

Strategic Plan for Theatre Expansion Setting the Stage for Excellence

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Executive Summary

This strategic plan will increase enrollment of performing arts majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels through the expansion and improvement of the theater facilities and increased staffing to National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) standards thereby expanding and enhancing program offerings. The Southern Oregon University Department of Theatre Arts has a proven track record as an enrollment and revenue magnet for the University and a valuable resource to the Southern Oregon arts community. With the number of academic-year majors beyond capacity, the department has continued to find ways of expanding its role to bring students to the University through entrepreneurial summer programs, online coursework and integrative partnerships across campus. However, the need to expand the theatre facility is critical. Bricks and mortar is now key to the Department's future success. The plan to expand the theatre facility requires a far-reaching commitment – from a fund-raising campaign, to legislative and board support, and for campus budgeting to reinvest tuition revenue in the program. Through the expansion of the physical environment, additional staffing and faculty lines, and the introduction of new emphasis in Musical Theatre there is the potential of 20 percent growth in undergraduate enrolment in Theatre Arts. In addition there is the opportunity for 10 percent growth in the Masters of Theatre Studies in Production and Design and significant growth opportunities in other self support programs.

Theatre Arts and the Need for Expansion

Responding to the 1995 external review, which identified lack of space in the current theatre facility as an institutional weakness, SOU began developing a plan for facility expansion to accommodate the growth and expansion of programming. The initial project was vetted by the University Planning Committee and included in the SOU 2010 long-range plan as the first priority following the Center for Visual Arts. The initial conceptual design was completed in 2000 and then revisited in 2005 and early 2006 with an eye to not only accommodate the unprecedented growth but take into account the potential synergy with the Department of Music in the areas of Musical Theatre as well as summer and distance learning opportunities.

In assessing the scope of the project the department consulted many specialists including Peter Schmitz, the lead architect during the conceptual design phase of the project. Additional consultations included Kent Conrad of Auerbach, Polluck and Friedlander –leading theatrical consultants, and members of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. All theatre faculty at Southern Oregon University have significant professional background in their areas of emphasis and all have been actively involved in this process as well.

The physical improvements will significantly enhance the University's capacity to deliver curriculum that is technologically current, competitive and attractive. The excitement of a building campaign will provide additional publicity for the performing arts programs, create an impetus for off-site productions during the construction phase and will (like the University's Center for Visual Arts construction) result in a spike in applications. At the conclusion of the project, we anticipate a stronger retention profile as well, moving from 75 to 85 percent.

Outcomes and Goals

- Implement the conceptual design for the Theatre Arts facility to improve efficiency, technology and safety in the academic and lab environments, and to increase facility square footage and

upgrade the core systems to accommodate the current enrollment as well as allow growth of 20 percent by the fourth year following completion of the capital construction project. The capacity of the expanded facility is targeted at 280.

- Achieve National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) accreditation by the third year following completion of the capital construction project thereby establishing Southern Oregon University as the premier undergraduate theatre program in the western United States.
- Reduce our student to faculty ratio. As a result, the department will be better able to support internships and community-based learning opportunities with regional performance companies. This is also required for NAST accreditation.
- Implement a Musical Theatre emphasis. This would be the only such program within an 800-mile radius.
- Increase the scope of the University's interaction with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival through growth of self-support programs administered by the Ashland Center for Theatre Studies and the Center for Shakespeare Studies as well as increased support for internships and use of adjunct faculty and guest artists.

Key Activities and Budget /Staff Implications

Commitments and activities are required in the following areas: Fundraising, Curriculum Development, Staffing, and Marketing.

A. Fundraising

The estimate for the capital construction of the expansion project based on the conceptual design is \$10,797,482. The most Southern Oregon University can anticipate coming from the state is \$5,398,741. A target amount toward endowed chairs and scholarship funds is \$10,000,000. **Cost:** Fundraising expenses calculated at 12 percent of goal would be \$1,847,850.

