

# Faculty balance teaching, working

*Teachers in Theatre and Dance, Law, Architecture share artistic, professional projects that keep them busy outside of their classrooms.*



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When she isn't teaching dance classes on campus, Erica Gionfriddo works on commissions for ARCOS dance, a contemporary performance company she co-founded. She's one of many faculty members on campus who have professions outside of the classroom.

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**E**rica Gionfriddo's work day doesn't end when class is dismissed.

After spending the day on campus fulfilling her responsibilities as a dance lecturer, she changes hats. As the executive director of ARCOS dance, Gionfriddo works on commissions for the contemporary performance company she co-founded.

Like other professors with additional jobs, Gionfriddo uses her diverse skill set to show her students the reality of a career in her field.

"I think my students greatly benefit from seeing me kind of

grapple with big artistic questions when I'm in the middle of a big project," Gionfriddo said.

While Gionfriddo's students learn about her perspective, she in turn learns from her students and applies those lessons to her life outside of UT in order to grow her artistry.

"I always feel that I'm incubating and uncovering new artistic ideas in every single class, whether that's a beginning level ballet class or professional modern class out in the community," Gionfriddo said. "I think that education at any level is a way to articulate what you value and get clarity around what it is that you're trying to express, which can only inform the artistic process."

Gionfriddo isn't the only professor who learns from her

students. At the School of Law, Carlos Treviño and Christopher Weimer, who both work for law firms outside of UT, co-teach the Legal Spanish for the Practicing Attorney class.

Every year, they bring in an interpreter to teach their students what giving testimony with a Spanish-speaking client is like. This experience gives their students the opportunity to practice like they're in a courtroom and also gives Weimer the opportunity to learn a new way to approach his work.

"I think that it is invigorating to work with students who bring a lot of curiosity as well as enthusiasm to the subject," Weimer said. "They ask questions that caused me to rethink how I do things in my own law

practice."

Additionally, Weimer offers his students both his expertise as well as his point of view as a professional.

"Carlos and I both work for law firms," Weimer said. "And so we can give (students) a perspective on what types of skills are of value and important to the places where we work."

John Blood, a distinguished senior lecturer in the School of Architecture doubling as a set designer for "Fear the Walking Dead," uses his work to teach students about what an architecture career can look like as a practicing professional.

Architecture senior Brandt Hansen took Blood's class last year and said learning from a working professor has its ups and downs. While Blood wasn't

always in class, he did bring in notable guest speakers.

"Because of his connections and his experience, I was able to learn about a viewpoint that I might not normally consider," Hansen said.

Beyond exposing students to unique career paths, working professors use their relationships with students to paint candid pictures of what their worlds are like.

"They get to see, kind of, a little bit of the messiness and grittiness of the creative process," Gionfriddo said. "That kind of demystifies what this career in dance might look like to them — to have one of their professors be actively engaged in that while they're teaching."