I have the privilege and responsibility of teaching undergraduate students about theatre and why it is an important part of a complete undergraduate education. As an educator, I approach theatre as a distillation of culture and a record of our efforts to understand the world. Theatre embodies the identities, ideals, fears and wisdom of the people sharing this planet. Theatre helps us understand the past and encourages exploration of the cultural moment we are living in right now. Through the study and performance of theatre texts, we can bring new life to the stories first told in ancient Greece, or 19th Century Germany, or pre-colonial India, or yesterday in Tennessee, thereby examining and reconsidering the values and impulses that make us human.

My position at Susquehanna University allows me to both explore the texts of drama and take part in the immediate creation of theatrical productions. I teach courses including Introduction to Dramatic Literature, Stage Management and Theatre Operations, and a hands-on Stagecraft and Production course. In addition to more traditional faculty member responsibilities, I am the faculty technical director for the Department of Theatre. I am responsible for the engineering, organization and financial management of scenery construction and installation along with the integration of scenery with other theatrical elements such as lighting, costumes, properties and stage management. I teach non-theatre majors the basics of the discipline and supervise student theatre practitioners in department productions. Most importantly, my work as technical director is a critical part of my teaching, as it allows me to demonstrate the professional practice of theatre for many students every day by leadership and example. With my dramatic text coursework and my hands-on activity, I am modeling the teaching philosophy of our department; we work to cultivate the “artist-scholar” through a balance between the study and the practice of the art of theatre.

The importance of dramatic literature coursework is understood without argument, but why should the study and practice of “theatre operations” be considered a valuable part of an academic experience? Why do we elevate it to a position of equality with acting, directing and the study of drama as literature? We do this because theatre technology almost perfectly embodies the spirit of a liberal arts education, in that it exposes the student to a range of interconnected experiences and encourages the development of measurable intellectual and practical skills. Theatre operations education introduces undergraduates to the basics of structural design, teamwork and project management, which may include budget estimates and expense coordination, resource and time management, and the basics of personnel management. Effective cooperation between artistic professionals may be the most universally valuable skill we teach in academic technical theatre.

Academic theatre departments are expected to do two things at once: provide comprehensive theatre education for department majors and create quality performing arts events to serve the cultural needs of a university community. As an educator in a “multi-use” academic department, I am responsible for helping students refine their understanding of the discipline as they move toward leadership positions in theatre.
operations, but I must also provide meaningful educational opportunities for students from the university community at large.

I work to promote technical theatre as a valuable part of an overall liberal arts education, and a liberal arts education should help students learn how to think critically, communicate effectively and solve problems in every aspect of life. I support this perspective when I teach, in both the traditional classroom setting and in the laboratory environment of theatre operations. In the classroom, my work is driven by the question "What do YOU think?" I do not expect students to recite from memory the year when Henrik Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* because this information is easily found in reputable reference books. What I do require is that they can express their critical opinions about the work, what it says about its originating cultural moment and what it may illuminate for us in our time and place. In practical technical theatre education, the education process is driven by the collaborative moments between technicians, managers and other artists as we cooperate to bring a production to the audience. There is always a moment in every production when the audience and the artists come together and are changed, emerging from the experience somehow greater than they were before. That is what I teach, and why.

### Scholarship and Creative Activity

My specialty within the discipline of theatre is "technology and operations," which is inherently practice-based and not always immediately focused on the study of theatre texts or performance. In the context of my academic discipline, a theatre production manager or technical director should be well-versed in the canon of world dramatic literature and the historical and cultural movements made manifest by theatre study and performance, but we are first *makers* of theatre.

The scholarly creative activity of a technical direction professor is more likely to take the form of a temporary theatre production, not a conference paper, journal article or research project. Tangible artifacts of scholarship in my field include production planning documents and organization tools, engineering materials, and photographs of finished theatrical production work. Our research is most often embodied in the full-scale theatrical productions created on campus and elsewhere during the academic year.

As a theatre professor, I am fortunate to stand with those of us who *do* write and publish in the field of theatre technology, but we are challenged by the lack of academic journals in our discipline. Our field claims only one nationally peer-reviewed publication, *Theatre Design and Technology*, in addition to several trade publications such as *Stage Directions*. Theatre design and operations as a published academic discipline remains primarily “hands-on” in nature and style, with articles focused on good practice, visual presentation of creative activity, and records of notable theatrical productions. I am pleased to have been published in peer-reviewed journals several times during my years at Susquehanna University, with my work presented alongside the textbook authors of my discipline.

In academic theatre, the technical diagrams and organization tools created during the production process serve as both creative activity documentation and
examples of teaching, because I use these materials as "mini textbooks" to advance my students' understanding of the practice of theatre technology and management.

I believe it is important to contribute to the discipline in ways other than publication, and in 2005 I was invited to join the national Publications Committee of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, serving as Secretary. Similarly, consulting work in my profession can enhance a national reputation and help develop professional skills to inform my teaching. My consulting work ranges from production management improvements, to traditional off-campus technical direction, to interdisciplinary work as a curator for an art gallery exhibition.

Service Philosophy

"Do not confuse 'duty' with what other people expect of you; they are utterly different. Duty is a debt you owe to yourself to fulfill obligations you have assumed voluntarily," writes Robert A. Heinlein. "Difficult it may be, but the reward is self-respect. But there is no reward at all for doing what other people expect of you, and to do so is not merely difficult, but impossible."

In my service to the Department of Theatre and to the university, I am fortunate to be able to follow Heinlein's advice. For me, participation in the life of this academic community has been a pleasant duty, driven by an interest in contributing to our shared work rather than by tenure-based expectations or concern about professional image. Administratively, the academic machinery of our university requires informed, energetic participants to function well, and committees and consultations provide opportunities to reap the benefits of shared talents applied to necessary responsibilities. My previous work with the faculty Admissions Committee continues to inform my ongoing recruitment activities with the Department of Theatre, and my years on the faculty Student Life Committee have helped me craft a successful teaching philosophy as I continue to build an understanding of the student population we serve.

Although I appreciate careful planning and analysis for all activities, especially when stewardship of community resources comes into play, I am always eager to take action. As part of my personal response to diversity initiatives at Susquehanna, I was honored to be invited by several students to join them in bringing to campus the historically black fraternity Phi Beta Sigma. As a graduate member and faculty advisor to the undergraduate men of the organization, I can actively encourage an inclusive campus community and make our university slightly more welcoming to young men from underrepresented populations. My work with the campus judicial program allows me to encourage civil conduct and a healthy social atmosphere to support the community of learning. As a participant on search committees I am able to help bring the best possible new colleagues to Susquehanna.

Service to the university is another way to educate our students. Much of our teaching happens in corridors and between classes, when students watch us interact collegially and, we trust, emulate our behavior. As facilitator of the Minor in Theatre, unofficial summer employment coordinator for department majors, and de facto “company manager” for the Department of Theatre, I support the work of my department
colleagues while simultaneously demonstrating good practices for performing arts management to our students. Philosophically, along with my department colleagues, my work on a daily basis includes perhaps our most important goal: to instill in our students a comprehensive sense of professionalism, maturity and artistry that may serve them well beyond a specific career in theatre. In this way, my service to the university is connected directly to the spirit of our liberal arts institution.