



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
SUFAC Funding Carryover Renewal Request
April 11, 2011

The Department of Theatre Arts requests a renewal of the agreement approved by the Segregated University Fee Allocation Committee which allows us to keep all carryover funds at the end of the academic year. As part of this agreement, Theatre Arts does not submit one-shot proposals but remains eligible for cost of living increases along with all other funded student organizations.

The proposal was first requested in the 2005-2006 academic year as a three year trial, subsequently renewed for a second three years. This arrangement has proved enormously beneficial to all students participating in theatre activities. We request that this arrangement be made permanent, or to be renewed for the next five years if governance rules prohibit a permanent change.

BENEFITS OF THE CARRYOVER FUNDING

1. **Facilitates Early-Season spending.** The first theatre production of the year typically performs in October. However, design work on that show begins the previous spring, and construction of scenery and costumes begins during the second week of classes in August. Without carryover funding, Theatre Arts would not have the money to purchase the materials needed for our shows until ticket sales begin—which occurs five days before a show opens. By utilizing the carryover funds, we are able to plan better projects, involve more students in the creation of our shows, and produce better work to be enjoyed by the campus community at large. We would have far fewer opportunities if that first show was planned at the last minute.

Additionally, a number of expenses are incurred the year before a production will take place. Security deposits are required often six months in advance to guarantee a musical will be available. Brochures and posters advertising the shows and student opportunities are created during the summer. Maintenance and repair of equipment is best done when it is not in use. This means that a portion of each year's budget is tasked to expenses necessary for theatre productions, but not related to the show onstage at that moment.

2. **Helps offset unexpected increases.** Shows are chosen, designed, and cast with a specific budget figure in mind. But despite our best efforts, unexpected events can take place. Just this year Theatre Arts was forced to find several new materials suppliers when businesses closed—increasing the cost of the material (less competition leads to higher prices) and adding shipping costs if the new supplier is not local. The carryover funds provide us a bit of a cushion, so that we can maintain our plans and provide as many opportunities for student involvement as we had hoped. The alternative would be cutting or simplifying productions as we go through the year in response to these changes, ultimately limiting the times and ways in which students can be involved.

A second example, and one which bridges the benefits from the first to second category, can be seen in the upcoming closure of Document Services on campus. In order to ensure that materials will be of the same predictably high quality and known price, Theatre Arts is trying to get a jump on season printing needs for next year. Once Document Services closes, we will be forced to go elsewhere for the printing of posters, flyers, programs, forms, and other documents—and at this point will be taking materials to a yet-to-be identified university contractor at a yet-to-be confirmed price and on a yet-to-be proven turnaround schedule. But as we can only focus on general season materials right now, much of our printing will fall into the unexpected, at least during the first semester.

3. **Teaches students the professional theatre model.** Professional theatres all across the country similarly count on a positive balance in their end-of-year accounts to begin work on the next season of plays and musicals. Students working in theatre arts, whether through a class, as a volunteer, or a paid student worker, are able to see this principle in action. The season planning and budgeting process we are able to model prepares students for roles in professional companies, or as volunteers for their boards.

4. **Creates better parity with other UW System Schools.** In the past three years, Theatre Arts has received support from segregated fees in the amounts of \$26,000 (current), \$26,698 (09-10), and \$25,485 (08-09). This represents approximately 45% of the budget required to produce our season.

A study of sister schools within the system offers the following comparison of segregated fee support for theatre activities:

	<u>2008-2009</u>	<u>2009-2010</u>
UW- Eau Claire	\$87,500	\$92,000
UW- Oshkosh	\$50,602	\$51,000
UW- Stevens Point	\$58,606	<i>see below</i>
UW-Whitewater	\$29,631	\$30,223

NOTE: in 2008-2009, UW-SP provided a total of \$149,913 to the arts, of which \$58,606 was specifically allocated to theatre. In 2010-2011, that arts funding is increased to 155,713.00. Details on the breakout are unavailable, as are the specifics of 2009-2010. It is reasonable, however, to assume the ratios within the arts funding have remained comparable as the campus and programs have undergone no significant changes during that time.

When prospective students interested in theatre visit campuses, it is safe to say that one important factor in their decision making process is the number and quality of shows in which they could become involved were they to choose UW-La Crosse. Students need not be majors or minors to participate here, and because of this we are visited by students intending to select a variety of majors. We do face limits in the shows we can produce—either because of a required technology we cannot afford to incorporate, a cast size that would exceed the number of costumes we can make, or a royalty (the fee we pay for permission to produce a show) that exceeds our budget.

The faculty in the department of theatre arts is committed to creating the best possible experiences for all students interested in theatre. Eliminating the carryover would reduce those limits further.

5. **Compromises Season Subscriptions.**

In addition to selling individual tickets for our productions, the theatre department offers subscriptions to students and residents of the La Crosse community. Often ways to get an even better value, these tickets are sold in advance. Season ticket sales for the 2011-2012 academic year will begin in April during our production of *Dracula*.

This means that a portion of that positive year-end balance is in fact money temporarily restricted for the next year, as it represents ticket sales for the upcoming season. If we were unable to carry over funds, we would be unable to sell advance tickets to the season, and thus unable to offer this additional discount to our audiences.