

# University of Houston School of Theatre & Dance + Alley Theatre MFA

## *Professional Actor Training Program Handbook*

The *Professional Actor Training Program* (PATP) at the University of Houston's School of Theatre & Dance admits MFA candidates with the demonstrated talent and the perceived determination to complete a challenging three-year course of academic and performance training. We expect our students to be exceptionally focused, disciplined, and engaged with all aspects of the program.

The PATP is designed to graduate all admitted candidates. Students receive individualized attention and support throughout the diverse challenges of the curriculum, and each MFA candidate may expect -- having earnestly participated and given their best -- to succeed in the program. The intention of the PATP is to train exceptionally adept actors for the ever-changing demands of the performing arts industry.

### **DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

This handbook describes current departmental policies and guidelines for the graduate acting program, or PATP. The University of Houston has minimum requirements for all graduate students, but these requirements may be superseded by the more specific departmental and/or program requirements.

Students are accountable for familiarizing themselves with these requirements. Faculty are available to guide students; however, it is the students' responsibility to know the University, College, and School policies and procedures as they apply to graduate study. The University of Houston Graduate Handbook may be found here: <https://publications.uh.edu/index.php?catoid=53>.

### **INCLUSIVITY**

The University of Houston embraces diversity and recognizes our responsibility to foster an open, welcoming environment where students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds can collaboratively learn, work and serve. We value the academic, social, and broader community benefits that arise from a diverse campus and are committed to equity, inclusion and accountability. Diversity enriches our university community and is a driving force instrumental to our institutional success, as well as the fulfillment of the university's mission. We commit to engaging in an ongoing dialogue to thoughtfully respond to the changing realities of our increasingly interconnected world. We will continually strive to work together to address the challenges of the future in a way that removes barriers to success and promotes a culture of inclusivity, compassion and mutual respect. The competencies gained through diverse experiences across campus prepare all of our students, staff and faculty to thrive personally and professionally in a global society.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Actors are storytelling artists crafting not with marble or paint or steel, but rather with the human experience. They train their bodies, minds, and voices for the demands of live performance. They delve into the highly personal and often vulnerable realms of their emotions and lived experiences. They engage their interpersonal skills to collaborate with other actors and artists, as well as agents, managers, and an array of theatre professionals at all levels. Students enter the PATP to learn more about their chosen industry, and to become better actors.

Students are expected to embody the varied and interconnected attributes they wish to encounter throughout their professional careers: to accomplish their work to the best of their ability and in a timely manner; to foster a community of artists striving for excellence by continually challenging and supporting one another; and to practice the craft and engage their community with respect, honesty, humility, and compassion.

## **CONDUCT**

A respectful, civil, disciplined, and professional bearing is expected of each student. The following is offered as a guideline for such behaviors:

- Be prepared and on time for all classes, rehearsals, and other calls;
- Dress appropriately for the various demands of classroom, studio, and rehearsal activities;
- Participate, rehearse, and perform to the best of your ability, following all reasonable direction, and conforming to the language of the script;
- Once cast in a show, wait for approval from the director and the costume designer before making changes to your appearance (i.e. hair, facial hair, piercings, tattoos);
- Maintain a standard of bodily hygiene that will enable the work, often done in close proximity, to thrive;
- Properly care for the costumes, props, and the spaces you inhabit (respect the physical property of others, as well as the classrooms, production spaces, and other university facilities);
- Use the utmost courtesy and respect with your colleagues, faculty, and university staff. In short, observe the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would like to be treated."

## **ETHICS**

We expect our students to maintain a high standard of ethics in their dealings with one another and with the university. Plagiarism, stealing, forgery of documents, misrepresentation of the truth, or any other unethical conduct will not be tolerated. Evidence of any of these infractions may result in dismissal from the PATP.

## **SOBRIETY**

The rigorous and collaborative nature of the PATP demands concentration, dedication, and commitment.

Experience teaches us that it is not possible for students to take full advantage of PATP training while abusing drugs or alcohol. Students who show up impaired for classwork, rehearsal, or performance will be asked to leave; repeated infractions of this policy may lead to dismissal. While students have the right to keep their medical concerns private, they may wish to alert appropriate faculty member(s) when taking any prescription medication(s) or following prescribed therapies which may affect their performance in school activities.

## **HARASSMENT**

The PATP is committed to building brave spaces, and to nurturing a creative community that fosters the maximum amount of artistic and intellectual freedom for its members. Harassment of any kind in our community interferes with these goals and will not be tolerated.

