

The summer I was notified about my promotion to Associate Professor, I was also asked to take on the role of 'Program Coordinator' for the Theatre Program. In addition to my regular duties as a Faculty Member, Technical Director, and Production Manager, I was placed in a position similar to a 'Chair.' I had already been doing several of my new position's duties within my other Theatre Program roles. However, being a more official 'leader' was a new challenge and included several new administrative responsibilities.

I was given several charges from the School of the Arts to undertake with the rest of the Theatre Faculty. I worked to democratize these processes, attempting in every challenge to reach a consensus within the group before moving forward or charting new paths. The Faculty and I rewrote the Graduate Handbook as a Program-wide handbook had not previously existed. We also generated a rubric for Faculty Evaluations and put together a proposal for BFA degrees in both Performance and Design. These challenging efforts ultimately proved fruitful.

We worked on these tasks from 2018-2019, understanding from the outset that these were to be living, malleable documents and policies. We've revisited most of them annually since, assessing what worked and what needed further change as we continue to live into the new administrative structure of the School of the Arts (the School encompasses the Film, Theatre, Fine Art, Music, and Arts Administration Programs, and was fully implemented in 2018). I believe these endeavors were largely successful, but to me, what is even more important and meaningful is the culture shift from a more traditional hierarchical model to a flattened, more open culture of consensus-based decision-making – incorporating our pedagogy as collaborative artists in the academic and administrative realms as well.

During this time, we also introduced several interdisciplinary practices to honor and further the mission of the School of the Arts: hosting undergraduate art openings in our lobby space, incorporating music composition students' work into our productions, instituting new procedures to open our prop, construction, and costume spaces to Film students' projects, and working with printmaking students on show posters, among others.

With my colleague Kevin Griffith, in the COVID Spring of 2021, we revitalized an under-used outdoor amphitheater performance space and produced an outdoor, socially-distanced production of Sarah Ruhl's 'Eurydice.' This space has since hosted several community performances, from ballet to community music and art festivals, as well as University and student events.

I have served on multiple School, College, and University committees. I was a member of the Faculty Senate for two years and currently serve on the University General Education Committee and the Calendar, Technology, and RTP Committees for the School of the Arts.

Professionally, I have come to a place of new understanding and confidence in my art and practice. I have cultivated and deepened my relationship with several local companies in

different ways while exploring and sharpening my skills and aesthetic as a designer. Since 2018, I have designed over 30 shows with the Tennessee Williams Theatre Company of New Orleans, the Radical Buffoons, ArtSpot Productions, Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, Goat in the Road Productions, Loyola University, and others. In each endeavor, and in different ways, I feel more rooted in my artistic community. This work rarely feels like work. I have been recognized for my work locally with several Big Easy Award nominations and a Big Easy for 'Best Lighting Design' in 2023

Similarly, I have remained an active member of organizations that feed my creative, pedagogical, civic, and aesthetic selves. Gatherings of groups like Alternate ROOTS, the Network of Ensemble Theatres, Theatre Communications Group, the Association of Theatre in Higher Education, and USITT help me recenter and reevaluate how and what I teach and how I enter spaces professionally.

Being involved with these organizations led me to participate in several workshops and certifications, especially during 2020-2021, when due to COVID, so many gatherings were held remotely. With Sojourn Theatre, part of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice, I attended their Teaching Artistry Institute and Zoom Facilitation workshop (which I used and shared with colleagues as we all had to pivot to remote teaching). I participated in Ground Water Arts' Decolonizing Theatre and Consensus Decision Making series. I attended several Antiracist Theatre training sessions and became a certified facilitator through No Dream Deferred NOLA's Equity and Justice for Institutional Change program. I also became a certified COVID Safety Officer through USITT.

This past summer, in June of 2024, I was invited to travel as a guest of the People's Republic of China to Beijing, Hangzhou and Guangzhou as a member of the US Delegation for Culture, Art, and Education. This was part of the 'Bridge of the Future' China/US Youth Exchange Program," funded by the All-China Youth Federation and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Besides myself, our five-person delegation included the Education Director for Lincoln Center in New York, a representative from the Peace Programs at the Carter Center in Atlanta, an arts integration facilitator from Focus 5 and Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, and a recent graduate of UNO's MFA Directing Program. We met with officials and students for eight days, touring historical sites, museums, schools, universities, music conservatories, performing arts venues, sports stadiums, and more in this bilateral cultural diplomacy effort.

I pour these experiences back into my work at the University of New Orleans. I believe the students benefit from my perspective and my sharing how I've shifted throughout my career — I try to model 'not always knowing' so that my students understand it is okay to ask questions and change their minds when presented with new ideas and information.

I strive to model remaining nimble for the students and to practice that in my professional work. Nothing ever goes exactly as planned; we prepare as best we can and roll with what comes — we can't force anything to be how we initially imagined. We have to incorporate

our circumstances into our imaginings all the while being professional and supportive of all of the individuals in the room. I believe this yields the best results for the performance and the makers. With collaboration comes the strength of many.

I am proud of the work I've accomplished as an Associate Professor at UNO, and I'm excited about the possibilities for the future of the School of the Arts. My colleagues inspire me to think about ways to work together to serve the students best and create degree programs that are both demanding and desirable for 21<sup>st</sup>-century artists. My city inspires me, personally and professionally, and I consider myself lucky to practice in this place and share that excitement with this University community. Collaboratively, step by step, we are making this University live up to its role as an integral resource for training artists in New Orleans.