

FACULTY HANDBOOK

MFA in Film



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FACULTY DEFINITION

1. Core Faculty:
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FACULTY HIRING PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Chair, in consultation with the Program Director to interview and recommend the hiring of faculty whose qualifications in terms of degrees held, teaching experience and expertise, and demonstration of creative and professional activity and excellence are in keeping with the high level of accomplishment of current faculty. Program recommendations for hiring are made to the Academic Dean for review and final approval and the Program Director is responsible for all final employment arrangements for new hires.

The Program will advertise nationally on at least an annual basis for applications for potential positions. Also, faculty members may nominate individuals for consideration for future openings.

When a faculty opening occurs, the Faculty Chair, in consultation with the Program Director, will review the nominations and applications and assess the potential faculty using the following criteria holistically, in no particular order:

1. Areas of expertise in which a faculty member is needed (the ability to teach more than one area is desirable);
2. Teaching experience and effectiveness;
3. Professional accomplishments;
4. Gender, ethnic and aesthetic diversity;
5. National reputation;
6. Collegiality;
7. Likelihood of succeeding in a low-residency model.

Upon narrowing the field to a limited number of qualified candidates, a committee composed of the Program Director, the Faculty Chair, and member(s) of the Core Faculty hiring subcommittee appointed by the Faculty Chair will conduct interviews with each candidate. Following interviews, the Faculty Chair, the hiring subcommittee, and the Program Director will discuss the candidates, and then the Chair and Program Director will come to a consensus or vote on a recommendation. The recommendation for

hiring will be forwarded through the Program Director to the Academic Dean for approval, prior to the offer of a position.

It should be noted that all faculty except for Distinguished Core Faculty are initially hired as Visiting Faculty.

FACULTY TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

TBD

FACULTY SEMESTER RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculty are expected to participate fully and actively in the entire residency period at the beginning of each semester, unless otherwise arranged with the program. Such participation includes:

- reviewing student prior to, or at the beginning of, the residency period;
- arrival on campus one day before the residency begins for faculty meetings and orientation;
- conducting lectures, screenings and/or workshops during the residency;
- conducting end-of-semester reviews with individual students;
- meeting individually with students for conferences about their semester study plans and program progress;
- remaining accessible to students, other faculty and visiting writers for informal exchange;
- evaluating thesis projects presented by graduating students;
- delivery to the Program Director all evaluation materials before the end of the residency unless otherwise specified.

During the succeeding nonresident semester, each faculty member is normally responsible for supervision of five student projects. Supervision includes willingness to help students plan their projects during the residency, as well as frequent and thorough dialogue. Such communication will include:

- an exchange with each student at least once every three to four weeks;
- thorough and detailed response to student letters and submitted creative and critical work within a week of receipt of packets; if, because of mitigating circumstances, that is not possible, faculty must alert students as to when they will be receiving the response;
- dialogue with the student about his/her project and its development from a film history/theory perspective as well as a creative and logistical [perspective applying contemporary professional

standards in keeping with the learning goals of the program. Readings, screenings, and additional research activities may be assigned to supplement the learning plan prepared during residency and all additions are to be submitted to the Program Director in writing.

Faculty are required to participate in various evaluative activities with their students. Such evaluation will include:

- a brief written report of the student's performance, due in the Program office at mid-semester;
- a written evaluation of the student's performance, including a description of the student's semester project and an assessment of the quality of the student's work and progress, due in the Program office at the end-of-semester date; this evaluation will substantiate a recommendation for or against degree candidacy, the award of a semester's credit, and/or the award of the degree;
- a written evaluation of a student's graduating lecture, either his/her own student or otherwise as assigned;

FACULTY COMMITTEES:

TBD

FACULTY CHAIR

The Faculty will elect a Faculty Chair for a three-year term, contingent upon continuation of their employment. Faculty Chairs may not immediately succeed themselves. The Faculty Chair works in collaboration with the Program Director on the following areas of academic responsibility and supports the Program Director, as needed, in other areas of program oversight as required by the College:

- serve as one of the Program's representatives on the College's Academic Council;
- oversee the work of the Faculty Committees;
- oversee the hiring subcommittee's discussion and consensus or vote on the election of new faculty for hiring recommendations to the Academic Dean;
- oversee and coordinate the work of faculty, including the apportionment of teaching assignments and advising responsibilities;
- maintain oversight of the academic components of Program residencies, including workshops, lectures, and panel discussions;
 - act as final arbiter for admission applications requiring an additional opinion;
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- represent, in conjunction with the Program Director, the Program to prospective students when needed;
- address any issues that arise out of the Program Director's review of students' academic progress;
- mediate and resolve major student/faculty issues throughout the semester and during the residency;
- chair, or co-chair with the Program Director, student orientation sessions as needed;
- conduct the Graduation Ceremony at the end of each residency;
- communicate and meet with College administration as needed in regards to relevant Program issues;
- travel to major College functions that require the presence of a Faculty Chair;
- serve, when required, as Program representative at appropriate internal and external functions;
- maintain a highly visible national and international profile in film program venues.

