C. Costume Designer

Costume Designers are artists/scholars who design the costumes that enhance a given production in general, and a characterization in particular. The costumes should visually express the stylistic interpretation of the drama unique to the production. They should meet the needs of the actors and the director by allowing for appropriate movement and staging. The designs should also enhance or harmonize with the other visual elements such as scenery and lighting.

When evaluating documentation in a tenure dossier, external reviewers, administrators, and the tenure and promotion committee may ask themselves whether the candidate’s tenure portfolio demonstrates the ability to teach and use their practice to explore:

Production Expertise

- Expertise in communicating costume design concepts and ideas through sketches presented via a variety of media
- Expert skill in the knowledge and ability to manipulate the elements of costume design in order to interpret diverse characters and roles
- Knowledge of the materials and methods of costume construction, including fabrics and fitting
- In-depth understanding of fabric modification, including dyeing, painting, lamination, and distressing
- Knowledge of techniques in costume crafts such as masks, and millinery
- Knowledge of safety procedures and regulations as they apply to costume construction, as well as facilitating the health, safety, and well-being of performers and technicians during costume fittings.
- Understanding of the related production design areas — scenic design, lighting design, and makeup design
- Awareness of relevant standard safety procedures and regulations, as well as those prescribed by related professional organizations such as Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), United Scenic Artists #829 (USAA), the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage employees (IATSE), Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDCS), Society of Fight Directors (SAFD), and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) as appropriate.
- In-depth understanding of equitable practices in the theatre through a display of cultural competency and the techniques necessary (consent-based and trauma-informed practices) for honoring the personal and professional boundaries of student actors and designers
- Training in Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention, Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ support, and DEIJE work

Historical Context

- Knowledge of dramatic literature across the globe from classic to contemporary genres
- Application of textual and structural analysis of characters and stories in practice
- Knowledge of historical dress, including ethnic dress and accessories, non-Western theatrical costume, Western and unique theatrical costume, and differing national styles of historic dress
- Knowledge of historic textiles and decoration
- Knowledge of art history as it relates to dress
- Knowledge of social and popular history, including period manners and movement
- Knowledge of the history of makeup, hair, wigs, and costume crafts, such as masks and millinery for hair styles and textures representing a range of cultures
- Knowledge of the history of theatrical production, with emphasis on the visual elements of costume, scenery, properties, and lighting

**Collaborative Skills**

- Excellence in oral, written, and graphic communication skills to secure sensitive translation of designs into workable costumes
- Ability to oversee the technical execution of costumes to ensure they accurately reflect the designs as sketched.
- Ability to effectively work and collaborate with various artists and technicians, many of whom may be unskilled students with various levels of expertise, in a variety of professional and academic settings
- Experience in working within the theatrical creative process, exhibiting promptness, preparedness, flexibility, and a responsible attitude toward the creative work
- Excellence in financial management, including budget development and materials acquisition
- An understanding of ethical practices associated with the field of professional and academic theatre and performance.
- An understanding of how DEIJE is considered when selecting research projects for students
- An understanding of how DEIJE informs the recruitment of students, in cases where that is part of the candidate’s labor
- An understanding of how DEIJE issues impact their life at the university and an ability to think about their own implicit biases

Overall excellence from the Costume Designer requires the ability to consistently integrate knowledge in the areas noted above with an understanding of both the conceptual requirements of a given production to produce costume designs that are both artistically and technically sound and within the constraints of the producing organization. Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production. The Costume Designer is best evaluated by attending a live performance of a production for which the designer is responsible. Whereas the inclusion of costume renderings & associated paperwork is essential as support material detailing the process of the designer, it does little to evaluate true ability in costume design. Drawings, charts, and other paperwork should be evaluated but they cannot substitute for the viewing of an actual production. Still or video photography might add some useful information to an evaluation but, again, are inferior to a live production. If recorded media are used for evaluation of a candidate, the circumstances of the recordings must be clearly stated.