



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The Graduate School

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July 30, 2003

To: David Thorud
Acting Provost

From: Marsha Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost

Re: School of Drama Program Review

Summary and Recommended Action

At its meeting of December 5, 2002, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team reviewing the School of Drama as well as with the Executive Director of the School and the Divisional Dean for Arts and Humanities. The Council recommended continuation of all degree programs offered by the School, with the next review to be conducted in 10 years (2012). The School is well and broadly recognized for its outstanding programming, and Council members emphasized that the University would be much the poorer if the School did not continue to flourish. With this in mind, the Council recommended strategic investments in production and facilities.

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments.

Background

Founded in 1941, the School of Drama offers a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Fine Arts in the Professional Actor Training, Professional Design, and Professional Director Training programs, and a PhD degree in Theatre Studies. It is currently ranked fourth in the United States (*US News and World Report*). It has a well-recognized, active and collegial faculty, and its graduate students as well are remarkably motivated within their programs and highly regarded nationally. Drama admits approximately 20 students to its MFA programs and 3-4 students to its Ph.D. program annually. Its undergraduate enrollments are quite high, both in general education courses provided by the School and as majors (150 in Winter 2003). Faculty and students at all levels collaborate extensively in productions for the School's three stages: the Glenn Hughes Penthouse, the Playhouse and the two stages in Meany Hall. In addition to these, the School occupies facilities in Hutchinson Hall, a Scene Shop on University Way, and a Design Studio in a converted service station, also on University Way.

While the review team stressed that the School of Drama is in outstanding academic health, material challenges threaten to undermine it in the future. The School's production budget has not increased in thirty years, meaning that inflation has all but wiped out the funds available for the physical aspects of production such as scenery, costumes, lights, properties, etc. Because of the unrealistic budgets, the Department is unable to realize acceptable production values without faculty regularly contributing from their own personal funds to help finance basic production needs. For this reason, the School unanimously ranked increased production funds as its top priority among a long list of other areas needing attention.

The review team was also concerned with the inadequacies of School facilities. The quality of the Scene Shop and Design Studio is neither commensurate with the top ranking of the School nationally nor of sufficient size to accommodate the large sets necessary for Meany main-stage productions. The team also stressed significant facilities deficiencies in Hutchinson Hall, a building dominated by a swimming pool that takes up much of the space that is needed for instruction and production preparation. Committee members were also distressed by the lack of a medium-sized proscenium stage theater for School productions (this traditional stage format does not exist outside Meany Auditorium). Lacking this more conventionally structured theater removes important plays from the School's potential repertoire; in addition, students are not able to be trained in the kind of structure in which many (if not most) will eventually find employment. For a School with a serious MFA program in Directing, the lack of such a facility is a major obstacle to graduate training.

The Graduate School Council concurred with the review team's concerns and concluded that the School certainly deserves investment from the University. It encourages the School to continue in its fundraising efforts and recommended that a permanent Development Director be assigned to the School once funding for the current Director expires (in June 2003).

cc: Lee Huntsman, Interim President
David Hodge, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Michael Halleran, Divisional Dean for Arts and Humanities
John Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Susan Nash Gates, Executive Director, School of Drama
Members of the Review Committee
Graduate School Council
Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean/Manager
Heidi Tilghman, Assistant to the Dean