May 9, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost
    William Karpus, Dean, Graduate School
FROM: Diana Hess, Dean, School of Education
SUBJECT: Request to Suspend Admissions to the MFA Theatre and Drama Program

We are writing to request suspension of admissions to the MFA Theatre and Drama program beginning in Fall 2017. On May 3, 2017 the School of Education Academic Planning Council voted to suspend admissions to the MFA Theatre and Drama program at the Theatre and Drama Department’s request. The Theatre and Drama Department seeks suspension to the program due to several factors. Both undergraduate and graduate reviews of the respective programs conducted recently encouraged the Theatre and Drama Department to rethink the direction and appeal of their program offerings to students. The MFA program has found it increasingly difficult to recruit MFA design/technology candidates in recent years due to competition from other institutions with similar programs that offer more generous graduate assistantships at a 50% appointment (Theatre and Drama offers at a 33% appointment). Moreover, the acting and directing specializations have not admitted MFA students in several years, due to an inability to offer sufficient coursework, given that two faculty members have been fulfilling campus administrative appointments.

The Theatre and Drama Department will focus its efforts on revising and implementing a new undergraduate curriculum as the first phase of defining a new direction for the department. As this curriculum is being finalized, the department will begin work on the revision of the graduate MFA program. We ask to suspend admissions to the MFA in Theatre and Drama for three years. As outlined in the attached letter from the Theatre and Drama Department, we believe that suspending admissions will be straightforward and all current MFA students will continue with their degree programs as scheduled. We anticipate a revised MFA program to be proposed within the next three years from the department.

Please do not hesitate to contact Associate Dean Carolyn Kelley with questions about this proposal and request. Thank you.

cc: Jocelyn Milner, Associate Vice Chancellor
    Carolyn Kelley, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Programs
    Sarah Kuba, Academic Planner, APIR
    Beth Janeski, Policy and Planning Analyst, School of Education
    Marty Gustafson, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
    Ann Archbold, Chair, Theatre and Drama Department
Proposal for Suspension of MFA Program

Submitted By: The Department of Theatre and Drama

The Department of Theatre and Drama is requesting to suspend all admissions to the MFA Program for a period of up to three years, commencing with those candidates that intend to apply Fall 2017/Spring 2018 admission in the Fall of 2018. Both the Graduate Program Faculty and the Department voted to request the suspension of suspend admissions to the MFA program on January 30, 2017. This request affects MFA specializations in Acting, Directing, Scenic Design, Lighting Design, Costume Design and Entertainment Technology. At present, seven students are currently enrolled in the program with one additional student “stopped out” for health concerns for the current semester.

The rationale for our decision is complex, but is summarized in the points below:

- The amount of the financial award available for teaching assistantships to incoming students, once competitive with our peers, has fallen to a level which puts UW-Madison at the very bottom of the list of URTA (University/Resident Theatre Association) member schools. We rely heavily on the USITT Conference (United States Institute for Theatre Technology) and URTA national unified portfolio reviews to recruit students seeking funded MFA positions, (with only an occasional student applying outside of the URTA process), we find ourselves unable to attract any (not merely “the top”) students, as was the case in the recent 2016 round of interviews.

- Most of our peer schools offer generous graduate assistantships (both teaching and non-teaching) at least at 50% and generous supplemental financial packages. Self-funded students are rare.

- Production budgets for University Theatre, which are 80% reliant on ticket sales, have remained stagnant for many years and thus funding to give access to state of the art technology is difficult. This puts several of our specializations (Lighting, Theatre Technology, Scenic Design), at a competitive disadvantage to other, better-funded programs with access to the latest technology in these rapidly advancing fields.

- The Directing specialization has been on hiatus for 6 years due to the campus service of Norma Saldivar. This specialization at one time averaged almost 50 applicants per 3-year cycle.

