D. Costume Technologist

The Costume Technologist is an artisan/scholar charged with directing the technology aspects of a theatre’s costume production operation. The costume technologist typically oversees the work of staff, student, and volunteer technicians, and sometimes student designers. Thus, the costume technologist must be evaluated as both a practicing technician and an administrator.

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

- Knowledge of costume design practices
- Excellence in the ability to effectively translate the designer’s renderings into workable costumes
- Excellence in costume construction, including contemporary/period construction, silhouettes, and style lines
- Advanced knowledge of materials and methods of costume construction, including fabrics, understructure, pattern development (draping and flat patterning), cutting fabrics and matching patterns when appropriate, properly fitting garments, tailoring techniques
- Knowledge of costume crafts, including millinery, masks, armor, jewelry, and shoe repair
- General knowledge of hair styles and wig styling and maintenance for hair styles and textures representing a range of cultures
- Knowledge of fabric modification, including dyeing, distressing, painting, and laminating
- Knowledge of historical and modern textiles
- Excellence in the ability to facilitate a safe working environment within the costume related areas to ensure the health, safety, & well-being of the performers & technicians during fittings, rehearsals, and performances
- Knowledge 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
- Advanced knowledge of equipment, including sewing machines, sergers, industrial irons, steamers, dye vats, washers and dryers, bone tipping/cutting machines, grommet/covered button presses
- Advanced knowledge of movement for acting, dance, and stage combat and the related requirements of costume construction
- Skill in wardrobe operations and costume maintenance, including leadership training and skills development in actor/wardrobe dynamics, quick change operations and problem solving, costume repairs, cleaning, and sustainability.
- 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 students.
- Training in Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention, Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ support, and DEIJ/E work
Historical Context

- Knowledge of dramatic literature across the globe from classic to contemporary texts
- Knowledge of the history of theatrical production, with emphasis on the visual elements of costume, scenery, properties, and lighting
- Knowledge of the history of dress and clothing construction and the history of art and an understanding of how designers use such knowledge

Collaborative Skills

- Excellence in managing a construction team or staff, including the first hand, stitchers, skilled and unskilled labor
- Excellence in managing the build and fitting schedules
- Skill in the range of managerial functions required in the costume operations of a theatre, including scheduling and management of the costume studio and personnel, financial management (budget development, materials acquisition, record keeping), stage and studio maintenance, and equipment acquisitions
- Skill in oral and written communication essential to the execution of costumes and to the smooth operation of the costuming operations of the theatre
- Ability to work and collaborate under pressure with various artists, technologists, and technicians, many or all of whom may be relatively unskilled students
- Capability in the higher levels of planning required in seasonal or repertory contexts.
- 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 Technologist requires the ability to consistently integrate knowledge in the areas noted above with an understanding of the technical requirements of a given production to produce costumes that are both artistically and technically sound and within the constraints of the producing organization. Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production. Off-campus professional activities, such as conference presentations, leadership roles in professional societies, and professional technology opportunities, are strongly encouraged. The Costume Designer is best evaluated by attending a live performance of a production for which the designer is responsible. Whereas the inclusion of associated paperwork is essential as support material detailing the process of the technologist, it does little to evaluate true ability in costume technology. 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.