Undergraduate Research Academy (URA)

Application for Student Fellowship

1. Name __Whitney Elmore________________________

6. Academic Major __Performance Theater__    7. Hours Completed __80 hrs__    8. GPA __3.4__

9. Nominated by __Jim Dorethy and Cameron Ulrich________________________

10. Reviewed by: (Please print)

   Faculty Mentor __Jim Dorethy and Cameron Ulrich__
   Department Chair __C. Otis Sweezey________________________

11. Title of Research Project __Exploring and Developing State Combat Methodologies____________

Please send the original plus 10 copies of the proposal, including budget justification and cover page.

12. Budget Summary

   Total: _$799.75________
   Commodities: _$123.25________
   Contractual Services: _$0________
   Travel: _$676.50________
   Other (specify): _$0________

13. Valid nominations must carry all of the following approval signatures with dates:

   a. Clearances (as appropriate):
      Animal Care __N/A__    Human Subjects __N/A (Verified 3/20/02)
      Toxic Waste __N/A__

   b. Student __Whitney Elmore’s Signature________________________ 3/19/02

   c. Faculty Mentors __James Dorethy and Cameron Ulrich’s Signatures________________________ 3/19/02

   d. Department Chair __Charles Otis Sweezey’s Signature________________________ 3/19/02

   e. Dean of College/School __David Steinberg’s Signature________________________ 3/10/02

   f. Undergraduate Research Academy Interview __Cindy Scarsdale’s Signature________________________

______SIUE Undergraduate Assessment -&- The Undergraduate Research Academy______
Box 1300 voice: 618/650-2640 e-mail: deder@siue.edu FAX: 618/650-3633
ABSTRACT: The abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the content of the proposal in about 150 words in plain language. Reviewers receive their first impression from this abstract. The information needs to be concise, well organized, self contained, and understandable to persons outside your academic discipline.

Since the Middle Ages, stage combat has been used in theater. Stage combat is the armed or unarmed stage effect or violence without any of the actors harming themselves or each other. Stage and film violence is prevalent in today’s national and international theater and film industry. To successfully and safely perform stage combat, the actor needs to be trained by skilled professionals. Without proper training, an eager actor could sprain his ankle or break his collarbone. I intend to investigate methods of stage combat through literature, interviews, and personal work with renowned masters of the field. Following this course of study, I will assimilate this research and manipulate it though reflective workshops at SIUE and other local theater organizations. Developing these skills will enable me to assist SIUE faculty and student directors in fight choreography for Black Theater Workshop as well as additional campus shows in the spring of 2003.

Upon submitting this proposal, I verify that this writing is my own and pledge to fulfill all of the expectations of the Undergraduate Research Academy to the best of my abilities. I understand that failure to do so may result in return of fellowship money to the University and forfeiture of academic credit and honors recognition.

Signature of the Student

I am able, willing, and committed to providing the necessary facilities and to take the time to mentor this student during this project. I verify that this student is capable of undertaking this proposed project.

Signature of the Faculty Mentors
This project is within the mission and scope of this department, and the department fully supports the faculty mentor and student during this venture.

_________________________Charles Otis Sweezey_________3/19/02__________________________

Signature of the Department Chairperson

I testify that all necessary research protocols (human, animal, toxic waste) have been fulfilled, and I support this proposed faculty-student scholarly activity as within the mission of the College/School.

_________________________David Steinberg_____________3/19/02__________________________

Signature of the Associate Dean of the College/School
Exploring and Developing Stage Combat Methods

Introduction and Significance

Stage combat has been used in theater for over seven-hundred years. Stage combat is the armed or unarmed stage effect of violence without any of the actors harming themselves or each other (Katz, 19). Today, it is hard to find a play or movie that does not require training for a fall, slap, or other means of combat. An actor needs to be trained by skilled professionals to successfully and safely execute stage combat (Penrod, 109). Serious injuries could result from the lack of proper training.

