

ITHACA COLLEGE

FILM STUDENT UNION



The Ithaca College Film Student Union serves as a voice for the *Cinema and Photography and Film, Photography, and Visual Arts* majors. We are dedicated to rebuilding and strengthening the film department to reach its fullest potential. With a new degree program in development, we believe that now is the optimal time to address the following:

After discussion with many students, alumni, and faculty, it became apparent that the IC Film Department is struggling to maintain daily operations, therefore disrupting the education of students and stunting their potential. Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient staff numbers, inconsistent course instruction, limited course offerings, misallocated resources, and dwindling funding have created a noticeable decline in Park School media creations. Through our discussions, we formulated a collection of grievances and proposed solutions that are compiled in this document. We are confident that by encouraging student involvement through the Film Student Union, these issues can be efficiently and adequately addressed and prevented. With support from Cathy Crane (Department Chair), Bradley Rappa (Associate Professor), and Andy Watts (Assistant Professor), we have successfully integrated and collaborated with the film faculty to present a detailed and necessary proposal for consideration by Dean Falkner and fellow students.

Our mission is clear: We aim to provide a student perspective in the College administrative processes and guide the restructuring of the film department with strategic and comprehensive goals to oversee the development of our program into the future. We hope to better equitably prepare film students with the knowledge, experience, and skill sets to be successful in their artistic fields by orienting our focus to five main pillars:

1. *Course Content & Curriculum Structure*
2. *Program Resource Access*
3. *Industry Preparedness*
4. *Women in Film*
5. *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging*

The Ithaca College Film Student Union is united behind the effort to create lasting reforms that will change the educational experience for all current and future IC Film students.

For more information and to see a live count of our [Change.org](https://www.change.org) proposal, which has been signed by over 200 supporters, and visit our website at icfilmunion.com.

COURSE CONTENT & CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

Core Curriculum Issues

Uneven Playing Field

People come into Park at different stages of their filmmaking careers with huge gaps in experience and knowledge. Classes like Cinema Production 1 (CP1) & Cinema Production 2 (CP2) try to cater to those who start with little to no background. However, the curriculum does not effectively standardize knowledge and generates a steep learning curve for beginner students.

When professors do not see student potential, they frequently give up on assessing that student's needs. They fail to support students who've fallen behind. As a result, students who receive more attention are propelled forward and the others are left even further behind.

Proposed Solutions

- CP1 and CP2 classes must be standardized and not faculty-specific. Everyone needs the same foundation.
 - Professors tend to teach the courses according to an incredibly loose curriculum. Increased communication between the professors teaching the same courses and using a more standardized curriculum between sections may help bridge the gap of knowledge and experience.
- Introductory courses should have a mandatory "Set Requirement." Other majors have required research hours, this is the cinema equivalent.
 - Fellow students would have to write a reflection on how they did; a post-production "Set Report" assignment.
 - Students should be required to fill multiple roles in pre-production, production, and post-production within their first two years.
 - NYU film students have to show proof that they've been on sets for 15 hours (30% of introductory grade).
 - In Dillingham, Acting and Musical Theatre BFA majors are *required to take two* sections of a practicum where they learn the technical side of theatre to complete their major. This allows them to be more well-rounded in theater overall. ¹

¹<https://catalog.ithaca.edu/undergrad/schools/school-music-theatre-and-dance/theatre-and-dance-performance/acting-major-bfa>

Counterproductive Curriculum Structure

For the *Cinema and Photography B.S.* major, 60 out of Park credits impair schedules and force students into unsatisfactory course trajectories where there is not enough concentration on the art and practice of filmmaking.

Another issue for students is course registration. The limited number of classes combined with the restriction of certain classes for *either* CP/FPVA or TVDM is preventing Park students from getting the education they need or desire. Courses have limited enrollment and are inconsistently offered from semester to semester and even year to year.

These issues throw students down limiting pathways and in some cases, cause them to stay an extra semester(s). As stated in the previous section, Dillingham students are required to take classes in *all* disciplines – acting, lighting, directing, sound design, etc. – but cinema students are pigeonholed into one path with an unclear end.

Proposed Solutions

- Create a set course structure with checkpoints every professor *must* ensure their students reach, especially for entry-level courses.
- Allow more flexibility and opportunity in course registration.
 - Require fewer outside of Park credits.
 - Add classes (theory and niche production), which will create a smoother registration (less competition for seats).
 - Implement a practicum course.
 - Hire more Cinema Professors.
 - Encourage Park Minors instead of prohibiting them. We have to remove the ideology that everything is “involved in our major.”. They're crucial to our development; they allow us to hone in on our craft.

Introductory Film Courses

Absence of Formal Introductory Course

A formal introductory course is absent. Our education relies on fundamentals taught in a class such as the late Dr. Zimmermann’s Film Aesthetics and Analysis. This class was intense but it gave students new to film theory a good sense of what the filmmaking world truly looks like. It forced students to think about film in a global sense, away from just Hollywood.

Proposed Solutions

- Create a Film A&A equivalent course.
- Hire new Screen Studies Faculty, and make more than one class of its kind mandatory.

Failing a Cinema Production Class

Each production class achieves different goals; often not reaching appropriate checkpoints. Inevitably professors will conduct classes differently but the lack of requirements doesn't ensure that everyone is learning sufficient knowledge. But simultaneously, cinema production classes are tasked with teaching too much information within a singular class.

