

COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, October 8, 2010

DECISION ITEM B-3: Teaching Theatre- Replacement Project at the University of Southern Indiana Campus

Staff Recommendation

That the Commission for Higher Education recommend approval to the State Budget Agency and the State Budget Committee of the project *Teaching Theatre- Replacement Project at the University of Southern Indiana Campus*, as described in the project description and staff analysis October 8, 2010.

Background

By statute, the Commission for Higher Education must review all projects to construct buildings or facilities costing more than \$500,000, regardless of the source of funding. Each repair and rehabilitation project must be reviewed by the Commission for Higher Education and approved by the Governor, on recommendation of the Budget Agency, if the cost of the project exceeds seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) and if any part of the cost of the project is paid by state appropriated funds or by mandatory student fees assessed all students. Such review is required if no part of the project is paid by state appropriated funds or by mandatory student fees and the project cost exceeds one million dollars (\$1,000,000). A project that has been approved or authorized by the General Assembly is not subject to review by the Commission for Higher Education. However, the Commission for Higher Education shall review a project approved or authorized by the General Assembly if the review is requested by the Budget Agency or the Budget Committee. This project was not authorized by the General Assembly.

The Trustees of the University of Southern Indiana request the approval for the release of funds for the construction and financing of the University's Teaching Theatre- Replacement Project authorized by the 2009 Indiana General Assembly. The total budget for this project is \$16,500,000. In discussions with members of the State Budget Committee in fall 2009, the University agreed to raise the remaining amount in private gifts and University funds for the project and not request the total amount of bonding authorized by the General Assembly. The \$13,000,000 in bonding authorization is what is requested to proceed with the financing plan for the project, design, and construction of the new facility.

Supporting Document

Teaching Theatre- Replacement Project at the University of Southern Indiana Campus, October 8, 2010.

TEACHING THEATRE – REPLACEMENT PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA CAMPUS

Project Description and Staff Analysis

SUMMARY

The University of Southern Indiana proposes construction of a \$16,500,000 Teaching Theatre to replace the current theatre, costume shop, and scene shop located approximately four miles from campus. The University requests release of \$13,000,000 in bonding authorization approved by the 2009 Indiana General Assembly for construction of the project. The balance of the project will be funded through private gifts and University funds. The proposed theatre will seat approximately 350 people and will be constructed adjacent to the University Center. It will better serve the educational needs of the Department of Performing Arts and will provide a more appropriate venue for on-campus theatrical and musical productions and other special events.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The University of Southern Indiana proposes construction of a \$16,500,000 Teaching Theatre to replace the current theatre, costume shop, and scene shop located approximately four miles from campus at 3001 Igleheart Avenue. The University received \$15,000,000 in bonding authorization from the 2009 Indiana General Assembly for construction of the project, but only requests \$13,000,000 in bonding authorization. The \$3,500,000 balance of the project will be funded through \$2,000,000 in private gifts and donations and \$1,500,000 from University funds.

In the mid-1970s, the University purchased a 152-seat theatre built in the 1950s from the Catholic Theatre League to be used as the University Theatre. A church parking lot across the street from the theatre is used for parking. In the early 1990s, the USI Foundation purchased the church and currently leases the facility to the University. The church was renovated at the time of purchase and is used today as a costume shop, scene design area, and practice facility for the Theatre Department. The University's theatre program has outgrown the current facility and its distance from campus limits the opportunity for students to easily participate in activities related to the theatre. The proposed Teaching Theatre will bring the two off-campus locations on campus to better serve students and the University community.

The new 21,929 assignable square foot (ASF) Teaching Theatre will be constructed adjacent to the expanded University Center and be connected by an atrium. The University Center Expansion project will provide new space for student programs, University outreach programs, expanded dining and meeting facilities, and will be a central gathering spot on campus. The new theatre will be ideally situated at the confluence of University activities and will be a location offering cultural enrichment in the form of educational programming and entertainment to the University community. The theatre will seat approximately 350 people and will be designed with a thrust stage. It will be ideally sized to serve the needs of the theatre program and to provide a venue for such additional events as special speakers, small performance groups, and musical recitals and performances. In serving the educational needs of the Department of Performing Arts, the Teaching Theatre will create opportunities for the instruction of all aspects of design and production beginning at the point of load-in and continuing on through strike of production elements (in effect, all post-shop aspects of production). As a teaching theatre it will provide a practice lab/classroom to teach key design and production elements, enhancing the education of USI theatre students.

The theatre facility will include support areas to facilitate the loading in and out of sets and properties, offstage storage space, "green room" space, dressing rooms, wardrobe, and laundry facilities. Storage adequate for running productions as well as maintaining a reasonable inventory of light and sound equipment with an area dedicated to equipment maintenance are included in the project. The stage will be designed to move equipment on and off stage with reasonable ease. The theatre will be designed with a loading facility to receive deliveries by large trucks.

