

Lindenwood University

**Digital Commons@Lindenwood University**

---

Archived Lindenwood Press Releases

Public Relations

---

11-4-2020

## **Lindenwood Leases Large Tent to Aid Social Distancing in Classes**

Lindenwood University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/press\\_releases](https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/press_releases)



Part of the [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#)

---

# LINDENWOOD LEASES LARGE TENT TO AID SOCIAL DISTANCING IN CLASSES

November 4, 2020

**By Zane Bell**

Located in the parking lot between the J. Scheidegger Center for the Arts and West Clay Street, a temporary investment from Lindenwood University has brought greater capabilities to students and staff dealing with the limitations of the current pandemic. This adaptation, which takes its form as an open-sided tent measuring 40 feet by 80 feet, allows Lindenwood's performing arts programs to continue their various activities with minimal disruption.

Originally leased in August, the tent was set up over the first few weeks of the semester with many features also currently found in classrooms across the university's campus. "We were able to get WiFi out there and power and a P.A. system," said Associate Dean Katherine Herrell, who works within Lindenwood's School of the Arts, Media, and Communications (AMC). "IT really helped us."

With these utilities available in an outdoor space, the performing arts faculty safely continued the instruction of their Fall 2020 classes in a manner that might not have been possible in the traditional classroom setting. "Some of our larger performing arts groups, like the large choir and the large band, would never have been able to meet all together in the rehearsal spaces they have allocated to them indoors. And it's really, really important for music ensembles to do their work together as a large group," said Herrell.

Though the future of the Coronavirus pandemic remained unclear in the summer months of 2020, the university's faculty remained hard at work in preparing their programs for these conditions. "COVID-19 and quarantine brought about the discussion of 'super-spreader events,'" said Professor Pam Grooms, who instructs various performing arts classes and also serves as Lindenwood's choir director. "Singing, dancing, playing wind instruments, and theatre performance were listed among the super-spreaders."

Consequently, faculty within AMC began to weigh the options available for the safe continuation of their classes. "We met weekly, or maybe even daily, to discuss our

options,” said Herrell. “But we were really relying upon the professional organizations in the performing arts who had commissioned a study from premier researchers.”

When the results and safety recommendations eventually arrived in August, the Lindenwood faculty involved in the decision-making process found good news for the performing arts programs. Herrell stated: “It really confirmed that we were moving in the right direction. Because the safety of our students and faculty were a primary concern to us, we basically aligned what we did mostly with those recommendations.”

In a practical sense, this turned the large tent into the best option for the performing arts programs. In particular, Associate Dean Herrell said that “being outside enabled the dance classes to do some of those traveling combinations they really needed to continue at times, and it was the same with some of the movement classes in the theater department. It gave them more opportunities to spread out and move and not be so confined.”

Compared to the indoor practice environment, the tent even proved itself to be more efficient for education in the time of COVID-19. “The tent allows us to have more students participating at one time,” said Professor Grooms. “It also allows us to utilize class time for more instruction. We can sing/play for 30 minutes, with just a five-minute break to ‘clear the air.’ Inside, we must sing/play for 30 minutes, then utilize HEPA room ‘scrubbers’ for 15 minutes. This really eats up our meeting and instruction time.”

With this basic advantage, the tent has proven itself as a valuable asset to the academic success of the performing arts programs at Lindenwood. This, however, is in no small part thanks to the innovation of instructors utilizing the space. “Once people were able to get out there, they started thinking of more ways they could use it,” Herrell said of the tent, which was reserved for classes via EMS. “We almost got overbooked.”

Additionally, the technology in the tent (but especially the OWL system which was also included) even enabled instructors to reach and involve those students who could not physically attend class.

As many as four or five classes with such activities were held in the tent each weekday, and as Herrell concluded, the tent “enabled them to do that and keep learning, growing, and refining their skills” in a safe, socially-distanced environment.