

*Since drafting and approving the Theatre Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Response and the Edwards College Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, the following efforts have been made by the Theatre Department DEI committee:*

**MISSION:**

The Theatre DEI Committee is dedicated to advocating for and developing the work of DEIA+ in the Theatre Department. We exist to support the efforts of the Edwards College DEI Committee and DEIA+ efforts University wide. Our main priority is to educate and promote the pillars of DEIA+ in the Theatre Department community through experiential workshops, DEIA+ training and seminars and providing resources for allyship and advocacy. Additionally, we continue to add language and policies to our faculty and student handbooks that uphold accountability structures and support DEIA+ policy.

**Current Representatives:**

Dory Sibley, Assistant Professor of Theatre, Performance (Chair)

Benjamin Sota, Associate Professor of Theatre, Performance

Melissa-Anne Blizzard, Staff, Theatre Design and Production

Kevin Ferguson, Lecturer, Theatre

Robert Laws, Student Representative, Theatre

AJ Gardner, Alumni Representative, Theatre

**2021- 2022**

- Continues the efforts of the 2020-2021 FY Theatre DEI Departmental Committee (outlined below)
- Research into Accountability structures and educating our students, faculty and staff in those processes.
- Creating space for discussion and conversation about equity and current DEI issues happening in the department
  - Departmental discussions and workshops on accountability structures, current DEI efforts and intimacy training
  - Organizing conversations mediated by Student Advocacy for specific groups within the department
- Created the Healthy Practices document to be added to the Theatre Faculty handbook this Spring.
  - Outlines and codifies the process of cultivating an inclusive and brave space in rehearsals, workshops and classroom work.
  - Allows the department chair to hold students, faculty and staff accountable if practices are not adhered to.
- Individual meetings with students, faculty and staff to address concerns and assess our efforts and trajectory as a department towards a more diverse, equitable, accessible and inclusive culture.

- Codified the participation of a DEI committee member on all faculty searches, recruitment efforts, season selection and casting discussions.
  - The responsibility of the DEI committee member is to assist in the navigation of difficult and sensitive conversations regarding DEIA+ and to consistently advocate for the pillars of DEIA+ in committee conversations.
- Provides support and resources for activism and social justice efforts

## **2020 – 2021**

- Formation of CCU Theatre DEI Committee
  - This committee is addressing the ways structural racism, classism, heteropatriarchy, and ableism operates in academia, artisanship, mentorship, and the field of theatre studies. The committee members have volunteered to be part of a working group that will develop proposals addressing the material conditions of the department with the aim of making the structural changes necessary for us to actualize the intersectional, anti-oppression vision that we share. The DEI committee will openly collaborate with current students and alumni to collectively audit the successful prioritization of these efforts in partnership with faculty.
- We seek to address the intensified, specific, and daily ways that structures of inequality exist and are perpetuated within our department and within our local South Carolina Arts community. This includes:
  - Weekly meetings of the committee beginning September 9, 2020.
  - Integration of DEI initiatives and actions into other departmental committees and student representation on committees, including:
    - Season Selection: Integrating student perspectives in the choice of material/representation (Nominations for membership currently open. Election forthcoming.)
    - Recruitment: How/where we recruit; dispelling industry gatekeeping practices (Nominations for membership currently open. Results forthcoming.)
    - Curriculum: Expansion of course content, artistic voices, and source material (see below)
    - Invitations to local SC DEI/BIPoC artists to serve as collaborative voices on the DEI committee
  - Creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in the department for the formal vetting and approval of published DEI documents, policies, and statements within the department and the greater community
  - Formal departmental response to Breonna Taylor case (in support of the ruling and CCU student demonstrations that were held on campus on September 25 and 26, 2020)
  - Alignment of the departmental DEI work with the university's Access, Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Plan (2021-2026) and the Edwards College's Immediate Action and Long-term DEI Strategic Plans.
- Theatre Appointments to CCU Edwards College DEI Committees
  - Faculty Representative to the College DEI Committee: Dory Ford Sibley, Asst. Professor Theatre (Performance)
  - Student Representative to the Edwards College Dean's DEI Undergraduate Advisory Council and rotating member on the Edwards College DEI Committee: Michelle Garcia, BFA Actor, Class of 2022
- Formation of CCU Theatre Student BIPoC Community Collective (BCC)