I intend to explore methods of stage combat through literature, interviews, and personal work with renowned masters in the field. Following this course of study, I will assimilate this research and manipulate it through reflective workshops at SIUE and other local theater organizations. Developing these skills will enable me to assist SIUE faculty and student directors with improved and safer methods of conducting fight choreography for Black Theater Workshop, directed by Lisa Bandele, as well as additional campus shows in the spring of 2003.

Literature Review

A common saying in many stage combat books is "Safety first, safety last, safety always" (Suddeth, 18). This is a basic principal of stage combat. In the Middle Ages, the combat was hardly realistic (Hobbs, 7), but now, with film special effects, people won't accept anything that doesn't look genuine. Audiences want the fight scene from Hamlet to look real without anyone actually being hurt. Choreographing a fight ahead of time will ensure that no one inflicts serious injury on themselves or each other (Oxenford, 71). James Penrod is quoted as saying, "These are specialized skills that require training under the watchful eye of an instructor or director" (Penrod, 109).

The Romans used combat in their theaters, but instead of using trained professionals in the naumachiae, or sea battles, they used prisoners or slaves. Then when the final battle scene came, the loss of life looked realistic and the victims were not missed (Brockett, 60). In the Middle Ages, mummer and pageant plays, such as Robin Hood and St. George and the Dragon,
actors were trained to use the quarter staff, two handed sword, and sword and bucklers (shields) so that they could keep their actors around for more than one performance. They even learned wrestling techniques that we now call unarmed or hand-to-hand combat (Gordon, 30-32). During the Renaissance, Shakespeare and his contemporaries used an assortment of different types of stage combat, such as fencing, broad sword, quarter staff, sword and buckler, point rapier, rapier and dagger, and short sword, to increase the amount of spectacle (Gordon, 59-83). Because the emphasis on spectacle grew, the fights lost the illusion of being realistic, but the audience was in awe of the magnificent presentation (Hobbs, 7). During the Restoration period, theater was known for its comedy of manners (Brockett, 238). Although plays were known more for their battles of wits than their battles of might, some more subtle uses of stage combat, such as slaps, trips, and falls, were used. At the same time in Asia, Beijing Opera and Kabuki theater were using the quarter staff and swords (Brockett, 604-621).

In the modern day theater, training in stage combat helps actors control their body and improve trust among fellow actors. The illusion work is also invaluable. Now instead of just swords and knives, guns are more often used and are included in stage combat (Dennis, 89, 102-103). The Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) and the Society of British Fight Directors (SBFD) are prominent and established organizations dedicated to teaching people stage combat. Chuch Coyl, Drew Fracher, J. Allen Suddeth, David Boushey, and David Leong are renowned masters of SAFD. David Boushey and J. Allen Suddeth also belong to SBFD. J. Allen Suddeth is the author if the book on fight directing that we currently use in Thea 250, SIUE's stage combat class. Also, David Boushey, founder of SAFD, owns and conducts a stunt school from which many of Hollywood's stuntmen come (McCollum).

Many untrained actors to do the combat needed in the play in order to get the part, or, in some cases, an untrained director will try to do the choreography himself. This unusually results in many bumps and bruises, such as SIUE's recent production of Fool for Love. The female lead only had to perform a fall, but it resulted in bruises all over the side of her leg and hip. This example is a low risk scenario. In the production of the movie The Crow, the main actor, Brandon Lee, was killed from a gun shot wound after the proper gun combat safety mentods were not used (Johnson).
**Hypothesis**

I want to conduct original and safe combat methods. Our university needs a person that has thoroughly explored and expanded on the safety and methods of stage combat. Anyone can fall or punch someone, but, as *Fool for Love* showed, a trained person is needed to avoid injury. Developing these skills will enable me to assist SIUE faculty and student directors with improved and safer methods of conducting fight choreography for *Black Theater Workshop*, directed by Lisa Bandele, as well as additional campus shows in the spring of 2003.

