

Dear UNCG Theatre Angels,

Greetings from the new Director of UNCG's School of Theatre. What a pleasure it is coming back to my alma mater where I received my MFA in Theatre for Youth. I'm returning to the South having spent 17 years teaching theatre and serving in several administrative roles (Director of the Critical Studies of Childhood, Youth, and Learning Program, Dean of the School for Interdisciplinary Arts, and Dean of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion) at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. My family and I are gently adapting to the heat, frequent downpours, much welcomed increased diversity, and we're loving the southern hospitality. So much has changed in Greensboro, on the campus of UNCG, and in the School of Theatre. All have grown impressively, yet there are some comforts of familiarity in UNCG theatre's faces and spaces.

Of course, starting this new position in the midst of a global pandemic presents its own challenges. You'll be pleased to know the University, the College of Visual and Performing Arts, and the School of Theatre have worked tirelessly over the summer to prepare and prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our students and our community. The theatre industry has been devastated by the economic impact of Covid-19. The earliest Broadway will reopen is January 2021. We at UNCG recognize the difficulties producing live theatre during this public health crisis presents, yet we are committed to providing an exceptional educational experience for our students. With this in mind we are endeavoring to produce a full season of shows, altered to accommodate CDC, state, local, and UNC system mandates and recommendations. All productions will be recorded, edited together, then made available for streaming on demand.

As a thank you for your support of UNCG's theatre, we'd like to offer you a complimentary on-demand streaming ticket to each of our streaming performances this season. Please call the box office and mention this "Angels Streaming" offer to redeem your tickets. The box office is open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at 336-334-4392. Please visit www.uncgtheatre.com or speak to the box office to learn more about the on-demand streaming productions we will be offering this season.

In addition to facing a global pandemic this summer, the US contended with civil unrest and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement promoted by the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police. We are in the midst of a new era of civil rights activism. Our students, activists in their own right, are demanding we in the School of Theatre also take heed. Last fall, under the tutelage of Director John Poole the school began a reconciliation process committed to attending to the diversity of our student body (35% of SoT students identify as BIPOC, while 48% of UNCG students are BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Color).

Belonging is central to our community values. In his June 2020 letter to the UNCG community, Chancellor Frank Gilliam asked, "Are we willing to buy into the notion that we have a "shared fate" regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or party affiliation? Are people willing to change how institutions work in this country so that all people are treated fairly?" We in the School of Theatre respond with a resounding yes to these questions! We are intentionally and urgently reconsidering the guest artists we bring to campus, our hiring processes, the

production season, and our curriculum in order to create a more equitable, diverse and inclusive learning environment rooted in anti-racist and anti-bias pedagogical practices. This year we invite you to contribute to this effort. The Musical Theatre Program is commissioning 4 "Mini Musicals" for production in Spring 2021. The writers of these pieces will come from groups too often marginalized on the Musical Theatre Stage: BIPOC, Female, LGBTQ+, and Gender Nonconforming. By viewing contemporary stories through the lens of these writers, we hope to elevate their experiences and allow their voices to help guide the discussions that are taking place in the School of Theatre. This project gives our students important performance experience (in a safe way during the pandemic) and allows us to continue our focus on new works. If your commitment aligns with the over 85,000 people who have signed the *We See You White American Theatre* petition demanding change for BIPOC theatremakers, please donate generously to bring this project to life via the enclosed form.

Thank you once again for supporting artistic practice/theatre making during these challenging times. We hope you enjoy the streamed performances and we look forward to seeing you back at the theatre hopefully someday soon. In the meantime, may you and your loved ones be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'N. Sowell', with a stylized, cursive script.

Natalie Sowell