“Harassment” is any behavior by an individual or group that contributes to a hostile, sexualized, intimidating, unwelcoming, and/or inaccessible work environment. This can include (but is not limited to) sexual, racial, ageist, ableist, or retaliatory harassment.

If you are being harassed, we encourage you to speak to someone, as we are committed to supporting you. You may speak with your instructor, adviser, peers, Ensemble Deputy, the Head of the PATP, the Director of the School of Theatre & Dance, or any other member(s) of the university with whom you feel comfortable.

Please be advised that all university employees are mandatory reporters in the state of Texas, and Title IX requires that any mention of harassment affecting a student or UH employee must be reported on UH’s official Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Report Form (<https://www.uh.edu/eos-forms/>). There are confidential resources available to you on campus, such as UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and certain religious organizations.

UH has many resources that are available to students, including:

Mental Health support:

<https://uh.edu/caps/>

Physical Health issues:

<https://uh.edu/healthcenter/>

Academic Advocacy & Support:

<https://uh.edu/dos/advocacy-support/academic-support/index>

...and more.

(For a complete list of student resources, please visit:

<https://uh.edu/campus-life/resources/>)

## **CONSENT CULTURE**

The MFA curriculum progresses through a broad range of skills and techniques that could reasonably be expected of a trained, professional performer. Actors are artists whose medium is the body: physicality, mind, voice, emotions... their entire self. The School of Theatre & Dance seeks to train arts professionals grounded in creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and craftsmanship, and prepared for the rigors of the profession. In keeping with this aim, the training will include theatrical expressions of intimacy and violence, and more.

To create conditions where bold, courageous, and generous collaboration can flourish, we are committed to a culture of self-reflection, proactive communication, and trauma-informed consent practices. We encourage the application of established intimacy protocols and methodologies when working with scene partners, faculty members, and production directors and designers, especially when charged material or intimate interactions that may be required for class projects, rehearsals, and/or performances.

“Trauma-Informed Consent Practices” recognize that, despite the familiarity engendered by the rigorous, intensive nature of the program, not everyone present may think or feel as we do, nor will they have had similar life experiences. We shall be mindful, especially when engaging with charged or intimate material, that we take nothing for granted, preventing harm, and remembering that there may be those in the room deeply affected by the work. Not all wounds are visible.

Understanding ourselves and communicating clearly when working on this kind of material – particularly setting and communicating specific physical boundaries – is important for all parties involved. This mindful approach to the work is in alignment with professional practices, engenders collaboration and trust, and facilitates everyone’s most courageous work.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Part of the success of the program rests upon the assumption that the carefully selected actors are mature, responsible, and dedicated. Furthermore, the faculty assumes that taking advantage of the totality of the program will be the first priority of the students’ time and effort. The PATP is based on an ensemble model. Every actor is, to a major degree, dependent on every other actor being as present, responsible, and dedicated as their fellows.

The most concrete and obvious indication of a student’s dedication is punctuality and attendance. Therefore, we enforce a class, studio and rehearsal participation policy based on professional standards. In brief, all actors in the program are expected to be in attendance, on time and ready to work for all classes, meetings, costume fittings, TA assignments, called rehearsals and performances.

Attendance is kept for each class. *Any* absences should be communicated with all scene partners, faculty members, and other affected parties. Absences lasting more than one day should be discussed with and approved by the Head of MFA Acting beforehand.

If an actor becomes too ill to attend class and/or rehearsal, they are expected to promptly email the instructor and/or the stage manager, as well as cc'ing the Head of the PATP. A student who is seriously ill and/or contagious to others will not be expected to participate in classes or rehearsals. Proactive communication will allow such illness-related decisions to be made appropriately on a case-by-case basis.

Routine doctor and dentist appointments should be arranged outside of class and rehearsal times, whenever possible. Additionally, any personal outside meetings or obligations must take place outside of class and rehearsal times. Students will not make travel plans during the academic term without express permission from their program Head. All PATP ensemble members are encouraged to spend the short Thanksgiving holiday break in Houston, collaborating with classmates on the material to be presented for end-of-semester finals. Spring Break in March is usually available for personal vacations, but certain SOTD productions may use the beginning or ending weekend of Spring Break for rehearsals, so please consider this before making travel plans.

