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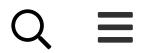
Abstract

A mentorship program designed to increase diversity in theatre, TV and film production by introducing students to behind-the-scenes careers launched recently for students at Kean University.

Keywords

Mentorship program

New Jersey



Mentorship Program Introduces Kean University Students to Entertainment Careers

Kean is one of 10 universities and colleges taking part, and one of only two in New Jersey.

by Chloe Rabinowitz Oct. 12, 2020



A mentorship program designed to increase diversity in theatre, TV and film production by introducing students to behind-the-scenes careers launched recently for students at Kean University.

Equity Through Design Mentorship will match students from Kean and other selected institutions with mentors who are professional set designers, costume designers, art directors and others from the worlds of TV, film and theatre.

"The idea is to help diversify the production departments of TV and film. We hope that through exposure and encouragement, more BIPOC students (Black, indigenous and persons of color) will discover jobs on sets," said Theatre Conservatory Lecturer **David M. Barber**, Kean's program liaison. A professional set and costume designer, he is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, which is endorsing the program.

Equity Through Design Mentorship focuses on BIPOC students and women, but all students are welcome to apply. A series of Zoom panel discussions with industry professionals is also planned and open to any student at participating schools.

"I would like to give the students I work with a leg up in getting introduced to film and TV work," said Barber, who teaches theatre design and technology.

Kean is one of 10 universities and colleges taking part, and one of only two in New Jersey. Several high schools and middle schools were also invited to participate.

The potential mentors include designers from the TV series Gossip Girl, Ray Donovan and Smash; artists who worked on **Spike Lee** and Coen Brothers films; and others.

The first panel discussion is expected to feature the Hamilton costume design team and will take costume design from preliminary sketch to Broadway stage.

Kean College of Liberal Arts Acting Dean Jonathan Mercantini called the program "an amazing opportunity for students to get experience with leaders in these fields and expand their professional networks."

"A program like this can expand horizons and show how opportunities in this field are appropriate for students in a wide variety of majors," he said.

Kean Theatre Conservatory Director Holly Logue said it is "particularly special" for Kean to be included.

"Kean's own diversity seems like a natural fit for a program designed to increase opportunities for diverse communities," she said. "As a theatre conservatory, we are simultaneously working to ensure that our practices, policy, productions and more reflect a sincere desire to be inclusive and aware."

Kean student Kaden Reuter of Haddon Township, a sophomore theatre design and technology major, attended the kick-off webinar.

"Seeing all these artists and professors talk about this program was inspirational," they said. "I think it's vital to increase voices that have been silenced."

Gabrielle Moorman, a North Brunswick freshman majoring in theatre design and technology, is already working on an application.

"I love that they are trying to diversity the field," Moorman said. "I really hope I'm paired with a mentor." For more information on the program, visit <http://www.etdmentorship.org/>.