30 July, 2015

To: Lawrence Furukawa-Schlereth, Zarin Mehta, Co-Executive Directors, Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Advisors, Weill Hall & the Green Music Center

From: Richard J. Senghas, Chair, Academic Senate

Re: GMC Budget Planning for 2015-2020, University Contributions

I am writing to contribute input from SSU faculty perspectives as the Weill Hall and the Green Music Center Board of Advisors Executive Committee discusses our budget planning for the next five years. It is likely that due to my current travels in rural England, I may be unable to join the BoA Executive Committee for the July session, and thus this communication.

After learning at the last Board of Advisors meeting of 6 June, 2015, about the proposal for university contributions to the MasterCard Performance Series budget of $800K/year for five years (total of $4M) to help cover anticipated revenue shortfalls, I have reached out to those few faculty available to me over the summer. As you probably are aware, the Academic Senate and all faculty governance committees are out of session until 24 August, with the exception of the Senate Executive Committee, which is occasionally convened for emergency or time-sensitive matters. Therefore, what I provide here is tentative, based on the inherently limited consultation possible during summer intersession.

The GMC, Weill Hall, the MasterCard Performance Series, and the various programs now offered at the GMC have become a dynamic and important part of SSU. With the addition of Schroeder Hall this past year, the educational opportunities have increased considerably, allowing events for and by students that are valuable learning experiences. When combined with the Academic Integration Program projects, we see an exciting future for the university community. Our faculty deeply appreciate what these bring to the SSU educational mission.

Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I did not convey concerns raised by some of those faculty I have been able to reach so far, given that the proposed university contributions of $800K/yr. come at a particularly difficult time for the academic budget of SSU. Due to nearly a decade of system-wide cuts and shortfalls in academic budgeting, SSU is only just now barely beginning to restore the significant reduction in tenure track faculty lines, as well as provide sorely needed funds for departmental operating expenses, teaching and research, and the necessary professional development required to maintain an effective educational environment. However warranted, any university funds directed towards the GMC MasterCard Performance Series necessarily come at the expense of the academic, whether directly or indirectly. (Even redeployment of resources from
Administration & Finance would be funds that might have been directed towards academic programs instead.)

After years of repeated assertions that external sources would be found to meet whatever costs the MasterCard Performance Series would incur (beyond the state-allocations provided for buildings and their maintenance), the university is now being asked to make a significant change of course by committing to providing substantial funds for the next five years. If this path is chosen, we must prepare to bring the issue to the Academic Senate, and be willing to consider constructive proposals there on how to implement such a budget to the least disadvantage of the university as a whole.

Cc: Members of the Weill Hall and Green Music Center Board of Advisors
    Members of the SSU Academic Senate Executive Committee