the source(s) of these funds? Is the program requesting new state funds? (During recent years, no new funds have been available from the state (IBHE) to support new degree programs).

The current budget for the Department of Theatre covers the program implementation based on tuition and IU revenue while shifting some current teaching assignments. As the program grows, any additional needs will be covered by tuition revenue, income through event programming, and donor gifts for new work development.

## **Faculty Resources**

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Will current faculty be adequate to provide instruction for the new program or will additional faculty need to be hired? If additional hires will be made, please elaborate.

The current faculty, including the newly hired position of Teaching Assistant Professor for Immersive and Interactive Performance, have the expertise and capacity to deliver the proposed program with high quality. Current faculty in the areas of theatre design will rotate through the core courses to ensure continued offerings. Two faculty are dedicated to teaching the core courses for this program. To ensure students receive strong individualized support from the outset, the program will require one teaching assistant to help facilitate instruction in core courses. As enrollment grows above 60, the need for additional teaching assistant support will be evaluated to maintain the high level of engagement and mentorship central to the program's success.



Please address the impact on faculty resources including any changes in numbers of faculty, class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratios, etc.

The proposed program will be delivered using the existing faculty within the Department of Theatre. No changes to faculty numbers, teaching loads, class sizes, or student-faculty ratios are anticipated. THEA 122 and THEA 123 will have separate sections as cohort building courses, which will have a TA and faculty assigned. Currently there are many graduate students in Theatre available for TA appointments and the FA 25 undergraduate admits to theatre design is a smaller cohort than in past years. Overall, existing resources are sufficient.

Describe how the unit will support student advising, including job placement and/or admission to advanced studies. Will current staff be adequate to implement and maintain the new program or will additional staff be hired? Will current advising staff be adequate to provide student support and advisement, including job placement and or admission to advanced studies? If additional hires will be made, please elaborate.

Student advising for the BA in Immersive & Interactive Performance will be coordinated by Amber Dewey Schultz, who will serve as program director and primary advisor. She will provide guidance on course selection, career pathways, and preparation for graduate study. Current advising staff are sufficient to support the program until enrollment reaches approximately 60 students, at which point the department will allocate additional staff to ensure continued high-quality advising, including support for job placement and admission to advanced academic programs. The department has courses in place - THEA 496: Professional Exploration, THEA 479: Preparation for Auditions, THEA 433: Business of Entertainment Design - to help undergraduate students develop materials for job placement across our industries.

Are the unit's current facilities adequate to support the program when fully implemented? Will there need to be facility renovation or new construction to house the program?

The unit's current facilities are adequate to support the program when fully implemented, and no major renovations or new construction are required. The program is currently exploring additional spaces for immersive experimentation to enhance hands-on learning opportunities, but existing classrooms, performance venues, and interdisciplinary facilities provide sufficient resources for high-quality instruction and creative work.

## Library Resources

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Describe your proposal's impact on the University Library's resources, collections, and services. If necessary please consult with the appropriate disciplinary specialist within the University Library.

- Current Library collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support the BA in Immersive and Interactive Theatre.
- A librarian from the Music and Performing Arts Library (Kate Lambaria, subject librarian for Dance, Music, Theatre) was contacted on September 23, 2025.
- Based on her consultation with colleagues in the University Library, the consensus is that the proposal presents few obstacles with respect to collections, research support, or library instruction in theatre. In reviewing the proposal materials, she noted courses involving virtual reality and immersive walk-through assignments. Colleagues in units providing relevant services within the University Library - the Media Commons and the IDEA Lab – also suggest that we encourage instructors with such assignments to consult with personnel in those units prior to offering the courses if there is any expectation that students would be utilizing resources from those units. Additionally, for planned capstone or active learning courses using University Library emerging technology services, instructors should contact IDEA Lab and/or Media Commons before each semester commences to confirm availability of specific tools or technologies built into assignments. We encourage instructors to build working collaborations with the staff of these units to ensure the best possible learning experiences for students. Based on experience, this has proven helpful with other programs that are utilizing emerging and immersive technologies in instruction.

