

Statement of Contributions to Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion

Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion have always been on the forefront of my views on education as well as how I look at my work as a Costume Designer. My main job, as a designer, is to create authentic characters/human beings that represent the entire spectrum of diversity on the screen and stage. So, the idea of that spectrum being lifted is something I have made a foundation of my work in real life, in education, and in every inch of the theater I work in.

When I started teaching at Pace University, the program was a newer program that allowed me an opportunity to create curriculum and pedagogy that **IS NOT** centered around historic narratives and structures that keep my students diversity limited. This led me to work with our Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Facilitator to ensure that all of the curriculum that I created met my personal goals of inclusion of perspectives that were meaningful and impactful to my students and create an inclusive narrative for my pedagogy. I needed the students to see themselves in the curriculum as well as all members of the PACE community to lift and fill the space with these perspectives. I accomplish this in several ways:

1. I allow my students to choose class literature that has meaningful to them, thus sharing their perspective to the room and their peers. This made my students “in charge” of their education and insured that the diversity in the room was showcased and incorporated in their peers work and everyday lives.
2. I work with diverse playwrights to bring new work to the room that is a better reflection of the world that is outside the classroom walls. Students know Shakespeare, they know Greek tragedies, but they do not realize opera’s like Central Park 5 or plays like Jump even exist. So, my goal is to bring them into the classroom daily.
3. I invite professional perspectives into all critiques and literature conversations, during class, to showcase that I am only one perspective and to ensure that my students hear multiple points of view on any piece of literature. This includes playwrights, directors, or actors that were crucial to the viewpoints in these diverse pieces of literature. This frees up the conversation from ever being one sided, which I believe is a major issue in many educational institutions.
4. In addition to bringing in diverse perspectives into my classes, I have also created a workshop series that conducts roundtables with various artists for the students to have more one on one contact with a spectrum of artists in the industry. I have found that many students hold designers and artists as “out of reach idols” and my goal is to bring that into a more realistic and grounded space. They are humans just like my students and its important to see that. This breaks down barriers of “out of reach” diversity in many ways.
5. I want my students to be the energy that pushes their education. I find when the student feels in control, then it creates an energy that lifts them and pushes them to levels that diversify and enrich the program naturally. This comes in understanding their goals at all time and pushing them to bring their goals into the room. It’s not about my goals or the programs only. It is about theirs and that in general brings diversity beyond the faculty’s imaginations. It diversifies the curriculum. Another way I have achieved this was by working to create a student committee which is comprised of 2 students from each year that become representatives to the faculty bringing their years goals and ideas to the forefront. This gives another pathway for individual voices to be heard.

The result of these simple steps creates diversity, equity, and inclusion as a fabric of my pedagogy rather than being an afterthought. This is a major issue I see in many universities, instead of breaking down barriers, they “repaint” and remodel. Commercial theater and the art world are monopolized by a small number of people with all of the design work. In order to break this non inclusive norm, we must begin that remodel on the educational level.

Another major aspect of my mission for inclusion and diversity is recruitment. A major problem with many university and colleges is that they push the goal of representing their state or connected community which ends up being very limited to diverse demographics, thus not allowing many regions to experience and be educated in diversity and inclusion. This also continues to lift racial systems that have been in place for years at many universities. I have worked with my department to find ways to not only extend our reach cross country, but to also focus on the work and ways to delete these systems from our recruitment process. This has been achieved by a “Blind” selection process that focus’ on exclusively on the work first and foremost. Faculty do not know age, sex, gender identity, race, or economic background when looking at applicants, which is not the case at all universities. This has been a huge success in our program. I have also worked with outside diversity programs and organizations to find applicants and to spread my push for recruitment rather than the traditional university specific ways which I believe do cater to non-diverse applicants.

Along with working with my program’s inward diversity goals, I have reached outside to find ways to work on my personal goals as well. This has come in not only working with organizations that have diversity and inclusion goals but also finding education on leadership in diversity and inclusion. This past year I have completed certification in Leadership for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Higher Education from the University of Michigan as well as Inclusive Design for Online Education from the University of Colorado: Boulder.