## **LEARNING GOALS**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of learning goals. Students must demonstrate satisfactory progress from semester\_to\_semester in their ability to:

- Analyze a dramatic text and glean from it the information necessary to deliver an engaging performance;
- Combine the practical skills of physical, vocal, and emotional command with imagination and a strong sense of space and circumstance in order to create performances which live in three dimensions;
- Deliver artful performances in shows produced within the UH School of Theatre & Dance season;
- Work collaboratively with a wide variety of faculty, staff, visiting artists and students in service of the work at hand;
- Effectively and efficiently navigate the assignments associated with the graduate curriculum, as well as the demands of the casting, rehearsal, tech, and performance processes;
- Develop strategies for managing a professional career.

## **ALLEY THEATRE PARTNERSHIP**

The University of Houston + Alley Theatre MFA Acting Program, or PATP, culminates in an apprenticeship for third-year students at the Alley Theatre complex in downtown

Houston. Students will be expected to carpool to and from the theatre as needed, as parking passes for the Alley garage are limited.

All PATP students are expected to comport themselves as responsible, professional artists during their time in residence at the theatre, representing not only themselves, but also the University of Houston and the Alley Theatre itself during all their activities and interactions.

The Alley Theatre apprenticeships will include participation in workshops, masterclasses, open rehearsals, and more. On a case-by-case basis, students may be cast in Alley productions, assigned understudy duties, and/or invited to participate in A Christmas Carol and/or the Alley All New Festival.

The apprenticeship year at the Alley Theatre will culminate in a showcase performance in the Neuhaus Theatre, which will be recorded and/or live-streamed, to allow students to share their showcase with industry professionals around the country.

## **NON-CURRICULAR ASPECTS OF THE TRAINING**

Graduate research in many fields demands that additional work be accomplished outside the scope of matriculated classes (e.g., lawyers and other scholars invest time in the library, clinicians and scientists in the laboratory, etc.). Graduate training in acting requires commensurate outside research and activity, with the additional challenge that the collaborative nature of our art form often necessitates that we do our outside work alongside our fellow artists, as well as with the mentorship of faculty and guest artists.

A number of additional efforts that are vital to this program's goal of expanding students' skills to meet the demands of the profession occur in sessions beyond the academic calendar and the constraints of a non-theatrical workday. These include (but are not limited to):

- The Intensive (O-Week)
- Evening and weekend rehearsals for SOTD season productions
- The Turbo Project
- Ensemble Training and Fight Laboratory
- "Feet Club" and the Saturday Mile Run
- Auditioning for professional companies

The expectation is that students will recognize the value of these "extracurricular" offerings and commit to their challenges with as much dedication as is brought to the challenges of standard course work (things that receive a grade and are recorded on a UH transcript).

The PATP replicates other graduate programs' use of national conferences by requiring students to participate in the Unified Professional Theatre Auditions (UPTAs) and/or other group auditions. This requirement parallels other graduate programs having

students share their work at a national level for feedback from leaders in the field, forging professional network connections that then form the foundation of their career post-graduation. The PATP is invested in all MFA Acting Students working in the summers between each of the academic years to put their skills to work in the “real world,” to garner professional credits that will make a notable resume, and to expand their connections in the profession.

## **O-WEEK**

Incoming first-year students will start their work together the week before UH’s official first day of classes, embarking on a five-day orientation called “O-Week.” Over those five days (Monday-Friday) incoming MFA candidates will work together to form the connections that will serve as a foundation for this new ensemble. Along the way, students will learn about the School of Theatre & Dance and the University of Houston, as well as their Teaching Assistant responsibilities.

Each day of Grad Week includes a morning, afternoon, and evening session (scheduled around lunch and dinner breaks). All students should be set up in their living accommodations and should have taken care of all UH Human Resources and employment forms before the start of Grad Week, so that they can focus on their new ensemble. Grad Week culminates in a debut showcase for the SoTD faculty, students and guests on Friday evening.

## **TURBO PROJECT**

Turbo Projects are shows produced in the time just before the start of the spring semester (usually in early January). The plays are chosen to cast the MFA actors in significant roles that will bolster their resumes, as well as train them for the rigors of rehearsing and performing shows in repertory circumstances. The project most typically will have one play performed two ways (with the actors playing different roles across the two renditions).

Casting is announced right after the end of fall semester conferences. Actors are required to prepare themselves over the winter holiday, and report for the first day of Turbo rehearsals ready to do full run-throughs, off-book. Actors are also responsible for providing their own rehearsal costumes. Performances are presented just before the start of spring classes. All PATP students are expected to participate in the Turbo Project. Students on probation, or those deemed by the faculty as unable to support the company with the challenge of this endeavor, may not be cast in the project.