- The BCC offers a space where BIPOC students can share with one another, be in fellowship with each other, and be sources of inspiration and refuge to each other as a community. The BCC encourages, supports and aligns with current students and alumni to share openly and to address concerns in order to remain mobilized, thoughtful, and vocal in their pursuit of expanding representation within our department, industry and society.
  - Faculty Mentors:
    - Xavier Pierce, Artist in Residence in Lighting Design
    - Amanda Masterpaul, Teaching Associate in Theatre and Women's and Gender Studies
- Alumni Representation on CCU Edwards College's Board of Visitors
  - By invitation of Dean Claudia Bornholdt, a representative of the new Theatre Alumni Advisory Chapter will have a seat on the Edwards College's Board of Visitors. All alumni are invited to apply for membership on the Board and its Alumni Advisory Committee.
- Pedagogical List of Plays & Musicals
  - Updating our published list of suggested reading to all theatre majors to include more diverse voices, origins and subject matter, specifically to include DEI perspectives in drama.
- Guest Artist Talkback Series
  - Diverse theatre professionals are being invited to speak to students to elevate representative voices as mentors and models from the industry, including:
- Formation of Monthly "Temperature Check" Departmental Open Forums
  - In direct response to students' request for transparent communication, the department is committed to a minimum of one monthly open forum during Common Hour where students can engage with faculty, staff, and invited guests about concerns within the department, with the option for breakout session as needed for specific disciplines.
- Formation Student/Dean Virtual Town Halls (per semester)
  - In direct response to students' request for open communication with college leadership, Dean Claudia Bornholdt met (without faculty) on Friday, 10/16/20 with interested students for a virtual Town Hall. The meeting was co-hosted by Michelle Garcia ('22). These meetings will continue throughout the fall and coming spring semester.
- Student-Driven Performance and Authorship Opportunities
  - In lieu of traditional productions and allowing for social distancing, two alternative productions are planned for limited/streamed presentation centered on student voices:
    - Musical Theatre Cabaret:
      - Students select their own material and provide individual perspectives in song. (To be presented November 2020)
    - Puppapalooza Festival:
      - Students create, devise, design, direct, and cast their own material and personal perspectives through puppetry, physical theatre and storytelling
- Launch of Faculty/Staff DEI Trainings
  - All faculty and staff in the department participated in trainings and webinars to bring forward informed changes to identifying our biases and gaining new DEI perspectives. Workshops:
    - Art Equity (<https://www.artequity.org/everyday-justice>)

- Anti-Racism as a Daily Practice:
      - Finding The Keys: Antiracist Approaches to Radical Recruitment in the Arts
      - The Transformative Teaching Collective
        - (<https://www.transformativeteaching.coop/our-workshops.html>)
          - Can We Talk? The Labels and Language of Social Identities
          - From Snap Judgements to Micro-aggressions: An Anti-bias
          - Power and Identity in the Workplace
- New Initiatives for Inclusive Course Content, Materials and Special Topics
  - All faculty in the department in Fall 2020 began evaluating playwriting voices to include more diverse and multicultural content for our courses. These included these immediate changes to sourced material (plays, musicals, designers, playwrights, artists, songs, dance and vocal performances) in existing performance, theatre history and design courses.
  - New Special Topics Courses:
    - VPA 103 – Visual Performing Arts - Theatre, Protest, and the Performance of Power
    - VPA 103 – Visual Performing Arts - LGBTQ/Queer theatre
    - VPA 103 – Visual Performing Arts - IDEA: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility as Theatre
- New/Revised Departmental Theatre Reading Lists
  - Pedagogical List of Plays & Musicals for Theatre Teachers (Curriculum Committee)
    - Updated our list of source content with DEI perspectives in drama.
  - Perspectives in DEI— Books for Teaching Enlightenment (DEI Committee)
    - New list of suggested readings for Teachers relating to Understanding DEI and Bias
  - 100 Plays & Musicals All Theatre Majors Should Know (Curriculum Committee)
    - Updated our list of suggested reading to all theatre majors to include more diverse voices, origins and subject matter with DEI perspectives in drama.