These have further given me the ability to analyze and understand historic narratives and structures within higher education that were built to keep equity, diversity, and inclusion out and how to enact transformational leadership to combat these and change the narrative. It allowed me the knowledge of how to analyze the strategic diversity planning process and implement it within various levels of education. I am also able to provide instruction and strategies in developing courses that are inclusive to students with a wide range of abilities, particularly students with disabilities. Creating effective practices to increase inclusion and avoid some of the common accessibility issues that can arise in an online course. This included such things as course organization, the accessibility of Microsoft Office and PDF documents, making course instruction pages accessible, captioning of videos, making images accessible, and designing for learning differences. These are commonly found in certain socio-economic structures as well as in student disabilities that which universities are just not prepared to support.

Along with additional education, I work with a non-for-profit organization called Off/the Lane which brings mentorship and education to graduating and early career artists in hopes of leveling the narrative that so many artists hit when leaving their educational institutions unprepared for the industry. This mentorship, which I work as a mentor, is giving students diverse and important resources that lift their voice into the industry and allow for pathways to be open to ALL students. I have also worked with Off/the Lane to write curriculum that is specifically difficult for many underfunded schools to offer to their students. These schools tend to be in primarily

lower income schools as well as diverse and underrepresented communities. This allows these institutions to offer these programs and give the student equal and inclusive opportunity and access to education that will give them a leg up in the industry.

As a designer, I have joined several organizations to fight the racist systems that exist in the entertainment industry. I have signed on to work with such organizations and groups as Design Action and We See You to work to commit our industry to create a diverse, inclusive, and equitable industry that represents the world that we live in and not monopolized by older cis gender white designers that continue to keep voices from being heard.

So, what are my goals moving forward, you may ask? My work in diversifying perspectives and education is not finished. Currently schools work in “fad” phases when it comes to diversity and I refuse to accept that. When we continue to promote on the “hot topic” we continue to put compartments that we can not break free from. I have written a personal diversity goal plan for myself and my personal curriculum and my hope is to find an educational home that shares those goals. Below are a few of those:

1. I want to create a digital community that allows for students all over the country to have access to diverse perspectives. Learning to connect to other organizations and schools will bring diversity simply by sharing stories and points of view that may not be available in certain locations. One of the largest reason’s diverse artists are kept out of the industry is that there is no sense of community. We must break that down and allow our students to form artistic communities while in school so that it heightens their entrance into the industry. This also helps with Alumni relations and recruitment.
2. My goal is to breakdown the traditional “Industry” education and make this education more inclusive to all who want it. Although I love teaching costume design, I have found a giant passion for education that goes beyond traditional education and gives information that students NEED to navigate the industry. Allowing them to make contacts, to allow them to market themselves and make their own way (rather than just use their faculties connections), and to give them the tools to make their unique and diverse views lifted and heard.
3. I would like to be a national voice in inventive and inclusive design education for all diversity. I want to open up pathways for inclusivity to be heard and formed into the norm. Not just “fad” education. I don’t believe in the word movement because it means there will be an end. We can never allow diversity and inclusion of anyone to have an end. We as a people are constantly re-inventing ourselves uniquely and the thing that must end is the system’s inability to not accept all uniqueness. There will always be uniqueness so the recognition of that must always be there and not just a movement there will be no end to uniqueness.
4. To continue my own involvement in lifting voices and educating myself on new techniques to do that. I have a passion for lifting voices, on stage or in the classroom, and I am devoted to being an ally and a support system for any artist that is underrepresented or feels they are not being heard.
5. My biggest goal is to find an educational home that supports me in these endeavors as well as supports me in breaking down traditional design education norms and bringing education into a new century. We have been plagued by educational theories that are not relevant and continue to keep every single artist down. I want to find a home that pushes

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me to go beyond the traditional and constantly re-invent myself and my curriculums. I want to work with an organization that is not scared of re-writing the narrative and pushes all of its students to succeed.

Finally, this is just the beginning of my journey with diversity, inclusion, and equity. I know that there will always be a re-write of my goals and my outcomes. That, in itself, is what this is about. Realizing that I must always be creating and finding new ways to bring in all that comes with this diverse world. When I stop doing that, I stop being the best I can be. I am not perfect, I do not have all the answers, but allowing myself to be open and constantly changing will allow me to always be the best ally and diverse human I can be.