**M.F.A. in Theatre – Arts Leadership Program**

**Structure**
Over the three-year period of the program, each student will work closely with a primary advisor and have available the knowledge and talent of the entire Theatre Arts faculty whose members contribute to the student’s program of study. M.F.A. students may also utilize resources and take courses from other departments across the Virginia Tech campus.

Led by the primary advisor and in consultation with the student’s graduate committee, the student will develop a personalized plan of study specifically tailored to her/his own experience, needs, and goals.

Each student is evaluated and graded on how well she/he achieves the program of study by demonstrating growth and development in the overarching areas. The evaluation is an on-going process. End of semester graduate committee reviews are the primary method of evaluation.

The degree requires a *minimum* of 54 graduate credit hours and a B or better grade average. To maintain assistantship support, students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours each semester.

Practical, hands-on projects form the foundation of the program, challenging students to think critically, problem solve, and respond creatively.

**Service to the School and Hands-On Learning**
A key area of practical experience is provided through assistantships. Typically, in the first year of the program, students in the Arts Leadership program will be assigned to work 20 hours a week in the Management Office of the School of Performing Arts. The Management Office is responsible for marketing/publicity and the front of house for School productions. In the second or third year of the program, an assistantship in the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech is possible, providing practical experience in a professional arts center.

**Theatre and Event Production and the Arts Leadership Program**
Elemental to the program is the direct connection of theory to practice. To ensure that students in the Arts Leadership program have the opportunity for study and experience in multiple facets of theatre production:

- All students in the M.F.A. program will participate in the Graduate Seminar during their first two years (see Seminar section for more details).
- Assistantships may include work hours in the costume or scene shop, as well as in the management office.
- Students are expected to attend and participate in departmental Production meetings.
- Coursework will, when possible, be directly tied to and connected with productions or projects in the School of Performing Arts.
- Students may be assigned as a producer for a School production or workshop (see Special Topics in the Studios section for more details).
- Elective courses in other areas of Theatre are open to Arts Leadership students, including directing and stage management.
- Each summer, students are strongly encouraged to find work and/or volunteer opportunities with a theatre or performing arts organization in a role consistent with career goals.

**Studios**
Studios are weekly tutorials with the primary advisor, School of Performing Arts faculty, or when appropriate other members of the Virginia Tech faculty. Studios serve to provide both practical experience and in-depth study. Studios may be conducted one-on-one or in small groups and may be 3-6 credit hours each.
An Immersion Studio (6 credits) is required for all incoming arts leadership students. The semester-long Immersion Studio is designed to introduce terms and concepts; develop collaborative work habits among members of the cohort; explore community engagement through hands-on work at the Center for the Arts; and identify particular areas of interest and areas for professional growth through in-depth assessment of individual skills and strengths.

During the first two years of the program, each student will select at least three of the following skill areas for study (areas may be repeated to allow for more in-depth study and practice over time):

**Business Communication**– Developing presentation and negotiation skills for marketing, development, and labor relations. *(This studio may be combined with the studio on Grant and Proposal Writing listed below for a total of 6 credit hours in one semester.)*

**Grant and Proposal Writing**– Strengthening writing and editing skills. *(This studio may be combined with the studio on Development listed below for a total of 6 credit hours in one semester.)*

**Financial Management**– Gaining practical field experience in creating and managing budgets. *(This studio may be combined with the studio on Marketing/Publicity listed below for a total of 6 credit hours in one semester.)*

**Development**– Surveying fundraising strategies in the non-profit arts sector and learning about investor strategies for start-ups and commercial enterprises.

**Marketing and Publicity**– Garnering practical field experience with both traditional and new media.

**Community Engagement**– Actively participating in community building, advocacy, or arts education.

Students also have the opportunity to focus their study through **Special Topics** designed to foster a student’s individual interests. A total of at least 3 Special Topics should be incorporated into each student’s program plan. **Special Topics of Study may be repeated over several semesters to allow for in-depth exploration and research.** Special Topics may be 3-6 credit hours each.

Following are suggested areas of exploration. **Students may also design their own areas of study with advisor approval or select courses from other departments to fulfill this requirement.**

**Technology Trends** – Surveying current trends in technology and the arts and their impact on marketing and development as well as on artistic and educational practices in the field.

**Governing and Volunteer Structures and Practices**– Examining Board structures and volunteer programs in arts organizations.

**Ensembles and Community Partnerships in Arts Making**– Surveying historical approaches and current models with specific emphasis on examining governance and organizational structures in ensemble and community arts making.

**Law and Ethics in the Arts**– Learning about legal structures including procedures for incorporation, maintenance of tax-exempt status, intellectual property rights in the 21th century; labor and unions; contracts; and examining theoretical and practical approaches to ethics in the field.
Arts Advocacy and Political Change- Studying historical approaches and researching current models to enhance understanding and form new paradigms in advocacy and policy.

Arts Education/Community Outreach --Exploring current trends and models for in-school and afterschool programs for youths; programs for seniors; and/or distance learning programs.

Producing- Exploring the roles and responsibilities of producing. As an assigned producer for a School production or workshop, the student will work with key faculty and staff to manage and track the production budget; develop a marketing/publicity plan; and observe auditions and select rehearsals.

Seminars
Seminars are designed for group discussion, examination, and exploration of topics relevant to today’s arts sector. Seminars are typically 3 credit hours each.

All students will participate in the Graduate Seminar, a two-year, weekly seminar that examines issues and topics in the field.

Additional seminars may be offered in the following areas:

Leadership and Management – Assessing and building leadership and management skills, including such topics as leadership theories and current practices, organizational dynamics, performance evaluation, and creative problem-solving in the workplace.

Strategic and Long-Range Planning- Analyzing planning processes and new trends in developing and implementing organizational strategies (including capacity building, change capital, and balancing artistic and administrative initiatives).

Artistic Management and Decision Making- Exploring the practice of artistic selection including designing a season and the fundamentals of casting performers, hiring staff, and managing artistic collaborations.

Electives
The program allows for exploration across fields, and students are encouraged to develop a Plan of Study that encompasses courses from the School of Performing Arts and from programs across campus including classes in Business, Communication, Leadership and Social Change, Management, and Urban Affairs and Planning.

Internship
The M.F.A. program requires, at minimum, a full semester internship designed to provide professional practice and strong positioning for career advancement upon graduation. The internship is typically conducted in the third year of the program.

Final Project
The M.F.A. program culminates with a final project that integrates the practical and academic experiences of the student synthesizing skills acquired through the program. Both a written report and oral presentation of the project are required.