

## **Theatre professor honored for supporting performing arts professionals — present and future**

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/921/theatre-professor-honored-for-supporting-performing-arts-professionals-present-and-future/>

Balancing on a platform 30 feet in the air, Mick Alderson adjusts the lighting for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh theatre department's upcoming show. His large, wire-framed glasses reflect the glowing orange light as he concentrates on the layout.

As technical director of the Frederic March Theatre at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Alderson oversees props and lighting and ensures that the scenery gets built on time.

However, it isn't Alderson's technical prowess that earned him the 2008 Founder's Award; it was his commitment to promoting theater within the Midwest section of the U.S. Institute for Theater Technology (USITT).

"Theater is a very small industry. When it comes to networking, we all know each other, and we know each other on a first-name basis," said Alderson, a member of UW Oshkosh's theater faculty. "It's not important that I won the award — it's important that I am active and bring networking opportunities and new technologies to students."

Alderson has been involved with USITT — a professional development organization for design, production and technology professionals in the performing arts and entertainment industry — for about nine years. He currently serves as the vice chair for membership for the Midwest section.

In addition to tracking membership, recruiting new members and sending out reminders for events, Alderson often steps up and takes on tasks that aren't necessarily in his area.

"There are things that have to get done, and if nobody knows who is supposed to do it, I will," he said.

The Founder's Award honors men and women for their service to the USITT's Midwest section as well as outstanding work and enthusiasm in technical theater field.

### **An asset to students**

After receiving a bachelor's degree in "speech theater" at UW Oshkosh in 1975 and then a master's degree from Indiana University in Bloomington, Alderson came full circle in 1998 when he was invited back to UW Oshkosh to be a guest designer.

"After I helped out with one play, the tech director quit, so they asked me if I wanted to stick around. The next year I applied to be here full time, and I've been here ever since," Alderson said.

Since Alderson spends so much time backstage, it can take students a while to get to know him.

“But once you get to know him, you find out how great he is for the program,” said Thomas Offer-Westort, a senior theater major at UW Oshkosh. “Because the theatre department is so small, each professor has to super specialize, and the department couldn’t function without any one of them — especially Alderson.”

Alderson has developed a reputation for knowing everything, Offer-Westort said.

“We just go up and ask him questions, and he always has the answer. It’s not just theater stuff either. There was a rumor going around that Alderson knew how to tie 200 different knots. So we sat around and gave him different situations, and he showed us all of these different ways to tie knots,” he said.

Whether changing light bulbs high above the stage or designing a new set, Alderson is always willing to put in the extra time.

This is the third time the Founder’s Award has been won by a UW Oshkosh theater department professor. Kathleen Donnelly and Roy Hoglund also have received the honor in the past.

“By supporting USITT, we support the industry our students are going into. It helps the students, and that’s why we do it,” Alderson said.