

Connecting the industry

Dean Teri Schwartz considers industry partnerships a key priority in her plan to modernize UCLA's TFT curriculum, looking for ways to put students in real-world work environments and bring pros into the classroom.



PARTICIPANT MEDIA FELLOWSHIP

Six grad students are selected to work with senior execs at Participant in film and TV development, production, digital media and social-responsibility campaigns.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL PARTNERSHIP

New alliance with performance troupe includes fellowships for grad students in interest in multimedia, motion capture, etc., as well as scholarships for one film and one theater student.

EROS INTL. PARTNERSHIP/INDIA

Working with one of the largest media production and distribution companies in India to develop and deliver online media education to the region's next-generation talent.



MATT GROENING TOON INITIATIVE

Endowments from "The Simpsons" creator Matt Groening fund up to a dozen short films from TFT's grad program (such as "Heart," above), as well as bringing in industry artists to mentor and teach.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS CENTENNIAL

The school is working directly with U to commemorate its 100-year anniversary, with the UCLA Archive curating and exhibiting pics from the studio's history.

TFT YOUNG ALUMNI NETWORK

New program focused on partnering recent grads (fewer than five years out) with UCLA's robust network of more established alumni, including opportunities for networking, screenings and events.

—Media Mentor of the Year—

Teri Schwartz { Dean of UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television }

As biz shifts quicker than academia, TFT honcho re-engineers film school for future

By Glenn Whipp

When Teri Schwartz became dean of UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television nearly three years ago, she arrived with a passel of lofty goals and the heady ambition of re-imagining the venerable institution for the 21st century.

Spend time with the enthusiastic, 62-year-old dean and former film producer and you'll see she's quick to point out that her aspirations aren't out of line with the school's under-one-roof setup, which, Schwartz says, lends itself to preparing would-be filmmakers for today's interconnected landscape.

"We're the one premiere school that has theater, film, television, animation and digital media all under one roof," Schwartz says during a lengthy chat in her office on the Westwood campus. "When I arrived, I felt what we really needed to do was tear down the silos across the disciplines and become completely interdisciplinary. That's the way for us to differentiate ourselves."

Although UCLA was one of the schools that helped define the model on film schools for the 20th century, as the industry evolves, Schwartz believes such institutions must reevaluate their priorities and ask, "What kind of world are we preparing our students for?"

So, while crosstown rival, USC's School of Cinematic Arts, recently opened a state-of-the-art 200,000-sq.-ft. film complex, Schwartz has been working with her faculty and staff to revamp UCLA's curriculum, initiatives and programs to emphasize the school's unique position.

The new offerings play to the school's strengths: its vast network of prestigious alumni (with this year's wins by Alexander Payne and Gore Verbinski, UCLA grads have now amassed 107 Oscars), its proximity to the film industry and its diverse community.

To that end, the MFA acting program has been redesigned to cut across the different media to provide training in stage, television and various types of film, including motion-capture and greenscreen work. The school also has launched a partnership with Cirque du Soleil, providing students opportunities



Araya Diaz/WireImage

to work in the group's various disciplines, including performance, design, costuming and directing.

Curriculum additions include classes by film producer Paula Wagner and screenwriter Bobby Moresco that bring together students in different disciplines, as well as a course in which theater and film students deconstruct and then restage "Gone With the Wind" as a repur-

posed multimedia performance piece.

"We want to combine traditional methods and experimental methods as often as possible to get to this interdisciplinary approach," Schwartz says. "We should be on the leading edge of the conversation about where the intersection of technology and new narrative structures are taking us in the future."

Wherever those stories might lead, UCLA/TFT will be counting on its alumni to help fashion them. "The Simpsons" creator Matt Groening recently donated \$500,000 for an endowment intended for working professionals to teach at the school's animation program. Groening also gives \$50,000 each year to fund student production of animated shorts revolving around themes of social responsibility.

UCLA alum Schwartz ('71, English literature) is keen on further deepening alumni commitment while developing partnerships within the industry, including production companies (Participant Media is onboard with fellowships) and such film festivals as Telluride and Sundance. It's here that she draws upon her 32-year career as a nuts-and-bolts film producer to ensure that professional preparation be central to the school's mission.

"Teri doesn't separate the art and the industry," says Deborah Landis, director of UCLA's Copley Center for Costume Design. "She brings the paradigm of the film business to academia. She's very goal-oriented and gets things done. The school is lucky to have her."

Schwartz feels blessed to have landed back at her alma mater, too. After receiving an M.A. in Film from the U. of London, she returned to Los Angeles and began her career, like so many in Hollywood, at Roger Corman's B-movie factory New World Pictures.

