For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Mary Trotter. I am with the College of Arts and Sciences and WSU Performing Arts. I’ve spoken to a lot of constituents this week about many concerns they have regarding the recently announced budget cuts. I’ve taken them all into consideration when generating this statement. We, as a body of faculty representatives, have a lot to talk about:

- The Lack of Transparency from the administration in this process of cutting University budgets,
- The cause of our deficits and the decision to cut the budgets across all units. Even those who have been financially solvent,
- The perception of our University whose administration starts a round of budget cuts with Multi-Cultural Student Services, Office of Equity and Diversity and Performing Arts, ALL of which are tasked with addressing diversity issues across our campus,
- The messaging of these initial cuts... the message having a clearly detrimental effect on our colleagues in the School of Music,
- The implication of the aforementioned messaging that Performing Arts was mismanaging money,
- The lack of clarity as to what will happen to the Jones and Wadleigh Theatre venues,
- And the void that will be left when the Performing Arts Unit that costs approximately $230,000 per year, yet brings in, and creates, world class entertainment to 13,000 guests annually, safely supports venues available to rent, maintains an extensive collection of costumes, props, furniture, and lighting fixtures, teaches 250 students per year which includes a large UCORE course, mentors and trains the 35 member student theatre organization, has maintained a grant program that helps to bring in students from underserved Washington communities, and is a direct collaborator with other units, colleges, and the Pullman community. WSU’s $230,000/year investment in the 4 salaries carries quite an impressive return.

I would like to generate a dialogue about these issues, but as a Senator, I see something of even more grave concern in regards to the health of this institution.

In the Daily Evergreen on Tuesday, October 31st in the column, “Administrators Must be Transparent About Budget Cuts” by student Journalist Luke Hudson, Vice President of Marketing and Communication Phil Weiler was quoted as saying:

1. “What we’ve tried to do is avoid [eliminating], if at all possible, any kind of position that provided service to students,”
   a. Multi-Cultural Student Services, Office of Equity and Diversity, and Performing Arts mandates are directly related to serving our student population.
2. Vice President Weiler also said that most of the program’s budget was spent on showcasing expensive, outside performers, while only a small portion was spent on student productions.
3. He goes on to say, and I quote, “I don’t believe that the staff salaries are necessarily coming out of the reserves, but I think that operations, the money to pay the bands to come and perform, to provide the sound equipment, the light equipment and all the other things it takes to put on a
performance, I think that’s where ultimately the ticket sales don’t bring in enough money to cover the cost of bringing the act to the Palouse.”

a. This statement is demonstrably false. While he sent an email to the evergreen later to confirm that the salaries do come out of the reserves, he again is incorrect about our expenses coming out of the reserves. Let me state this clearly; WSU Performing Arts is programmatically self-sufficient. Performing Arts was arranged with late WSU President Elson Floyd, to be a panacea for the elimination of the Department of Theatre and Dance. We were tasked to become programmatically self-sufficient, and were never tasked, nor given the opportunity to generate funds that would fully sustain our programs AND our salaries. For going on 7 years we have been successful in what we had been mandated to do. I can refute, with real data, these false claims by Vice President Weiler.

*Additionally, I have confirmed with multiple people at the Evergreen that Vice President Weiler was quoted accurately.

Something about this leaves me unsettled and should leave you unsettled too.

- Why are objectively untrue statements being masked as fact to justify this cut?
- This is what has me gravely worried. This is what should keep us all up at night.

These quotes demonstrate that we, the Performing Arts Unit, were cut, at best, because it was an arbitrary decision without proper examination, and, at worst, with assumption, with misinformation, or with deceit. Pullman, as well as our University, is a small community. When I look around this room I see the representatives of thousands of faculty who have years of research, scholarship, and creative effort put into their work. I see these same people who like me, have a family who depend on this university to adhere to the principles of truth. It doesn’t matter what department or unit you are in, we are all here as a body of minds, in the arts, in the sciences, in labs, or on a stage, to greater understand maxims that benefit the human condition. “Truth Will Out”. If these budget decisions were made arbitrarily, under assumption, with misinformation, or with deceit, as well as without an examination of the human toll, the toll on our colleagues, the toll on our students, the toll on our families, then we have failed as an institution of higher education.

To be clear, this is not a plea to save our jobs. We understand that the elimination of WSU Performing Arts is a foregone conclusion, however, it should be understood that without WSU making a meaningful investment into the arts, our university will not be living up to its land-grant mission.

If the truth is, that WSU does not prioritize the arts, nor recognize it as essential to higher education, then let that be the truth to the institution. Don’t disguise it as anything else.

I implore you, when you discuss these events and these cuts with your departments and with your constituents, seek what is best for our students. Seek what is best for WSU. Seek the truth.