Summarize information about library resources for the program, including a list of key textbooks, a list of key text and electronic journals that will support this program, and a short summary of general library resources of the University that will be used by the program’s faculty, students, and staff.

- Most courses within the BA in Immersive and Interactive Theatre will not require standard textbooks.
- Library resources for the BA in Immersive and Interactive Theatre program by faculty and students will be identical to those utilized by the Department of Theatre more generally.

Are any sources of funding temporary (e.g., grant funding)? If so, how will the program be sustained once these funds are exhausted?

None of the funding sources are temporary

Budget Narrative      [Library Consultation for BA in Theatre Degree Proposal.pdf](#)  
Fiscal and  
Personnel  
Resources  
Attachments

Personnel Budget

Category	Year One	Year Five	Notes
Faculty (FTE)			

Faculty FTE Year1	Faculty FTE Year 5	Faculty FTE Notes
73,000	120,450	Year 1: One 100% FTE current faculty (includes advising) Year 5: One additional 50% FTE, with assumption of nominal 2% annual raise

#### Faculty (\$)

Faculty Year 1	Faculty Year 5	Faculty Notes
8,111	8,922	1 month summer salary for new student registration advising & other recruitment/coordination needs, with assumption of nominal 2% annual raise

#### Advising Staff (\$)

Advising Staff Year 1	Advising Staff Year 5	Advising Staff Notes
0	\$30,000	Part-time advising or 25% of second faculty FTE at Year 5

#### Graduate Students (\$)

Graduate Students Year 1	Graduate Students Year 5	Graduate Students Notes
12,100	37,100	One TA at 25% for 4 years, 9 month contract (est. 12,100 each year) Two TAs at 25% in Year 5, 9 month contract (est. 12,500 each)

#### Other Personnel

##### Costs

Other Personnel Costs Year 1	Other Personnel Costs Year 5	Other Personnel Costs Notes
0	0	n/a

#### Budget Narrative

##### Attachments

#### Facilities and Equipment

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(4): A) Facilities, equipment and instructional resources (e.g., laboratory supplies and equipment, instructional materials, computational equipment) necessary to support high quality academic work in the unit of instruction, research or public service are available and maintained;*

*B) Clinical sites necessary to meet the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service;*

*C) Library holdings and acquisitions, owned or contracted for by the institution, that are necessary to support high quality instruction and scholarship in the unit of instruction, research and public service, are conveniently available and accessible, and can be maintained.*

Describe the facilities and equipment that are available, or that will be available, to develop and maintain high quality in this program. Summarize information about buildings, classrooms, office space, laboratories and equipment, and other instructional technologies for the program.

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at IL, a 300,000 square-foot performing arts and academic facility, houses five indoor stages including Foellinger Great Hall—which boasts one of the world’s premier acoustic environments—Tryon Festival Theatre, Colwell Playhouse, Studio Theatre, and the Lobby’s Stage 5, as well as the outdoor Amphitheatre. Each venue was designed for a particular style of performance with features that enhance the audience experience with impressive views, fine-tuned acoustics, and exquisite beauty. KCPA offers an ideal setting for experiential and integrated experiences of laboratory, classroom, and public square as the setting and backdrop for the program.

In addition to Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, students can utilize several interdisciplinary spaces across campus open to all students that expand opportunities for exploration, creation, and performance. The CU Community Fab Lab provides access to fabrication technologies such as 3D printing, laser cutting, and digital media tools, enabling students to prototype and experiment with interactive design elements. The Siebel Center for Design, a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to human-centered and interdisciplinary design, offers flexible studios, collaboration spaces, and access to emerging technologies that support creative experimentation and project-based learning. The Armory provides adaptable classrooms and performance spaces that foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, giving students the freedom to test and present work in settings beyond traditional theatre venues. Together, these facilities ensure that students in the Immersive & Interactive Theatre program have access to the diverse resources and environments necessary to sustain high-quality, innovative academic and creative work.

Will the program require new or additional facilities or significant improvements to already existing facilities?

