

To: WSU Theatre Faculty & Staff

From: Dean Madonne Miner

Re: Dean's Response to Theatre's Self-Study, Reviewers' Report, and Theatre's Response to the Review

Date: May 4, 2015

Thank you all for your many contributions to WSU's Theatre Program Review process. All Theatre area faculty and staff members participated in various stages of this review, and I am grateful to you for your thoughtfulness and thoroughness in addressing concerns of importance to the area and to the College. I want to convey special thanks to Dr. Jenny Kokai for serving as internal team leader, and to the four individuals (John Hill, Bob Nelson, Sue Harley and K Stevenson) who served as reviewers.

Having read documents associated with the Theatre area, as well as those from Music and Dance (units with whom Theatre shares space, administration and staff, some budgets and some students), I want to comment on items that I believe merit highlighting (and, in some cases, further attention and discussion).

1. As noted by the Review Committee, the Theatre area shows "genuine strength and vitality." I concur: students and faculty are confident, positive, and are engaged in educational endeavors that lead to high-caliber graduates and high-caliber productions. Like the Review Committee, my sense is that overall, Theatre is doing an excellent job.
2. Under "Challenges," the Review Committee worries about: the amount of administrative service required of some Theatre faculty members; perceptions of inequity with respect to funding of the three areas in Performing Arts; reliance on soft money for production funding, adjunct compensation, "creep" in the demands for tenure and promotion; integration of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Endowed Chair; space availability in the VBC, and other issues. All of these worries are valid and merit discussion. From my perspective, however, the two most pressing issues are those associated with the governing/operating structures of the Performing Arts Department and the appropriate positioning of the BTS Endowed Chair.
3. With respect to the first of these pressing issues: it is time for Music, Dance, and Theatre to have a realistic discussion about their existence as a single department. All three areas were reviewed this year; all three reviews mentioned concerns associated with the union of these areas under one chair. What might be advantages/disadvantages of different organizational/governance structures? Are there ways all three areas might benefit if we were to configure them differently? What costs would accompany such a reconfiguration? Which resources can continue to be shared and which should be allocated to individual units? Theatre faculty members suggest the formation of a Task Force to analyze the situation and propose alternatives. I am supportive of this approach, and suggest such a Task Force might be called into existence before the end of summer,

2015. The Dean's Office is willing to provide funding for an internal (to the university) or external facilitator for such a Task Force up to \$1500.

After this Task Force makes recommendations about possible alternative configurations, the areas will need to determine how they want to allocate administrative, outreach, recruitment, and service roles. It may be that some release time can be allocated for taking on these duties. It also is the case that the college has been granted a second college-wide advisor (primarily to work with At-Risk students); this individual will be available to do some recruiting on behalf of departments.

4. With respect to the positioning of the BTS Endowed Chair: I wish that as dean I had been better at anticipating some of the issues that might arise when attempting to bridge the goals, visions and structural elements of an external entity (the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Foundation) with those of an academic college and department (Arts & Humanities; Performing Arts).

Funding for the BTS Chair came from the BTS Foundation and had to be used to hire an arts educator to lead arts education efforts in local public schools. The Foundation does not particularly care what department provides a home for the BTS Chair, as long as the department recognizes that most of the Chair's duties will be associated with establishing BTS programs in local elementary schools.

Faculty, of course, do care about placement of new members in departments. Although there was faculty representation from Performing Arts and Visual Arts on the Search Committee for the BTS Chair, in retrospect I wish I would have done more to clarify to committee members (and to departmental faculty not on the search) that: 1) the BTS chair would reside in—and be evaluated by—one of our departments; 2) the funding for the BTS line would not have any effect (positive or negative) on a department's arguments for additional lines; 3) the presence of a BTS Endowed Chair at WSU is a benefit to the university and community at large. With the Endowed Chair, we establish ourselves as participants in the present and future of Utah arts education, and make ourselves eligible for various state-appropriated funds.

The BTS Chair Search Committee screened and interviewed many applicants. We made an offer to Tamara Goldbogen, a candidate with an impressive history of experience in Young Adult Theatre and public outreach. Given Tamara's background, I placed the BTS "line" in the Theatre area.

While other Theatre faculty are primarily occupied with educating theatre majors and directing, designing, preparing our productions, Tamara's attention generally is directed to Education majors, local school teachers and principals, and to the state-wide BTS organization. This difference in focus means that many times there is limited overlap in duties and responsibilities of the BTS Chair and other Theatre faculty members.

Although there is limited overlap, Department of Performing Arts faculty members will be called upon to evaluate Tamara's progress toward tenure and promotion; assuming

that progress is satisfactory, she would become a tenured faculty member in this department. In an ideal world, all of us might be attentive to and supportive of others' work, even when it differs from our own—but we are not in an ideal world.

This coming academic year (2015-16) Tamara will come up for 3<sup>rd</sup>-year review within the Department of Performing Arts. Thom Priest, chair of the department, and I have encouraged Tamara to provide a full explanation of her BTS work to her departmental colleagues in order that they may understand and evaluate her accomplishments as a teacher, scholar, and administrator. After the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year review, we will re-visit the question of whether a tenure-track line in Performing Arts is the best fit for the BTS Chair.

I should add: Tamara and I have discussed the possibility of shifting her position to that of Professional Staff, but her interest in and success with research publication suggests that the tenure-track is an appropriate placement for her. Similarly, given her degree (MFA), the College of Arts & Humanities appears to be her logical home. I would not want to weaken, in any way, our college's association with BTS, which is growing larger and more effective each year in bringing side-by-side arts-integrated learning to public schools.

5. With respect to other challenges: I appreciate reviewers' suggestions for enhanced staffing in support of the Costume Studio and Scene Shop, permanent funding for productions, effective resolution of venue and scheduling issues. I would encourage Theatre to present arguments for additional staff during the Dean's Office annual Call for Position Requests; I also encourage Theatre to think as creatively as possible about sources for permanent production funding. At present, I don't see revenue sources for these items.

As I mentioned at the outset, the Theatre area is quite successful. Faculty and students produce theatre that is award-winning. Students get jobs in their areas of expertise or are accepted into graduate programs for further study. If the three units in the Performing Arts Department determine that structural reconfiguration is necessary, I encourage them to move carefully, thoughtfully, to ensure that we are able to maintain and build upon our current success record.

Madonne Miner, Dean  
Telitha Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities