

2026 SYMPOSIUM ON EDUCATION IN ENTERTAINMENT AND ENGINEERING



**SYMPOSIUM
BOOK**

JULY 24-25, 2026
WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA



Fusion Studio for
Entertainment and Engineering

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SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Friday, July 24, 2026

12:30 PM	Event Check in	Stewart Center, Room 278 (hallway)
1:00 PM	Welcome Remarks	Stewart Center, Room 279
1:15 PM	Panel Session: The Load In / Load Out -How Touring and Touring Venues Shape Entertainment and Engineering Education <i>Panel Guests: Matt Jackson, Jeff Reder, Elmer Veith</i> <i>Moderator: Davin Huston</i>	Stewart Center, Room 279
2:45 PM	Break and Networking	Stewart Center, Room 278
3:00 PM	Working Session: Teaching Touring Logistics, Standards, and Systems Thinking <i>Moderator: Davin Huston</i>	Stewart Center, Room 278
4:30 PM	Meet & Greet Reception	Stewart Center, Room 278

Saturday, July 25, 2026

8:30 AM	Event Check in	Stewart Center, Room 278 (hallway)
9:00 AM	Welcome Remarks	Stewart Center, Room 279
9:00 AM	Panel Discussion: Designing the Permanent for the Temporary-How Venue Engineering Informs Scenic and Systems Education <i>Panel Guests: Bill Gorlin, Michael Schweikardt, Iris Williams</i> <i>Moderator: Kimberly Corbett-Oates</i>	Stewart Center, Room 279
10:30 AM	Break and Networking	Stewart Center, Room 278
10:45 AM	Working Session: Designing the Designed Space- Teaching Venue and Scenic Engineering Through Case Studies <i>Moderator: Kimberly Corbett-Oates</i>	Stewart Center, Room 278
12:00 PM	Lunch Break and Networking	Stewart Center, Room 278
1:00 PM	Panel Discussion: When It Breaks- How Failure, Recovery, and Troubleshooting Should Shape Theatre Engineering Education <i>Panel Guests: Justin L. Hess, Eric Rouse, Amber Schultz</i> <i>Moderator: Rich Dionne</i>	Stewart Center, Room 279
2:30 PM	Break and Networking	Stewart Center, Room 278
2:45PM	Working Session: Failing Forward- Embedding Troubleshooting, Iteration, and Resilience into Engineering Education <i>Moderator: Rich Dionne</i>	Stewart Center, Room 278
4:15 PM	Working Group White Paper Discussion and Feedback + Closing Remarks	Stewart Center, Room 278
5:30 PM	Dinner <i>(pre-registration required)</i>	East End Grill

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

in alphabetical order

Kimberly Corbett-Oates, Schuler Shook

Kimberly Corbett Oates, ASTC is a Partner with Schuler Shook, a consultancy specializing in theatre planning, architectural lighting, and audio video design, where she is based in the firm's Dallas office. She is widely recognized for her expertise in theatre planning and performance equipment design, bringing a unique blend of engineering, production, and performance experience to projects across the country. Kimberly works closely with owners, architects, and venue operators to develop thoughtful, flexible performance spaces that support artists, audiences, and venue staff. Over 20 years with Schuler Shook, she has worked on dozens of projects, including Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts and Sciences in Lubbock, Moody Performance Hall in Dallas, and the McAllen Performing Arts Center in McAllen, Texas, among others.

An active leader in the theatre and venue technology community, Kimberly has contributed to technical standards development through Entertainment Services and Technology Association and has served on both the Engineering and Architecture Commissions of United States Institute for Theatre Technology. She currently serves on USITT's Board of Directors and was recently elevated to Fellow of USITT, one of the organization's highest honors recognizing sustained and distinguished contributions to the organization and theatre and live entertainment industry. Kimberly is an active participant in the International Association of Venue Managers, where she serves on the Allied Committee,



the Region 6 Board, and assists with PAC programming for VenueConnect.

Kimberly holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Lafayette College and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama (now David Geffen School of Drama at Yale). Outside of work, she enjoys spending time outdoors with her family, volunteering with her church's AV and livestream team, and continuing her quest to learn guitar.

Rich Dionne, Purdue University

Rich Dionne is a Professor of Practice and technical director in the Department of Theatre in the Patti and Rusty Rueff School of Design, Art, and Performance at Purdue University. He specializes in scenery automation and show control systems while also serving as the department's production manager. He has a passion for both the art of theatre and the science and engineering of making theatre happen.

Prior to coming to Purdue, Rich was the production manager and resident sound designer at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, where he mounted numerous productions at various indoor and outdoor venues, including a nationally-recognized educational touring company. Additionally, he has served as the technical director for Berkshire Theatre Festival, Alpine Theatre Project, Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, and Dorset Theatre Festival, mounting critically-acclaimed productions including *The Whipping Man*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Amadeus*, *Night of the Iguana*, *Avenue Q*, *The Illusion*,



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and Death of a Salesman. Rich's book, Project Planning for the Stage: Tools and Techniques for Managing Extraordinary Performances, focuses on the application of project planning techniques for theatrical production, was recently published by Southern Illinois University Press. The ninth edition of Theatrical Design and Production, for which he is a co-author with Michael Gillette, was recently published by McGraw-Hill.

Bill Gorlin, formerly of KCI and McLaren Engineering

William Gorlin is a consultant who was formerly KCI and McLaren Engineering Group's Vice President of the Entertainment Division. A graduate of Cornell University in engineering (Bachelor's and Master's), he is registered as a Professional Engineer in twenty-six States.



His 40 years of experience include engineering of scenic, entertainment and amusement structures, staging, rigging, theatrical infrastructure, buildings, show action equipment, scenic elements, theme park attractions, architectural theming, sculptures, and other frameworks, worldwide.

Mr. Gorlin is a member of the ESTA Rigging Working Group, including serving on its Performer Flying, Temporary Structures and Powered Hoist Task Groups; University of Connecticut Krenicki Arts and Engineering Institute Advisory Board; American Society of Civil Engineers; ASTM Committee F24 for Amusement Rides and Devices; Structural Engineers Association of New York; and Cornell

Society of Engineers. He has published articles in Architecture Week, Structural Engineering Forum, and ASME Journal, and is a frequent lecturer at various universities and industry conventions.

Bill received the 2024 Backstage Legend and Master Award from the Broadway Technical Theatre History Project and was named "Engineer of the Year" in 2018 by the New York State Society of Professional Engineers. Bill is the author of the "Structural Behavior" chapter in Entertainment Rigging for the 21st Century, Ed. Bill Sapsis, Focal Press, 2015.

Justin L Hess, School of Engineering Education, Purdue University

Dr. Justin L. Hess is an associate professor in the School of Engineering Education, where he also co-directs the Multidisciplinary Engineering



and Interdisciplinary Engineering Studies undergraduate programs. Dr. Hess's research ethical and empathic formation among engineering students and practitioners. He received his PhD in Engineering Education from Purdue University in 2015 and his BS/MS in Civil Engineering from Purdue in 2011 and 2015, respectively. He served as the assistant director of the STEM Education Research Institute at Purdue University for four years (2015-2019) before returning to Purdue as a tenure-track faculty member in 2019.

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Davin Huston, Passerelle Design Group

Davin is the Director of the Audiovisual Design practice at Passerelle Design Group. With nearly two decades of experience in consulting, design, operations, and education, Davin brings a hands-on perspective shaped by roles in theatrical operations, experiential environments, and higher education. He partners closely with clients and design teams to define how spaces should function and be experienced, prioritizing user workflow and long-term operability before technology selection. Outside of work, Davin prioritizes time with his family and explores creative side projects that challenge him to learn new technologies and skill sets.



the Washington National Opera and the Lyric Opera.

Prior to his current role, Matt served as a Senior Project Manager at Big Show Construction Management from 2000 to 2008, overseeing significant projects like Madame Tussauds New York and the Sony Museum in NYC. He began his career as the Director of Technical Design at SFI (now Showman) from 1998 to 2000, where he led fabrication design teams for major broadcasters and prestigious institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History.

Matt holds a BFA in Scenic Design from Keene State College and an MFA in Technical Theater from Ohio University, equipping him with a robust foundation in the arts and technical fields.

Matt Jackson, Adirondack Studios

Matt Jackson is an accomplished Project Portfolio Director at Adirondack Studios, where he has been instrumental since July 2008. His extensive experience encompasses roles in technical design, project management, and team leadership, with a focus on fabrication and construction management. Throughout his career, Matt has successfully managed high-profile projects for renowned clients, including Universal Studios, Disney Worldwide, and notable theaters such as



Jeff Reder, Clark Reder Engineering

Jeff Reder is Principal and Owner of Clark Reder Engineering in West Chester, OH. Jeff received his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees at Purdue University and is currently registered in 49 states and Puerto Rico. Jeff's personal design experience is in a wide variety of entertainment structures such as performance and pavilion roof structures—both temporary and permanent, aluminum truss grids, temporary and permanent seating risers, and sound delay and video wall support structures. Additionally, Jeff has extensive experience in the design and analysis of complex aluminum structures. In addition to his extensive experience with entertainment structures, Jeff is an expert in the design of conventional building structures. He has personal design experience



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with structural steel, pre-stressed and post-tensioned concrete, masonry and wood framing. Jeff's personal structural design experience includes ESPN Winter and Summer X Games, NFL Super Bowls, Mad Tea Party, Electric Zoo Festival, Holiday Inn Express, Zac Brown Band, and Luke Bryan Tour.

Eric Rouse, Sapsis Rigging

Eric brings more than 25 years of experience in the entertainment business as a rigger, rigging trainer, inspector, and project manager. As General Manager, he supports clients by providing services for design, installations, and inspections of rigging systems as well as providing training for individual professionals, unions, and workforces in need of continuing education.



Eric was a tenured associate professor at Penn State University, where he was the head of the B.F.A and M.F.A. programs in Scenic Technology. He has done rigging training for more than 20 years for clients in the US, Europe, and China. Throughout his career, Eric has gained a broad range of experience in rigging and rigging design working for Flying by Foy, Cirque du Soleil, EPS, and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. He has been fortunate enough to work on fall protection projects and training for companies and organizations including IATSE, Disney, Tomcat/Area Four, Royal Caribbean, and The Sphere in Las Vegas. Eric also provides rope splicing training for the Cirque du Soleil touring division.

Eric is a former board member of USITT where he served in various roles for over 10 years. He

is a member of the ETCP Council, the SME Chair for the ETCP Rigging Theater exam, and an active member of ESTA's Rigging Working Group where he helped lead the latest update of ANSI E1.43 – 2025 – Performer Flying.

Amber Schultz, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Amber Dewey Schultz is a Teaching Assistant Professor of Immersive and Interactive Theatre and core faculty in the Game Studies & Design program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is an interdisciplinary experience designer and researcher specializing in playable theatre and narrative-driven escape rooms, with a focus on audience interaction, agency, and psychology.



Amber applies human-centered design and iterative feedback processes to both the creation of immersive experiences and the development of educational programs. Her pedagogical work supports student designers in shifting from expression-centered to participant-centered approaches, integrating early feedback and prototyping into immersive and interactive theatre. She has designed and led projects including I Wish: A Theatrical Puzzle Room (aspects of which were included in the internationally award-winning Forst of Fables by CU Adventures in Time and Space), as well as The Heist: A Theatrical Escape Room and Murder on Klein Island. She has also mentored students in developing educational escape rooms for on-campus and community partners, with one project touring nationally. Prior to joining the faculty at UIUC, Amber worked on stage management teams for opera companies across the country, including

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San Francisco Opera, The Dallas Opera, and Opera Carolina.

She holds an MFA in Experience Design from Miami University and a BFA in Design and Production from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

Michael Schweikhardt, San Francisco State University

Michael Schweikhardt enjoys a successful career as a set designer working for theatre companies across the United States and abroad. He is Assistant Professor at San Francisco State University, School of Theatre & Dance where he teaches production, design, and theatre studies. Essays in *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, and *Teaching Writing in Theatre and Performance Studies: An Instructor's Guide*, reflect his ongoing interest in pedagogy. He serves as a managing editor for *The Theatre Times* and is co-creator and co-editor of *Prompt: A Journal of Theatre Theory, Practice, and Teaching*.



Elmer Veith, Reliable Design Services

Elmer Veith has spent nearly 30 years working full time in the entertainment industry, focusing on rigging and structure-related projects for most of that time. Having worked for several industry-leading companies, he is currently the head of sales and training for



Reliable Design Services in Dallas, Texas. Past projects have included the development of the R3 Outdoor Stage Roof system, Cincinnati Symphony Summer Concert Series stage roof system, Toyota Electrify Expo exhibits, and numerous truss and tower designs. Elmer has been an active member of the ESTA Technical Standards Program - Rigging Working Group since 2007 and is currently the task group leader for three Rigging standards update efforts including ANSI E1.2 – Design, Manufacture, and Use of Aluminum Trusses and Towers. Elmer is based in Atlanta, Georgia where he lives with his wife, son, thousands of LEGO bricks, and an unknown number of motorcycles.

Iris Williams, InterAmerica Stage

Iris Williams is a sales engineer for InterAmerica Stage. She has experience working in various production spaces throughout college as a general technician, master electrician, and lighting designer. She is visually impaired and is working to make current and new spaces more accessible for her and other people with disabilities.