No

Will the program need additional technology beyond what is currently available for the unit?

No

Are there other costs associated with implementing the program?

No

Facilities and Equipment Attachments

*Illinois Administrative Code: 1050.30(a)(3): A) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff ensure that the objectives of the unit of instruction, research or public service are met; B) The academic preparation and experience of faculty and staff, as evidenced by level of degrees held, professional experience in the field of study and demonstrated knowledge of the field, ensure that they are able to fulfill their academic responsibilities; C) The involvement of faculty in the unit of instruction, research or public service is sufficient to cover the various fields of knowledge encompassed by the unit, to sustain scholarship appropriate to the unit, and to assure curricular continuity and consistency in student evaluation; D) Support personnel, including but not limited to counselors, administrators, clinical supervisors, and technical staff, which are directly assigned to the unit of instruction, research or public service, have the educational background and experience necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities.*

Describe the personnel resources available to develop and maintain a high quality program, including faculty (full- and part-time, current and new), staff (full- and part-time, current and new), and the administrative structure that will be in place to oversee the program. Also include a description of faculty qualifications, the faculty evaluation and reward structure, and student support services that will be provided by faculty and staff.

The core instructors for this program are Teaching Assistant Professor Amber Dewey Schultz and Assistant Professor Angela Pinholster. Other Theatre faculty may teach courses or support practicum based on interest and availability.

Summarize the major accomplishments of each key faculty member, including research/scholarship, publications, grant awards, honors and awards, etc. Include an abbreviated curriculum vitae or a short description.

Amber Dewey Schultz, Teaching Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies with affiliated roles in Game Studies and Design, the Siebel Center for Design, and IMMERSE: Center for Immersive Computing, will be teaching FAA 250: Interdisciplinary Design Lab I, FAA 450: Interdisciplinary Design Lab II, THEA 402: Designing Immersive Adventures – Escape Rooms, THEA 385: Theatrical Tabletop RPG Design, FAA 402: Experience Design for Immersion and Interaction, and may teach sections of THEA 200: Practicum II, THEA 384: Experimental Collaborative Lab, and THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Schultz holds an MFA in Experience Design from Miami University, where her thesis examined cognitive overload in playable theatre. Her creative and scholarly work centers on immersive and interactive performance, audience-centered experience design, and the intersection of theatre and game design. She has developed award-winning immersive projects, including I Wish: A Theatrical Puzzle Room, which evolved into Forest of Fables at CU Adventures in Time and Space and received the 2025 Golden Lock Award. Schultz has designed multiple theatrical escape rooms, live-action role-playing games, and interactive performances, and is developing Outsourced Decisions, a cross-campus project exploring AI and human values through immersive interaction. A dedicated educator and curriculum leader, she has created and taught interdisciplinary courses, launched four undergraduate certificates, the upcoming Minor in Human-Centered Design, and "Theatre Pathways" within two Game Studies and Design minors, earning over \$2 million in grants for innovative teaching and program development, and recognition on UIUC's List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent.

Angela Pinholster, Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies, will be teaching THEA 284: Introduction to Immersive and Interactive Theatre and may teach sections of THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Pinholster is an educator and scholar whose work focuses on designing and analyzing immersive experiences that foster youth development, spanning theatrical productions, theme parks, and transformative educational programs. She earned her PhD in Theatre for Youth and Community from Arizona State University and holds two master's degrees in education. Prior to her doctoral studies, she founded and directed a nonprofit, arts-integrated Title I public charter school in Phoenix, and she began her career Off-Broadway as a stage manager and production assistant. Pinholster's teaching and research emphasize experiential learning, immersive storytelling, and designing environments that engage and inspire young audiences, reflecting her commitment to meaningful, impactful theatre experiences.

