

# letters to the editor

## AU theatre alumni collect 102 signatures to display career success

Submitted and signed by  
*Theatre Alumni*

This letter is written and sent on behalf of the undersigned alumni of the Ashland University Theatre Department in response to President Carlos Campo’s quote in the news article regarding the phasing out of twenty academic programs. In the article published on July 27, 2020 in the Ashland Times-Gazette, President Campo stated, “The students made this decision more than we did. If students were coming to Ashland in droves for the theater program, it never would have been sunset ... So while the board started this action, it was really students who decided by

their registrations where they really want to focus and want to study. And that’s what we’re going to stay focused on.” The goal of this letter is not to reverse the decision to phase out these programs. We recognize that student enrollment in the program has dwindled. It seems irresponsible, however, that the University fails to recognize the part they played in maintaining the quality and appeal of the program. As prospective students seek out theatre programs, the three questions most often asked include: What faculty and staff are available for student support? What facilities and resources are available for academic and

performance studies? What is the alumni success record post-graduation? Ashland’s Theatre Department, a once thriving program with five full-time faculty and one full-time staff member as well as support from the Communications/Performing Arts Coordinator, has now been reduced to one full-time faculty member with adjunct support. Other than Founders Hall, the oldest building on campus is the Center for the Arts. With performance and classroom spaces that have not been updated in decades, it should be of no surprise students are not coming to Ashland in droves. We the alumni feel that the

theatre major is being phased out not because of the students, but because the University has missed a plethora of opportunities to leverage the success of its graduates to increase enrollment. Alumni success stories are a critical and key strategy for recruiting prospective students. We write this letter in celebration of the success of our alumni and a program that launched numerous careers in the arts, academic, and entertainment industries. The alumni of Ashland University’s Theatre Department have credits and careers spanning from Saturday Night Live to Hamilton, from New York to Los Angeles, and

stretching as far as Moscow, London, and everywhere in between. We write this letter in celebration of our alumni and of the Ashland community that supported and nurtured us in our artistic nascence. To the Ashland community, theatre faculty and staff we thank you. To the current theatre students, we alumni support your future endeavors and hope that you can help carry the legacy of Ashland University’s Theatre Department forward with pride, perseverance and dignity.

**To write a letter to the editor email afitzge3@ashland.edu or contact the Collegian on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook.**

## Student speaks out for accountability

Submitted by  
*Cincere Freeman-Jones*

In the midst of all the events that have taken place this summer and the creation of the “dearashland” Instagram account, I have taken a deep look

without flaw. Maybe the newfound friends, freedom and independence misled me, but as I see other stories from victims of the ills of the university, I soon realize that Ashland is not the amazing place it claims to be.

*“Is there a solution to the problems we all face while here?”*

- Cincere Freeman-Jones, AU student

into my own experiences while attending Ashland University through a different lens. As I look back at my time spent at Ashland for that first unusual (yet still very enjoyable) year, I recognize that Ashland is not

In my one year spent on campus a few of my friends and I, have been called a “n\*\*\*\*\*” in a menacing way by a senior Caucasian track and field athlete during a party at his off-campus house. I have seen an extremely vulgar

and hate-filled video made by a junior Caucasian baseball player. I have been called a “n\*\*\*\*\*” by many Caucasian individuals who attend Ashland, and even though no malice may have been in their hearts, I bore an uneasy feeling all the same. Do I love Ashland University? Yes, I do. Does it have problems? Yes, very much so. Is there a solution to the problems we all face while here? Yes indeed, and the solution is accountability. In some sense accountability is like justice. The days of a slap on the wrist or the protection of certain individuals because of the contributions they make to the university or the legacy that they have must be abolished. Then, and only then, will the problems that plague this university begin to be addressed.

