

This draft was approved by Leah Reynolds, Interim Title IX Coordinator, on April 14, 2025. It was adopted unanimously by the Department of Theatre faculty on September 22, 2025.

Article I: Purpose, General Provisions and Philosophy

The Department of Theatre is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where all participants feel safe and can fully engage in the artistic process. Our approach is restorative, fostering an environment where challenges become moments of reflection and improvement. The Department's policies serve as a guide for both teaching and learning, recognizing that while the process of creating live theatre is deeply rewarding, every production has the potential to encounter misunderstandings, conflicts, and differing interpretations. By embracing open dialogue and collaboration, we strive to navigate these challenges with clarity and purpose.

Concerns should be addressed with curiosity rather than judgment, and all discussions should be approached in good faith. Retaliation against those who raise concerns will not be tolerated. While the goal is to resolve issues promptly at the lowest level possible (see below), individuals are encouraged to seek the level of intervention that best suits their comfort and the nature of their concerns.

The Department of Theatre's Civic Compass is a dynamic and comprehensive set of policies and practices designed to ensure that we stay aligned with our values, mission, and vision. It serves as a guide for ethical practice in theatre education, encouraging us to "take care of oneself, take care of the space, and take care of each other."

Within the Civic Compass, we have policies and practices that address community agreements, backstage protocols, attendance, illness and injuries, allyship, and more. This document outlines explicitly our policies on Theatrical Intimacy, Instructional Touch, and Theatrical Violence, providing clear guidelines for these critical areas of our work.

Article II: Authority

- A. The Department Chair and Faculty set the standards and guidelines for the Department of Theatre's Civic Compass.
- B. The Department Chair and Faculty may develop policies and procedures that are not inconsistent with the UMBC Student Code of Conduct or any other UMBC policy.
- C. The Department of Theatre's Civic Compass will be reviewed every two (three?) years.

Article III: Policies

Theatrical Intimacy, Theatrical Violence, and Instructional Touch and Violence

The UMBC Department of Theatre follows industry-aligned best practices for theatre training, recognizing that instructional touch may be more common in an educational setting. Theatrical Intimacy work is approached with methods suited to this context, ensuring faculty, staff, and students are informed on best practices and evolving standards. As the field of theatrical intimacy develops, the department remains committed to continuous learning and adaptation.

One of the most critical components of this work is **understanding consent**. Consent establishes the boundaries within which performers may safely explore their characters and the world of the play. It allows for the creative process to unfold in a manner that honors both artistic integrity and the well-being of all involved.

Instructional Touch

Instructional touch is intentional, consent-driven physical contact used by instructors to support learning, technique, and safety. It is essential in somatic practices, where the body is central to learning and awareness. All instructional touch should be professional, respectful, and used only after other corrective methods have been explored—unless safety is a primary concern. Faculty and staff must prioritize trust, communication, and best practices to ensure students feel safe and empowered.

Examples of Instructional Touch include, but are not limited to:

- Adjusting alignment or positioning for improved posture or movement
- Bringing awareness to physical engagement or technique
- Partnering for demonstrations to guide movement or action
- Correcting actor placement in space for spatial awareness or staging
- Adjusting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure safety and comfort
- Assisting with costume fittings to ensure proper fit and mobility
- Offering tactile feedback to enhance body awareness or performance technique

Instructional Touch Best Practices:

To maintain a supportive and respectful environment, instructional touch should always:

- Establish Boundaries (*see appendix*)
- Integrate “Button” (*see appendix*)
- Be explained clearly in advance, with the purpose and intent communicated to the student.
- Seek explicit verbal consent from the student before proceeding.
- Communicate what reason you are initiating instructional touch.
- Be used sparingly and only when necessary to achieve the intended educational outcome.
- Consider individual comfort levels, cultural differences, personal boundaries, and any accommodations that might be needed.
- Try Open Questions (e.g.) “Does that work for you?”, “How would you feel about _____”, “Would you be open to _____?”,
- Be prepared for “no” and adjust accordingly.