Genesee Spridco, Teaching Assistant Professor of Movement, will teach THEA 436: Engagement & Alchemy of the Audience. She teaches Movement in the Acting program, with a focus on physical habits, character creation, and maskwork. She is an advocate for Devised Theatre processes and serves as Co-Vice Chair for the National Playwriting Program and Coordinator for the Devised Theatre Initiative for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Region III. Spridco has co-founded and directed physical theatre ensembles including Suitcase

Shakespeare and Imaginez, leading the creation and touring of original works that incorporated circus arts, clown, and mask performance. Her credits as a movement director include productions with Illinois Theatre, Lyric Theatre at Illinois, and Milwaukee's Shakespeare in the Park. She also performs nationally with the award-winning comedy troupe the Washing Well Wenchies. Spridco earned her MFA in Ensemble Devised Physical Theatre from Dell'Arte International School for Physical Theatre, a BFA in Directing and BS in Theatre Education from Viterbo University, and holds certifications in yoga instruction and Alexander Technique training.

Robert Perry may teach sections of THEA 200: Practicum II and THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Perry is the Director of Design, Co-Director of Level 21 (Design, Tech & Management programs), and an Associate Professor in the Lighting Design & Technology BFA and MFA programs. He has designed lighting for over 35 years, with productions ranging from Off-Broadway premieres to opera, dance, and regional theatre across the country, including the Goodman Theatre, LaJolla Playhouse, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Arena Stage, Walnut Street Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Career highlights include world premieres such as Drowning Crow at the Goodman Theatre, Crowns at the McCarter Theatre, and Lost Lake at Manhattan Theatre Club, as well as the New York premieres of Reefer Madness and David Mamet's Boston Marriage. Perry has collaborated with numerous celebrated directors, including five Tony Award winners—Dan Sullivan, Pam MacKinnon, Des McAnuff, Rebecca Taichman, and Mark Lamos. His work has been recognized with multiple honors, including a Vivian Robinson AUDELCO Award for Crowns, a Dean Goodman Choice Award for The Skin of Our Teeth, and a Dallas–Fort Worth Theater Critics Forum Award for Inexpressible Island, alongside Drama Desk and Joseph Jefferson Award nominations. A faculty member at the University of Miami and Virginia Commonwealth University prior to joining Illinois, Perry is also a lighting sculptor whose art incorporates incandescent bulbs and reclaimed materials. He earned his MFA from the Yale School of Drama, BFA from the North Carolina School of the Arts, studied music performance at Berklee College of Music and Musicians' Institute, and is a member of United Scenic Artists Local #829.

Scott Neale, Associate Professor and Chair of the BFA and MFA Scenic Design programs, may teach sections of THEA 200: Practicum II, THEA 384: Experimental Collaborative Lab, and THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Neale is an internationally recognized, award-winning Scenic Designer and Associate Professor of Scenic Design, holding an MFA from Northwestern University and a BFA from Webster University's Conservatory of Theatre Arts. Since 2006, he has been Resident Scenic Designer for Albany Park Theater Project in Chicago, while also designing theatrical sets, immersive theatre experiences, theme park attractions, exhibits, and live events worldwide. His theatre work includes productions with Third Rail Projects, Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Great River Shakespeare Festival, and Yale Baroque Opera, while his themed entertainment designs span Busch Gardens, SeaWorld, Tivoli Gardens, the St. Louis Zoo, and Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. In the live events industry, Neale has created designs for HBO, NBC, FOX, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Bentley, and The New York Times Food Festival. A member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, the Themed

THE NEW YORK TIMES FOOD FESTIVAL. A member of UNITED SCENIC ARTISTS LOCAL 629, THE THEATRE ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATION, and USITT, Neale is also a credited contributor to the textbook *Scene Design and Stage Lighting* (9th and 10th editions). Beyond scenic design, his creative practice extends to visual art, sculpture, illustration, photography, and performance as a professional blues harmonica player.

Reiko Huffman, Assistant Professor of Scenic Design, may teach sections of THEA 200: Practicum II, THEA 384: Experimental Collaborative Lab, and THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Huffman is a freelance Scenic Designer dedicated to advancing the field through emotionally driven design that integrates diverse perspectives and critical awareness. Her work embraces unconventional methods, daring concepts, and challenging narratives to explore authentic visual storytelling, helping audiences connect with the emotions behind each production. In addition to her design work, Huffman researches and practices emotional awareness in her process, teaching, and collaborations, guiding emerging artists to use their personal stories as tools for more inclusive and thoughtful design. She regularly hosts free design workshops, applying insights from these experiences to both her professional and teaching practice. Huffman's approach emphasizes brave experimentation, collaborative growth, and the transformative potential of design that is both personal and deeply reflective.