FACULTY REVIEW AND RETENTION

1. VISITING FACULTY REVIEW PROCESS –

At the end of the first semester taught by a Visiting Faculty member, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will examine the student evaluations of his/her semester work, workshop, lecture, and reading and determine whether he/she should be invited back to teach a second semester as a Visiting Faculty member, based on enrollments and specific program needs. A recommendation to retain or not will be sent to the Dean for the final decision. If retained, the same procedure will follow his/her second semester as a Visiting Faculty.

2. CORE FACULTY REVIEW PROCESS

Each year the Faculty Chair and Program Director will evaluate the performance of one-third of the Core Faculty. The faculty will be evaluated in order of seniority, with the most senior faculty evaluated the first year and the least senior the third year. The Faculty Chair and the Program Director will examine the student evaluations for each faculty member's semester work, workshops, lectures, and readings for the previous three years. In addition, they will request evaluations from the Program Director, the faculty member's previous workshop co-leaders, and from the faculty as a whole. They will also examine the faculty member's curriculum vitae in order to evaluate his/her publication and professional activity over the previous seven years. Each faculty member being evaluated may also submit a letter and any other supporting materials he/she desires the Faculty Chair and Program Director to take into consideration.

After examining this information and completing the VCFA Core Faculty Review form, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will generally vote or reach a consensus to recommend retention or dismissal. In some cases, however, the Faculty Chair and Program Director may elect to ask a faculty member to take a leave to address whatever concerns they may have with his/her progress toward the criteria for retention as a member of the Core Faculty. In all cases, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will discuss with each faculty member the various strengths and weaknesses revealed during the evaluation process, and the faculty member will have the opportunity to respond to this feedback.

a. Determination of Seniority:

When considering seniority, we will take into account both the number of semesters a faculty member has taught in the Program and how recently or consistently s/he has taught.

b. Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness:

Teaching effectiveness will be determined primarily by examining student evaluations of semester work, residency workshops, and lectures. Copies of semester and workshop evaluations will be provided to every faculty member at the conclusion of a semester and a residency. Copies of lecture evaluations will also be provided to a faculty member when those evaluations raise concerns about a faculty member's performance. In addition, performance during residencies may be evaluated through observation of lectures, readings, and other presentations and interactions with students. In measuring a faculty member's teaching effectiveness, we will also take into consideration the relative ease or difficulty of finding a sufficient number of advisees who want to work with him/her, as evidenced by a continuing pattern of high or low numbers of students who list him/her on their Advisor Request Forms. Finally, we will also take into consideration evaluations by the faculty member's peers. At the end of each residency, each faculty member will complete an evaluation of his/her workshop co-leader. As with student evaluations of teachers' performance, these evaluations may be confidential or not. In the case of a confidential evaluation, the Program Director and the Faculty Chair will jointly provide a written synopsis of the evaluation and the faculty member has the option to respond in writing for any official record or file.

It is recommended that faculty retain correspondence with all students for a period of three semesters. The Program office will retain copies of student evaluations, for semester work as well as residency evaluation, for a period of five years.

In instances where a faculty member receives two or more student complaints in a given semester's end-of-semester evaluations, or at least one student complaint in end-of-semester evaluations for three semesters consecutively, or a negative evaluation from a workshop co-leader, or written complaints from two or more students, a review will be conducted by the Faculty Chair and Program Director to investigate the legitimacy of the complaints. The students' names will be redacted before the review.

It is important to note that there will be no assumption that a complaint has merit. A review process is also a means of support for faculty in instances of an unwarranted complaint.

If there appears to be some legitimacy to the complaints, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will report to the Dean who will recommend the following procedure:

The Faculty Chair will draft a letter to the faculty member indicating in detail the complaints and suggest methods for improving teaching performance. During this process, the faculty member will be encouraged to present to the Faculty Chair and Program Director, any evidence of his or her teaching effectiveness (including packet letters, tape recordings, student and/or faculty workshop evaluations, and the like). After the conclusion of the following semester, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will review the relevant student and/or faculty evaluations and make a recommendation on retention.