"It was another film school in its own crazy way," Schwartz recalls.

A stint with Robert Abel's pioneering production company followed, which included making musicvideos in the fledgling medium. There she became friends with Bette Midler and Barbra Streisand. When Schwartz closed up shop with Abel, Streisand asked her to help produce her 1987 drama "Nuts." Midler rang next with "Beaches," and soon Schwartz had her own production company and a deal with Touchstone, where she produced "Sister Act."

She left the film business in 2003 when Loyola Marymount approached her to become the first dean of its School of Film and Television.

"It was like a light bulb went on over my head," Schwartz says. "I thought it was an extraordinary opportunity to give back."

Just shy of three years into the job at UCLA, she believes the school is well on its way to better preparing students for the rapidly changing industry.

"Students don't see boundaries across disciplines," Schwartz says. "They'll tell me, 'I made a short film last week and I'm in a play this week and I'm doing a little animated piece over here.' It's an exciting time." ■



During the inaugural year of UCLA's Telluride Film Lab, 10 grad students attended intimate sessions with director Alexander Payne and Glenn Close during the fest. At the Patrons Brunch, they had a chance to meet George Clooney, above.

Telluride Film Lab turns fest guests into honorary UCLA lecturers

By Glenn Whipp

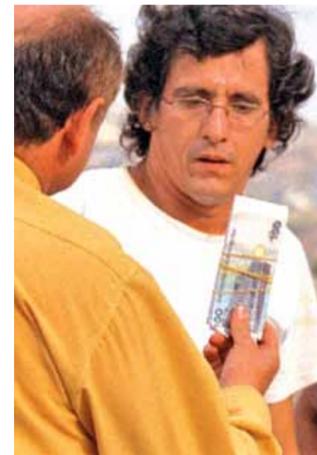
UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television began a partnership with the Telluride Film Festival last September, bringing 10 graduate film students to Colorado for an intense series of workshops and networking events with the talent in attendance, which last year included Alexander Payne, Rodrigo Garcia and Glenn Close.

The visiting students included one, Peruvian-born Julio Ramos, whose Spanish-language short film, "A Doctor's Job," had already been accepted for a Telluride showcase. Of that selection, Telluride festival co-director Julie Huntsinger says, "It speaks to the quality of the students they brought."

This inaugural Film Lab kicked off a two-pronged alliance between Telluride and the school that continued last week with another program, For the Love of Movies, which brings inner-city high-schoolers to UCLA's Westwood campus for a year of co-curated screenings. West Adams Preparatory students enjoyed the initial offering of "Slumdog Millionaire," followed by breakout sessions with UCLA faculty and graduate students.

"We want to help them focus on story and finding their personal voice," says UCLA/TFT dean Teri Schwartz.

Adds Huntsinger: "It's all about



Film Lab attendee Julio Ramos' Telluride experience was enriched by the fact the fest selected his short, "A Doctor's Job," above, to screen there too.

exposure, to movies and to an academic institution the caliber of UCLA."

By all accounts, last fall's Film Lab, which attracted UCLA alum and film school executive board member Frank Marshall as a founding sponsor, accomplished all its goals, immersing the 10 graduate students into the festival and filmmaking experience.

"We're hoping — almost expecting — to see some of them back again someday," Huntsinger says. "Creating this community within a community is very important to Telluride." ■

Uniting the departments

Teri Schwartz describes UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television as "a conservatory within a major research university." Her goal is to bring down the divisions between each discipline and connect with the university at large.

PAULA WAGNER CROSSES OVER

The power producer teaches a new course called "From Page to Stage to Screen to Stage," focusing on the process of adapting novels and plays for film and TV, then back to stage again.



FILMMAKING INTENSIVE CLASS

Oscar winner Bobby Moresco coaches grad students through all stages of the production process on five short films, from writing to acting to post-production (above).

'GONE WITH THE WIND' REMIX

A year-long course that studies the 1939 classic, then deconstructs and remounts the film in new-media formats, applying motion capture, Web and interactive gaming techniques to the project.

REMAP

Fosters a new way of looking at the arts and community development by partnering with the university's Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science.



"O.P.C." by Eve Ensler

TFT THEATER LAB

Students had the opportunity to collaborate on and perform in new plays by Eve Ensler and Antwone Fisher, which were workshoped in a TFT film stage converted into an experimental black-box space for the purpose.

MANAGEMENT & PRODUCING

A joint year-long certificate program offered online that draws on aspects of TFT and the Anderson School of Management to prep students for careers in management and producing.