## **ENSEMBLE TRAINING**

Ensemble training meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 4-5:30pm. All MFA candidates, and occasionally a limited number of vetted undergraduate performers, are required to attend.

## **FIGHT LABORATORY**

Fight Lab meets on Wednesday afternoons from 4-5:30pm, and on Saturday mornings from 9-10:20am. First year MFA candidates are required to attend.

## **FEET CLUB / MILE RUN**

Feet Club is held every Saturday morning at 8:30am, and involves agility drills and other attribute training. Feet Club is followed by the Mile Run, beginning promptly at 8:45am. All MFA candidates are required to attend.

## **GRADING & ASSESSMENT**

At the end of every semester, each acting student will meet with the PATP faculty for an evaluation of their work. First-year students will also have an additional assessment meeting in the middle of their first semester. Students receiving any grade less than a "B" (3.0) should consider that as an indication that their work in the program is not satisfactory, and that immediate improvement must be made. Students earning less than a 3.0 cumulative GPA will have their graduate tuition fellowship and teaching assistantships withdrawn by the Graduate School.

## **TEACHING ASSISTANTS & TEACHING FELLOWS**

Students in the PATP receive a graduate tuition fellowship (GTF), which covers university costs, as well as a teaching assistantship, or stipend, for their work as a Teaching Assistant (TA). These tuition waivers and funds are earned by students working as TAs for the SoTD's *Introduction to Theatre* classes. Expectations are that students will handle their TA grading assignments in a timely fashion, will maintain good communication with the instructor of record for their course section, and will make themselves available to the *Intro* students for whom they are responsible. Failure to take care of these responsibilities can result in withdrawal of GTF and assistantship support.

The UH Graduate School permits graduate students to serve as instructors of record (with the title of Teaching Fellow) after completing 18 hours of graduate course work. MFA Acting students may be afforded this opportunity in their second year, but such assignments are limited, and made by faculty on a year-by-year and case-by-case basis. Students invited to lead undergraduate courses in *Acting* or *Voice & Speech* will have their responsibilities shifted from Teaching Assistant to Teaching Fellow.

PATP students are tracked through the first year for their dedication, discipline, punctuality, articulation of technique, interpersonal communication and temperament. Those who are deemed by the PATP faculty to be capable of handling the responsibilities of a Teaching Fellow, in addition to their own course work, will be assigned such duties. While it is the faculty's goal to give every PATP student an opportunity to take on such teaching assignments, these course offerings are too limited



at this time to provide this opportunity to all MFA candidates. We appreciate your understanding.

## **UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

Students struggling with any of the demands of the program will be informed that they are not meeting expectations. Any decision to retain a student or to recommend another action is made in consultation with the entire full-time PATP faculty. The final decision to recommend probation or dismissal from the program is the responsibility of the Head of MFA Acting.

## **PROBATION & DISMISSAL POLICIES**

If a student's work falls below acceptable standards in the judgment of the faculty, the student will receive notification that they are not meeting the professional, personal, and/or academic expectations of the program. The Head of the PATP and any other pertinent faculty will meet with the student to discuss the relevant problems. Should the case warrant it, the student may be placed on probation.

In such circumstances, the student will receive a letter from the program head as notification of their change in status. The letter will contain information on the steps necessary to return to good standing, and the consequences if the student's work continues to fall below acceptable standards. Probationary status is not issued lightly, and should be seen as a warning that the student has either neglected their studies and dropped below an acceptable GPA (academic probation), or has been deemed negligent or disruptive by the faculty in their behavior (conduct probation), affecting the PATP learning environment or SoTD productions. Probationary status may impact casting and teaching assignments.

A student may petition the faculty to appeal their probationary status, or to request re-evaluation of their probation. Either request must be made in writing (hard copy letter) and addressed to the Head of MFA Acting. If academic or behavioral issues do not improve to the satisfaction of the faculty during the probationary period, the faculty will reconvene to decide whether the student continues on probation, or is recommended for dismissal. The final decision for dismissal rests with the Head of MFA Acting.