If instructional touch is declined, faculty, staff, and guest artists should offer alternative methods, such as:

- Visualization techniques
- Demonstrating on themselves
- Verbal Guidance with student using their own hands, using props to demonstrate movement or positioning
- Careful observation and note-taking to provide verbal feedback and guidance

Please note: Instructional touch differs from touch made in an emergency, which is used to prevent or minimize injury. In emergencies, immediate action should be taken to reduce harm, followed by a check-in if needed.

Theatrical Intimacy

Theatrical intimacy involves simulating intimate or vulnerable acts—physical, verbal, emotional, or imaginative—for performance. It extends beyond sexual or violent acts to include various forms of familiarity and closeness. Built on shared experiences, trust, and mutual respect, theatrical intimacy fosters deeper awareness, understanding, and connection in storytelling.

These moments belong to the characters, not the actors. Actors engage with choreography and dialogue, maintaining a clear distinction between themselves and their roles. While characters may not consent within the story, actors perform from a foundation of clear communication, consent, and shared understanding.

Clear communication among the production team, director, theatrical intimacy directors, and performers is essential before beginning any intimacy work. Open dialogue fosters

understanding, eliminates confusion, and ensures a safe, respectful, and transparent process for all involved.

Theatrical Intimacy encompasses a wide-range of simulated depictions, including but not limited to

- **Kissing:** Any type of mouth-to-body contact, whether romantic, familial, or symbolic.
- **Embraces:** Hugs or any form of sustained physical closeness.
- **Sexual innuendo:** Dialogue or behavior suggesting or alluding to sexual themes.
- **Revealing clothing:** Costumes designed to suggest intimacy or vulnerability.
- **Nudity or partial nudity:** Includes on-stage or off-stage costume changes that reveal down to the character's undergarments or less.
- **Simulated intercourse and outercourse:** Choreographed physical acts representing sexual activity.
- **Intimate dialogue:** Personal or emotionally charged exchanges that depict sensuality or sexually explicit content, or moments of extreme emotional difficulty or vulnerability, particularly regarding the status or identity of the actor.
- **Violent dialogue:** Words used to simulate conflict, intimidation, or harm, particularly against the protected status or identity of the actor.
- **Physical acts:** Gestures of affection (e.g., holding hands), simulated violence (e.g., slaps, punches), or actions requiring physical closeness.
- **Imaginative acts:** Moments where actors simulate intimacy or violence symbolically or non-physically.
- **Off-stage interactions:** Scenarios such as costume changes, which may involve varying states of undress in shared spaces.

Theatrical Intimacy Best Practices

In addition to the Instructional Touch Best Practices, the following guidelines are required for Theatrical Intimacy.

1. Consent-Based Process

The department will implement an Audition Disclosure Form, giving actors the agency to opt in or out of theatrical intimacy. Additionally, we will use "The Button" technique, ensuring performers have the power to pause or stop at any moment, fostering a safe and respectful creative environment.

2. Established Boundaries

- Implement the Boundary Practice exercise (*see appendix*) to establish clear limits and expectations.

- Require a third-party observer, such as a Stage Manager, to be present during all rehearsals and staging of intimate scenes.
- Ensure that only essential personnel—such as the Intimacy Director/Coordinator/Choreographer, Director, or Instructor of Record—are present during these moments.
- Enforce a strict no-cell-phone policy for all production members during rehearsals and backstage in productions involving intimacy.
- Directors and choreographers must refrain from physically demonstrating or participating in the staging of intimate moments. All staging should be conducted through verbal communication or guided by an intimacy choreographer.

3. Desexualize the Process

- Use anatomically accurate, non-sexual language when discussing or staging intimacy, avoiding slang. If a term is unavailable, gesturing may be used as an alternative.
- Refer to characters by name when discussing their actions and motivations, rather than referencing the actors directly.
- Maintain a professional environment by prohibiting sexual jokes, innuendos, or inappropriate comments during all rehearsals and related discussions.
- Implement de-roling exercises to help actors separate themselves from their characters after performing intimate scenes.