Eben Alguire, Clinical Assistant Professor and Chair of the BFA Arts and Entertainment Technology program, may teach sections of THEA 200: Practicum II, THEA 384: Experimental Collaborative Lab, and THEA 403: Topics in Immersive and Interactive Theatre. Alguire is a technical production specialist with extensive experience across regional and academic production departments nationwide. They earned a BA from Beloit College and an MFA from San Diego State University, where they developed a passion for automation and mechanical effects as a form of creative problem-solving. Alguire has served as Technical Director for Skylight Music Theatre in Milwaukee, overseeing full-scale opera productions including *The Snow Dragon* by Somtow Sucharitkul, and most recently led technical production at the University of Florida's School of Theatre and Dance. Returning to the Midwest, Alguire is excited to contribute to the vibrant Champaign-Urbana community, bringing expertise in technical design, production leadership, and immersive theatrical experiences to students and colleagues alike.

Katryna Starks, Teaching Assistant Professor in Game Studies and Design, will be teaching GSD 101: Introduction to Game Studies and Design. Starks earned her PhD from the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, and specializes in serious games, interactive narrative, and game-based learning for health, education, and social impact. Prior to joining UIUC, she served as Lecturer and Program Coordinator at the University of the Sunshine Coast, where she co-developed the Bachelor of Serious Games, created the Interactive Narrative minor, coordinated program staffing and resources, and designed curriculum and assessment for immersive and storytelling-focused courses. Starks has published research on cognitive-behavioral game design and therapeutic game tools, and she brings her extensive experience in program development, curriculum design, and interactive storytelling to her teaching and mentorship of



students in game studies and design.

Faculty and Staff

Attachments

## HLC Section

### Credit Hours

Existing or repackaged curricula (Courses from existing inventory of courses):	Number of Credit Hours:	37 31	Percent of Total:
Revised or redesigned curricula (Courses for which content has been revised for the new program):	Number of Credit Hours:	0 0	Percent of Total:
New curricula (Courses developed for the new program that have never been offered):	Number of Credit Hours:	18 15	Percent of Total:
Total Credit Hours of the Program:	Number of Credit Hours:	120 100	Percent of Total:

### New Faculty Required

Will new faculty expertise or new faculty members be needed to launch this program?

No

Please explain existing coverage: Amber Schultz will serve as director/coordinator/advisor, until the enrollment reaches 60 students at which point the department will provide additional staffing to support the program. Current faculty are available to provide all course offerings in years 1 through 4 and one additional Teaching Assistant has been allocated for in the budget proposal.

### Additional Funds

Will the proposed program require a large outlay of additional funds by the institution?

No

### Institutional Funding

Please explain institutional funding for proposed program:

There will be no campus-level funding for the proposed program; faculty and staff salaries are already part of the College of FAA budget to support instruction and student services. It is anticipated that in years 4 and on, tuition revenue will aid in the additional costs of advising/ faculty advising, additional course sections, additional teaching assistants, and further program resources required.

EP Documentation

EP Control Number     EP.26.043

Attach Rollback/  
Approval Notices

Non-EP Documentation

U Program Review  
Comments

Rollback  
Documentation and  
Attachment

DMI Documentation

Attach Final  
Approval Notices  
  
Banner/Codebook  
Name

Program Code:

Minor	Conc	Degree	
Code	Code	Code	Major Code

Senate Approval  
Date

Senate Conference  
Approval Date

BOT Approval Date

IBHE Approval Date

HLC Approval Date

DOE Approval Date

Effective Date:

Program Reviewer     **Melissa Steinkoenig (menewell) (10/06/25 4:04 pm):** Gen Ed Table: Good  
Comments