PROPOSAL: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Labor Agreement

Background

On November 16, 2023 Western Michigan University and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) reached a tentative agreement for a three-year contract. IATSE represents independent stage workers for major theatre productions. At Western Michigan University, the venue is Miller Auditorium. IATSE members fill the bulk of the need for part-time professional stage help beyond that provided by the University’s permanent staff. Each Broadway show provides a Labor Call Sheet which dictates the number of workers required at the various job classifications to fill the show. The shows pay approximately 70% of the labor cost of the IATSE workers. If the Labor Call Sheet is not filled, then the Broadway show can be canceled and Miller Auditorium pays a substantial cancellation fee.

IATSE members work and are paid when working approximately seven (7) shows per year at Miller. Although the agreed upon wage schedule includes eleven job classifications, the bulk of work at Miller Auditorium is done by members of five job classifications. Approximately 80% of the compensation is paid to stage hands which is the lowest pay classification. Both parties agreed that DeVos Hall is the best market comparison for the IATSE contract. It has become increasingly difficult for Miller Auditorium to fill the Labor Call Sheets as we have not kept pace with DeVos wage rates so workers – of which many reside in areas outside of the Kalamazoo area - choose to work DeVos events rather than travelling to Miller Auditorium events. In addition, the labor shortage is also creating strain for all event venues. The proposed agreement aligns the rates with the existing DeVos scale. For the five classifications used by Miller Auditorium, the range of increase is $2.60 per hour (stage hands) to $4.02 per hour. In years two and three of the contract, the proposed increase is 3% each year for each job classification.

Given the part-time nature of the employment arrangement, IATSE members are not on the University’s health or retirement plan. Instead, the University contributes health and pension plan payments directly to IATSE. There is a 0.47% increase to the pension contributions in year one and no increase in years two and three of the agreement. There is no increase to the health & welfare and annuity payments to IATSE during the contract term. The University contribution rates for the three years of the contract will be health & welfare of 14.75%, annuity of 4.25% and pension of 1.5%.

The IATSE membership, consisting of approximately 200 stage workers, ratified the agreement on November 30, 2023. The agreement will become effective when approved by the Board of Trustees through June 30, 2026.

Recommended Action

It is recommended the Board of Trustees approve the 2023-2026 agreement between Western Michigan University and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE).