

To the Council for Teacher Education,

I am writing this letter to express a concern of mine that I brought to Dr. Christy Borders and that I would like to express to the rest of the council. My name is Cody Rogers and I am a Third Year Theatre Teacher Education Major here at ISU. As part of the professional secondary education requirement for Theatre Ed majors, we are required to take TCH 216. As an educator in training, I have really valued this class because it is the first opportunity I can get full exposure to spending time in a real high school classroom setting. TCH 216 has given us Theatre Ed majors, as well as all other majors, a really great opportunity to begin to apply all the skills we have been talking about in theory in our other professional development and method classes and putting it into practice with the lab placements at UHigh.

I would like to bring to the CTE's attention my concerns with the TCH program at University High School. As of currently, there are no theatre classes offered for a TCH 216 student to take at UHigh. When signing up for a TCH 216 lab, Theatre Ed students are lumped together with the English, Speech and Communications, and Debate classes. This to me is very frustrating. TCH 216 is supposed to provide an opportunity for all education students taking the course to gain a feeling for what teaching their content will be like and to serve as a practical and engaging learning experience prior to student teaching. As a Theatre Education major, this is the only opportunity we have to work with real students in a classroom setting before student teaching. I feel very underappreciated and undervalued within the College of Education as a Theatre Teacher Education major when our opportunities have been limited and we do not get the same experience to apply all the content and skills we have worked so hard for throughout our time in the program

Within our Theater Ed program, we are very fortunate to be given many opportunities to take our specific major methods classes the very first semester we come to ISU and continue to do so almost every semester thereafter. The clinical opportunities my fellow Theatre Ed majors and I have partaken in so far have only been observations of highschool classes in the school districts in the surrounding community of Bloomington-Normal or through extra-curricular experiences. It is important to note that none of these clinical observations include observing theatre classes because there are no theatre classes offered at any of the high schools around ISU. The only opportunities I have been given for clinical experiences as a Theatre Education major in our actual subject area have either been through volunteering at the Illinois High School Theatre Festival every January where it is held at ISU or the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, attending an organized trip to spend a day observing theatre classes at a Chicago Public School, which has been offered once so far in my three years here, or our final Theatre Education methods class where we have a placement at UHigh to work with students in an extra-curricular setting.

I want to bring this to the CTE's attention because this has been a frustrating reality for many students, including myself, within the Theatre Education major. Almost all other subjects

in the TCH 216 program are provided placements in their subject areas at UHigh while a notable few non-tested subjects such as Theatre Ed, Family Consumer Sciences Ed, and Agricultural Ed are not given opportunities to be placed at UHigh. Fortunately for most of those subjects I just named, they have the opportunity to find alternative placements at schools for their clinical hours for TCH 216, or a different course completely that gives them a better experience working in their subject area. Theatre Ed students do not have this luxury. As I mentioned previously, there are no high schools in the surrounding area of ISU that offer theatre as classes for us to observe or be placed in. Theatre Education students are forced to go through TCH 216 placed in either their endorsement content or an English classroom. My endorsement is Psychology but unfortunately this semester while taking TCH 216 I was placed in an American Literature class for my clinical experience lab. I have not been trained to teach English nor will I teach it in the future. Many other students in the Theatre Teacher Education major agree with me when I say it is frustrating and confusing for us to be in this circumstance. It is unfair to the University High school students, the cooperating teachers, and us as the students to be expected to teach a subject that we have never been trained to teach.

Illinois State University is known for its outstanding Teacher Education program that is ranked among the top, nationally. The reason I chose to come to Illinois State University is that it is one of the few Universities in the country that actually provides a Theatre Teacher Education major program, in comparison to other schools where students with the desire to teach theatre would be forced to create their own plan of study and not receive as much specialized training. I hope that the College of Education at Illinois State can strive to ensure that all Teacher Education majors have the same opportunities to learn and grow, through diverse clinical experiences, specialized content and method courses, and encouraging and professional staff. I believe that Illinois State's Teacher Education program can be a model for other Universities to follow. I also believe that it can be a model for other high schools about the importance of including more classes such as theatre into their curriculum.

Theatre Education is just as important as any other subject, however, when we are not provided the same opportunities within our training it feels as though our subject and futures are viewed as less valuable within our College. I hope we can begin to work together to start supporting the subject areas that are not given the same opportunities as other subjects within the College of Education. I believe that implementing theatre classroom clinical experiences for TCH 216 placements is a great first step in achieving that.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns,

Cody Rogers

Third Year Theatre Teacher Education Major, ISU