

Strategic Plan Update

2023-2028

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Mission and Vision	3
Section 2: Goals Aligned with Campus Pillars	3
Goal 1: Deepen Our Engagement with Los Angeles	3
Goal 2: Expand Our Reach as a Global University	4
Goal 3: Enhance Our Research and Creative Activities	5
Goal 4: Elevate How We Teach	6
Goal 5: Become a More Effective Institution	7
Section 3: Inclusive Excellence	8
Section 4: Key Imperative: Infrastructure Modernization	9
Section 5: Strategic Plan Update Process	9
Appendix 1: Summary of FTE	10
Appendix 2: TFT Fact Sheet	11

About this Strategic Plan Update

In early 2024, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Darnell Hunt requested that all units update their strategic plans to align with the five goals in the campus's 2023-28 Strategic Plan. The resulting plan focuses on school-wide goals that address the needs of TFT's programs, faculty, staff, and students.

To prepare this report, TFT formed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee to solicit input from school leadership, faculty, staff, and students. The resulting plan reflects a broad and thoughtful consensus on our commitment to excellence and innovation in our fields, while highlighting the urgent need for modernized facilities and technology, faculty research support, and competitive graduate student recruitment funding. Above all, stakeholders emphasized the need for strong organizational support in essential areas that will advance the educational experience, enable programmatic growth both on and off campus, and increase external support.

MISSION + VISION

Mission

The UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television is dedicated to nurturing and empowering diverse artists, scholars, and visionaries committed to the profound ability of the arts to drive meaningful change. As a leading professional school within the nation's top public research university, TFT emphasizes excellence in education, research, and public service. TFT thrives on collaboration among its faculty, staff, and students, and is enriched by strong relationships with alumni, civic leaders, cultural organizations, and industry partners in entertainment and the performing arts.

Vision

Over the next five years, TFT will strengthen its position as a global leader in the dramatic and cinematic arts, known for innovative research, interdisciplinary pedagogy, and a commitment to inclusive excellence. To achieve this, TFT will focus on modernizing its physical, technological, and administrative infrastructure to better support its mission. With these updates, TFT can enhance industry and community engagement, grow enrollment, expand cutting-edge research, and improve rankings. While TFT already excels in the goals of UCLA's 2023-28 Strategic Plan, much of our success has relied upon the extraordinary efforts of individual faculty, staff, and students on a scale that is not sustainable. Our goal is to create lasting support for such efforts within a mission-driven organizational structure.

About TFT

TFT excels at innovation, inclusivity, and artistic and scholarly excellence in the dynamic fields that make up the dramatic and cinematic arts. The school uniquely brings together one of the oldest art forms (theater) with one of the newest (digital media). While the two departments are often described in terms of storytelling to audiences, the departments' histories and practices are far more complex, bringing together art forms and knowledge production that play a vital role in community, society, and cross-cultural communication. TFT's work speaks across built spaces, informal venues, virtual environments, and published works. This complexity is reflected in the diversity and expertise of our faculty and staff, whose professional achievements, public service, and dedication to training the next generation of artists and scholars are at the heart of the school's success.

GOALS ALIGNED WITH CAMPUS PILLARS

Goal 1: Deepen Our Engagement with Los Angeles

TFT has a long history of engaging with Los Angeles through its research, creative work, teaching, student placement, and alumni and donor engagement. However, in listening to our TFT community, we recognize the need to shift from an aggregate of impactful one-off efforts to an intentional, integrated program that can expand opportunities and networks.

Priority Initiatives

Establish a Structured Approach to Community and Industry Relations: TFT needs a dedicated program to connect its resources with the broader community, strengthening industry relations, cultural partnerships, and career support while facilitating events and guest engagements. This initiative would require funding for staff, faculty advisors, and programming.

Emerging Opportunities

Explore Opportunities at UCLA's Satellite Campuses: UCLA's continued expansion in downtown LA, the Research Park at the former Westside Pavilion, and the South Bay provides a unique opportunity to bring TFT's scholars and artists out into the city and invite members of our community to interact in their own neighborhoods.

Expand Service to Los Angeles through TFT Professional Programs: Our renowned Professional Programs offer graduate-level certificates in several areas of film. TFT could offer these programs at satellite locations, giving Southern California access to TFT in new ways.