SYMPOSIUM WORKBOOK

Undoubtedly, most everyone here has attended other conferences, and find them to be a source of inspiration and re-invigoration. It is our sincere hope that this event will have the same effect for you as well. It is also our experience—and a swath of education research on learning supports this—that active and goal-centered participation in your individual learning aids in “stickier” retention and improves personal achievement more so than passively receiving information or “hoping” you will get something out of your invested time.

Our lives are very full these days and our brain’s ability to keep all of the important “bits” of information— even the most important ones—can suffer recall problems. To that end, we would like to offer the following reflective prompts and organizational pages as a first step toward encouraging you to actively engage with the symposium and its participants and presentations. The following pages were designed to help you manage your newly formed connections, jot down ideas and concepts, or make note of items you want to act on or investigate more fully.

We have shamelessly borrowed elements of this concept from other workshops and conferences, including the Lilly Conferences on Evidence-Based Teaching and Learning held across the country each year. We encourage you to consider attending a Lilly Conference, as they can be exceptional experiences.

Intentional Symposium Goal

In a brief sentence, set one personal goal for your attendance at this symposium:

What **one word or image that you can create in the space below** captures the essence of this goal?

Of all the people I met at the symposium, when I return home **I just have to send a follow up email to:** _____

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Symposium on Education in Entertainment and Engineering

SESSION 1: THE LOAD IN / LOAD OUT -HOW TOURING AND TOURING VENUES SHAPE ENTERTAINMENT AND ENGINEERING EDUCATION

Points of Interest and Follow-Up Action Items

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WORKING SESSION: TEACHING TOURING LOGISTICS, STANDARDS, AND SYSTEMS
THINKING | MODERATOR: DAVIN HUSTON

Thinking back to your own career, what experiences taught you lessons that would have been valuable to learn before entering the profession?

Think beyond specific tools or technologies. What experiences helped shape your decision-making, adaptability, communication, or professional growth?

How can we give students opportunities to learn those lessons in the classroom, lab, or through hands-on projects before they encounter them in the field?

Think about learning experiences that help students move from understanding concepts to applying them in realistic situations.

Symposium on Education in Entertainment and Engineering

WORKING SESSION: TEACHING TOURING LOGISTICS, STANDARDS, AND SYSTEMS THINKING, CONTINUED | MODERATOR: DAVIN HUSTON

What experiences help people move beyond learning individual skills and start understanding how an entire production, venue, or organization works together?

Think about moments that reveal how people, processes, resources, and decisions are connected.

What could education and industry do differently to create more meaningful learning opportunities for the next generation of professionals?

Think about partnerships, mentorship, project opportunities, access to facilities, or other ways to connect learning with professional practice.

Symposium on Education in Entertainment and Engineering

WORKING SESSION: DESIGNING THE DESIGNED SPACE: TEACHING VENUE AND SCENIC ENGINEERING THROUGH CASE STUDIES | MODERATOR: KIMBERLY CORBETT-OATES

What types of exercises can you assign to intentionally collaborate with other departments/schools? For example: architecture, structural engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, etc.

Often scenic design assignments take an existing room and ask students to design for that space. What opportunities are there for production teams to design spaces within a space? Or in a found space?

How is accessibility considered in production design? When are considerations planned for the audience? For performers? How does the casting schedule affect this?

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SESSION 3: WHEN IT BREAKS- HOW FAILURE, RECOVERY, AND TROUBLESHOOTING SHOULD SHAPE THEATRE ENGINEERING EDUCATION

Points of Interest and Follow-Up Action Items

[illegible]

WORKING SESSION: FAILING FORWARD- EMBEDDING TROUBLESHOOTING,
ITERATION, AND RESILIENCE INTO ENTERTAINMENT ENGINEERING EDUCATION
MODERATOR: RICH DIONNE

What are the most common types of failure you observe in students and/or early career professionals? Are there types of failure that they seem to have more trouble recovering from and/or anticipating?

Consider some of the instances of failure in the classroom or in onboarding/early career mentoring that you have observed. Were those instances managed by teachers/mentors/supervisors as opportunities to teach failure acceptance and recovery? What steps could have been taken to address both the specific risk to the project/company/etc., and the opportunity for the student or early career professional to improve in the future?

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WORKING SESSION: FAILING FORWARD- EMBEDDING TROUBLESHOOTING, ITERATION, AND RESILIENCE INTO ENTERTAINMENT ENGINEERING EDUCATION, CONT.

Consider one type of failure that is both common and problematic in your classroom, workplace, or industry. Can you imagine a project/experience that teachers, mentors, and trainers could force students and early career professionals to experience and recover from that type of failure?

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

WORKBOOK