Most shows produced at East Carolina University have a five to six week rehearsal and construction period. Two shows, however, were produced in the same amount of time one show should be conducted, Dance 2004 and “The Grapes of Wrath.” Jeni Parker and Robert “Bob” Alpers work on the properties and scenery for the shows along with students enrolled in certain classes at ECU. Parker states, “Normally, in the past we have six weeks from the time we get a crew until the show opens, but in the same amount of time, we’ve had two shows...” where Alpers cuts in and corrects Parker, “five weeks” instead of six.

The time constraint was not the only difficulty in producing the show. The number of students helping with the construction process were lower than in previous crew assignments. “We needed a larger base of students from Leonard’s [scenery] class,” Parker said. “I recruited a dozen or more students, and honestly, without them we would have been in trouble. They worked nights and weekends...” Many adjustments to the time spent working on building the set or props had to be made in order to finish the process before opening night. Even with the hard work required for the show, many people come to find that they enjoy the process. Alpers said that he “really like doing the design, I just wish I had more time,” while Parker told of two students who expressed an interest in helping after the crew was over due to work study, and one student who asked if there was money to hire him for the rest of the semester.

Both Alpers and Parker agree that the biggest challenge was putting together a “musical scale” show. “The show is as big as a musical, with nineteen scenes... and none of them repeat. [There is] a large number of props that go with each person. It is a naturalistic show in a way. It’s about poverty, so there is a rustic, texture to it, character to it to really depict the piecemeal these people lived. Everything needs treatment; it can’t just be cut out and painted,” Alpers said. Obviously the show is so large that every department is stretched thin in order to accommodate it. In fact, the Theatre 1000 students are required to write a short paper on their semester of work, and all of them say that they “did not realize how much work it takes,” because it is so different from high school according to Jeni Parker, who teaches the class. “They understand first hand, and appreciate the shows more.”