

MFA COSTUME DESIGN BENCHMARKS

The Graduate Costume Design Program provides a workshop where students hone their skills in research, conceptualization, oral, written and visual communication, drawing, project management and the technical disciplines of the costume shop. Through course work and assignments directly linked to Department of Theater productions, students not only gain design experience, they develop a firm understanding of the technical rigor required to succeed in the professional world of theatrical costume.

1. The ability to analyze and visually interpret a variety of dramatic texts from a costume designer's point of view.
2. Exposure to a broad range of performance styles and important works of the western canon, including but not limited to comedy, drama, musicals, opera, devised work, and dance.
3. The ability to clearly articulate visual concepts to a director, the design team, the actors, the producing theatre and the general public.
4. An understanding of the processes of research for costume design, including a coherent overview of the timeline of clothing history, and the tools needed to carry out quality research for any design project.
5. The project management skills needed to execute a costume design from start to finish, including but not limited to:
 - a. Clear paperwork including costume plots and piece lists
 - b. Time management and the ability to make decisions for the costume shop in an expedient manner
 - c. The ability to accurately budget a project and maintain financial paperwork throughout the design process
6. Advanced drawing skills in a wide range of drawing, painting and digital media, resulting in a clear expression of ideas about the design, the production, the character, and the construction of the garment.
7. An understanding of the properties of fabric, including its drape, body, weight, mass, elasticity, memory, movement and its ability to be manipulated with paint and dye techniques.
8. A fundamental knowledge of pattern making, tailoring, draping and construction, with a more concentrated focus in one area of interest.
9. Exposure to a wide variety of craft and millinery techniques for costume and the corresponding safe practices in regard to the use of paints, chemicals and dyes in the costume shop.
10. A thorough understanding of the other design disciplines, if not the opportunity to participate in the design process as a scenic, lighting, sound or projection designer.
11. A respectful, professional demeanor, whether in a classroom, production, or shop context.
12. Punctuality, precision and responsibility for assigned duties and tasks.
13. Openness to constructive criticism, and the flexibility to adjust accordingly.