Current Activities

ArtsBridge: Led by Department of Theater faculty, ArtsBridge enriches LAUSD K-12 schools by connecting TFT students with classrooms for ten-week teaching artist residencies.

Guest Speakers and Visiting Instructors: TFT faculty consistently exceed student expectations by integrating leading entertainment professionals into the classroom experience.

Student Showcases: Each spring, TFT hosts a series of student showcases, including Design Showcase West, the Actor's Showcase, and the TFT Film Festival. Industry professionals are invited to connect with emerging talent and serve as judges for competitive awards.

Goal 2: Expand Our Reach as a Global University

By expanding our global footprint through strategic partnerships, we will not only elevate UCLA and TFT's reputation and influence but also bring global perspectives into the classroom, preparing students for the ever-evolving landscape of the arts.

Priority Initiatives

International Faculty Hires and Research Support: TFT boasts a roster of internationally renowned scholars and artists and must continue to prioritize diversity and global perspectives in faculty recruitment and research funding in both departments.

International Alumni Engagement: While alumni engagement is strong in Southern California, TFT must prioritize strengthening the bonds with alumni working in the industry around the world.

Emerging Opportunities

Expand Our Reach Through Global Partnerships: TFT needs to explore exchange and residency programs for faculty and students, as well as with TFT-branded programs at international universities. Such global programs offer mutually beneficial opportunities for both academic enrichment and institutional growth.

Goal 3: Enhance Our Research and Creative Activities

TFT's research vision focuses on increasing sponsored research opportunities and enhancing support for faculty projects in line with other campus units. By positioning itself as a hub for innovation in emerging fields, TFT will align faculty hires and student recruitment with this goal. Committed to fostering cross-departmental collaboration, TFT also aims to lead in center- and institute-scale research initiatives while securing external funding to support these efforts.

Priority Initiatives

Establish Administrative Support for Faculty Research: TFT needs to strengthen faculty research support in order to foster groundbreaking work, and specifically hire a grant officer. With such support, TFT will be better positioned to be a leader in research and creative endeavors while advocating for arts funding at the university and state levels.

Position TFT as a Hub for Innovative Research in Entertainment and the Performing Arts: TFT will continue advancing cutting-edge technologies like virtual production, AI, and immersive media through interdisciplinary research that merges science, technology, and the arts. To stay competitive and drive innovation, TFT must expand its faculty in these rapidly growing fields, fostering industry partnerships, cross-campus research, and graduate student opportunities.

Emerging Opportunities

Fundraising for Endowed Chairs: TFT Development will prioritize funding for termed chairships, as these positions provide substantial research support over several years and help raise the profile of the groundbreaking work being conducted at TFT.

Develop a Collaborative Interdepartmental and Cross-Campus Research Culture: By increasing faculty and graduate student collaboration through colloquia, events, guest scholars, and shared projects, TFT can strengthen ties across its departments and across campus, catalyzing opportunities for securing external funding.

Pursue Leadership in Center- and Institute-Scale Collaborative Research: To expand our impact on arts research, we must pursue large-scale, interdisciplinary initiatives by developing center- and institute-level collaborative projects. TFT has a recent track record in developing such proposals for the National Science Foundation, and expects that this strategy will position TFT as a leader in innovative research.

Current Research & Funding

Existing External Grants: TFT faculty have demonstrated their ability to attract funding beyond the limited resources available for the arts and humanities. For example, current active grants secured by three senior faculty in both departments total over \$7M. These innovative, collaborative projects often extend across campus.

Current Research Centers: TFT currently houses three research centers: Center for Performance Studies, David C. Copley Center for Costume Design, and the Center for Research in Engineering, Media and Performance (REMAP).

Dean's Faculty Research Fund: In 2023-24, Dean Brian Kite launched a faculty research fund, offering seed support in areas with limited campus and extramural funding. This initiative, which was well-received by faculty, presents an opportunity to work with the Development office to establish a sustainable funding strategy.

Goal 4: Elevate How We Teach

TFT faculty prepare students for the evolving arts and entertainment industry. To support their success, we must upgrade our facilities with state-of-the-art technology and teaching spaces while fostering a culture of community, collaboration, and inclusive excellence.