In instances where there is deemed insufficient merit to a student or faculty complaint, a letter of support, if necessary, will be written in response to the complaint and one copy will be given to the complainant and another will be placed in the faculty member's file.

In addition, a faculty member also may request a review of his or her teaching performance at any time.

c. Evaluation of Professional Activities and Publications:

Faculty members will submit an updated vita or list of recent professional activities prior to a review or as otherwise requested by the program or College. The Faculty Chair and Program Director will review these documents.

In the case of a faculty member falling below the standards of publication and/or professional activity, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will report to the Dean who will recommend the following procedure:

That the Faculty Chair and Program Director will first inform the faculty member that it appears s/he is falling below the standards set by the faculty for itself and encourage the faculty member to seek more professional exposure. The Faculty Chair and Program Director should, in this conversation, discuss with the faculty member his or her publishing plans, ongoing projects and plans for other kinds of professional activities.

At the end of the second semester following this initial conversation, the Faculty Chair and Program Director will review the faculty member's progress and make a recommendation on retention to the Academic Dean.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION (MFA in Film)

SUPERVISOR: Academic Dean

JOB SUMMARY:

Manages the MFA in Film program including but not limited to: overseeing the admission and enrollment process, overseeing student retention, creating and managing program budgets, overseeing and directing faculty appointments, designing and overseeing program residencies, designing and supervising program staff and office functions.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Manages the strategic direction, organization, and operations of program.
 - 1.1 Initiates, writes, recommends, plans, and implements program policy changes, program design changes, and program materials. Interprets policy for students, faculty, and staff.
 - 1.2 Initiates, writes, recommends, plans, implements, and works with faculty chair, faculty committees, and administration on new initiatives and program direction.
 - 1.3 Designs and directs residencies, plans residency functions and schedules.
 - 1.4 Develops and directs residency orientations for students and faculty.
 - 1.5 Writes contracts for visiting writers. Recommends hiring of residency speakers/guests.
 - 1.6 Mediates, initiates and directs strategies to assure resolution of major residency and non-residency issues.
 - 1.7 Co-chairs all faculty meetings.
 - 1.8 Assists Executive Director of Institutional Advancement and Alumni Affairs Director in alumni relations for the program.
 - 1.9 Participates in College committees and meetings as Program representative, represents program to prospective students, outside organizations, at recruiting events/conferences, and to the public.
2. Oversees student retention and progress through the program.
 - 2.1 Promotes and assures student retention/satisfaction through individual advising, problem-solving, faculty orientation, and policy interpretation.
 - 2.2 Certifies degree completion requirements.
 - 2.3 Counsels students, faculty, and staff on program related issues during residency/non-residency period.
3. Oversees and directs marketing and the student admission and enrollment process.
 - 3.1 Reviews all applications to assure that candidates meet minimum requirements for admission review.
 - 3.2 Determines admissions review strategies and acceptance numbers through careful monitoring of enrolled students and alignment with program growth goals in collaboration with Faculty Chair and administration.

- 3.3 Works with Admissions office and faculty on promotional and recruitment strategies.
- 3.4 Serves on Admissions Committee.
- 3.5 Works with Marketing Director and others on design of program materials, brochures, web content and design, and additional program literature for prospective applicants.
- 4. Initiates and monitors the Faculty hiring process. Works collaboratively with Faculty Chair to determine hiring recommendations, and the continuance and termination of faculty contracts.
 - 4.1 Counsels new faculty on job duties and provides all faculty with orientation and updates on program policy, assuring smooth integration of new faculty into the program and continued updates to continuing faculty.
 - 4.2 Initiates semester contracts for approval of Academic Dean.
 - 4.3 Reviews, with consultation of Faculty Chair when appropriate, faculty salary/equity issues.
 - 4.4 Determines who is responsible for dealing with problems/issues and assigns work to appropriate person/people.
- 5. Supervises program staff and program office.
 - 5.1 Directs office staff operations, conducts training and evaluation of program staff, and assures the smooth running of a complex program.
 - 5.2 Assigns duties to staff, evaluates staff, recommends hiring, renewal and termination of staff.
- 6. Designs and manages program budgets.
 - 6.1 Works with the Academic Dean and CFO to develop annual budget.
 - 6.2 Manages budgets, approves all expenditures, makes decisions on the awarding of scholarships monies, manages program restricted funds, assures proper use of all budgets.
- 7. This description is not intended to be all-inclusive and the employee will also perform other reasonably related business duties as assigned by the immediate supervisor and other management as required.

Vermont College of Fine Arts reserves the right to change any provision, requirement, statement of policy or procedure, service or facility detailed in this handbook.