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As costume technicians, we exist with a sort of dual identity. While we are artists, and artists collaborating with other artists, we are also craftspeople. What we have in our heads has to translate through our hands, whether it's in the creation of cohesive and buildable patterns or figuring out how the pieces of a dress go together. We make very real clothing for temporary people, and the stakes are often high as far as "getting it right" in the shortest amount of time and money possible. I think that hands-on is the best way to learn anything about costuming. Even designers who never think that they'll be sewing need to learn the basics so they can communicate more clearly what they want in their designs.

In my time teaching costuming students, I've realized that their experience seems to split into two stages. The first stage any costume student will go through is the technical stage. Can they sew a seam accurately? Can they use an iron with any level of finesse? Once they start to master the basic technical skills, they start to move into the processing stage. If they understand how to do one set of skills, they start figuring out how to adapt that to other situations; for instance, bias binding is almost the same skillset as continuous lap plackets. Once a student starts to see how their skills build on each other and can be adapted to most situations, they start being able to anticipate where they're going next and how to problem solve on the way there.

As an instructor, I consciously work on balancing the need to be both fair and demanding. I always want each student to feel like they're actively contributing to the theatrical process to the best of their abilities. I strive within a shop to assign projects that will push students' skillsets and give them the most realistic view of what they'll experience in the outside world. In my past, I have worked with unapproachable professors and shop managers, and I strive to hold myself to the opposite standard. However, I also believe that students need to learn resilience and responsibility, and always attempt to influence students to own their actions. They should be willing to admit when they may have done something not-so-great, as opposed to trying to blame other factors. To model this behavior I will often make public my errors so that students see that issues can happen to the best of us. I believe that screwing up is one of the best ways to learn, and often say to students "as long as you haven't cut anything, we can back out of it and try again." I see a lot of current students terrified to fail, and I make a conscious effort to create a space in which failure is part of the process. While every costumer wants to be proud of the work we send onstage, we also have to remember that we are not building bridges or launching manned spacecraft, and if there are small imperfections, the show will still go on.

I often joke that I work in the "thread mines," given a costume shop's likelihood of being in a theater's basement. Within that sentiment, however, is also a desire to bring technicians out of the basement and into view more, both physically and in the thought processes of those around the theater. At OU, I was often jokingly accused of "radicalizing" the student technicians, encouraging them to make sure that their side of the craft was recognized as much as the design side was, and not to settle for unfair wages in their summer stock work and outside gigs. This "radicalization" is also often carried with me into fittings. I thoroughly enjoy the challenges of fitting non-standard bodies, and have made a point throughout my career of using body neutral language as much as I can, as well as making sure that the people being costumed understand that a fit problem is never about their body, it's always about the garment they're being asked to try on. In many ways I also appreciate the extra level of challenge that different accommodations for people add to my job, whether it's how to disguise waist length hair

inside a molded plastic wig or modifying a ball gown to cover LDS temple garments. I have found that as long as you ask thoughtful questions to find the parameters within which actors and designers alike are willing to work, there's generally an acceptable and often innovative answer for every problem.