Behaviors that can lead to probation may include (but are not limited to):

- Unsatisfactory progress in classwork
- Motivation or discipline problems
- Unprofessional, irresponsible, inappropriate, or rude behavior (whether inside or outside of the classroom)
- Failure to meet regularly with scene partners
- Not participating fully in class work
- Disrupting or impacting other actors' progress by taking focus
- Unprofessional behavior while teaching

- Habitual tardiness or absences
- Flagrant disrespect of the SoTD classrooms, theatres, offices, or shops
- Lack of commitment and/or preparation
- Repeated failure of an assigned task or skill
- Failure to meet AEA standards for professional behavior

Certain extreme behavioral issues may result in stronger disciplinary actions, including immediate dismissal. Such extreme behaviors may include (but are not limited to):

- Repeated patterns of any behavior listed above or deemed inappropriate
- Deliberate destruction, theft, or unauthorized use of university property
- Sexual misconduct, stalking, verbal, physical or emotional violence
- Harassment, bullying, threatening, and other disruptive behaviors
- Violation of university policies concerning drugs and alcohol

## **GRIEVANCES & COMPLAINTS**

Any student who wishes to submit a grievance or complaint should contact the Head of MFA Acting and/or the Director of the School. When submitting a grievance, the student should state 1) when they discovered the issue being reported, 2) what the issue is, providing evidence to support their grievance, and 3) what their desired solution is.

Depending on the nature of the grievance or complaint, the Head of MFA Acting and/or the Director of the School will initiate appropriate review procedures.

Protocol dictates that informal efforts should be made first to resolve the grievance. In the event that an informal solution is not possible, the grievant may then file a formal grievance (within 60 days of initiating the informal process). In the event that a resolution is not possible at the School level, or the outcome is not acceptable to the grievant, a written Notice of Appeal may be sent to the KGMCA Dean within 10 days of the departmental decision. Appeals may continue to escalate up the university system, to the Graduate and Professional Studies Committee, and on to the office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Links to the College and University procedures for addressing student grievances regarding grades, course requirements, and classroom procedures or other academic problems are presented below.

To familiarize yourself with all the policies and procedures of the University of Houston, please navigate the Graduate Catalogue:

<https://publications.uh.edu/index.php?catoid=53>

For the grievance policy (as well as the other academic policies of the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts), please navigate here:

<https://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=53&navoid=20341>

## **HEALTH, STAMINA, AND MOTIVATIONAL ISSUES**

The faculty expects students to make productive and mature judgments concerning their own health and life issues, so that they are able give their all to their training and not put themselves, their fellow actors, or the ensemble into jeopardy.

It is each student's responsibility to maintain and nurture their health, strength, and motivation for the challenges of the program. If these standards become compromised for whatever reason, the student is encouraged to disclose enough information to the faculty or program Head so that together they can determine the best course of action. If a student is unwilling or unable to disclose deteriorating health, stamina, or motivation issues, and is perceived to not be meeting the requirements of the program, the student can expect a "meeting of concern" with the faculty, to assess the problem and plan the best course of action for the benefit of the student, and for the program as a whole. If such a meeting does not succeed in solving the perceived issues, the student may expect to be put on probation.

The University of Houston has resources for students struggling with health and personal issues. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers support, advocacy, consultation, and education regarding alcohol and drug problems, suicide intervention, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and harassment advocacy, and crisis advice (<https://uh.edu/caps/>). UH Dart Student Accessibility Center offers services to the UH community members with disabilities (<https://www.uh.edu/accessibility/>).

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Students planning to leave school for any protracted period of time need to be aware that re-admittance into the PATP program is not guaranteed. The nature of the curriculum, with each course building off the course preceding it, generally does not allow for a one semester leave of absence. Students who find that they must withdraw from the program will usually only be considered for readmittance the following year. All withdrawn students must re-audition for placement. Any waiver of this re-audition requirement is at the sole discretion of the Head of the PATP.

If a student realizes that they need to be absent from the program for any length of time due to a medical diagnosis, psychological issue or family emergency, the student should speak immediately with the Head of the PATP. In cases where a lengthy absence is necessary, a student may wish to consider a complete withdrawal.

## **CASTING POLICY**

The University of Houston School of Theatre & Dance (SoTD) produces plays and productions that embrace the theatrical canon, including classical works, contemporary plays, and new works. The SoTD productions are an extension of the classwork and are designed to serve the students. Upon acceptance into the program, MFA candidates must be willing and eager to "play as cast" in any given production. All MFA acting students will be cast in a production each semester.

As much as is possible, SoTD seasons are chosen to provide opportunities for actors to be cast in a variety of plays and roles. These same opportunities do not necessarily

translate into equitable results. Every effort is made to give each actor in the program opportunities to play a wide range of roles of varying sizes, but there can be no guarantees about the size or nature of the roles any actor will play while enrolled in the program.

