

WSU cuts Theater/Dance

- **June 10th, 2009**

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By Joel Mills of the Tribune
No merger with UI

Washington State University's Department of Theater and Dance will be cut, and won't merge with the University of Idaho's program as some had hoped, WSU's provost said Tuesday.

"That is a non-starter," Warwick Bayly said. "We're fine-tuning our reductions at this time, but we're not going to be merging with the UI."

He said WSU's final budget - which will reveal the fates of several other programs - would be released "any day."

The original release date of June 1 was pushed back after administrators decided they needed more time to work on slicing out \$54 million in state funding over the next two years, and to consider public input on other proposed reductions.

Along with theater and dance, sports management, community and rural sociology and the German language major were eliminated under a budget proposal released in May. Beyond the theater department, Bayly declined to discuss the other areas.

"I don't want people to read about things in the paper before they've had a chance to be informed directly," he said.

Bayly said a recent meeting with UI Provost Doug Baker revolved around how the universities can help each other in all the academic fields they have in common. He said people in some disciplines already have plans to talk about co-operative efforts, and others will follow.

And the talks aren't driven solely by hard financial times, he added.

"We're not focusing on budget reduction deliberations, per se," Bayly said. "We're talking big picture, about where there are possibilities for mutual benefit."

He said the proximity of the two universities and their commonalities should allow each institution to help the other be better, and the discussion was merely prompted by tough financial times on each side of the state line.

The UI's state budget was cut by about \$12 million for fiscal year 2010. It is also trimming its academic offerings, closing dozens of degree offerings in the coming years.

Lewis-Clark State College Provost Tony Fernandez said he hasn't had any discussions with either Palouse university about absorbing some of the students who won't be able to major in the fields being cut. But he said the college would be a willing home for them.

"LCSC does offer a BA/BS degree in sport management and we would be glad to talk to WSU about helping students seeking an undergraduate degree in this area," Fernandez wrote in an e-mail.

He said the college's justice studies program would also like to talk to students at the UI, where that major is being phased out.

The WSU theater program hosts more than 100 students, and sports management has more than 200 students. A two-year "teach out" will allow students certified in those majors to finish their degrees.

Repeated attempts were made to contact UI Provost Baker for comment, but he was unavailable due to a busy travel schedule, according to a university representative.