B. Curriculum Development

- 1) Musical Theatre Program. In 2004, Music and Theatre Arts jointly submitted a Strategic Initiative Proposal for a Musical Theatre program that would serve both departments. Conceived as a dual track emphasis, the program would not only serve as a recruiting magnet for both departments but would also raise the profile of SOU regionally by serving a market of proven demand for musical theatre performances. Enrollment in this emphasis would be targeted at 40 by the sixth year of implementation toward a maximum of 48. Implementing this program will be enhanced by improving the performance lighting capacity of the Music Recital Hall, This program would require adding three faculty lines: Musical Theatre and Dance to Theatre Dept. and Applied Voice to Music Dept as well as a staff accompanist. **Cost:** Approximate faculty cost per annum would be \$198,000. The accompanist position, per annum, would cost \$35,962 including OPE.
- 2) Ashland Center for Theatre Studies. Programmatically, the Theatre Department has focused its growth strategy on summer graduate programs, most notably with Ashland Center for Theatre Studies (ACTS) Master of Theatre Studies in Production and Design (MoTS). This self-support program has grown to 55 masters candidates and 10 (MORE with 2 cohorts – about 20) graduates since its inception in 2004. In 2005, ACTS added graduate level electives courses. In addition to capturing the Student Credit Hours (SCH) for the required electives of our MoTS students, these a la carte courses bring additional enrollment from outside the MoTS program. The ACTS self-support programs have expanded the geographic radius of students who come to SOU to an international scope and have enhanced the

department's undergraduate recruitment. There is potential for further growth within ACTS. **Options under exploration include:**

- a) **Master of Theatre Studies in Production and Design** could see up to 10 percent growth upon the completion of the capital construction project.
 - b) **Theatrical Combat Certification**, currently at 9 graduate level student credit hours (SCH) and 6 undergraduate SCH, has the potential for more than a 300 percent increase by the year 2011. The facility expansion will facilitate this and create the potential for SOU to become a center for theatrical combat certification.
 - c) **A la Carte** graduate courses generated 180 graduate level SCH in summer of 2007. The intention is to increase this amount by 36 SCH over the next 5 years. This would reflect an increase in a minimum of 3 new course offerings.
 - d) Developing a theatre technology camp for high school students and young adults
 - e) Developing a summer theatre/music business institute in cooperation with the School of Business
 - f) Developing a summer performance camp for high school and young adults
 - g) Developing a playwriting program in conjunction with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival
- 3) **Theatre Business Management Minor**. This would be developed in cooperation with the School of business. Implementation requires the establishment of a combined Theatre/Music Department with a new chair of Performing Arts position.
- 4) **The Center for Shakespeare Studies**. This existing program will now be located in Theatre where the academic curriculum will maintain the Minor in Shakespeare Studies. Aspects of the programs affiliated with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival will be administered by the Ashland Center for Theatre Studies and housed in the expanded facility. Options include:
- a) A goal of increasing the number of Shakespeare Studies minors by 2 per year to 20 by the year 2011.
 - b) By the year 2012 establishing a Masters in Shakespeare Studies, Emphasis in Performance which would be the only such degree in the western hemisphere.
 - c) Increasing the course offerings for our students
 - d) Increasing the dynamic relationship with OSF. There is the potential for a shared position with the OSF literary office. When this position is realized, it will create more opportunities for SOU students to be exposed to research and dramaturgy at the professional level. Such a position will be of mutual benefit to both institutions and will enhance recruitment potential.
- 5) **Dance Minor**. With the expanded facility and Musical Theatre Dance faculty, undergraduate studies in Dance would become a viable option for a Minor in Dance and could eventually include undergraduate degrees. This would be a significant area for growth and would enhance the exposure of theatre design and technical students to broader training in viable career opportunities.
- 6) **Professional internships**
Professional internships at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), currently range from 12 to 16 annually, enhance student success and professional opportunities. Internships at OSF also serve to showcase our students' abilities – both on stage and backstage with a broader audience – and continue to increase the visibility of SOU on a national scale. OSF artistic staff regularly serves the University with 3 adjunct faculty, 2 guest artists and 10 guest lecturers. With adequate staffing at SOU, Professional Internships at OSF could increase to 25 to 30 annually and we could develop additional opportunities regionally and nationally to such organizations as Britt Festivals, The Craterian Theatre, Oregon Stage Works, Camelot Theatre as well as outside the immediate region with Portland Center

Stage, Williamstown Theater Festival, Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts, Willamette Repertory Theater, and The Globe Theatre in San Diego. The expanded faculty and facility will also increase opportunities for interaction with Southern Oregon Education Service District and Rogue Community College.

7) Master of Arts in Teaching. More theatre undergraduates will be prepared for the MAT program.

C. Staffing to accommodate our current numbers, enhance retention, and meet NAST accreditation, a student to faculty ratio of 15:1 is required. Currently the Theatre Arts undergraduate program has 8.5 faculty FTE for nearly 240 students. An additional 7, not including Musical Theatre, faculty positions and two staff positions would be required to meet accreditation standards and the planned growth in general education, new programs and summer activities. To establish new positions, the College of Arts and Sciences and University budget processes will need to accommodate the reinvestment in performing arts. This heightens the need to include fundraising for endowed chairs in theatre while seeking funds for the capital project.

