As the summer comes to a close, we are gearing up for our new season and preparing to welcome hundreds of new students to Mary Washington—many of whom will find their way to duPont Hall as they discover a second home in our theatres, rehearsal spaces, shops, offices, and classrooms. The advent of the new year culminates a year of planning and kicks off a season of opportunities that will engage not only our students, but also our faculty, staff, and audiences.

Our shops are already hard at work getting ready for our first two shows. The scene shop is deep in the build of *Noises Off*, and the puppets of *Avenue Q* are taking shape in the craft studio. Soon the students will begin rehearsal as we begin yet another extraordinary year of creating theatre at Mary Washington.

**Our program is stronger than it has ever been.** We have surpassed our goals for student participation, course enrollment, and the number of students who pursue professional opportunities and internships during the summer months. Students who lead Studio 115 (our small black box theatre on the first floor) produced more events and engaged more students in performances last year than ever before.

**Our audience numbers continue to break records.** Nearly 10,000 people joined us in Klein Theatre last season, contributing to a trajectory of growth that is essential to the strength of our program. Having so many people join us in this work inspires us to enrich the dialogue with our audience that is essential to the vitality of what we do.

We are particularly proud of several key initiatives that we inaugurated last season. Our seminar series, *Backstage Pass*, drew scores of people to lectures, rehearsals, and conversations that granted them unprecedented access to our production of *Sunday in the Park With George*. Our *Ladies Night Out* event in conjunction with *The Drunken City* drew a capacity crowd in an evening that combined a pre-show happy hour with a performance of the show. Finally, our sign-interpreted performance of *Sunday in the Park With George* drew a strong audience of theatregoers who would not have been able to enjoy the performance otherwise. These initiatives are critical to our success—and we will continue them as we move forward.

**More importantly, students from all parts of Virginia (and around the country) are discovering that UMW is a phenomenal place to study theatre.**
We believe that the strongest approach to teaching theatre is to create theatre. We combine our hands-on approach to teaching with a commitment to replicate professional practices at every turn. Our students learn by doing—performing characters, designing productions, managing rehearsals, building scenery, painting drops, selling tickets, hanging lights, focusing instruments, fitting costumes, marketing productions...side by side with our dedicated and talented faculty and staff. Our graduates emerge from our program fully prepared to enter the professional world because they have learned those essential habits as students.

Not only do our students learn about theatre as they accomplish the tasks before them, they learn about themselves. Our students gain lifelong skills in time and project management, collaboration, creative problem solving, and leadership while they create theatre. At the very heart of our work are the stories we tell on the stage—but the skills and insight our students gain in the process are the true reflection of our educational purpose.

As we start the 2015-16 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 $75 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 helps us to succeed. This is especially true when you make a gift to Friends of Theatre. Your precious treasure 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 give our students time during the year to devote themselves to studying theatre, and enable them to take advantage of study-abroad programs and internships.

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...the list goes on and on. 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.
Career Development is a critical aspect of everything that we do. We encourage our students to fill their time at UMW with experiences that prepare them for the professional world and that will distinguish them when they graduate. Some of our students pursue unpaid professional internships that prevent them from working to pay for their college expenses, while others enroll in demanding summer intensive training programs to strengthen their skills. These pursuits require resources above and beyond the costs of college; your gift helps us make these life-changing experiences possible for our students.

Visiting Artists introduce our students to the professional world. When we collaborate with directors, music directors, designers, technicians, historians, playwrights, choreographers, stage managers, and arts managers, our students 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 connect the dots between study, practice, and professional life.

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 many others in Washington, DC. Not only do our students begin to 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. Simply put, your gift helps us help our students create extraordinary futures for themselves.

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 on the stage, 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 one of the funniest comedies ever written, Noises Off by Michael Frayn, followed by the endearing and little-bit-racy musical Avenue Q by Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx, and Jeff Whitty. Our second semester begins with the British thriller Frozen by Bryony Lavery, and we close with Molière’s titillating comedy Tartuffé.

This season, we are continuing our resoundingly popular Backstage Pass to coincide with Avenue Q, where participants will go inside the production and experience our work first hand in the weeks preceding opening night. In addition, we will offer sign-language interpretation of one performance of every production and inaugurate our Friday Night Out program, where patrons can enjoy cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, conversation (and door prizes!) before the performance. Finally, I hope you will consider joining us for our first-ever Broadway Weekend, where we will travel to New York, see shows, talk theatre, and enjoy all that great city has to offer! 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 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 $75 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 and creates opportunities for students that shape and change their lives. Your gift helps us help our students.

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

With warmest regards,

Gregg Stull
Professor & Chair

P.S. 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 Avenue Q. I would love to have your name among our many friends!