Students are not failed nor given honest feedback. There should be a balance between supporting a student's growth and being honest. These introductory classes should push people into their film experience and careers, as well as test people's passion for the medium. *Not everyone should move on to the next class.*

Proposed Solutions

- Standardized assignments, tests, rubrics, and class schedules. Especially between sections of the same course.
- CP1 and CP2 should allow for the following:
 - a) Normalize failure and expose areas that need work. We believe if classes are harder, people will rise to the occasion.
 - b) Focus on theory and filmmaking as an art while another class, a pairing Practicum, teaches the practical/technical side.
- There must be a large assessment at the halfway mark at the end of CP2. This should be a portfolio check-in. Students will have to practice making films but also how to pitch themselves and create a portfolio of their work.

Lost Course Content

It is important to learn how to conduct ourselves since we are learning a collaborative medium. As it currently stands, we are not taught proper set safety and procedures, nor how to respect crew members, cast members, and subject matters with care and specificity. We do not talk about the rampant sexual harassment of women on set or stereotyped roles in films. Our production classes normally involve students watching the professor talk without any sort of action or involvement from the students.

Another missing piece of course content is sound, both location recording and sound design. Unless a professor cares about it or has a TA with expertise, learning about sound is not incentivized. We are in a huge drought of sound recordists in the school, and pro-sound equipment sits and collects dust in PPECS.

Proposed Solutions

Either incorporate into the new CP1 and CP2 curriculum or add classes regarding the following:

- Set Etiquette and Safety
- Industry Social Issues - *this may require its own class*
- More in-class Shoots/Formal Filming and Recording in classes

Advanced Cinema Production Classes

Lack of Availability and Access

Advanced Cinema Production classes are in high demand and they are not offered enough for students to take the classes they want to. There are also no classes on Production Design or anything in the Art Department which is incredibly important to storytelling.

Proposed Solutions

- Hire more faculty for extra classes or admit fewer students into the film program.
- Create a Cinema Art Department/ Production Design classes that are accessible to film students. We know there is talk of a Production Design minor being added, but it should combine classes in Park and Dillingham.

Unproductive Structure

Any class that requires the creation of a full film including pre-production, production, and post-production is squeezed into one semester and does not allow for careful and thorough filmmaking. Because of this students often won't take chances on new crew members which in turn leads to isolated groups of filmmakers.

With the current course structure, many students jump into Thesis without proper preparation. ACPs are supposed to expose discrepancies in skills and experience, but these classes do not compensate for knowledge gaps, nor do they push students to become better filmmakers.

Proposed Solutions

- There needs to be more collaboration between ACP classes. This way there are fewer projects, more communication and delegation, and students can hone in on the skills learned in their specialized classes. Each student would only have one job and would each have a mentor: their professor.
 - A non-exhaustive list of classes that should have better lines of communication:
 - Screenwriting classes
 - This one is especially important. Many of the Screenwriting Majors never see their films get made while Cinema students struggle to write scripts
 - ACP Fiction
 - ACP Cinematography
 - ACP Indie Film Financing
 - ACP Editing
 - ACP Sound Editing

- Thesis and Developing the Short should be a facilitated, year-long, conjoined class. A class where we get help creating our thesis films, like ACP Developing the Short, should be a *required path* for every student.
- ACP classes should be intensive and challenge students, which goes back to the idea of actually critiquing students.

Thesis

No Preparation

One 15-week class is too short for all stages of pre-production, production, and post-production. This issue is exasperated in Thesis. Not to mention that some students are unprepared when they realize they need to make their own projects.

Too many students go into Thesis with the following problems:

- Lack of connections to crew members.
- Lack of understanding of the logistics of making a film.
- Lack of experience directing their own film before.

Proposed Solutions

- As stated above, Developing the Short should be made a required class, or Thesis should be made two semesters long.
- Make sure that Thesis is not the first time a student is directing and collaborating on their *own* project.

Insufficient Class Structure

While workshopping films is the crux of this class, there are many parts of the filmmaking process that are not discussed. Also, many of the lectures are about filmmaking styles and ideas when most students should be/are coming into the class with their ideas already, due to the short length of the course.

Proposed Solutions

- Have breakout classes that cover more specific material to help students along the way.
- This class would be more beneficial to be structured as an additional theory class.
- Bring in Industry Professionals to teach us specific parts of the filmmaking process from idea to exhibition.
- Plan the Thesis Screening with sufficient time to fundraise, and order food, posters, programs etc.

Lacking Equipment Knowledge

Inadequate Equipment Training

It is important that all film students first learn how to be effective storytellers using the bare minimum. However, heading into the industry, everyone should gain competency on the best equipment available to us. Unfortunately, there is a huge disparity in equipment knowledge among students in Park due to inadequate training. This is often the catalyst of broken equipment and injuries, as well as a lack of on-set or technical experience.

Professors all have different approaches to teaching equipment due to differences in their own knowledge of the equipment. The responsibility then falls to students who work in PPECS – specifically those in PPECS Pro – to take the lead on sets in order to ensure both equipment and bodily safety. These are fundamental skills that all film students should learn during class.

Students don't have the know-how to make their ideas a reality. By forcing people to take agency in all areas of filmmaking, students will be able to find more people to collaborate with.

Proposed Solutions

- More assignments or in-class shoots that force students to learn how to use the equipment in a set-like environment.
 - Create a Practicum class to pair with production classes. This would allow production classes to talk theory while providing students with a course that's sole purpose is to teach equipment usage.
- Have test days where students are forced to exhibit they have basic knowledge of the equipment before they are allowed to reserve it. It would be a similar process to PPECS Pro Equipment workshops.
- Have PPECS employees come into classes to teach equipment. They handle the equipment more often than the professors do, and they have the full faith of the support staff. This also opens communication between students and PPECS employees for questions they may have.
- Anyone should be allowed to take a workshop. Not that they should have access to the equipment but everyone uses equipment on sets and everyone should be able to be taught any and all the equipment if they choose.
- As stated in [*Core Curriculum Issues: Uneven Playing Field*](#), Students should be required to do different roles on sets, especially in introductory classes.

