

Regents approved agreement with Theatre and Arts Foundation of San Diego County in which foundation will underwrite construction of a 500-seat theater at UCSD

February 17, 1978

The University of California Board of Regents have approved a unique agreement with the Theatre and Arts Foundation of San Diego County in which the foundation will underwrite the construction of a 500-seat theater on the UC San Diego campus.

The action, taken by the board during its February meeting (Friday, Feb. 17) at the Los Angeles Convention Center, culminates an effort of some 25 years on the part of the foundation to get such a theater built.

The Theatre and Arts Foundation of San Diego County is the successor to the La Jolla Playhouse which was started in the late 1940s by Gregory Peck, Mel Ferrer and Dorothy McGuire. The Playhouse, which presented productions with known professional actors and actresses on the stage of the La Jolla High School auditorium, ran for some 15 years. The high school auditorium has since been razed because it did not meet California's earthquake safety standards.

In its action, the University Board of Regents accepted \$2.2 million from the foundation for planning, design and construction of the theater on some three acres of university land at the northeastern corner of the intersection of Torrey Pines Road and La Jolla Village Drive. The search will now begin for an architect and construction could start within a year. It is possible that the theater could open as early as the fall of 1979.

While construction of the theater will be funded by the foundation, the university will be responsible for the maintenance, repair and operation of the building. Advice on planning, design, construction and administrative operation of the theater will be through a Joint Performing Arts Board composed of both UC San Diego and Theatre and Arts Foundation representatives.

Current plans call for a 500-seat, 13,100-assignable-square-foot playhouse with a full stage, dressing rooms, lobby, a box office, a theater office and light and sound control rooms. An adjacent building, as yet unfunded, will be designed to house a scene shop, costume shop and other technical functions.

Under the terms of the agreement, the university will have primary use of the theater during the nine-month school term and the Theatre and Arts Foundation will have primary use during the three-month summer period with a format similar to the old La Jolla Playhouse.

For the UC San Diego Department of Drama, the theater will satisfy a pressing need for a larger, more sophisticated theater facility. The department's current performing space is a cramped, 230-seat theater located in a former Marine Corps pump house on the Warren campus. Opened in 1972, the facility served three faculty members, a small number of classes and two largely extracurricular production programs. In the past six years the drama department has grown to a faculty of 13 professional theater artists with formal academic professional theater training programs leading to the bachelor and master of fine arts degrees. There are currently 100 undergraduate drama majors and 30 graduate students in the department. Six major theater productions and a number of smaller theater pieces are produced each year by the department.

Under the current plans the theater will also be used during the academic year for cultural events of importance to the campus and to its surrounding communities and for the showing of curriculum-related films as supplements to classroom teaching.

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(February 17, 1978)