



# **Myer Horowitz Theatre**

## **Revitalization Feasibility Study**

### **Interim Report to Students' Council**

**VITR**  **O**

The logo for VITRO, consisting of the word "VITR" in a bold, grey, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized orange symbol that resembles a double equals sign with a horizontal bar, and then the letter "O" in the same font.

Submitted April 2017

# At a Glance: Proposed MHT Revitalization

- Sound, lighting, seating & other equipment upgrades
- An expanded lobby
- A new connection between upper & main theatre lobbies
- New washrooms for the main & upper lobbies
- Renovated green room & dressing rooms
- Expanded upper level: theatre offices, storage, staff areas
- New entrance to the theatre's main floor
- Third public elevator joining the first three levels of SUB
- Basement catering kitchen

# Project Overview

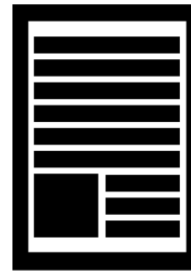
## Mandate:

The University of Alberta Students' Union (the SU), with the support of the Friends of the Myer Horowitz Theatre (FMHT), retained ViTrêo Group Inc. in November 2016 to test whether potential donors would support a public fundraising campaign to revitalize the Myer Horowitz Theatre. The revitalization aims to improve the ambiance of the space and, most importantly, the audience experience.

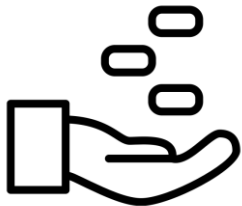
Through consultations with SU alumni and other stakeholders, ViTrêo is measuring the campaign potential through four key success factors, specifically by:



Assessing the SU's capacity to mount a successful philanthropic fundraising campaign through **identifying potential campaign donors and leaders**; and determining the resources and strategies required to recruit and support them.



Developing a **"Defining Moments" case for support** to test its impact of the project with interviewees. The case includes the vision, history, role, image and the appeal of the proposed campaign.