- The Acting specialization has not recruited a three-year cohort since the fall of 2012. It graduated its most recent class of eight MFAs in 2015. Because of the campus service of Professor Saldivar and Professor Patrick Sims (Vice Provost for Equity and Diversity), the full-time acting faculty has been reduced to just two-- Professors Boyette and Furumoto.
additional faculty lines in Voice and Movement were lost to earlier budget cuts. Though short-
term staff and VAP hires have enabled suitable course offerings to graduate the 2015 students,
the lack of continued continuity of instruction in both Voice and Movement, Directing and
Advanced Acting has dealt a lethal blow for continuing a MFA program that would be
accredited by NAST (National Association of Schools of Theatre.

- Lastly, the external MFA program review from the spring of 2016 made it clear that the
  programs, in their current configurations, were hardly sustainable, from a financial and even
  philosophical standpoint. They lack cohesion, faculty and a firm identity when measured
  against those of peer institutions.

It is this last point, which provided the final impetus for us to consider suspending admissions for
the time being. We are currently in the process of revising the BS degree in its entirety. This process
has involved all faculty and staff in an intensive collaboration of reflection, ideas, innovations and
vision. Indeed, the process has consumed most of the departmental energy and meetings for more
than a year. As the undergraduate degree very much is/was dependent on some graduate students
serving as instructors, we have been examining our plans for undergraduate instruction with the future
of the MFA in mind. The two programs have had a symbiotic relationship for many years and it was
time to revisit all of our assumptions. However, we have given the re-imagining of the BS degree in
SOE our primary focus. We feel confident we are on track to submit our intents for a revised BS
degree. But re-imagining the MFA will take an equal amount of time, and time is what we are seeking
by putting all MFA admissions on hold for now. We intend to devote equally intense reflection and
collaboration in re-imagining a future MFA during the next academic years.

We are unaware of any serious impact to other programs/degrees if we suspend the MFA for now.
We have examined the impact to our current students, and have determined that there will be little to
no impact on them. Current students in the MFA are:

Acting/Directing : 0

Scenic Design: 1 first year

Costume Design: 1 first year, 1 second year

Lighting Design: 2 second year, 1 “stopped out” with three semesters completed

Entertainment Technology: 2 second year

Prospective 2018 Graduates: 5

Prospective 2019 Graduates: 2 or 3 (if lighting student returns in the Fall)

The student in Lighting Design, who has stopped out, can easily be accommodated (on her own
timeline for re-enrollment) through tutorials with her mentors and ample production opportunities with
University Theatre. We do not regard this as any impediment for her—or the program admission
suspension.
We foresee that the remaining students will be able to complete all required courses through regularly scheduled course offerings and/or tutorials with their instructors and mentors. Their production work with University Theatre will continue uninterrupted, with all students receiving the promised number of production experiences and thesis assignments.

The remaining students are securely funded through their program completions. We have examined the departmental budget for the near future to provide for, with short-term staffing, any instructional obligations traditionally fulfilled by MFA students in the course instruction for BS students.

As stated, we are currently in the process of examining how best to allocate the totality of the departmental budget to creatively deal with funding all of the instructors necessary to teach the amount of courses we feel are necessary to a new, re-imagined BS program. What, if any funding, we can devote to supporting a future MFA at an amount competitive with peer institutions remains to be determined. We would need time to explore partnerships and funding from new, heretofore unexplored external sources. This suspension buys us that time.

Of great concern to us is the fact that we are the only school in the UW system to offer the MFA in Theatre and Drama. We hope that supporting the eventual continuation of the MFA in Theatre and Drama would be a priority for this noted research university.

Again, we stress that this proposal has the strong support of the faculty and staff in Theatre and Drama. We would be happy to provide any additional documentation you require in making this decision. Our intent is that we will use the time to examine all aspects of the future of the MFA and develop a highly competitive, contemporary degree in the Department of Theatre and Drama.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Archbold
Professor & Chair
Department of Theatre and Drama
May 9, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost
   William Karpus, Dean, Graduate School

FROM: Diana Hess, Dean, School of Education

SUBJECT: Request to Suspend Admissions to the PhD Minor in Theatre and Drama

We are writing to request suspension of admissions and eventual discontinuation of the PhD Minor in Theatre and Drama beginning in Fall 2017. On May 3, 2017 the School of Education Academic Planning Council voted to suspend admissions to the PhD Minor in the Theatre and Drama program at the Theatre and Drama Department’s request. The PhD minor was left in the Theatre and Drama Department when it moved from the College of Letters and Sciences to the School of Education. This PhD minor and most of its related coursework are managed by Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies (ITS), a program now in the Department of English. As the content and students seeking the minor are much more aligned with the Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies program, ITS will be seeking to create an ITS PhD minor on their own timeline.