4. Choreography

- All theatrical intimacy, no matter how simple, must be carefully choreographed and notated.
- Performers and Stage Management must document choreography, consulting with the Theatrical Intimacy Choreographer (IC) for proper notation using precise, non-sexualized language. Notation can be written or audio-recorded, but video recordings of intimacy are prohibited to protect actor privacy.
- Performers must follow the choreographed movements and maintain clear boundaries. If boundaries change, they should immediately inform the instructor or IC for adjustments.
- Directors cannot alter choreography without first discussing any changes with the IC.
- Choreography should not be rehearsed outside of official rehearsal times unless a third-party representative from the production is present.
- Placeholders (non-intimate gestures) should be used until choreography is finalized. They may continue to be used during rehearsals or technical runs, but not in performances. They may also be used if an actor is unwell.
- The company should establish a clear placeholder phase-out date—determined by the director, IC and the ensemble members directly involved—ensuring all parties have adequate time to rehearse and perform the moments fully before performances.

Theatrical Violence

Theatrical violence involves simulating physical, emotional, or psychological acts of aggression to evoke conflict or resolution. It includes symbolic representations of power and resistance, conflict, and the human condition. Effective theatrical violence demands precision, trust, careful rehearsal, open communication, and the guidance of fight choreographers or violence choreographer (VC) to ensure safety and preserve artistic integrity.

Staging violence is typically not the responsibility of the IC unless specified before the production begins. In cases involving simulated sexual violence, the IC may take on these duties if previously agreed upon or if they were specifically hired for this purpose. Collaboration on these elements is possible, but all discussions must occur before any performer interactions.

Theatrical violence encompasses a wide range of interactions, including but not limited to:

Simulated Fights: Choreographed combat involving hand-to-hand or weapons.

Gestures of Threat: Non-contact actions like raised fists or pointing weapons.

Symbolic Acts: Abstract representations of violence through movement, sound, or props.

Slaps, Punches, or Kicks: Choreographed strikes ensuring safety and realism.

Falls and Stumbles: Controlled actions portraying injury.

Use of Weapons: Choreographed interactions with props like swords or firearms.

Verbal Violence: Aggressive or threatening language, such as racial slurs and hate speech.

Psychological Harm: Depictions of manipulation or coercion.

Death or Injury Simulations: Representations of harm, often with props or effects.

Destruction of Objects: Symbolic acts of aggression like smashing props.

Costume Shop, Fittings, and Wardrobe Best Practices

When a performer is cast in a department production, they must attend a measurement appointment and costume fittings in the Costume Shop, attend dress rehearsals, participate in back-stage or on-stage costume changes, and wear their costumes in performance as designed. Participants in these activities typically include designers, costume shop professional staff, student wardrobe crews, and actors. Given the close proximity involved, the Department has established best practices, informed by the guidelines on Instructional Touch, to ensure safety and respect during these activities.

Fittings may involve the following:

- Removal of street clothes down to undergarments.
- Changing into show-specific undergarments, if provided.
- Demonstration of movement related to production requirements (e.g., standing for up to 90 minutes, sitting, squatting, jumping, lunging, walking, raising arms, using stairs, dancing).
- Physical touch from the Costume Designer, Draper, or Shop Manager for proper fit and adjustments.
- Close proximity between the performer and costume staff during the fitting process.
- Photography for reference purposes (e.g., for costume adjustments, communication with the director, wardrobe, and lighting departments). *Images of in-progress garments will remain confidential within the shop.

Make-up & Wig Fittings:

- Discussion of cosmetic and grooming routines to ensure safe and appropriate application methods.
- Brushing/combining hair (students may do this themselves if preferred).
- Curling or straightening with hot tools (used only with consent).
- Light touch around the hairline or scalp with hands or bobby pins.
- Hairspray application (students will be given a warning before use).