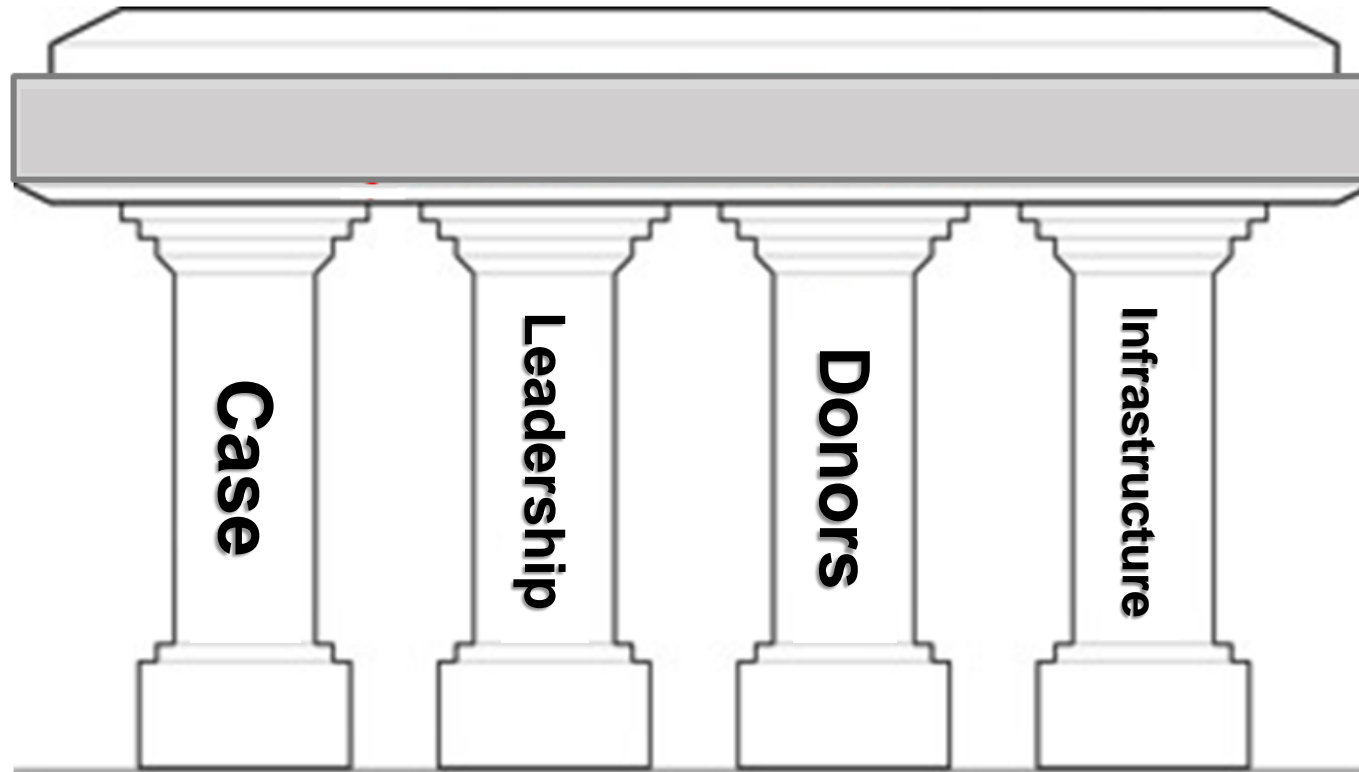


Evaluating the proposed goal of \$14.7M from a variety of **potential funding sources**, giving levels and any mitigating factors.



Assessing the SU's **organizational readiness** and other factors that impact its ability to deliver a successful campaign.

# The 4 Pillars of a Successful Fundraising Campaign



**Note:** The SU would fundraise through the Students' Involvement Endowment Foundation, the charitable arm of the SU

## Methodology:



Goal to **interview 30 – 35 stakeholders**: SU staff, FMHT members, potential campaign donors, and those familiar with Edmonton's arts and entertainment scene.



Prepared a **draft case for support** with the SU Executive, members of FMHT and SU Communications Staff.



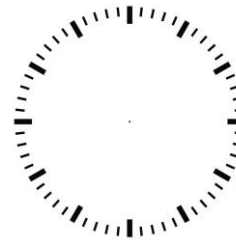
Held ongoing weekly **Steering Committee meetings** with staff and a representative of the SU Executive; plus regular updates to **meetings of the FMHT**.



Progress update: **confidential interviews with 24 individuals in person and by phone** (out of an optimal number of 35 interviews).



To date, SU staff have **emailed interview invitations** to ~60 potential interviewees and scheduled interviews. SU Executive members and staff have followed-up by phone to book interview dates and times.



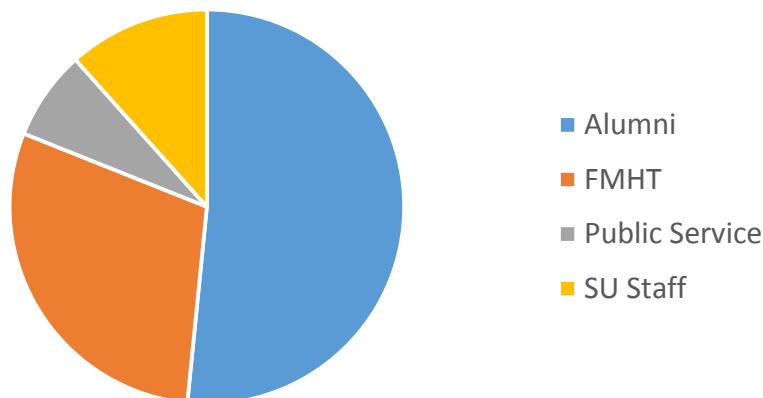
Progress in obtaining interviews has been slowed by the following factors: **the SU has never done a study of this nature before**; the SU typically has very limited, and sometimes no, interaction with SU alumni once their terms are over; SU alumni have lives and careers in many different countries - in Asia, the Americas, and Europe.

## Profile of Interviewees

Interviews began in January 2017 and continue to the present time. The pie chart below gives a snapshot of the 24 individuals who have been interviewed to date.

- Goal is to interview 30-35 individuals: SU alumni, members of the FMHT, campus and community representatives.
- The SU is working closely with the University's Alumni Office to obtain interviewee contact information.
- Nearly 60% of those interviewed are former SU Executive members.
- Members of the FMHT include University representatives and individuals from the broader Edmonton community, some of whom have a previous connection to the SU.
- Approximately 75% of the interviews have been in person; the remainder have been by phone, in part because many SU alumni live in other Canadian cities or in other countries.

