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## The Arts, but Smarter: Lippes' \$1 Million Gift Funds Interdisciplinary Learning Opportunities

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# Alumni Profiles

## THE ARTS, BUT SMARTER

*Lippes' \$1 million gift funds interdisciplinary learning opportunities*

A business-savvy approach to managing art museums, symphony orchestras and professional theater troupes is the focus of an interdisciplinary program in arts administration being developed at the University at Buffalo. The program is being funded through a \$1 million gift by Buffalo attorney Gerald S. Lippes, a 1964 UB Law School graduate and a longtime supporter of the arts, and his late wife, Sandra A. Lippes, B.A. '84. It involves components of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Law School and the School of Management, and aims to develop the next generation of arts administrators with the skills to manage the financial affairs of their institutions as well as the artistic vision.

Lippes said his vision for the program grew partly from the hope that UB scholars will get better at working with each other across disciplines, as well as his observations that some arts organizations lack leaders with the business acumen to achieve fiscal stability.

"In many arts organizations, the artistic quality and leadership is just wonderful, but the leadership of the organization and its stewardship is problematic," he said. "Universities and hospitals have very large budgets and can hire very competent business executives. But some of these arts organizations do not have the means to hire and retain top-quality leaders. Many of the maestros and curators and directors have had no background in business.

"The question is, how do you teach a person who is an art history major or a music major and decides on a career in this area?"

His downtown Buffalo law office shows evidence of Lippes' longtime interest especially in the visual arts, with

big abstract paintings including one by Charlie Clough – and in the hall, a series of works by celebrated Buffalo painter Seymour Drumlevitch. Lippes has been a trustee of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, as well as the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Studio Arena Theater and the New York State Council on the Arts, as well as Kaleida Health and other businesses.

"I acquire a lot of art. I do not say I collect," he said with a smile, "because that presumes I know what I am doing."

In recognition of the gift by Lippes and his late wife, the performance space in Slee Hall on the North Campus has been renamed the Gerald S. and Sandra F. Lippes Auditorium.

Under a philosophy called "entrepre-

neurial philanthropy," Lippes wanted to ensure that any new program created would be top-flight. "I thought about it for quite a while," he said. "There are only a few colleges that offer this in New York State, and none in the SUNY system. UB convinced me that they could become excellent – that they could arrive at a point in the not-too-distant future when this program would be recognized nationwide as an excellent program."

And the need, he said, is great: "There are a number of institutions in Western New York with a budget of more than \$5 million. Who is going to administer that budget? Who is going to raise the money? And then there are those smaller groups with a budget under \$1 million. That artistic director ought to know something about what he is doing in the fiscal sense."

"Clearly the problem with a lot of not-for-profits is that people do not come with a lot of management training and experience," agreed Dr. Sandra H. Olsen, director of the University art galleries. "In the performing and visual arts, it's always about management, in large part. You cannot get involved in the management of these entities without being involved in legal issues.

"There certainly is strong recognition among not-for-profit visual and performing arts organizations of the need for more training and preparation in man-



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*— Gerald S. Lippes '64*

with College of Arts and Sciences Dean Uday Sukhatme and School of Management Dean John Thomas in the academic coalition within which the program will grow and develop. From a Law School perspective, he said, the program will cover such issues as the Internal Revenue Code as it relates to development; intellectual property law; contracts; and employment law. Other courses will address fund raising and marketing, grant writing, human resources, and education and community development.

"The Law School has a commitment to interdisciplinary studies," Olsen said, "and to providing instruction in other units in the University, when appropriate, to permit UB to benefit from the fact that it houses the only law school in the state system."

"Gerry has also been a big supporter of the Law School in many other ways, including the Dean's Advisory Council."

"This gift represents his strongly held position that business and law are central to the activities of both businessmen and business lawyers, and that lawyers who work as counsel and the business people they serve need to learn to work effectively together. They both need to understand the expertise each brings to the process."

Added Lippes: "The University is one of the great assets of Western New York. The community has been good to me, and this gift is the right thing to do."

Lippes is founder and managing partner of the Buffalo law firm Lippes, Silverstein, Mathias and Wexler. He has served on the University Council since 1997. He is a trustee emeritus of the UB Foundation, founding chair of the Law School's Dean's Advisory Council, and 1995 recipient of the Jaeckle Award, the highest award presented by the Law School and the UB Law Alumni Association, among others.

agement. All of these things have become so complex that there is also the need to handle the various legal issues that come with it."

Competition for the public's increasingly scarce free time, and a squeeze on grant money, has made smart arts administration even more important, Dr. Olsen said. "As there is less and less grant money available and foundation support available, institutions are struggling with how to manage as a not-for-profit organization," she said. "They need to be very competitive with all the other venues that are competing for people's free time, and yet remain an important educational resource."

Dr. Olsen said she and others are re-

fining a preliminary curriculum for the program, expected to start in the fall of 2005 with a class of about 20 students, and beginning the search for a program director. They do so, she said, with the assurance that the world of visual and performing arts stands in sore need of well-trained administrators. She said she mentioned the program to a gallery dealer in New York City, a UB alumnus, who said: "This is exactly right. I need to spend so much time training people who come in here who have a wonderful arts background but do not have the management skills."

"I think it was very smart of Gerald Lippes to strongly suggest this," Dr. Olsen said. "And we have met that challenge."

UB Law Dean Nils Olsen will work

Photo by Mark Mulville