Dressing Rooms, Backstage and Onstage: In addition to the above, participants may also be involved in these activities:

- Exposure to other performers' bodies while changing in shared spaces.
- Physical touch by a wardrobe crew member for dressing assistance.
- Entry of crew members into changing spaces, following knock procedures.

Best Practices:

At any point in the process, a participant may:

- Say "Button" to pause the process.
- Request a two-minute break.
- Request fewer people in the room.
- Ask for the door to be open or closed.
- Request a fitting in a private or open area.
- Request assistance or additional privacy for dressing/undressing.
- Ask for a faculty or staff member to make adjustments instead of a student.
- Request changes to a garment for comfort.
- Request a chair for breaks.
- Ask for a different dressing room or dresser/performer assignment.
- Request adjustments to a costume for ease of changing or comfort.

- Ask questions for clarification.

Further detail on Wardrobe Practices can be found in *(see appendices.)*

Article IV: Student Rights and Responsibilities

Student Rights:

1. Access to Qualified Professionals:

- Students have the right to an Theatrical Intimacy Director for all productions requiring intimacy.
- Students have the right to a Violence Choreographer for all productions involving staged violence.

The department will strive, when possible and appropriate for the production, to provide a guest artist to fulfill these roles. However, recognizing the diverse experiences, training, and qualifications within our staff and faculty, a faculty or staff member may also be assigned to productions requiring this expertise. The director may also take on these responsibilities when appropriate. In any instance where intimacy or stage combat is required, support will be provided at a level suited to the specific needs of the production.

2. Safe and Respectful Environments:

- Students have the right to work in a rehearsal and performance environment that prioritizes safety, respect, and consent.
- Students have the right to voice their boundaries without fear of retaliation or judgment.

3. Clear Communication and Consent:

- Students have the right to participate in a consent-based rehearsal process where boundaries are respected, and open communication is encouraged.
- Students have the right to request placeholders or modifications to intimacy or violence choreography to align with their boundaries.

4. Access to Support:

- Students have the right to report concerns about intimacy, violence choreography, or instructional touch to faculty or staff without fear of reprisal.
- Students have the right to request a check-in or adjustment if their boundaries shift during a production or class.

5. Theatrical Intimacy, Fight & Movement Calls

Actors are entitled to scheduled calls for intimacy, fight, and essential physical rehearsals before a performance. On two show days, only one call should be scheduled unless complex choreography, intense scenes, or significant intimacy are required otherwise. A trained ensemble member, appointed by the IC, VC, PSM or director, must lead these sessions.

Theatrical Intimacy calls must be overseen by stage management and conducted in a closed space, with only the stage manager and the directly involved ensemble members present, unless otherwise communicated and agreed upon. Fight captains and dance captains may be appointed by the fight director or choreographer on the project. They may not be self-appointed or assigned by a member of the stage management team.

Pre-show calls for theatrical intimacy, violence, other movement, and singing provide performers and crew the opportunity to review staging and check in with the ensemble. Supervised by stage management, these sessions follow a structured running order for maximum efficiency. All props, weapons, costumes, and scenery must be set exactly as they will be used in the performance.

6. Conflicts

Students have the right to initiate a Concern Repair Path (see below,) a documented pathway to address any concerns or issues that may arise during a UMBC Theatre activity.

Student Responsibilities:

Communication:

- Performers are responsible for clearly communicating their boundaries during rehearsals and classes.
- Students should notify the appropriate faculty or staff member if they have concerns about intimacy or violence choreography.

Preparation:

- Performers are responsible for reviewing scripts, theatrical intimacy notes, and fight choreography materials provided by the production team before auditions, before and after rehearsals, and before and after performances.
- Performers should arrive dressed appropriately for calls with proper footwear and clothing and/or costume pieces.
- Performers should come prepared for fittings, rehearsals, and performances, adhering to all established policies.