## Sunsetting of majors reflects “no confidence vote”

Submitted by  
*Julia Hines*

On Friday, May 15, AU’s Faculty Senate almost unanimously approved a vote of “no confidence” in Dr. Campo’s abilities as president of the university. Faculty Senate President, Dr. Bonfiglio, wrote that Dr. Campo has “repeatedly demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to collaborate with the Faculty, communicate with the Faculty, or foster an atmosphere of trust and respect,” according to Ashland Source’s article on the vote. Only a little over two months later, the university announced the decision to cut at least twenty undergraduate programs. While this decision has been attributed to COVID-19, students, faculty and staff alike have been saying for years that the administration is apathetic towards its own academic programs. As an English & Creative Writing alumna who recently graduated this past spring, I spent most of my classes in Bixler, the so-called “center for the humanities.” With water-damaged ceiling tiles—when the tiles aren’t already missing—and a consistently grimy ground floor that almost always floods in the summer, it’s no wonder. On that same ground floor, there are (the only) unisex bathrooms in the building, the Multiliteracy Center and many faculty/staff offices. I could go on and on about all the various things the building needs fixed, but to avoid belaboring a point, for a university working on an initiative of “accent on writing,” it seems that they couldn’t care less about the students and faculty/staff who work there. This especially holds true when one looks at the tour guide manual and sees Bixler under the “Do Not Show on Any Tour” list.

In addition, one of the most egregious and well-known examples of the administration’s apathy is the Center for the Arts (CFA). Tour guides are also encouraged not to show CFA, though on the document, it’s listed under “Show if they ask or are interested.” In practice, tour guides are advised not to show it at all. Take all the water damage from Bixler, add leaking toilets and ceilings, plus an elevator everyone calls the “hellevator” for its incredibly terrifying jerks and halts. During my freshman year, for one of our choir sectionals, we were told to go find a space to practice. I don’t remember who, but someone mentioned using the “hellevator,” so all 8 of us got in. It took roughly 3-5 minutes for the elevator to go from one floor to another. At one point, we were worried it wouldn’t even make it, and we’d be stuck. The building also houses the office for the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. As someone who has many theatre friends—current students and alumni—I’ve often heard about their struggles in trying to work comfortably in that building, but somehow our theatre program consistently brings in audiences big enough to sell out shows. I’d wager a bet that it has to do with the amazing faculty, staff and students who run those shows, yet all but one theatre faculty/staff was fired this year because their positions were no longer “prudent to university operations,” according to an email a professor received. If firing the majority of the faculty/staff wasn’t enough, AU’s theatre major was cut in the recent slashing of programs. When asked about it for a Times-Gazette article, Dr. Campo claimed, “The students made this decision more than



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we did. If students were coming to Ashland in droves for the theater program, it never would have been sunset ... So while the board started this action, it was really students who decided by their registrations where they really want to focus and want to study. And that’s what we’re going to stay focused on.” Again, I’d like to reiterate that tour guides are encouraged not to show CFA, the building that theatre majors would spend most of their time. Why would prospective students choose a program the university has no pride in? Why does Dr. Campo blame students for not choosing a program that the university ignores? Perhaps if the Board of Trustees or Dr. Campo would advocate for donations to renovate CFA to create a better workspace that could actually rival other theatre programs, students would choose to come to Ashland University. Of course, that puts the responsibility on the administration rather than on a group of students who are paying them to do their jobs. Dr. Campo has shown time and time again that he has little respect for the university’s faculty, staff, or students. From destroying trust to the point

that the Faculty Senate voted no confidence in his abilities, to his claims that students are the reason programs are cut, he has shown he values donors who will help him make another athletic center more than the people who make a university a place of education. When members of the Higher Learning Commission came to campus during 2018-2019, I distinctly remember students (including my own friend group) talking about how, if one of the officials came up and asked us about our experiences at Ashland, we would feel the need to lie so that AU could have its accreditation reaffirmed. The reasons had nothing to do with faculty and everything to do with the administration. I love Ashland University, and that’s why I care so much about the comments and decisions Dr. Campo has made. As the university that gave me my education, my friends, and so many experiences I’ve grown from, Ashland University deserves better than a president who blames his students. Staff deserve better. Faculty deserve better. Students deserve better. Because of this, I’m calling on Student Senate to either hold

their own vote to determine whether they have confidence in Dr. Campo’s abilities, or to endorse Faculty Senate’s vote of no confidence. To current students: tell your senators how you feel. To current senators: listen to your peers. It can feel impossible to stand up to an administration you think holds all the power to your education, but since Dr. Campo wants to blame students for the cutting of so many programs, it seems that students must have more power than we think. When there’s no trust or respect between an administration and the student body, there can be no progress, especially for a university who’s prided itself on the “Accent on the Individual.” Additionally, I’d like to point out a great example of people using anonymous means to raise awareness. The @dearashland account on Instagram collects anonymous stories from current students and alumni who have experienced distressing things at Ashland.