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Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is imperative for all members of the academic community to aggressively work for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational environment. Realizing that 21st Century campuses are comprised of a variety of physical and digital places, faculty members must embrace this mindset in settings ranging from their offices, departmental hallways, classroom spaces and to non-traditional arenas such as digital forums, social media and online messaging. Fine and Performing Arts faculty shoulder a particular responsibility in this endeavor as makers of art that has the opportunity to heal, unify and redefine outdated cultural mindsets, while also challenging our communities to join the crucial work for which we are all responsible for advancing.

As an artist and educator, my commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment begins in the classroom. It is crucial that students feel that their voice, whether in class discussion, written assignment, or studio projects is both heard and respected, not only by the instructor, but by their student colleagues as well. As a designer, I work toward this goal via a range of source material in the form of cultural and textual reference points, drawing from a broad selection of playwrights' work that explores themes of race, sex, gender, and ideological viewpoints. I reject the notion that design exists in a bubble outside of these concerns, but rather, hope to use it as lens through which we may engage such themes. By utilizing work by playwrights ranging from Shakespeare, to Dominique Morisseau and Pearl Cleage, I make efforts to blend technical projects with the dramaturgical exploration of material that has the ability to callout systemic inequity and social injustice while simultaneously investigating the technical skills at hand. As faculty members and mentors, we shoulder the responsibility to lead by action and example.

Theatre and Dance programs have a unique opportunity to lead diversity and inclusion initiatives on campuses through their public productions. Selecting material that is relevant and challenging to the campus and regional communities is essential. It is incumbent upon play selection committees to select work that not only represents the current talents found within a program, but those which the program hopes to attract, as well. Words can be heartfelt and well meaning, but actions speak much louder and the performing arts sits at this powerful intersection. As an active, long serving member of play selection groups at two institutions, and former chair of William and Mary's committee, I'm dedicated to producing work of immediate social relevance, through careful consideration of contemporary social and artistic diversity by well-established and emerging artists and the re-imagination of more seasoned works through a progressive, 21st Century view point.

As theatrical artists, we must continuously strive to expand our personal and professional definition of the art form, pushing beyond outdated expectations and limitations developed under socially outdated mindsets. Simple, but powerful, positive messaging in the form of syllabi language and mindful interpersonal communication strategies are essential tools in the fostering of diverse and inclusive environments. As the Education Commissioner for the United States Institute for Theatre Technology and former Vice Commissioner for Educational Programming, I've successfully introduced a wide range of national conference sessions on such topics as: lab and shop inclusivity, teaching "taboo" subject matter, and race, gender and sexual identity inclusive practices in the design and technical theatre environments. Additionally, I have helped lead our members in a series of national discussions centered on the resolute support of BIPOC theatre artists from all areas of the industry. I believe that it is my ongoing duty to use my leadership position to continue this essential work at every available moment.

The pursuit of a diverse and inclusive academic environment is an essential undertaking for all educators. Through the active modeling of these aspirations in our collaborative engagement with both colleagues and students in the classroom, lab and production environments, we can continue to make progress toward programs where all are truly welcomed, celebrated and heard.