Accountability

Lack of Accountability to be on Set & No Repercussions for Poor Performance on Set

We should be encouraging students to be on set and also building accountability for putting in effort and learning on set.

No one has repercussions for performing poorly on a set or running a poor set. Consistent performance reviews must take place so that their behavior and mistakes don't continue or follow them into the industry while representing IC and the Park School.

Proposed Solutions

- We can use a credit-based system for getting people on set in which students get class credit for being on set, akin to Whalen and Dillingham where students must attend a certain number of performances throughout a semester.
- We should have performance reviews, similar to in Dillingham that are conducted by professor but we can also rely on Set Reports for peer review.

Lack of Sufficient Teaching About the Set Environment

As briefly touched upon in the [Lost Course Content](#) section, we are not taught set etiquette and language, which is frustrating because we are learning to create professional settings on our student sets. This leaves other students to become instructors and fill in the gaps while on set and makes us seem ill-prepared on professional jobs. Such topics we need to discuss in class include understanding the set hierarchy, set language, and basic knowledge of gender and racial inequality often seen in set environments.

Additionally, Intimacy Coordination is not taught or even mentioned in production classes, which is problematic since students often write intimate scenes; we need to understand how to film these scenes safely and comfortably for everyone on set. *Especially* in the wake of the requirement SAG-AFTRA that “studios and production companies must take performers' requests for an intimacy coordinator under consideration, without retribution” for every union set with any amount of intimacy in the script.

Proposed Solutions

- Incorporate lessons about set environment into the courses, or require a course solely dedicated to how to compose oneself on set/ in a professional environment.
- More in-class shoots with high expectations for student performance and minimal professor intervention.
- Intimacy coordination is an underrated role in film school. There should be at least one course offered that teaches filmmakers how to make sure everyone is comfortable on set, *especially* the actors; their comfort is of little importance to directors at times.

Collaboration - Lack of Campus Connections

There is no facilitated collaboration or interaction with majors outside of Park, which would greatly benefit the Film students as well as those in other majors in Dillingham, Whalen, Park Business, etc.

There is also a lack of collaboration between majors and classes even *within* Park. As mentioned in [Advanced Cinema Production Classes](#), work needs to be produced by Screenwriting majors, as well as film students taking other Cinematography, Production, Editing, and Sound classes.

Another issue is underclassmen are not connected to upperclassmen. Other classmates, especially those with more experience are a crucial source of learning. It allows students to be mentored by peers who graduate and become alumni. Those connections can help current students find work in the industry.

There is also a competitive nature in the Park School among some of its students. Individualism destroys connections!

Proposed Solutions

- Require collaboration with other associated majors. This can be structured through specific classes that require crossover or school events that allow students to show off their work and abilities to their peers.
- Create a database for creatives that allows students to describe their expertise and provide images of their work.²
- Help us advertise our abilities for art creation and designs to students who need posters, videos, etc. This would be *in addition* to a database.
- Require underclassmen to be on upperclassmen sets. As stated in the [Core Curriculum Issues section](#), NYU students are required to show proof they spent 15 hours on set and counts for 30% of their introductory grade

² IC Alumna Surina Belk-Gupta created a on-male IC filmmakers database (<https://sbelkgupta.wixsite.com/genderdiversityonset>) which can be used as an example for one formally created and maintained by the Park School that includes all IC students.

Funding - Wealth Disparities Affect Quality of Student Films and Sets

Students are expected to fund their projects on their own, despite many students struggling to even pay for tuition. Nonetheless, students ultimately feed and transport the crew as well as finance all other aspects of their projects, all at their own expense. This creates a large disparity in who can do what with their projects. Due to economic discrimination, particular marginalized groups are more affected by this.

Proposed Solutions

- Provide more opportunities for grants that would provide funding for more aspects of filmmaking, (travel/gas, locations, food, actors, etc).
- Allot a sum of money to be used for each student project deemed appropriate by a committee.
- Include more discussions on effective crowdfunding campaigns, how to form sponsorships, and where to find external film grants in classes. We understand that the school cannot fund every project in its entirety, but raising money is a need-to-know skill for the industry.

ICLA - Lack of Student Support

The LA program is highly effective in a student's career if they get an internship. However, students report little to no help from the school in their pursuit of internships during their time abroad. This causes students to feel caught off guard when they get to LA. There is also a lack of transparency in what happens while you're there.

Proposed Solutions

- Establish and recommend connections with working alumni to provide more internship opportunities.
- Offer classes about LA and the industry *before getting there*. Include lessons about finding jobs, networking, city layout, affording LA, and resumes/cover letters/portfolios
- Connect students with others who've already completed the LA program.
- Provide more film classes while in LA. Different internships allow for different amounts of credited hours. We shouldn't have to rely on finding an internship with an inordinate amount of hours in order to continue earning credits

PROGRAM RESOURCE ACCESS

Student/Lesson Disconnect

Instruction Doesn't Match Needed Industry Experience

Professors do not teach about film distribution and how to create independent films outside of college, or get an industry job post-graduation. Our professors should be a reliable resource for students, but they don't tend to lecture extensively about their own set experience unless it is coaxed out by students.

Proposed Solution

- Incorporate on-set experiences from professors as a mandated part of teaching, and encourage them to talk about their own professional journeys.

Facilities

Lack of Complementary Facilities

Park does not hold any emphasis on production design, resulting in the lack of a Prop and Set Dressing Warehouse. Students end up spending an incredible amount of money on props they may never use again, which also leads to waste.