Priority Initiatives

Enhance Industry Readiness: To prepare students for industry and academic careers, the curriculum must balance creative design with marketable skills and hands-on learning. Supplemental programming, including master classes, guest speakers, and expanded internships, will further strengthen professional and academic connections while preserving the core artistic focus.

Graduate Student Recruitment Funding: In order for TFT to compete for top graduate students, we must increase graduate student funding packages through fundraising and additional campus support.

Emerging Opportunities

Expanded Undergraduate Film Major: FTVDM is exploring expanding its undergraduate major. Currently, space, equipment, and staffing for film production limit the number of BA students admitted. We propose a second BA track focused on media studies that would include more lecture-based courses. Such expansion will require additional faculty, staff, and classroom space, but also be of mutual benefit to the campus, school, and department.

Expand Production Partnerships with Other Arts Organizations: TFT students need more opportunities to hone their craft since the limited number of TFT productions restricts hands-on experience. Strengthening partnerships with organizations like the Geffen Playhouse and other UCLA departments will provide students more chances to apply their skills in a production environment.

Interdisciplinary and Interdepartmental Collaboration: Students seek more collaboration between the two departments, especially as part of their coursework. Such collaboration is crucial for preparing graduates to generate and execute innovative ideas in the rapidly evolving entertainment industry.

Current Activities

Theater Freshman Experience: This program emphasizes a flexible, individualized approach, allowing first-year Theater students to explore acting, playwriting, directing, and design while developing interdisciplinary storytelling skills. It also fosters strong cohort bonds that often extend into their professional careers.

Teaching Excellence and Innovation: As a pioneer in online education at UCLA, TFT Online sets the standard for creative learning in media and performing arts, supporting faculty with instructional design, media production, and technology. Students strongly support expanding hybrid and online options to maximize in-person time for hands-on activities.

Goal 5: Become a More Effective Institution

Despite limited resources, TFT faculty, staff, and students consistently achieve outstanding results, though staffing shortages and new administrative software have caused delays. Over the next five years, TFT will improve efficiency through internal adjustments and coordination with campus administration under a unified vision.

Priority Initiatives

Administrative Effectiveness Task Force: TFT will establish an Administrative Effectiveness Task Force to improve processes, implement efficient technological tools, and enhance communication with stakeholders.

Development Strategy: At the direction of the school leadership and in collaboration with the faculty, the Development team will create a long-term strategy to support the initiatives in this plan.

Facilities Review: Long-term, TFT requires substantial financial support to renovate its facilities (see Overarching Priority section). In the short term, TFT will catalog renovation needs and assess immediate maintenance and accessibility concerns. This approach addresses repairs that require immediate attention while laying a foundation for future capital projects.

Equipment and Technology Planning: TFT will develop a proactive life cycle strategy for updating equipment and technology infrastructure to keep pace with industry innovation. Funding will need to be secured to ensure its long-term success.

Emerging Opportunities

Diversify Revenue Streams: TFT has several strong revenue-generating programs, including Summer Institutes, Theater Workshops, TFT Online, and the Professional Programs. We need to continue to diversify our revenue streams and increase the proportion of non-state funds in our operating budget.

Current Activities

Culture and Community: Survey responses show strong commitment to the TFT community, which has prioritized respect, transparency, and recognition. Initiatives include revitalized staff awards, interdepartmental faculty events, a cross-disciplinary MFA course, and a Student Wellness Coordinator.

Marketing and Communications Reorganization: This office is in the midst of a comprehensive overhaul to improve internal communications with faculty, staff, and students, enhance external media relations, and strengthen our web-based and social media presence.

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

TFT has a long-standing commitment to social justice, inclusion, and amplifying underrepresented voices. We boast one of the most diverse Senate faculties at UCLA, and we continually strive to enhance student diversity. Our students are actively engaged in inclusive excellence initiatives and are key collaborators in this ongoing process.

Priority Initiatives

Infrastructure for EDIA Programs: TFT needs stronger support to provide inclusive excellence programs at the school level. Compared to other institutions and UCLA departments, TFT has minimal support despite unique challenges related to EDIA. TFT students work together in groups, after hours, in highly stressful situations, as a regular part of their demanding coursework. Much of their education comes from industry lecturers with varying degrees of EDIA experience.