Theatre and Drama will continue to work with Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies to ensure that currently enrolled PhD minor Theatre and Drama students are able to complete their coursework. Upon completion of the last currently enrolled student, we request that this program be discontinued. The accompanying letters indicate support from both Theatre and Drama and Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies of this plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact Associate Dean Carolyn Kelley with questions about this proposal and request. Thank you.

Cc: Jocelyn Milner, Associate Vice Chancellor
    Carolyn Kelley, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Programs
    Sarah Kuba, Academic Planner, APIR
    Beth Janeski, Policy and Planning Analyst, School of Education
    Marty Gustafson, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
    Ann Archbold, Chair, Theatre and Drama Department
    Mary Trotter, Director, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
    Elaine Klein, Associate Dean, L&S

School of Education Office of the Dean
377 Education Building  University of Wisconsin-Madison  1000 Bascom Mall  Madison, Wisconsin 53706
608/262-1763  Fax: 608/265-2512
April 13, 2017

To: Diana Hess, Dean

CC: Carolyn Kelley, Jeff Hamm, Beth Janetski

From: Ann M Archbold, Chair - Theatre and Drama

RE: Doctoral Minor Discontinuation Request

The Department of Theatre and Drama is proposing the suspension of admissions and eventual discontinuation of the Doctoral Minor in Theatre and Drama. The move of the MA/PhD from Theatre and Drama to Integrated Theatre Studies (ITS) Program in the Department of English in Fall of 2014 created the expectation that the ITS program would be developing a PhD minor to replace it. The faculty of Theatre and Drama unanimously approved this request for discontinuation in March of 2016. Students currently enrolled will be allowed to continue and Professor Trotter from ITS will be working with those students to ensure coursework is available to complete the minor. Current students will be informed that they must complete the PhD minor within the next 5 years. We would recommend discontinuation of the minor effective Spring 2021 or earlier dependent on the completion of all currently enrolled students.

Thank you,
April 26, 2017

Beth Janetski  
Policy and Planning Analyst  
School of Education  
University of Wisconsin – Madison  
1000 Bascom Mall, Rm 139B  
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Dr. Janetski,

I write to confirm that the Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program will continue to teach courses that fulfill the requirements for the PhD minor in Theatre and Drama until 2021. We will also continue to advise students pursuing the minor about appropriate courses. Please let me know of any other ways I can support the management of the PhD minor in Theatre and Drama.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Trotter  
Director, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program  
Associate Professor, English and Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
18 May 2017

TO: William Karpus, Dean, Graduate School

FROM: John Karl Scholz, Dean

RE: School of Education Request to Suspend Admission to and Discontinue Doctoral Minor, “Theatre & Drama”

CC: Marty Gustafson, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
Diana Hess, Dean, School of Education
Beth Janetski, Policy and Planning Analyst, School of Education
Elaine Klein, Associate Dean for Academic Planning, L&S
Sarah Kuba, Academic Planner, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
Mary Trotter, Professor and Director, Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
Susan Zaeske, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, L&S

The College of Letters & Science has been asked to weigh in on the School of Education’s request to suspend admission to, and eventually discontinue, the doctoral minor in the Theatre & Drama. As noted in the memo provided, the L&S program in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies (housed in our Department of English) will work with colleagues in Theatre & Drama to “teach out” students enrolled in the program.

Although the L&S Academic Planning Council will not meet again this academic year, I am confident that its members would endorse this plan, and approve a recommendation that L&S support it. Since the timing of this request has some urgency associated with it, I will therefore signal my support, and will report having done so to the L&S APC in the Fall.