There is also no space where Park Film students can hold Production meetings. Pre-Production and Post-Production require a lot of communication and collaboration. There are limited spaces in the library and considering most of our resources are in the Park School, it's more detrimental that there are no spaces for scheduling, general film planning, or any writing rooms.

Proposed Solutions

- Create The Park Prop and Set Dressing Warehouse that would operate similarly to PPECS with students renting out props and set dressing pieces. This would incentivize students to take Production Design more seriously whilst being more cost-efficient for the student body *and* Park – much of Pendelton is spent on Production Design elements.
- Create more accessible spaces for students looking to professionally record ADR, foley, voiceover, and other sound effects. The rooms are sometimes tricky to reserve depending on what students' majors and minors are. They should be accessible to everyone.
- Create a communal seating area in the Park School where students can congregate or individual rooms students can book to use for meetings.

Poor Existing Facilities

The Studio in the Downtown Commons is in shambles. There is actual trash scattered along the edges. There is dust that once covered everything and still infested the air. There is extra equipment that is handled with zero care. It is not a safe space to spend a lot of time due to the lack of cleanliness. We know the studio is moving, but the issue isn't that specific space itself, it's how the space is treated by students and ignored by staff. Not to mention that the process for booking this space has become very muddled since the previous manager, John Fucile, is no longer employed at IC.

Additionally, there is a lack of encouragement for students to explore Sound Recording and Design. As such, our current sound-recording facilities (Foley Stage and Sound Booth) for recording foley, ADR, and other effects, are often underutilized because of the lack of maintenance and knowledge of their usage by students and faculty alike. These spaces should be better maintained and utilized more often.

Proposed Solutions

- Send staff to the facilities regularly to check in on the space throughout its usage.
- Emphasize student care of facilities in production courses and checkout centers

Miseducation on College Resources

Out of Date Databases

The location and actors databases have not been updated in multiple semesters, making them functionally useless. Professors still suggest these databases to students as if they are still promising resources because they lack the understanding of just how underserved these resources are. A good example of this is the Facebook page intended to connect Dillingham actors and Park filmmakers.³

Proposed Solution

- Either put a professor or organization in charge of these databases so they're less likely to be forgotten about.
 - The New York Film Academy has its own version of Backstage made solely for its students; you must have a NYFA email to use it. Both Dillingham and Park students would benefit from a similarly functioning site.

³ This is the link offered to us in classes.

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/32098411174/?ref=share&mibextid=S66gvF>) The Facebook Group is completely overrun by bots.

- Update faculty on what current resources are being used by students.

What is the “IC Filmmaking Process”?

For a faculty body that teaches cinema, a notoriously collaborative art form, the professors are largely removed from the day-to-day activities of student films even with larger student projects like Thesis films.

Professor check-ins on student films happen during class periods, and conflict with the amount of time we have in class for other material. There must be time carved out for both one-on-one coaching as well as course materials.

Proposed Solution

- Heavier involvement from faculty outside of brief check-ins during class would allow them to be more up-to-date on projects – struggling or thriving – but also give us students the resources to succeed. Professors need to be given time and space to coach students when they get stuck.

Faculty Advisors Do Not Receive Training

Faculty Advisors are not trained on how to guide students through course registration or 4-year planning besides having knowledge on major-specific classes. There is not much help on when students should take certain courses, and how to balance our in-Park classes with our outside-of-Park classes. Students are forced to guess and align their schedules without clear guidance.

Proposed Solution

- Have new Professional Development programs designed to train staff on (a) how difficult it is for students to sign up for classes and (b) how to build a schedule aligning with a student’s desired education, including study abroad opportunities.
- Make it mandatory for film students to meet with our advisors! It’s required for most other majors on campus.

Timidity During Critique

Censorship and Critique

Having creative freedom is a massive draw to a school. However, the slippery slope of *unlimited* freedom leads not only to socially harmful material being produced but also half-baked, unworkable scripts that only lead to failure.

Telling students “no” to ideas that do not complete the assignment or align with the course should not be as rare as it is. While creativity should be encouraged, students should be guided by professors on how to succeed, even if that means completely revamping ideas. Without this, students are being set up to fail.

In critique, professors often shy away from offering substantive and more in-depth, long-form critiques of student work (whether in class or individually) for fear of being considered too harsh, but many students walk away from critiques underwhelmed by feedback.

Proposed Solutions

- Faculty should be encouraged by the administration to tell students “no.” There are too many instances in which professors encourage films with no structure to go on to further stages of production despite being aware these projects may fail. If critiques are more honest, this will occur less often
- Many students have found the Photography department structures critique very well. Professors offer tough, but honest and respectful feedback. Cinema professors should do the same.
- Admit fewer students into the film program so that there is more time to dedicate to each student’s project.

Professorial Variety

Potential Incoming Faculty

Faculty turnover is inevitable in any institution, but we ask that as current faculty move positions or retire, include in the criteria for candidates certain qualities current and former Cinema students have found more desirable as faculty move through the hiring process.

These qualities that students across the Film degrees have expressed a desire for include Professors who are actively working on productions now, stay up to date on current trends in the industry (both in and out of Hollywood), come from diverse backgrounds (in filmmaking and socially), and professors capable of instructing both broad courses, and those focused on their own specialized field of production.

Faculty should be encouraged to come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and the administration should support these professors throughout their employment to ensure a longer retention rate, helping both the administration and students. When professors come and go so quickly, it’s difficult for students to build relationships with staff.

Proposed Solutions

- Diversify faculty, among both social groups and in filmmaking specialties
- Utilize student input in hiring processes for new professor positions, either within interviews or cross-referencing previous student feedback on faculty performance
- Develop support systems within the administration and Cinema Department to listen to faculty needs and feedback, provide solutions to increase retention
- While it is not ideal, maybe hire staff to teach on Zoom? Not all educators can live here in Ithaca full-time, or commute to the school, but having working professionals teaching students would be incredibly beneficial to the student body.

