

Good afternoon. Today it is my privilege to have the chance to do something I don't often get to do.

That is to brag about our department, our program, our students, and the amazing work we do together with all of you.

I feel lucky to have this opportunity to have so many university decision makers gathered together at once. I trust you have all read and carefully considered our proposal so I won't repeat those details to you.

Rather I thought I might fill in the picture a little better by providing some context for why we felt the proposal was appropriate to bring to you today, even in the face of budgetary challenges.

The Bachelor of Fine Arts, Musical Theatre concentration is housed in the department of Fine, Digital, and Performing Arts under the college of Arts, and Sciences. If you will direct your attention to figure 1. on the handouts.

When I began working at Shawnee State in 2003 we only had the minor in music and the minor in theatre. I was hired as a computer music and sound effects guy to work with the video game students and to teach music theory.

I still continue to teach music technology and theory courses today but when I got here I pretty quickly discovered an aspect of our department that seriously bothered me.

We were supposed to be the department of Fine, Digital, and Performing Arts. It was possible for our students to major in Fine Arts, to devote their studies to Digital Arts, but there was no curricular avenue for them to focus on the Performing Arts. In my opinion that was a weak spot in the type of interdisciplinary arts environment we were trying to create.

Also the state of community involvement in locally created performing arts was really limited. Together the ssu performing groups might have drawn a couple of hundred audience members per year. Mostly their own family and friends who came out of a sense of obligation.

The arts experiences we offered back then were extensions of the sorts of familiar activities students had encountered in their high schools. These programs were sustainable but expensive relative to their impact. I began to explore the question of what performing arts vehicle might be the best fit for an institution of the type, size, and resources of Shawnee State.

Luckily we were able to recruit additional music adjuncts from within the community and we added an excellent adjunct faculty member in 2005, a solid performer and conductor who began developing our choir along a more proven collegiate model and teaching voice lessons for us.

I served on the department search committee that brought a new director to our theatre position in 2007 and, as we began to see a steady rise in the quality and production value of our concerts and plays, sure enough we began to develop a much bigger audience base.

This steady upward trend continues and the past five years is depicted in figure 2. Last year we reached almost 10 times the number of audience members we had back in 2003.

Also the number and type of our productions has greatly increased. Over the last dozen years we have gone from offering a single concert and a single theatre event each semester to the list in figure 3 each season.

Only the underlined events were included in the attendance totals for figure 2. I believe this information accurately portrays how we have become a major partner in contributing to the community engagement element of our strategic plan's enduring values.

We generated almost \$8000 in ticket revenue from our audience ticket sales at very affordable prices. Under \$8. Half of this money goes to support the Vern Riffe Center, and half goes into our scholarship fund for recruiting future musical theatre students.

I'd also mention that our work has attracted the attention and support of some community members as well. Last year we received a \$10,000 check donated through the development foundation that provided our cast members with state of the art wireless microphones. This saved our budget thousands each year in rental fees.

Musical theatre is brand new here. We just got the permission from the board of regents to launch a concentration in musical theatre in 2013 so we will be graduating our first senior class

this year. If you look back at figure 1, I underlined the programs we have added in the past few years and put the approximate number of students they currently serve in parentheses.

We chose musical theatre for SSU because it casts a wide net for students drawing in the type of performers known as triple threats.

They have to be able to act, to sing and to dance. They audition to get into the program and must demonstrate strong potential in one area and at least raw talent that can be developed in the other two areas.

Also, some students who want to focus on acting, or who may not sing, or dance, choose to do the BIS in Theatre. Over just the past few years we have grown to 20 majors between the 14 in the BFA and the 6 in the BIS. A theatre major may in fact be the next logical progression in our curriculum development.

The students we attract are self motivated. They are competing via audition to get into the program, then auditioning to get into each production. They are the types of students who want to be here. They work really hard and they bring something special to the campus environment. A couple of years ago when we had the big blizzard and the campus was technically closed, these students came in anyway and rehearsed. They loved having the extra time to work on their production.

The performing arts faculty bring a special commitment level to our campus as well putting in lots of evening rehearsals,

weekend performances, trips to conferences and auditions with our students and other efforts above and beyond what is normally expected of a faculty member. We are all like race cars in the red at this point. We have expanded quickly to the point where we have outgrown the capacity of our existing staff.

Figure 4 shows the other big component provided to the shawnee state community by your performing arts faculty. In addition to courses serving our majors we serve a great number of general education courses to the campus. We also offer additional courses beyond our GEP and major including popular instrument and voice lessons for non-major students.

So to summarize; we steadily generate the revenue to pay our own way, we are expanding quickly and could support up to 45 majors with the addition of another full time faculty member, we have a major community engagement and publicity component to offer, several of our current students and recent graduates are employed in professional theatre including at the prestigious Barn Theater program in Michigan, contracts with companies in Cincinnati and in Florida, and troupes throughout Ohio including Trumpet in The Land in New Philadelphia, and Tecumseh here in Southern Ohio.

We have been reviewed favorably by representatives from the Kennedy Center who visited our program in its second year They evaluated a really challenging work “Beyond the Horizon” by the distinguished playwright Eugene O’Neill, and invited 3 of our students to audition for scholarships at regional conferences.

We have also received an invitation to enter into a consortium that will include the programs at Marshall, Ohio University, and others that will provide us with student and faculty exchange visits as well as access to their graduate students who will aid our productions to add to their portfolio experience.

I think we will be instrumental in helping shawnee state meet and exceed its recruiting goals and I am asking for your vote of support to aid us in our continuing efforts to grow this outstanding program. Thank you. And now if you have questions for me I will do my best to answer them.