1) In order to move our students through the undergraduate program effectively, we need to offer 3 sections of our core lower division courses per year. This means adding three faculty positions: costume, properties, and sound/lighting. **Cost:** Approximate per annum would be \$195,000.

2) In order to adequately serve our demand for performance classes we need an additional performance/acting voice position. Additional performance faculty will allow Music and other Southern Oregon University students to be exposed to fundamental acting classes that meet general education exploration requirements. Additional faculty specializing in dramatic literature/theatre history will facilitate cross-listed courses in Theatre Arts and English Literature. A position in production management is necessary to improve the scope of stage and production management curriculum and to better facilitate the production life of the department. **Cost:** Approximate per annum would be \$195,000.

3) Implementing the Musical Theatre Program requires two new positions in Theatre, Director of Musical Theatre and Dance /Choreographer and one in Music, Applied Voice.

4) For the institution as a whole and to facilitate the Musical Theatre Program, the addition of an academic chair of Performing Arts implemented by fall of 2008 would positively impact both Theatre and Music's ability to be accredited. **Cost:** Approximate per annum would be \$80,000.

5) Implementing the Musical Theatre will also need a staff accompanist in addition to the faculty listed above. **Cost:** \$35,962 per annum.

6) To facilitate a safer more efficient costume shop, an added classified staff position of costume shop manager by 2011. **Cost:** \$45,268 per annum.

7) Box Office supervisor to serve Performing Arts and auxiliary organizations. **Cost:** \$45,268

D. Marketing and Recruitment

The Theatre Arts Program

Theatre Arts is a marquee program for the University in terms of delivering student success, internship visibility, academic standards and marketing potential. The Southern Oregon University Theatre Arts program has created significant attention for the University in national publications such as *Dramatics Magazine* and *Stage Directions*. The new master's program at Ashland Center for Theatre Studies was

awarded the Creative and Innovative Program Award for Most Outstanding Credit Program for 2005 from the North American Association of Summer Sessions and the Theatre Arts undergraduate program has garnered mentions for Southern Oregon University in *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. There will need to be a marketing plan developed for the upcoming fundraising efforts for both the facility and programmatic support needs of the program.

- ***Undergraduate Programs***

The undergraduate programs attract more than 40 percent of its students from outside Oregon and another 35 percent from outside the Southern Oregon region. These are, on whole, students with higher than average SAT scores and higher transfer Grade Point Averages than the SOU average. Of students who come to SOU as Theatre Arts pre-majors and choose another degree track, 50 percent stay at the University.

- ***Alumni and Recruitment***

Our alumni are working successfully throughout the United States – on Broadway, in films, and on television. They work as designers, technicians, actors, directors and educators. They are also on the front lines of recruiting for the University. By demonstrating their talents, their work ethic and their tremendous skill set, each graduate becomes an ambassador for the University.

Through alumni, patrons, partnerships, and ACTS students, Theatre Arts has a positive impact on how SOU is viewed by potential students and the teachers at the secondary level who recommend schools to their students. Recruitment occurs at all levels – from the students who attend productions to their teachers who participate in ACTS programs. Even if a student does not enroll in Theatre Arts upon being admitted to Southern Oregon University, they often cite the theatre as a compelling reason for attending.

- ***Relationship with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival***

The relationship with Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) is one of mutual benefit. The need for facility and personnel expansion is acknowledged by OSF General Manager Paul Nicholson and throughout its ranks. In the development of the Conceptual Design for the theatre expansion a minimum of seven OSF department heads were consulted in the area of their specialization.

Connection to the Southern Oregon University Mission

The mission and goals of the Theatre Department and this strategic plan are in harmony with SOU's mission and commitments as we seek to enhance student success, stimulate intellectual growth and the integrate the role of the liberal arts in the creation of the performing arts – locally and globally. This plan will increase the general student population's involvement in theatre as well as general public exposure to Southern Oregon University programs.

Conclusion

The need for the facility is immediate as the current facility is bursting to accommodate four times its capacity. The expanded facility will have the potential to accommodate 280. The need for additional faculty is immediate as the current student-to-faculty ratio in the undergraduate program is twice the NAST standard. The building expansion and appropriate increases in faculty and staff could increase SCH by more than 200 per year for graduate studies and 1,800 per year between theatre and music if a musical theatre emphasis is realized. A degree emphasizing dance could create an additional 750 SCH per year. The program must be freed to obtain NAST accreditation and reach its potential.