Dear Friend,

Another academic year and theatre season is upon us. Students are returning to campus and making their way to our shops and rehearsal spaces to prepare for the year ahead. In just a couple of weeks our first two shows, *Doubt* and *Sunday in the Park with George*, will be in rehearsal as we begin yet another extraordinary year of creating theatre at Mary Washington.

Last year, UMW Theatre made significant leaps in important ways. Our production program is thriving, we have more majors than we have ever had and the number of students involved in creating theatre at UMW has never been greater.

In the 2013-14 season, we played to record-breaking audiences in Klein Theatre. We are making great progress at establishing ourselves as an important cultural resource for the greater Fredericksburg area. More importantly, students from all parts of Virginia (and around the country) are discovering that UMW is a phenomenal place to study theatre.

Our approach to teaching theatre is hands-on. Students learn by doing—performing characters, designing productions, managing rehearsals, building scenery, painting backdrops, selling tickets, hanging lights, fitting costumes, marketing productions ... the list goes on and on! Not only do our students learn about theatre as they accomplish the tasks before them, they learn about themselves. As they work with our talented faculty and staff, our students gain lifelong skills in time and project management, collaboration, creative problem solving, and leadership.

I am so pleased that we had more students pursuing professional internships this summer than I can remember in over two decades of teaching. Our students worked at Williamstown Theatre Festival in Rhode Island, *Kitchen Theatre* in Ithaca, NY, *Arundel Barn Playhouse* in Maine, *Walnut Street Theatre* in Philadelphia, the off-Broadway production of the musical, *Atomic* in New York, NY, the *John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*, *Wolf Trap*, and the *Shakespeare Theatre Company* in Washington, DC. Two of our students were accepted into prestigious professional training programs in New York—*SpringboardNYC* and the *Atlantic Acting School*. Because of our experiential approach to theatre education and our strong commitment to replicating professional practices, our students can transition to the professional world without missing a beat. We are so proud of them!

As we start the 2014-15 season, I invite you to deepen your relationship with the UMW Department of Theatre & Dance by joining Friends of Theatre with your tax-deductible gift of $50 or more today!

We build community every time we embark on a production process. We gather students, faculty, staff, and our audience to share in the experience of bringing to life the words of a playwright in our darkened theatre. You are an important part of our work; your support and encouragement help us to succeed. This is especially true when you make a gift to Friends of Theatre.
Your gift enhances the education of our students by making possible scholarships, collaborations with visiting professionals, supplies for student productions, and support for internships and professional study.

**Student Scholarships** are the most essential support we can offer our students. Many of our students struggle to pay for their tuition, housing, course fees, books, and supplies. As state support becomes increasingly scarce, we want to ease the burden our students feel as they face juggling a job with classes and production work. We cannot let our talented, dedicated students miss out on opportunities because they have to work full-time in order to attend school. Scholarships are critical to our students who want to study abroad, attend out-of-state workshops, or pursue an unpaid professional internship. Your gift helps us help these students pay their bills.

**Classroom and Production Supplies** are critical to creating theatre. Our work is so much more than paper, pens, computers, and printers—we need wood, nails, paint, fabric, microphones, light bulbs, thread, sofas, tables, doors, windows, draperies, shoes, wigs. . . you name it, we need it! Last year we even needed kitchen cabinets and the sink to go with them! We must be sure that our faculty and students have access to what they need—not only period furniture, lighting instruments, table saws, and sewing machines, but also new materials that our professional colleagues are implementing in scenic, costume, sound, and lighting technology. We must be certain that our students are using the tools and materials that are standard to the industry so our program is vital and relevant to the professional world our students seek to enter.

**Visiting Artists** connect our students with the professional world. When we collaborate with directors, music directors, designers, technicians, historians, playwrights, choreographers, stage managers, and arts managers, our students make connections, have the opportunity to ask real-world questions about the business, starting a career, and building the skill sets they need to be successful. **We must help our students cross the bridge between college and career**. Friends of Theatre helps our students build bridges between study, practice, and career.

**Professional Productions** provide the chance for our students to experience extraordinary theatre in the world-class theatre city, Washington, DC. Because Fredericksburg is so close to the city, our students attend performances at the Kennedy Center, the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Signature Theatre, Ford’s Theatre, Studio Theatre, and the many others in Washington, DC. Not only do our students develop a habit of going to the theatre, they begin to frame an aesthetic so they can articulate an informed critique of what they experience. Friends of Theatre helps make these trips possible for hundreds of students every year.
Your support is vital to us—to our faculty, our staff, and most especially, our students.

I believe we are at a critical juncture in our history. If we are to continue to expand the opportunities we offer students in our classrooms, shops, rehearsal rooms, and onstage, we will need to prove the widespread and loyal support of our donors to those who chart the future of UMW. Your gift means so much more than the dollars you so generously give to us—your gift is evidence that we have strong support for our program beyond the gates of Mary Washington.

We have a breathtaking season ahead of us. We open with the riveting drama by John Patrick Shanley, Doubt, followed by Stephen Sondheim’s glorious Sunday in the Park with George. Our second semester begins with the contemporary dark comedy about marriage, The Drunken City by Adam Bock, and we close with Oscar Wilde’s sumptuous comedy, Lady Windermere’s Fan.

In addition, we have two exciting new offerings for our audience. We are hosting a Sing Along Sound of Music in December where folks can wear costumes and sing along to the beloved classic film, as well as Backstage Pass—a seminar series that gives our audience an inside look at what it takes to produce a musical from start to finish. We have a busy year ahead; I hope you will be with us every step of the way.

Thank you for being there for us. Knowing we have your support helps us to take the risks we must take to develop a theatre program that is the pride of UMW and the destination for young theatre students across Virginia and the nation. You help us to be the very best we can be.

I hope you will consider supporting the future of UMW Theatre by making a tax-deductible gift of $50 or more today.

Your support will have a profound impact on the lives of our students by enhancing the quality of their education. But most of all, every gift—regardless of size—makes our work possible by creating opportunities for students that shape and change their lives. Your gift makes a real difference in the lives of students.

Thank you in advance for being there for us! I look forward to greeting you in Klein Theatre!

With warm regards,

Gregg Stull
Professor & Chair

PS If you honor us with a gift by October 15, we will be able to list your membership in Friends of Theatre in the playbill for Sunday in the Park with George. I would love to include your name among our many friends!