Profile of 24 Interviewees to date



### Interviewee Facts:

- Interviewees often have more than one connection with the SU or the University
- There are several “generations” of former SU executives represented among the interviewees, including some who were instrumental in getting SUB constructed in the 1960's
- SU alumni are prominent in business, politics and the professions

The SU is viewed as:

- A successful social enterprise with a wide range of programs and services for students
- A strong advocate for students both internally and externally
- A national leader in student representation
- Having a reputation for successfully managing renovations to update and upgrade SUB
- Developing SUB as an central hub for student activities

## Preliminary Observations about the MHT from Study Consultations

### **MHT's Current Profile**

- MHT is in clear need of renovation and major upgrades to its facilities
- There is a well-established history of “Defining Moments” associated with MHT that is shared by alumni, former and current employees, and other campus and community representatives
- Historically, the MHT has served as a bridge between the University and the community
- MHT will need to define a new role for itself once it is revitalized

### **MHT's Possible Future Profile**

- MHT will continue to serve as a bridge between the University and the community
- MHT will continue to be a focal point for student focused activities
- The expanded multi-use lobby will add a new venue for hosting and events
- A revitalized MHT will need to find its niche in the burgeoning theatre and entertainment venue scene in the city
- In addition to the capital investment, the SU will need to invest in programming and marketing, targeted to the broader campus community and to non-campus audiences. This will be essential for MHT's future success

## Interviewee Comments

*“The SU has a long institutional history as an organization. It has a deserved reputation as the developer of some amazing leaders - in government, business etc. both nationally and internationally.”*

*“SUB and its services are well developed, the best in Canada for students and the SU has the funds to support these.”*

*“This SU was one of the first nonprofits I’m aware of that started off and continues to be a reasonably astute and successful social enterprise. It was a social enterprise before we started to call these kind of organizations social enterprises.”*

*“During my time as an SU Executive, MHT played a key role on campus. (It) was part of the experience of being a UofA student and reminded us that we are part of a broader community. That’s because MHT is not an academic setting - it’s a commercial, artistic space that elevated the SU to a key community facility and facilitator.”*

*“The MHT is historic, many important functions and events have taken place within its walls. But now it’s tired and dated. It’s not sophisticated enough for a modern facility.”*

*“The MHT is neglected. It’s also underappreciated and has potential if it’s developed successfully.”*



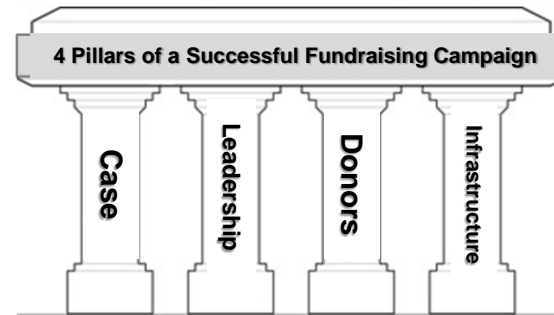
The proposed campaign will be feasible if:

1. The case resonates with prospective supporters
2. The right leadership is in place
3. Donors are engaged and committed to the project
4. The SU has the right staff with the right skills to support the volunteer leadership and engage with donors

## Progress Summary

1. Interviewees are generally supportive of the project outlined in the preliminary case for support
2. The goal of 30-35 interviews must be met to assess the feasibility of the proposed fundraising goal of \$7.35M being tested.
3. A number of interviewees have suggested that this campaign is in line with the SU's historic position in the forefront of Canadian student social entrepreneurship
4. Possible campaign leaders are emerging from the study process
5. The majority of those interviewed would contribute to the campaign if it is launched
6. Additional potential interviewees have recently been contacted and interviews are expected to conclude this month
7. Fundraising is a "new business" in the SU stable of services and programs. New business ventures need resources to support their successful implementation

## What to Expect in the Final Report – Recommendations for a MHT Fundraising Strategy



- What will make the case for the MHT's revitalization appealing to multiple generations of SU alumni and others?
- Who, in the SU's community, should lead the campaign?
- How much can the SU expect to fundraise from public sources?
- How should the SU adapt organizationally to support a multi-million dollar fundraising campaign?
- When should the SU launch its campaign?
- What else does the SU need to do, based on ViTreo's experience, to help achieve its goals?