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Teaching Philosophy

There is nothing more inspiring to me as a teacher than observing a student blossom into a collaborative, creative artist. Helping them tap into their own creative spirit and express their design ideas is a delight. Seeing this transformation as their early attempts gradually grow into more professional forms of expression drives my passion to teach. Teaching is not only giving students the tools they need to succeed, but also inspiring an excitement about the material that spawns questions and a quest for knowledge beyond the binding of a textbook and walls of the classroom.

I am constantly surprised by another person's creative process - how they come up with something completely different than what I would have envisioned. I believe in generously contributing with ideas, knowing that even if my idea isn't the final answer to a challenge, it may be a stepping-stone to the best solution from someone else. By modeling this behavior and attitude to my students I hope to encourage their open expression of ideas and willingness to accept the ideas of others.

As a costume artist I enjoy a level of excitement about the construction process. Costumes are so much fun! Discovering new techniques, working with innovative materials or simply trying something I haven't done before is all part of the enjoyment for me. I believe in creating an environment where process is valued as highly as product. By breaking down a process into manageable steps I can coach a student to having a very successful project. Pride from a job well done leads to the confidence to try new techniques. "Failure" and less successful projects can be viewed as learning experiments. My costume shop motto is "the seam ripper is your friend!"

As a professor my goal is to prepare my students for a professional career in the theatre. With this goal comes the challenge to instill in them an understanding of and facility for a high degree of excellence in their technical and design work. While I foster a nurturing environment for the beginning student I have more exacting standards as they progress in skills. Through my experience in professional theatre I have learned the different levels of quality that are expected in many situations. In mentoring costume design and technology students I have a responsibility to open their eyes to all the possibilities available to them. I promote students in taking internships and summer jobs in professional settings so they can not only gain valuable experience but also to determine if this vocation will suit them. I encourage cross-discipline design assignments to broaden their understanding of our craft and increase their value as a theatre artist to future employers.

I feel a responsibility to students to educate them as well as I possibly can. Staying true to that responsibility requires an ongoing commitment to improving my teaching skills. As I approach my lesson plans I hope to instill a curiosity and excitement for our subjects through my own love of the information. I also care about the individuals in my class - their difficulties, strengths and challenges. It is important to me to keep an open mind and to approach the students in whatever way speaks to them. Each classroom is a diverse group of individuals with various levels of ability and experience. There will always be students who understand everything with little or no guidance, those who try but just do not identify with the material, and those who dread the subject all together. It is only through different approaches, excitement for the material and constant refinement of my teaching techniques that I can hope to experience and witness the ongoing creative blossoming of my students and myself.

The process of theatre is to communicate elements of the human condition through storytelling. In light of this I believe it is important that an education in theatre includes the ability to communicate properly through the written word. I require standard rules of proper writing in all assignments.

Overall, I believe I am a patient, demanding and fair teacher. I always look for new ways of challenging my students toward expressing their unique design perspective. Furthermore, I love creating characters and telling stories through costuming. I find working in the theatre is a joy and deeply rewarding. It is my goal to inspire my students to find what they love about theatre in general and costuming specifically and to equip them with the necessary tools to pursue their dreams.