**Materials and Procedures**

First, I will examine the fight choreography, special feature section of *Kiss of the Dragon*, *The Musketeer*, and *Matrix Revisited* on DVD. Studying these recent works will give me an insight to the latest techniques of study. Then I will thoroughly research books that have been written by masters of SAFD and SBFD (see budget for the list of books to be purchased). In July, I will travel to a stage combat conference at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada, to interview and work under Chuck Coyl, Drew Fracher, J. Allen Suddeth, David Boushey, and David Leong for three weeks in the techniques of unarmed, single sword, broadsword, and film fighting. Upon returning, I will assimilate all of the teaching styles used and modify them to teach a seminar on unarmed combat and quarter staff combat at Kaskaskia College in Centralia, Illinois. For this and other seminars, I will need ten quarter staffs for the participants. From this seminar, I will assess what worked and what did not work as teaching methods for people who know relatively little about stage combat. After consulting my mentors, one of which belongs to SAFD, and modifying the teaching methods used, I will cultivate a new curriculum to use at a seminar at SIUE.

Next, I will again modify the teaching methods used and prepare a demonstration for the American College Theatre Festival and a lesson plan for the Illinois High School Theatre
Festiv
al. Then, I will put these reflective seminars to use by assisting Lisa Bandele, a SIUE performance theater faculty member, with the Black Theatre Workshop on campus. Assisting other SIUE student and faculty directors is among my main intentions. At this point, I will assimilate all of the knowledge that I have acquired thus far and prepare and demonstrate an improved version of what I have learned through my literature, interviews, working with stage combat masters, and what I have learned from applying their methods for the URA.

**Timeline**

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review Film Choreography</td>
<td>May 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Books about Stage Combat by Fight Masters</td>
<td>June 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview and Work with Fight Masters</td>
<td>July 2002</td>
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<td>Seminar at Kaskaskia College</td>
<td>August 2002</td>
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<td>Review Seminar and Modify Teaching Methods</td>
<td>September 2002</td>
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<td>Seminar at SIUE</td>
<td>October 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Seminar and Modify Teaching Methods</td>
<td>November 2002</td>
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<td>Prepare Lesson Plan for Seminar at Illinois High School Theater Festival</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare Demonstration for American College Theater Festival</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
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<td>Seminar at Illinois High School Theater Festival</td>
<td>January 9-11, 2003</td>
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<td>Demonstration for American College Theater Festival</td>
<td>January 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Seminar and Demonstration</td>
<td>February 2003</td>
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<td>Consult for Black Theater Workshop</td>
<td>February 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare Demonstration for Final URA Presentation</td>
<td>March 2003</td>
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<td>URA Final Presentation</td>
<td>April 2003</td>
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References


Budget Justification

Commodities

Renting DVDs
Blockbuster

Ten Quarter Staffs
($10 each)
Middendorf Woodcrafts

Commodities Subtotal: $115.00

Travel

Lodging in Las Vegas
University of Las Vegas, Nevada

Food during Conference
($12.40 per day)

Travel Subtotal: $680.40

Budget Summary Total: $795.40

Additional costs purchased ahead of time by student (no reimbursement expected)

Airfare and Conference Fees
American Airlines and SAFD

Actors on Guard: A Practical Guide for the Use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen
By Dale Anthony Girard
Amazon.com

Swashbuckling: A Step-By-Step Guide to the Art of Stage Combat and Theatrical Swordplay
By Richard J. Lane
Amazon.com

Fight Direction for Stage Screen
By William Hobbs
Amazon.com
Fight Directing for Theatre $27.96
By J. Allen Suddeth
Amazon.com

Renaissance Swordsmanship $17.50
By John Clements
Amazon.com

Medieval Combat $20.96
By Hans Talhoffer
Amazon.com

Medieval Swordsmanship: Illustrated Methods And Techniques $28.00
By John Clements
Amazon.com

Combat Mime: A Non-Violent Approach to Stage Violence $23.25
By J. D. Martinez (November 1982)
Amazon.com

The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe $31.50
By Sydney Anglo
Amazon.com

My Total: $1,830.63