Faculty/Administration Relationships

“Not My Department”

The administration’s hands-off attitude toward the Cinema Program and addressing student concerns is unproductive. Faculty and administration (Park or College) must work together to address these issues instead of simply complaining to students who are also frustrated by them.

These issues caused a trickle-down effect. Professors discouraged by the administration’s restrictions then discourage their students from pushing themselves creatively and technically, which only creates resentment and disappointment in the students

Proposed Solutions

- Building a more functional working relationship between faculty needs and admin restrictions - and this often comes down to building trust between admin and faculty
- Meeting regularly to discuss student issues and frequent problems within the department
 - Meetings may include opening conversations about and providing updates to department financials, college technology/equipment, and faculty/student support services

INDUSTRY PREPAREDNESS

with Quotes from Anonymous Alumni

Professional vs. Student Sets

Set Etiquette - Terminology and Safety

The most important lessons are learned outside of the classroom, primarily on sets. This should be the main focus of our time spent in Production courses - introducing roles on set, how they function in an IC student production, what they do on a larger scale production, and what skills are necessary for this role. Within current Production classes, students are often told to make films with only a basic introduction to the equipment and little guidance from professors on logistics, safety, production management, and set procedures.

Pieces of information some students feel they should be taught include the current standard rate for PA work (\$250/day), walkie-talkie lingo, and current set terminology. A crucial aspect of proper set etiquette is communication. If students don't understand the language of filmmaking, they will be disadvantaged on the job.

Proposed Solutions

- Build courses that provide real insight for the true industry experience, specifically preparing students with the skill set for both entry-level jobs and higher-level positions.
- Invite alumni in various stages of their careers — who understand the current job market — to discuss strategies and insights they've collected in their fields.
- Teach frequently used terminology during in-class sets, pre-production, and post-production so film crews can more effectively communicate across departments

Filmmaking Style Differences

As the current curriculum stands, Ithaca teaches students to do independent, somewhat guerilla filmmaking with a very basic introduction to crew roles. Instructors provide very little input on production management and logistical set expectations during production classes. This leads to students having limited knowledge of what the film industry is actually like for people who aren't well-known directors, leaving them with little to no understanding of other career paths.

Proposed Solutions

- Gear production courses to align with industry standards and communicate expectations for set life outside of film school.
 - The means of production will be different, but the processes by which we align our standards will set students up for success post-grad.

Getting a Job

As an Ithaca College graduate, there is no expectation that one's degree will help *in any way* with how to sell and market oneself as a freelance media creator. Production jobs are all freelance, yet there is no guidance on the first step of marketing yourself, let alone how to secure an actual position. This problem also extends to a lack of discussion on finances and how to be a true business person within the field. In such a competitive industry, it is imperative to understand how to give yourself an edge and how to vouch for yourself. (Ex: Should we create a reel? How do I create a reel as a director, producer, etc.?)

Proposed Solutions:

- Align courses with the business school or faculty with industry experience who can explain the job market. Use the expertise of marketing students to learn strategies for self-promotion.

Alumni Statements

- “I feel like the biggest gap for me was how to even get jobs! I graduated with practically zero understanding of where to look, how to put myself out there, and who to talk to, and found it really hard to come by that information on my own.”
- “Park taught me nothing about how to climb the ladder and the culture of real-world filmmaking and instead had to rely on what I learned in my filmmaking classes and intensives from high school. Most students didn't have those opportunities in high school and are paying thousands of dollars to learn, yet aren't.”
- “Park does almost nothing to help their students strategize a way across that chasm. Clubs try their best, and I tried to offer what I knew as someone who got into the industry early on in my college career, but Park truly needs heavy structural changes and I wouldn't be saying any of this if I didn't care deeply about the IC community and the future of Park students.”

Types of Jobs Within the Film World

Despite the field having recently undergone such a big shift since the 2023 strikes, faculty has rarely mentioned the guilds or any sort of union for production work. While not all faculty are part of a union, it is worthwhile to have instruction on organizations that play such a major role in our professions. Whether this is how to properly communicate with them, how to join them, or how to understand what is and is not covered in each contract. Some form of introduction to these unions and their locals would leave fewer graduates feeling stuck in LA or whichever major film city they move to.

Beyond strictly Hollywood blockbuster projects, Cinema Production courses provide very little discussion on how the jobs outside traditional film and television are connected (reality TV, music videos, game shows, streaming, commercials, etc.) The modern media industry for new filmmakers involves lots of short-form content, specifically commercials, social media posts, etc. This is not discussed or taught in the Cinema Program, despite being a frequent area where students find themselves after college.

Proposed Solutions

- Bring film industry veterans and alumni into classes to discuss the logistics of industry operation for each position, which union and local cover specific roles, how to get into a union, etc.
- Require film students to take courses like Intro to Media Industries early in their academic careers to better align with the globalized multi-media landscape.