Engagement in Training:

- Students must attend all required theatrical intimacy and safety training sessions the department provides.
- Students should actively participate in boundary practices, "Button" moments, de-roling, check-in/check-outs, and other consent-based exercises.

Respect for Others:

- Students must respect the boundaries of their peers, collaborators, and instructors.
- Students should refrain from behavior that undermines the safety or professionalism of the rehearsal or class environment.
- Students should adhere to UMBC Community Agreements (*see appendix*)

By upholding these rights and responsibilities, students contribute to a supportive, inclusive, and professional community within the UMBC Department of Theatre.

Article V. Proscribed Conduct

A. Student Responsibility to Know Rules and Regulations

Each student is responsible for notice of and compliance with the provisions of the University's Rules and Regulations. All students are expected and required:

1. to comply with University Rules and Regulations and with directives issued by a University Official in the course of their authorized duties, and
2. to observe standards of conduct appropriate for an academic institution and the Department of Theatre

All members of the Department (faculty, staff, students, guests, etc.) are obliged to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the Department's mission and purpose as an educational unit of UMBC.

B. Misconduct involving Theatrical Intimacy, Instructional Touch, and Theatrical Violence

This rule prohibits, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Deviation from choreography without specific instruction of Theatrical Intimacy Choreographer or Violence Choreographer
2. Rehearsing intimacy and fight choreography outside of rehearsal or without proper supervision.
3. Failure to report an illness or injury that might negatively impact classmates' health and safety during intimacy and fight choreography.

4. Recounting of or disclosing sensitive personal information that has a negative impact on classmates, unintentional or not.
5. Use of sexualized language, jokes, innuendo, violent language, harmful, degrading, or derogatory or comments outside of the study/rehearsal/performances of text that might include such behavior.
6. Failure or refusal to use and or lift placeholder language and/or gestures at the date established by the Theatrical Intimacy Choreographer, Fight Director, Director, and company.
7. Failure or refusal to do check-in/check-out and/or boundary practice as agreed upon by the company, partners, choreographers, etc.
8. Misuse or mishandling of theatrical weapons.
9. Failure or refusal to participate in annual Theatrical Intimacy trainings, tests, and tune-ups as required.
10. Unauthorized use of photographic or videographic recording equipment during classes, rehearsals, costume fittings and performances.
11. Unauthorized use of computers or cell phones during classes, rehearsals, or performances.
12. Failure to cease repetitive unwanted behavior directed toward a particular individual or individuals
13. Absence or tardiness to a pre-rehearsal or pre-performance Intimacy or Fight call.

Article VI. Interventions and Sanctions

A. Interventions

Interventions are designed to address a pattern of misconduct and cultivate a safe and equitable environment while supporting the Department's mission and UMBC policies. The following interventions may be imposed, in any combination, on a student who fails or refuses to meet the Civic Compass guidelines and standards. Any intervention(s) must have a plan(s) for improvement, an established timeline for improvement, and follow-up(s) to evaluate improvement.

Interventions include, but are not limited to:

1. Conference(s) with instructor(s), academic advisor(s), academic area head, production director(s), choreographer(s), Associate Chair, Production Stage Manager, Civic Compass Chair, Production Manager, and/or Department Chair.
2. Participation in a restorative circle or conference
3. Re-training and/or re-testing on skills, concepts, and guidelines
4. Additional rehearsal with instructor(s), choreographers, coaches and/or others

5. Referral to or consultation with one or more of UMBC's administrative offices: Dean of Students, Student Conduct and Community Standards, Equity and Civil Rights, Retriever CARE, Retriever Integrated Health, Residential Life, Academic Success Center, Financial Services, or other offices and individuals relevant to the situation.

B. Sanctions.

The Department and its community of faculty, staff, students, and guests make every effort to resolve conflicts through the Concern Repair Process (below) using the intervention(s) above. Some conduct, however, is so deleterious to the educational environment, so harmful to the individuals involved or the entire UMBC Theatre community, that it requires action more disciplinary in nature. In these cases, the department may work with one or more of the UMBC administrative offices listed above.

