Plans for theater still in discussion stage

by Mary Beth Sinclair
and Tom Hilterbrand

Improved physical facilities for the performing arts have been considered and are being considered, according to Dean Richard Passon of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Rev. Donald MacLean, S.J., vice president for academic affairs.

Father MacLean said that the current gym is one possibility being considered. He also said that a temporary building, such as a pre-fabricated Butler building, is also a possibility.

Passon said that in fall 1973, when plans for the new Kiosk Center were being discussed, it was proposed that a theater and concert hall be included. But the idea was rejected by Dr. Harry Langdon, then chairman of the Department of Speech.

According to Passon, Langdon wanted a separate theater because he feared conflicts with concerts.

Temporarily tabled

Langdon then proposed a Butler building—a separate, pre-fabricated structure—to be built adjacent to the Fine Arts Building. Passon said Langdon proposed the idea of a Butler building when money in Centennial Thrust Phase I was being appropriated. Passon said the proposal was temporarily tabled.

The Butler proposal, Passon said, is still "up in the air" due to a funding problem.

Father MacLean said, however, that any type of Butler facility would only be temporary.

Passon also said the new communications arts building planned under Phase I would have housed a theater. This proposal was made after a significant contribution was made toward its construction. However, no further contributions were made toward it construction. No further contributions were received and the proposal was dropped, he said.

Lack of space

Passon said he, Father MacLean and Dr. Allen Schleich, chairman of the Department of History who formed a planning subcommittee, had discussed using the moot court room of the old law building. Passon said they also considered extending the building, but rejected both plans because there was not enough space.

Passon said he is aware of the inadequate facilities for the performing arts and is "deeply concerned" about the problem. However, he said, no formal plans are under consideration.

He said right now he is more concerned with relocating faculty from Wareham Hall into the new Communications Arts Building.

Passon said any new plans for a theater would have to come when the Department of Fine and Performing Arts has completed its reorganization.

Other ideas have been suggested, but not formally proposed, according to the Rev. Joseph Brown, S.J., adjunct professor of speech. Facilities could be improved with a minimum of time and expense by merely adding on to the existing Eppley Little Theatre, he said. However, he said, this would not accommodate ballet or dancing.

The Rev. Anthony Weber, S.J., assistant professor of speech, said he explored the possibility of expanding the Eppley Lecture Hall. He said, however, this idea was financially unacceptable.

Father Brown said good facilities are important from an educational point of view also. He said performance and production are vital for dance and theater majors.

Passon agreed, saying that any new theater facility would have to be constructed for its educational and instructional value.

Father MacLean said that theater is not a priority in Centennial Thrust Phase II. He said that any theater building would probably be four to five years in coming. He also said any building would fulfill the needs for both dance and theater productions.