This policy conforms to policies of the other leading programs around the country. The School of Theatre & Dance adheres to the University of Houston's policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation/identity, age, marital status, disability status, or veteran status.

### Student responsibility:

In preparation for each semester, students must read all available scripts and breakdowns for the season, and familiarize themselves with each of the plays, prior to auditions. Just as in a professional audition, it is imperative that actors know what they are signing on for, and have a reasonable idea of what will be expected of them. (Please be advised that, due to the nature of new play or film script development, there may be occasions when a finalized script is unavailable prior to our semester auditions.)

In order to offer greater context and facilitate meaningful communication regarding the individual plays produced in our season, production directors will post *audition and callback notices*\*, informing students of the content and the requirements for each production, and each role.

\* *Audition Notice: A brief statement regarding the play and the director's vision for it, including a list of potentially triggering material (e.g. intimacy/sexual content/nudity, aggression/violence/assault, racially charged language, religious themes, etc.)*

\* *Callback Notice: A breakdown of the requirements and requests for each individual role, to provide greater clarity on the director's vision for the play as well as expectations of the actors*

MFA candidates are still responsible for reading the scripts and familiarizing themselves with the plays in question, to determine in advance if there is any content that may be a possible trigger, concern, or conflict for them.

Student concerns with potential casting should be addressed at least one week before semester auditions. The student is asked to submit a rationale to the head of their area, in writing, as to why they wish to be excluded from consideration for a given production. Requests will be reviewed and addressed case by case.

If, in the process of auditions and/or callbacks, or even into the beginning of the rehearsal process, a student feels that their potential or actual casting creates a legitimate personal issue, the student should contact the Head of MFA Acting immediately.

Every attempt will be made to find alternate casting for students who request to be removed from consideration for a particular production; however, please be advised, this will not always be possible.

Occasionally, the SoTD works with local, professional theatre companies to create opportunities for students. In these cases, information about the plays will be included in the department audition notices, and outside directors and/or Artistic Directors will be present for semester auditions. Earning a role in one of these productions will count as official, department casting.

Every student is required to audition each semester for faculty review.

It is the responsibility of the student to make themselves available for all scheduled rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and performance schedules. All potential conflicts need to be submitted for approval to the Head of MFA Acting at least a week before the season auditions, and must also be included on their audition form. If a student fails to fulfill their obligations to a production without adequate cause, it could result in departmental probation.

Please note that an actor may be removed from the mainstage casting pool or from a production at the discretion of the Head of the PATP if they are not meeting their coursework requirements, or if they are on probation for academic or conduct reasons.

## **OUTSIDE WORK FOR ACTORS**

The PATP provides irreplaceable training experiences that are time-sensitive. The curriculum is challenging, comprehensive, and intricate enough that the faculty agrees that it should not be interrupted, even by professional work. The acting program is a particularly concentrated endeavor, one which offers a series of coordinated and overlapping training activities to give actors the foundation on which to build essential and complex skills that can only be grasped through trial and error when practiced with rigor and reinforced through repetition. Our program provides the expertise and somewhat cloistered structure for this necessary training to take place undistracted. Valuable learning also arises from witnessing other students' efforts, and many educational outcomes are made possible by the interdependence forged among fellow artists working together consistently on class projects, rehearsals, and assignments. We feel it is in best interest of the PATP students to be part of an integrated ensemble.

Therefore, the students in the program will only be available for outside work during the period from the end of the spring semester to the beginning of the fall semester, each year. The rest of the year is to be devoted to the training. The exclusion of outside work for actors extends to film, television, commercials, industrials, streaming projects, etc. Additionally, students are not allowed to miss class or rehearsal for auditions or meetings with agents, casting directors, producers, or directors. This is a standard

policy for the leading professional training programs around the country, including Juilliard, Yale, NYU, University of Washington, Trinity/Brown, and others.

On the other hand, the faculty feel strongly that MFA candidates should find summer work as an actor. The PATP will host professional theatre companies to come to Houston (in-person and/or virtually) to audition actors for their upcoming seasons. MFA Acting students are required to present themselves for all of these auditions. This entails preparing appropriate monologues/songs, submitting headshots/resumes/cover letters in an appropriate format by the deadline, arriving for the scheduled audition on time and prepared, participating in callbacks, and sending follow-up communications. When no other times are available, the faculty may choose to interrupt classes for such auditions.

Should summer festival employment begin before the end of the school year, or continue after PATP classes resume, permission may be granted by the Head of MFA Acting on a case-by-case basis, to make it possible for a student to accept that summer work.