Sanctions may include educational, restorative, and rehabilitative components. These sanctions may include: reassignment of students' class assignments, partners, crew, casting; suspension from class, rehearsal, production assignment or performance for a specific amount of time; removal from role or production assignment, removal from casting or production assignments, internships, and/or independent studies in future semester(s)

Concern Repair Path (CRP)

When situations arise that are believed to conflict with the UMBC Department of Theatre's Community Agreements, this policy and any other policies around community conduct, individuals are encouraged to follow this path, based on the Concern Repair Path by The Chicago Theatre Standards, available online at www.notinourhouse.org

The Repair Path provides a documented pathway to address any concerns or issues that may arise during a UMBC Theatre activity. The Department wants all participants to feel supported and know what steps are available for them to take in the event of any concern or issue with safety, respect, or other topics impacting them during or related to a UMBC Theatre.

It is the goal to resolve concerns promptly and via the lowest level (below) possible. However, participants may choose the level they are most comfortable with and that is most appropriate to their concern.

It is the responsibility of all UMBC Theatre participants, particularly faculty and professional staff, to take appropriate action when inappropriate behavior is witnessed or reported.

Level 1: If they feel comfortable doing so, an individual (faculty, staff or student) who believes themselves to conflict with another individual(s,) or if they perceive that misconduct has occurred that is negatively affecting them, they are encouraged first directly to address the individual(s) involved. This helps to foster an honest and open community and is often the fastest path to a resolution.

Level 2: If an individual is not comfortable directly addressing the individual(s) involved, or if no resolution can be agreed upon, or the pattern of behavior continues, the next point of contact is the Instructor of Record, who may also call upon

- Production Director
- Intimacy or Violence Choreographer
- Production Coach
- Staff Production Stage Manager
- Civic Compass Committee Member
- Production Manager

These contacts may intervene, call a private conference or restorative conversation, and might evoke a plan for re-training, additional rehearsal, reassignment or referral to another resource in any combination. Improvement plans should include timelines and follow-ups.

Level 3: If an issue has not been resolved through Levels 1 and 2, or if more assistance is needed to resolve the problem, the next point of contact can be any of the following people. The contacts at this level may consult with each other to create the appropriate intervention(s,) referral(s,) sanction(s,) and follow-ups.

Associate Chair/Undergraduate Program Director
Director of B.F.A
Director of Design & Production
Academic Advisor
Civic Compass Chair
Department Chair

The Department of Theatre's Policies on Theatrical Intimacy, Instructional Touch, and Theatrical Violence are intended to guide the depiction and instructional use of consensual touch in

performance settings. These policies should not be interpreted as addressing or excusing real-life instances of sex-based misconduct. Nonetheless, the Department remains committed to upholding the principles outlined in the Interim Policy on Sex Discrimination, Sex-Based Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct.

The UMBC Code of Student Conduct defines student responsibilities, expectations, and the procedures for addressing complaints while ensuring due process. In addition, all students are subject to UMBC's Interim Policy on Sex Discrimination, Sex-Based Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct, which operates separately from the Code of Student Conduct. Students are strongly encouraged to review both policies to understand their rights, responsibilities, and the distinct procedures each outlines.

When situations arise that are believed to be in direct conflict with UMBC's Student Code of Conduct, Interim Policy on Sex Discrimination, Sex-Based Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct, or Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy, individuals are strongly encouraged to submit a report using the confidential online reporting/ referral form.

Reports may be submitted via the online reporting/referral form or by contacting the Office of Equity and Civil Rights at ecr@umbc.edu or 410-455-1717.

The Interim Policy on Sex Discrimination, Sex-Based Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct is found at:

<https://ecr.umbc.edu/interim-policy-on-sex-discrimination-sex-based-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-august-1-2024/>

The Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy is found at

<https://ecr.umbc.edu/discrimination-policy/>