Training for New Instructors: TFT must develop arts-specific equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility training in instructor onboarding. Students have highlighted the need for training on accommodations, sensitive topics, accessibility, and pronoun usage. With a Faculty Forward Initiative grant, TFT is creating an EDI Network Toolkit and offering stipends to instructors who complete the program.

Support for Underrepresented Minority Faculty: TFT must ensure underrepresented minority faculty have a voice in leadership without overburdening junior and mid-career faculty with service responsibilities. TFT needs to codify service requirements for pre-tenure faculty, document tenure expectations and timelines, monitor labor equity concerns, and schedule regular meetings with junior faculty.

Continuing Successes

Diversity in Faculty Hiring: TFT has been very successful in diversifying its faculty, including through recent and upcoming faculty hires through the Bruin Rising Initiative. In 2023-2024, ladder rank faculty were 43% white, 57% non-white/multiple; 53% female, 30% male, 17% non-binary/unknown; 89% domestic and 11% international.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: As the birthplace of the “LA Rebellion” movement, TFT has a rich history of social justice, activism, and “maverick artistic thinking,” aligned with its mission as a public university. This ethos continues to shape our curriculum and pedagogy, serving as a platform for new works by emerging and underrepresented voices.

EDI Programming and Services: The faculty Equity Advisor supports programming based on topics identified by faculty and student representatives. In 2023-2024, programming focused on gender diversity in film and theater. In Fall 2024, TFT Student Services launched the TFT Wellness Initiative, providing support services tailored to student needs and under the leadership of a Student Wellness Coordinator. This position is partially funded by the Chancellor’s Office for a period of three years.

Resources Required

EDI Administrative Support: Additional campus support is needed for the EDI leadership within schools and departments. There is no dedicated staff support for EDI, leaving the Associate Dean or Equity Advisor to handle all event programming, communications, and research themselves.

Graduate Student Funding: A significant challenge for TFT is the inability to offer competitive recruitment packages to graduate students, limiting access for financially disadvantaged and often more diverse applicants. Inclusivity is closely tied to financial support: without adequate funding, many students simply cannot afford to attend TFT.

Modernize Facilities for Accessibility Compliance: TFT needs funding to improve accessibility across its facilities, including adding gender-neutral bathrooms in Melnitz.

KEY IMPERATIVE - INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION

The most pressing concern raised in our faculty, staff, and student surveys was the urgent need to modernize TFT's infrastructure, including facilities and technology. This concern touches every area of this strategic plan update, and therefore we have split it into its own section.

TFT must continuously upgrade its facilities to keep pace with industry trends and technological advancements. These improvements are essential for enhancing education, research, and fundraising while ensuring greater accessibility for our community. In order to provide students with meaningful experiential learning, TFT needs a fully staffed production facility capable of supporting innovations like LED virtual backgrounds, live VFX, AI, and advanced computing. Classroom and shared spaces should be redesigned to foster collaboration and experimentation across cohorts and departments, alongside a life cycle replacement plan for computing equipment and software. These upgrades will position TFT at the forefront of media and performing arts education, ensuring we remain competitive and provide students with a cutting-edge, industry-relevant experience. Securing the necessary funding is critical to realizing this vision.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Strategic Planning Process

Dean Brian Kite envisioned a collaborative process for the strategic plan refresh, engaging all members of the TFT community. He invited Senate faculty and permanent staff to form a Steering Committee that would oversee a comprehensive process. The resulting committee planned mechanisms for feedback at the individual, program, departmental, and school level. These mechanisms included a survey to faculty, staff, and students; individualized input from School leadership; and presentations to the annual all-staff and all-faculty meetings. The Steering Committee wrote the final report, and Dean Brian Kite submitted it to the EVCP's office on October 15, 2024.

Throughout the process, there was a strong sense of engagement and commitment to the school, its students, and the art forms we cultivate. A clear consensus emerged on key priorities, despite disciplinary differences between the two departments. Top concerns included budgets, facilities, and the need for additional faculty and staff. Respondents emphasized the need to strengthen ties with industry and cultural institutions and increase student funding for greater inclusivity.

