N. Technical Director

The Technical Director is an artisan/scholar charged with directing the technical aspects of a theatre’s production operation. The Technical Director typically oversees the work of staff, student, and volunteer technicians as well as faculty, guest, or student designers. Thus, the Technical Director must be evaluated as both a practicing technician and an administrator. It must be acknowledged that the work of the Technical Director should be considered as creative activity in the same manner as any other member of the production/design team.

There is a critical difference here, in that Technical Directors, along with other faculty working in ‘craft’ fields such as Props or Scenic Art, are often responsible for realizing the artistic work of others. This is not to suggest that these areas don’t contribute in new and interesting ways, as many people in these roles regularly take the designer’s work and make it something more refined. Instead, this is meant to communicate that there are also times when this can’t happen in a way that is obvious or visible to the outside reviewer. In this case, the faculty member is doing their job exactly as expected by taking what they are given and bringing it into being as envisioned by the designers & director.

Technical Direction is also different from most other positions in production, in that Technical Directors don’t have nearly as many opportunities to freelance on outside productions without committing to an entire season, such as a summer theatre season or lengthy tour. Reviewers and tenure and promotion committees should take this into account when reviewing the dossiers and CVs of Technical Directors, and administrators should have a careful and informed conversation with faculty Technical Directors about expectations and the availability of outside work balanced with the work done while on campus.

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 theatrical scenic, costume, lighting, and sound design practices
- Skill in creative problem solving and in devising solutions to meet technical and design challenges
- Ability to effectively translate the designer’s renderings, drafting, models and/or sketches into practical stage settings
- Skill in formulating and communicating technological solutions, including technical drafting and model building
- Knowledge of materials commonly used in scenic construction and their strengths and safe use
- Skill in methods of scenic construction, including plastics fabrication, metal working, carpentry, and cabinet work
- Knowledge of safe handling procedures for scenic equipment, hand and power tools, and materials used in scenic construction
- Skill in using computer software to support the production process as appropriate (spreadsheets, databases, CAD, etc.)
- Skill in stage operations and stage maintenance, including stage rigging machinery, automated systems, stage lighting equipment, and stage audio equipment
- 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.
- 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 professional and personal boundaries of students
- Training in Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention, Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ support, and DEIJE work

**Historical Context**

- Knowledge of dramatic literature across the globe, including historic and contemporary genres
- Knowledge of the history of theatrical production, with emphasis on the elements of scenery, properties, lighting, sound, projections, and costumes
- Knowledge of art history, especially architectural details and décor, and understanding of how designers use such knowledge

**Collaborative Skills**

- Skill in the range of managerial functions required in the technical operations of a theatre, including scenic studio and personnel scheduling and management, 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 scenery and to the smooth operation of the technical aspects 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 higher levels of planning required in seasonal or repertory contexts
- Ability to supervise and maintain safe operations in accordance with state and local codes and authorities having jurisdiction (fire, safety, etc.).
- 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 Technical Director requires the ability to consistently integrate knowledge in the areas noted above with an understanding of the conceptual requirements of a given production to execute scenic designs that conform to the designer’s artistic concept, are technically sound, and within the constraints of the producing organization. Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production. The Technical Director is best evaluated by attending a live performance of a production for which the director is responsible. Whereas the inclusion of associated paperwork is
essential as support material detailing the process of the Technical Director, it does little to evaluate true ability. 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.