The proposed staging will include general dimensions and a traditional proportion of a thrust or modified thrust theatre and multiple entrances typical of the thrust will be part of the design. Adequate space for stage management, sound and lighting booths, and all lighting positions will be included in the design. The Teaching Theatre will feature adequate peripheral service areas to enhance production and, most important, to insure the appropriate education and training of students. Full box office facilities and controlled access of entrances and exits will enable the facility to operate and to serve as a multipurpose venue.

RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING

The University of Southern Indiana is a broad-based institution offering instruction, research, and service. A liberal arts and science curriculum provides the foundation of knowledge for all programs and complements undergraduate programs leading to careers in business, engineering, government, health professions, education, and related fields. Selected master's degrees serve persons in professional and technical fields. As a public institution, the University of Southern Indiana counsels and assists business and industry, as well as social, education, governmental, and health agencies to higher levels of efficiency and improved services. Approximately 10,500 students are enrolled in degree programs; in addition, another 15,000 students enroll annually in noncredit, continuing education, workforce training, and professional development programs at the University.

The proposed Teaching Theatre will replace the 50-year old off-campus theatre located approximately four miles from campus and will better serve the growing needs of the University and its students as a multipurpose performance venue.

The construction of dedicated performance space on campus supports the University's commitment to arts education and to the cultural needs of the community. The University's Theatre Arts Program has grown significantly in the past 20 years and is now part of the Department of Performing Arts. The Department and its attendant programs have outgrown the theatre on Igleheart Avenue and planned growth of the theatre program is limited because of the current facilities and distance from campus.

NEED AND EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The University of Southern Indiana has experienced tremendous growth during its 45- year history. In the mid-1970s, when the off-campus theatre was purchased, the University served a student population of about 2,500 students. Today, over 10,500 students are enrolled in degree programs with an additional 15,000 students enrolled annually in noncredit, continuing education, workforce training, and professional development programs.

Need for New Facility

The off-campus theatre no longer can support the needs of the USI Theatre Program. The University has maximized the capacity of the current theatre and it will not be able to continue in its current capacity as the main stage of the USI Theatre. There are three primary reasons for construction of a replacement Teaching Theatre on the University campus.

1. Current facilities are inadequate -size and structure
2. Off-campus location
3. Widening of Highway 62, the Lloyd Expressway

Current Facilities

As a teaching facility, the current USI Theatre was never an optimum solution for the needs of the University. The theatre was designed very simply and inexpensively in 1955 by the Catholic Theatre League and has never been an effective teaching site. It is an inconvenient place to stage and teach theatre and lacks adequate space for productions. There are maintenance issues with the building including flooding and electrical problems resulting in safety concerns. Repairs to the facility are expensive for what it provides and due to its location; it is not easily maintained by Physical Plant personnel. The costume shop and scene shop are in buildings ill suited for their use. The buildings were not properly designed to serve the needs of the theatre department or the University community.

The needs of a modern performing arts program have rendered the theatre obsolete because of accessibility problems and because it was not built to the standards a good theatre education facility requires. The theatre served a temporary purpose when the University acquired it in the mid-1970s as a stopgap measure to provide some growing space to USI's young program, but the program has clearly outgrown the space and a new venue is needed to meet the needs of the University.

Off-Campus Location

The location of the theatre, approximately four miles from campus, has hampered the growth of the theatre program. It presents logistical difficulties to students who want to take classes on site. It also has hampered the growth of an audience culled from the University community, who find its location remote and inconvenient. Maintenance of the facility is difficult for Physical Plant personnel because of its distance from campus and the condition of the buildings.

Widening of Highway 62, the Lloyd Expressway

The area in front of the theatre will undergo change in the near future as the site is redesigned to become an entrance ramp to Highway 62, the Lloyd Expressway. This change will eliminate the support buildings for the current theatre and nearly 60 percent of the parking for the facility. Without the support buildings and with inadequate parking, the theatre will be virtually useless as a performance venue. Widening of Highway 62, the Lloyd Expressway, is included in the current Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Plan. The roadway project is in the planning stages, although a start date has not been determined. The pending roadway project requires the University to evaluate alternative facilities to accommodate the University's Theatre Program.

Maintenance issues and the need for upgrades and renovations in a building that will be rendered useless by the Department of Transportation make plans for any large expenditure of money in this facility impractical; the life of the facility cannot justify it, nor can its location.

Design of New Facility and Contribution to Education Services

The proposed Teaching Theatre with more than 350 seats more than doubles the seating available in the current theatre. It will be designed with a thrust stage and will be ideally sized to serve the needs of the Theatre Program and to provide a venue for special speakers, small performance groups, and musical recitals.

Educational opportunities in the Department of Performing arts include curricula in both theatre and music. The Theatre Program offers a fully articulated major in Theatre Arts as well as a minor in Theatre Arts and Theatre Education. Currently there are approximately 70 theatre majors while hundreds of non-majors take courses in theatre and music every year.