Alumni Statements

- “While I feel that I learned a lot in the Park School, I have struggled post-grad to find jobs that I feel particularly qualified for. It can be good to know how to do a little bit of everything, but I don’t necessarily feel it taught me in depth about any particular thing, unless I went out of my way to seek it out. If Park didn’t have the class you wanted, you were out of luck. For instance, I always wanted to learn more about VFX, CGI, & After Effects but there were no classes that taught those things in depth. I minored in animation as a way to dip my toes in the water but there is still so much I don’t know how to do. evidently, this speaks to the general experience students have with the park school.” - Anonymous
- “Where Ithaca and other film schools struggle is that they don't hone in on industry preparedness specifically in the classroom. I've been lucky enough to start developing a couple of projects with legitimate producers and executives post grad. Almost none of my experience, from getting representation to working in development was taught or even mentioned in any Park classes. The only two required classes that even remotely explored post-grad life were Connecting the Dots and a few days of Thesis Cinema Production. Connecting the Dots did a good job of bringing in alumni to talk to us about their experiences. Some students will complain that we aren't hearing from alumni. I disagree and I know some of those same students simply aren't listening when alumni are brought in. That's on them. BUT, we should be hearing from these alumni earlier in our education. Right before we're thrust into the throes of post-grad life is not the right time to just START learning about the reality of this industry” - Anonymous
- “I think an industry preparedness class or workshop that focuses way more on specifics would be helpful. Like, it’s much more helpful to say “These are the websites you can look on for jobs, and these are the kind of resources you should get access to.” rather than the more general “Work hard, stay late, make people like you.” that I felt like I was getting from professors a lot. I personally really liked and valued that a lot of my class

time was dedicated to creativity and artistic instruction, so I think developing an external course or workshop that gets really business-like and specific would be the best way to incorporate that information” - Anonymous

- “I think concentrations in fields such as sound, lighting, camera work, directing/producing, etc. of the students' choice should be an option, well-rounded students knowledge so they can pursue a specific career path.” - Anonymous

Outdated Curriculum

Old Lessons, Old Experiences

When post-graduation is discussed, classes talk about the specific plan of working in Hollywood. These conversations about the industry and how it functions are not inclusive to all media makers and are not up-to-date with the industry landscape post-SAG/WGA strike.

Also, as mentioned in the [Instruction Doesn't Match Needed Industry Experience](#) section, distribution is rarely taught. Only film history classes briefly touch on the subject, but the means and culture of distributing films have changed dramatically since the boom of Netflix and other streamers.

On the off-chance professors talk about their on-set experiences, the stories are frequently a decade old or older. While these stories do hold value, we need to learn about contemporary experiences in our ever-changing industry, even if they won't mirror the exact workforce we enter after graduation.

Proposed Solutions

- *Bring in more guest speakers!* Many of the best educational lectures on our futures as filmmakers have come from alumni, or peers of professors, who are currently active in the industry.
- Talk about current events in the entertainment industry – there is no reason the school should ignore all the happenings of our career paths.

Alumni Statements

- “Some of my favorite classes were Production Management with Steve Gordon and ACP Sound Editing with Marlena Grzaslewics as both of these professors introduced us to alumni and colleagues working in the industry to speak to us about their transition from college to career, their professional experiences, and union membership.”

Building Connections

Alumni

One of Ithaca's best attributes is the expansive alumni network, which other programs have frequent guests and visitors. The Cinema Program rarely, if ever, connects students to alumni in film production.

Proposed Solutions

- Alumni-student mixers in Ithaca and Los Angeles could be a great way for students to find connections.
- Alumni mentors whom students can connect with on a relatively frequent basis for advice and insight from a current industry professional.

Alumni Statements

- "Having speakers with industry experience come to talk about networking and making connections, what it's been like working in the field, union/non-union work, teaching the ins and outs of these things may be the equivalent to teaching high schoolers how to file taxes, not relevant yet, but incredibly imperative to know."
- "Since I started working in the industry, I've been told on numerous occasions how Ithaca alumni are everywhere, and yet, Park fails to connect us to this network they so proudly boast to prospective students."

Students

The most immediate contact we make in our field will be with our peers. However, there is little emphasis from faculty that tells students to expand their networks and build connections with fellow students.

Proposed Solutions

- Require group work with students outside of normal production groups, and encourage distribution of crew with varying stages of experience.
- Bring film students together outside of class for programmed events to act as mixers.

Alumni Statements

- "Make it mandatory for first and second-year students to work on ACP and thesis projects and to attend screenings of other students. Have PPECS employees train students in classes with equipment & safety workshops. They use and inspect the equipment more often than the professors and can clearly outline PPECS guidelines as well as make them aware of Pro workshops earlier. Encourage collaboration between Cinema Photo / FPVA and the screenwriting students"

Local

There are many local production companies throughout Upstate New York, none of which have ties to Ithaca College. Students need local experiences to gain connections and experience. (Ex: American High / Syracuse Studios)

The current resources for finding and obtaining internships are unhelpful. Students are encouraged to look for these opportunities on their own with no help from staff.

Proposed Solutions

- Connect Ithaca College to local and state production companies to encourage connection-building and internships. Real-world information is unparalleled!

WOMEN IN FILM

Opportunities

In all Park programs, sets, and organizations Women are constantly underestimated and undermined. They are encouraged to take “smaller” or more “managerial” roles on set – roles that don’t require equipment/ technical knowledge (AD, PD, Producer, Script Supervisor). In any position, women are told to do less than the required work and forced to do “busy tasks” instead (take notes, go on errands, step aside). Moreover, women are rarely encouraged to be hands-on with equipment on sets or during classes. The Park School does not initiate *any* conversations about creating a safe space for women on set.

Proposed Solutions

- Talk about gender issues in classes and encourage new collaborations outside of friend groups.
- Create requirements that force *all students* to experience working in every position; for each production class, students would fill a certain quota of roles.

Representation

The Ratio of Men to Women in Classes

There is a very visible and detrimental disparity between the populations of male-identifying BS/BFA majors and female-identifying BS/BFA majors. In classes of 18 students, there are often only three women, particularly in classes focusing on technical skills like ACP Cinematography and Lighting. This is largely because women are not encouraged to take on technical roles like men are. While men jump on the opportunity to access equipment, women do not; in turn, they receive less on-set and hands-on experience, which creates a negative cycle. Inversely, there are more women in the TVDM majors. Why are women driven away from the BS/BA?