Strategic Plan Update Steering Committee

Aaron Cervantes, Director of Development
Felipe Cervera, Assistant Professor, Theater
George Huang, Professor, FTVDM
Chrisi Karvonides, Professor, Theater
Amanda Kibiloski, Director of Enrollment Management
Kerry Schutt Nason, Director of Educational and Information Technology – Co-Chair
Chon Noriega, Distinguished Professor, FTVDM – Co-Chair
Miebaka Opuiyo Yohannes, Student Services Assistant
Sylvan Oswald, Associate Professor, Theater

Implementation

This report recommends concrete next steps for achieving our goals, with school leadership tasked with developing a process, plan, timeline, oversight, and staffing for their respective units. During the implementation process, TFT will continue engaging faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee recommends forming a schoolwide Implementation Committee to ensure accountability, with progress tracked at the unit, department, and school levels.

APPENDIX 1: FTE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

Following is a compilation of the positions that were mentioned throughout the report, provided in this format for ease of reading.

New Staff Positions

Community and Industry Relations: Two or three staff positions and a faculty advisor to establish a structured program.

Development Office: Alumni Relations staff member.

Office of Associate Dean for Research: A staff Grant Officer for faculty research support.

Office of Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: A staff member or GSR to provide administrative and programmatic support.

Schoolwide and Departmental Administrative Staff: Additional staff are urgently needed to relieve the administrative burden on faculty and allow them to focus more on teaching and research.

New Faculty Positions

Additional Faculty for Curricular Expansion and Expertise in Emerging Areas: TFT will require new faculty FTE if we want to increase enrollment in any of our programs, as well as if we want to become a leader in emerging entertainment technology.

APPENDIX 2: TFT FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA (FTVDM)

Degrees: BA, MFA, MA, PhD

Program Areas: Animation, Cinema Media Studies, Cinematography, Producers Program, Production/Directing, Screenwriting

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER

Degrees: BA, MFA, PhD

Program Areas: Acting, Design for Theater & Entertainment, Directing, Playwriting, Musical Theater, Theater & Performance Studies

FACULTY + STAFF

Number of Individuals

FTVDM ladder faculty	21
Theater ladder faculty	19
Non-ladder faculty	~250
Staff	88

Ladder Faculty Ethnicity

American Indian/Alaska Native	0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	11%
Black/African American	14%
Hispanic/Latino	20%
White Non-Hispanic	46%
Multiple	9%

FALL 2023 ADMISSIONS

	Applications	Admits	Rate
Undergraduate first-year	3,825	123	3%
Undergraduate transfers	909	34	4%
Graduate	986	161	16%

STUDENTS

Enrollment

Film undergraduate	89
Film graduate	207
Theater undergraduate	250
Theater graduate	49
Total Students	595

Residency

California Residency	66%
Domestic Non-Resident	21%
International	14%

Ethnicity

American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	18%
Black Non-Hispanic	14%
Hispanic/Latino	19%
White Non-Hispanic	33%
Unstated/Unknown/Other	1%

Gender

Female	59%
Male	35%
Non-Binary/Other	6%

Other Metrics

Underrepresented minority	34.4%
Undergraduate first-generation	20%
Undergraduate Pell Grant recipients	28%

APPENDIX 2: TFT FACT SHEET

FACILITIES

Buildings

Melnitz Hall: James Bridges Theater, Darren Star Screening Room, film classrooms, sound stages, animation labs, post-production labs, tech office, screening rooms, scoring stage, edit suites, VR lab, Theater experimental lab

Macgowan Hall: Theater classrooms, dance studios, rehearsal spaces, Design Studio computer lab, costume shop

Macgowan Production: Freud and Little Theaters, scene and prop shop, lighting and grip office, dance studios

East Melnitz: Administrative offices

Theaters

Freud Theater: 562-seat proscenium theater

Little Theater: 172-seat proscenium theater

Macgowan 1330: ~50 seats, currently under renovation

Studio Theater 1340: 81-seat black box theater

James Bridges Theater: 278-seat movie theater

Darren Star Screening Room: 50-seat movie theater, renovated 2015