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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Student-Centered Teaching: Mentorship, Rigor, and Disposition

I believe an undergraduate training program must provide rigorous pre-professional training that focuses on engaged and active learning in discipline specific techniques, academic scholarship, and high personal and professional standards. Teaching should empower students with the skills and dispositions necessary to succeed in advanced training, in the professional arena, and ultimately, in navigating the life of an artist in service to their world community.

Teaching and training should be designed to develop critical thinking in the student and this is a focus I stress in both theory and performance classes. My students are taught detailed analysis in all areas of training and learn a phenomenological approach to dramatic literature, dramatic structure, and scene study. In the classroom I work diligently to connect my students to a “practical and applied” understanding of the material, keeping them focused on revealing and illuminating (staging) dramatic action. I move from critical understanding to artistic expression and focus on the development of informed choices. During the rehearsal process, I focus on connecting the actors to the dramatic action and to an honest revealing of that action, once discovered. This approach enables students to learn objectivity and the ability to assess the specific and overall effectiveness of their work in practice. It also empowers students to undertake fearless self-evaluation, to take ownership of their actions, and ultimately positions them with the ability to determine their own next step in their work.

With commitment to high artistic standards and to providing my students with high-quality pre-professional training, students are taught in the studio with coursework designed to build, strengthen, and solidify core techniques and develop individual artistic vision. Through internal and external training, students are taught the intricacies of their own instruments and by providing exposure to more than one training modality, students learn multiple approaches to their understanding and mastery of complicated techniques.

Training and detailed study culminates with production and performance opportunities that put studio training into practice. Along with solid grounding in their concentration, I advocate study and appreciation of the visual arts, music, philosophy, and world religion/spiritual studies so students will be well-rounded and develop along the way a knowledge of the self in the work of the artist.

I believe that students should be given instruction that is rigorous, passionate, and inspiring. Students need to encounter the education process with a positive zest for learning. For me, this zest for knowledge and commitment to self-exploration and life-long learning is nurtured in the student by example of their professors. I am a rigorous, compassionate, and disciplined teacher. I am vigilant in demonstrating a disciplined commitment to high personal and professional standards, and to maintaining a positive disposition toward the work as well as toward maintaining a healthy approach to navigating the life-long career path of an artist.

I am a proponent of the faculty-mentor model and believe strongly in the value of healthy faculty-mentor/student relationships. I believe faculty must model a rigorous approach to training and instill in their students a passion for life-long learning. The mentor must align the student to student’s own work and to building in the student an approach to the work that embodies a disciplined work ethic, a positive disposition, and an entrepreneurial spirit that will continue to position the student for success in their profession throughout their careers.

Undertaken holistically, teaching and mentorship should provide students with a disciplined, rigorous approach to their work, passion in its application, and a life-long commitment to honing the skills and dispositions necessary to navigate a healthy life-path as an artist.