Proposed Solutions

- Admit more women into the film programs.
- Make the film programs more welcoming for women and non-men, specifically, creating more women-centered film education, maintaining the non-male crew database started by alumna Surina Belk-Gupta, etc.
- Create a SET REPORT – a standard practice for every production class/student set that requires gender diversity on-set.
- Require women in prominent roles during in-class equipment demos and sets to ensure women have hands-on experience and time with equipment.

The Ratio of Male to Female Professors

Nearly all production classes are taught by male professors. Additionally, most guest speakers are men. This does not allow women to see themselves in the industry or hear about how to navigate the industry as a woman.

Proposed Solutions

- Hire more women for staff and faculty.
- Reach out to more female alumni active in the industry to speak to the female students.
- Diversify what classes current non-male professors teach.

Highlighting Female Filmmakers

Outside of Film A&A, female presence in film is rarely, if ever, acknowledged in more specific/advanced theory and production classes. This highlights the larger issue that visibility to women is only present when “diversity” is the conscious focus in the class.

Proposed Solutions

- Introductory-level classes should show more female-made films and highlight female filmmakers, specifically VARYING perspectives and experiences of non-male filmmakers, not just the work of white women.
- Production classes that require students to be on-set need to have conversations about how women are treated on sets (i.e. being perceived as “bitchy” vs. men being perceived as “authoritative”).
- Objectivity vs. subjectivity in the films we study needs to be repeatedly addressed in more classes outside of Film A&A.
- Additionally, there should be classes dedicated to Women in Film History.

Women's Issues on Student Films

Conversations must be had in production classes regarding the content of films in relation to the filmmaker’s identities. Men create student films that discuss female sexuality and social issues yet do not invite women to consult on storyline/representation or to work on the crew. Women actresses end up in non-consensual situations; these male-led sets do not consider the needs of an actress in intimate scenes. Inadvertently, these films inaccurately sexualize women’s relationships, bodies, and experiences or fail to characterize women outside of a prize to be won. These films should not represent the student body of the Park School and need to be more socially aware to make conscious and respectful statements.

Proposed Solutions:

- As stated in the [*Lack of Sufficient Teaching About the Set Environment*](#) section, every student must be taught the importance of Intimacy Coordination in films with intimate

scenes. Again, it is now a SAG-AFTRA requirement that films including scenes with any level of intimacy have Intimacy Coordinators.

- Professors should be more involved with the writing/pre-production process and encourage appropriate research and review depending on the subject matter; specifically in getting women students/professors involved in women’s stories.

On-Set

Set Etiquette - Behavior and Sexual Misconduct

Generally speaking, set etiquette must be a required topic in the Production Course Curriculum. Currently, without guidance from the Park Film Program, women are often the target of unprofessional behavior. Women end up as the “token” on male-led sets and have to put on a ‘masculine persona’ to gain respect from male classmates.

The more pressing issue pertains to *the rampant and consistently not reprimanded sexual harassment* that takes place on Park film sets. Nearly every woman can describe a specific experience of sexual harassment from a student set. This largely pertains to the lack of discussion and emphasis on set environment, set-appropriate behavior, and Intimacy Coordination in production classes.

Proposed Solutions:

- Require a diversity/sexual harassment curriculum quota. This does *not* include the online course everyone has to take during their freshman year. There is virtually no way to make sure students actually pay attention to the videos. This needs to be an in-person class.
- Screen films from former students and professionals of diverse backgrounds to expand upon examples and references given in class.
- Set Logs must be a requirement in Production Classes - who was on set, who did what, and any incidents that occurred, including anonymous statements from crew members.
 - Repeatedly, there must be Set Requirements to get women on set more.
- Outlets (Park-specific) where inappropriate behavior can be safely reported and repercussions can be enforced. This must be distinct and not connected to Title IX as it is unsuccessful in supporting victims and reprimanding offenders.
- Greater access to Intimacy Coordination Training and to more Intimacy Coordinators.

Learning Environment

Women in the Park Film Programs are not granted a productive and safe learning environment. While men can fail and grow on set and in class, women do not have the privilege of “trial and error.” Instead, women are often nit-picked and defined by one “mistake” or an irrelevant personality trait.

Proposed Solutions

- Encouraging sets as a learning environment in class.
- Teaching set knowledge in class, professors encouraging trial-and-error on set, requiring all students to try *everything!*

Mistreatment of Women and Non-Men

PPECS

Within Park's highly respected and crucial equipment center, only 23% of PPECS employees are non-male identifying. Women who apply to work there are interviewed *very* harshly with greater scrutiny than their male counterparts. Most of the time, women applicants never hear back. Furthermore, employers are quoted saying, they "only hire women for diversity purposes." Numerous non-male employees have produced testimonies that describe specific, and numerous instances where staff have made women feel excluded and degraded. Women are either not hired, not considered, reprimanded to a higher degree, or fired (i.e. unprompted firing of a woman employee in Fall 2023).

Proposed Solutions

- Hire more women and BIPOC; encourage them to apply.
- Integrate a nonmale supervisor.
- Create an outlet to report mistreatment and discrimination that is *not Title IX*, as stated in [Set Etiquette - Behavior and Misconduct](#).
- The administration must have a discussion with PPECS staff about the current treatment of women employees and discover a new path forward.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING

Community

The lack of spaces and communities meant for BIPOC students is currently an issue across Ithaca College, but it's *especially* prevalent in Park. Finding belonging on sets and within classrooms is challenging as understanding our experiences as BIPOC students is not always prioritized. In turn, this impacts the work we are able to create.