A joint production effort between the USI Theatre and the New Harmony Theater, known as the Fall Repertory Project, began in fall 2007. This program is an innovative model for undergraduate theatre programs. It brings professional theatre to the University. Undergraduate students gain the experience of working side by side with theatre professionals in classroom activities and in productions.

The new Teaching Theatre will attract more students into the Theatre Program and will provide theatre majors with a quality educational experience. With a larger auditorium many new and innovative programs will be possible on campus. From matinee performances for K-12 students to enhanced production schedules for theatrical and musical performances, the new teaching Theatre will provide cultural outreach to regional school systems and to the community.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Productions and performance classes at the off-campus theatre were discontinued in 2007 due to the poor conditions of the building and because of the theatre's inadequate facilities. As a short-term solution, the Performing Arts Department uses the Mallette Studio Classroom located in the lower level of the Liberal Arts Center to teach studio classes and for productions. It is the only classroom dedicated to theatre instruction. Despite its on-campus location, it is not adequately designed to serve as the performance space to replace the off-campus theatre for several reasons.

- The support facilities for the Mallette Studio Classroom are not adequate for large or intermediate scale productions.
- Use of the Mallette Studio Classroom as a performance space requires relocation of classes to facilities that are not designed for teaching theatre performance.
- As a black box theatre, the Mallette Studio Classroom is not designed to offer design and technical students the broadest range of instruction.
- The Mallette Studio Classroom seats approximately 100 people, depending upon the staging configuration. The theatre is too small to serve the University audience without an extended performance run of shows. Additional runs add costs to productions and create hardships for participants because of additional time commitments. New theatre space will rectify this problem and allow for one week of production rather than the current two.
- The auditoriums and large classrooms on campus are considered lecture stages and lack the backstage support necessary for traditional theatrical productions or a practical educational experience.

Without a teaching theatre and with the inevitable loss of the off-campus theatre, the Theatre Program and the Department of Performing Arts will be forced to depend upon what is primarily a studio classroom or an alternative off-campus venue for performances. Other venues that might be rented in the Evansville area are even further from campus. In addition to issues of accessibility, these alternative venues would be more costly and would not provide a permanent solution for the Theatre Program and the Department of Performing Arts.

Plans for the construction of a performing arts facility have been a part of the University's Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan for almost 20 years, since 1991-93. The proposed Teaching Theatre will provide a more appropriate venue for on campus theatrical and musical productions and other special events.

RELATIONSHIP TO LONG-RANGE FACILITY PLANS

The Teaching Theatre project is an integral part of the University's long-range facility plan. The University Center Expansion Project, currently under construction, includes the renovation of the existing library and expansion of the University Center. The Teaching Theatre, as part of the University Center complex, will be conveniently located and easily accessible to students and the University community. With access to meeting facilities and food services, the new Teaching Theatre will be a multi-use facility.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The project does not involve historically significant buildings. The proposed Teaching Theatre will be built as an extension of the University Center complex.

STAFF ANALYSIS

USI is requesting approval to construct a 33,500 GSF Teaching Theatre on campus to replace a decommissioned teaching theatre that is currently off campus. The estimated cost of the project is \$16.5 million, with \$2 million from gifts/donations, \$1.5 million from University Funds and \$13 million from state funds. Estimated fee replacement for this project is \$1.1 million and will begin payment in 2012. For 2011, USI's debt ratio is approximately 22.1% compared to the institution wide debt ratio of 13.6%. It is projected by CHE that USI's debt ratio will be 23.9% by 2013.

Currently, space for the teaching theatre is located in the Liberal Arts Center on campus in a studio classroom that has been retrofitted to be a teaching theatre. Prior to 2007, USI used an off campus location to house its teaching theatre; however, due to building issues, safety and location, USI decommissioned the site and moved theatre activities and programs on campus to the Liberal Arts Center. The current location can house 90 to 100 people and provides performances by students. There are no other locations on campus that provide a performance theatre setting or theatre set up for students and faculty.

USI has approximately 70 students majoring in theatre who utilize the current teaching theatre. Another 100 students who are non-theatre majors take classes that involve a teaching theatre setting. USI projects that with a new teaching theatre and performance facility additional students will enroll in the Performing Arts Program and take classes. In addition, the new facility will allow for other major events to be housed on campus and potentially generate revenue based on productions and events held at the new facility.

The cost to operate the new facility is approximately \$175,000 annually and would be paid for through campus wide operational savings. USI is currently working to secure the \$2 million in gifts for the Teaching Theatre and the \$1.5 million of university funds has been secured through setting funds aside *over time*. *With gift and university funds the cost to the state will be \$13 million or 79% of the total project cost.* Staff urges USI to continue to identify outside funding sources for this project as it continues its approval process in order to reduce the overall fee replacement and reduce USI's debt ratio in the future.