

2020-10-7

Dear Second Year MFA Film Students.

I realize in writing this update that a lot of key issues have been touched on in the course of the last few weeks, so I will start by simply recapping where we are and what's in progress, then answer as many of the rep's questions as I can.

- Hopefully already on your calendar, but the MFA FT Faculty will be available **this Friday** to connect and to touch base with you on curricular thinking as the semester begins. Your Student Reps are reaching out to coordinate talking points. We are looking forward to connecting with you.
- Jenny shared a **Production Grant update by email** on 10/2. We anticipate that 2021 Production Grants will be comparable to the funding available in previous years. Jenny and Ann will be holding **Production Grant Info sessions later this month**, but in the mean time they would like to encourage you to take a look at:
 - *Application requirements and other details on the [Directing/Screenwriting](#) and [Producing](#) Production Grant pages*
 - *[Thesis-level production policies](#), including principal photography deadlines for graduation.*
- From Jenny's update on 9/29 re: **Phase 2**: *"As you know, we have actively been working on Phase 2 since Phase 1 was announced in early August. Thanks to those who have contributed feedback on the expansions that would be most helpful to your productions. Our proposal includes the areas that we have heard about the most:*
 - *A slightly larger number of cast and crew allowed on set*
 - *Filming in public outdoor spaces (in addition to the private outdoor spaces outlined in Phase 1)*
 - *Removal of the 14 day quarantine period for locations before the shoot*
 - *Ability to rent/borrow outside equipment*

Please keep in mind Phase 2 requires approval from both the University and external parties, so the timeline for announcing Phase 2 remains TBD. We hope it will be expedient and begin by Fall B. We will keep you posted."

Until then [current equipment and location parameters of Phase 1 production](#) apply.

- **PRODUCTION CENTER:** The Production Center Team are still on track toward our goal of opening the production center for circulation at the beginning of Fall B!
- **AVID MEDIA CENTRAL PROJECT:** The Avid Media Central Project is on schedule and should go live in the beginning of Fall B.
- **Student Facing MFA & MA Event Calendar:** [Click this link to view the calendar](#)

Specific Questions and Concerns from Student Reps 9/25:

Note: It is my understanding that some of the questions specific to Creative Producing are being addressed within concentration, so I haven't included answers here. And likewise questions that have been touched on above (ie. PHASE 2).

Question: "What's the current curriculum plan for Directing 3/4 and DA 3/4 being conducted online?"

Response: We are actively refining planning for Dir 3 and DA 3 in concentration and will email you soon.

We are also thinking about Dir 4 and Dir Actors 4. That thinking will certainly evolve in the coming weeks.

These classes will have the same pedagogical goals they have had in the past, though some course design may adapt to COVID.

Concern: "Need a unified curriculum plan"

Response: Hopefully we can discuss this point on Friday to make sure we're understanding this note/concern. Please know Faculty is in constant conversation as the semester unfolds and conditions change. We are deeply aware of how our curriculum intersects --- both as it has in the past, and as it is changing (connecting differently as we adapt to COVID).

Concern: "We need to extend the Thesis completion semesters/matriculation cap to include all semesters that will be conducted online."

Response: Currently students, needing to complete Thesis work, are eligible up to 2 semesters of Thesis Completion per stipulations of the Policy Statement of 7/24.

Concern from Reps: "It's Portfolio completion, not just Thesis (exercises, 8-12, D4 film)."

*Response: An important clarification: It is **Thesis Completion Status**. As specified in the 7/24 policy statement, COVID interrupted projects (8-12 or D4 respectively) can be completed prior to your Thesis work. **Thesis completion semesters** are by design to support Thesis films. This is what the University has agreed to. Also, exercises from Spring 20 are not specified in the Policy Statement of 7/24/2020.*

We know the exercises of Spring 20 are a concern and are working on ways to address this.

Question: "Any flexibility for auditing during Thesis completion semesters?"

At this point, no. Thesis completion semesters are about making up PRODUCTION opportunities connected to thesis filmmaking.

Question: "Can the Thesis completion option be extended to producers as well looking to finish 8- 12 and exercises?"

Response: See answers above. Thesis completion wasn't designed for exercise work and the 8-12. We hear your concern though, and Faculty will discuss this in more detail.

Question: "What's the current plan for the 2nd year Editing class (originally designed to re-edit 8- 12s)."

Response: We're considering a few options for the Spring and will have an update by end of November.

Question: What's the status/progress on granting alumni access to equipment (something like NYU's 'alumni rig')?

Response: We continue to explore the idea and look for ways to make it workable, but it just isn't possible right now. We will keep you posted.

Yours Truly,
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& Associate Professor of Practice, MFA Film
School of the Arts, Columbia University

Additional useful CU info and links:

Steering Committee/Concentration Heads Fall 2020: Screen & TV writing: Jamal Joseph, Directing: Ramin Bahrani, Creative Producing: Maureen Ryan, Rob King: Film and Media Studies

FOCUS Contact: <focus.filmakers@gmail.com>

Weekly Industry Newsletter

<https://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/ao2324/>

Production for 2nd Year Students

<https://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/hub/2nd-year-students-entered-2019/>