Park must address the intersections of students' varying identities to equitably support students while acknowledging the layers of oppression within the school and the industry.

Proposed Solutions:

- Acknowledgment of our concerns and actively creating awareness for non-BIPOC students.
- Provide more dialogue and a space for and about BIPOC film experiences.

Faculty and Staff

Training on Diversity Equity Inclusion

Many members of the faculty and staff do not understand our experiences. They can be dismissive towards students but more importantly, they are not equipped for conversations regarding diversity in the classroom, on sets, or in the industry.

Proposed Solutions

- The creation of a Diversity Equity Inclusion Board initiative (e.g. committee, training, workshops) as resources for students, staff, and faculty.
 - We need a long-lasting committee that is constantly analyzing Park Programs and can keep students, faculty, and organizations accountable for mistreatment and discrimination.
- Hiring more BIPOC faculty and staff.

Curriculum and Academic Materials

The Industry

Part of the industry preparedness we need to learn about involves learning about and addressing the skewed demographics within the Hollywood industry. As it stands now, BIPOC students are encouraged with a false sense of security where “if you work hard, you’ll make it.” This is misleading as industry statistics do not mirror this.

Proposed Solutions

- Clearly establish the systemic lack of representation beyond the academic environment. Educate students on how the industry has or has not changed over the years, and how to deal with the systemic racism in the industry.
- Offer resources and advice that better prepare BIPOC students for stepping into the industry. We would love to hear about the experiences of our professors, and how they were similarly able to navigate their post-grad worlds.
- Invite BIPOC alumni to talk about their experiences in the industry.

Course Materials

The materials engaged within courses are often U.S., white, male, and hetero-centric. While film studies courses are interested in challenging this, production classes rarely discuss this, if ever. Rarely are we exposed to films that describe diverse, non-white experiences and perspectives, and even if we are, those films are typically made by white men.

Proposed Solutions

- Include more diverse engagement with media in classrooms by filmmakers of various backgrounds and experiences; filmmakers who work beyond the fiction-narrative-centric approach.
- Meaningful explorations of language and representation as visibility does not equate to meaningful engagement. This would help to (a) create a better sense of belonging for BIPOC students, and (b) prevent offensive films being made by Ithaca College students.

Challenging Standardized Production Education

Production techniques are not inclusive. In classes regarding cinematography, symbols and motifs are only “correct” if they are Western symbols, but colors and symbols mean different things to different cultures and communities.

Additionally, many Park students do not understand how to light or color scenes for actors with darker skin. There is also a lack of awareness and repercussions regarding stereotypes in student films that can be harmful and offensive.

Proposed Solutions

- Production classes should aim to be inclusive in their production techniques, regarding ethics and visuals.
 - Incorporate lighting and color grading for different skin tones into course curriculums.
- During development and pre-production, discuss how casting decisions can change the meaning of films and the use of characteristics that are racial stereotypes.

Set Etiquette and Creative Projects

IC student film sets represent a singular set of identities. The content matter of the films and the representation on sets is not inclusive of the varied identities within the Film Programs. Due to the lack of Set Requirements and Set Reports, students of marginalized groups are not given opportunities nor encouraged to take on big roles on set. Often students will work with the same friend groups and as a result of the social implications of race, gender, sexuality, etc, many minorities are excluded. In addition to the effects of social and cultural matters, the Film Programs and the courses within the Film Programs do not take any steps to address such issues nor create a safe place for diversity and inclusion to thrive.

Proposed Solutions

- Emphasize respect and inclusivity on set. Professors and classmates should be responsible for ensuring this through Set Logs. After a student set, professors should collect and discuss the demographic data with students to create an open dialogue.
 - *Practicing inclusivity on student sets will set an example for the inclusivity that's possible to cultivate in the Industry.*
- Establish cultural content guidelines for projects. Professors must define the line between ethically correct vs. creatively liable projects. It shouldn't fall on students to call out "problematic" ideas, scripts, films, and sets. The IC Park community as a whole should address this.

Abroad Opportunities

Abroad opportunities for film students are limited to London and LA, which results in Euro-centric and U.S.-centric engagement with media creation. The notable expectation is the Seoul, South Korea Summer Program.

Proposed Solutions:

- Provide and encourage more opportunities and classes made available to students to explore studying in different regions of the world to expand our engagement with global media-making and studies.

Alumni and Networking

Creating a More Inclusive Network of Alumni and Visitors

The networking connections and visitors brought into the Park School are not diverse enough. Students must see their “future selves” working and making it in the industry. This becomes especially difficult for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students when the selection of alumni and visitors featured does not reflect a plurality of identities.

Proposed Solutions

- We need more resources, workshops, and visits from alumni, creatives, and scholars from a variety of backgrounds.
- Creating a database of Ithaca alumni who have spoken with student organizations and classes, as well as maintaining that database as more students become alumni and continue their careers.⁴

⁴ <https://network.nyfa.edu/en/> This is a database the New York Film Academy has that alumni can voluntarily partake in directly. This allows current NYFA students to contact alumni on their own accord.





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Daisy Bolger, Jonah Barresi, Malik Clement, Claire Delaney, Grace Drury, Guadi Fanelli, Gracie Ferguson, Ariana Gonzalez, Peter Gillen, Sophia Guarnaschelli, Omkar Hingu, Clare Lickona, Jaden Lee, Hannah Maloy, Byrne Mazzella, Malaika Menezes, Chike Nezianya, George Pavlidis, Ainsley Perkins, Baneet Pukhrambam, Jodi Resnick, AT Rodgers, Alec Schlesinger, Sami Smith, Henry Suzuki, Ryan Williams-Abrams, Monti Yoo

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