

## ROUGH EDITED COPY

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
Voices from the Field: Transition and the Arts  
October 17, 2017

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>>> Hello, everyone, and welcome to the October installment of our VFA webinar series. Addressing topics related to the arts and special education. I'm Genna Gabriel. I will be your webinar moderator today. Today's webinar is part of our lightning talk series and hosted by my colleague Emily Thiell. If you'd like live stream captioning, you can follow the link on this slide. Before we get going, let's take a brief moment and introduce you to the WebEx event center. A link for live stream captioning appear in the chat box which you can select from the control panel. If you need to leave the webinar early, you leave it by clicking the X in the upper left corner. A recording will be available afterwards. You can catch up on any parts you miss. You can connect to the audio portion through your telephone or through your computer's microphone and speakers. If you are using your telephone, please make sure you mute your computer speakers. You can submit comments and questions using the Q&A option. This is different than the chat box and allows moderators to view your questions. Make sure your question is directed to all panelists. I will monitor the screen throughout the webinar. If you prefer to speak your input, please click on the raise your hand icon. I will touch base with you and unmute your microphone at the appropriate time. Much of today's presentation will be conducted over a screen share. You may also expand your view to a full screen. At the end of today's presentation, there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the material. Given the limited time of available to us, we respectfully ask you avoid questions about individual students and focus on the broader implications of Emily's work. During this question and answer time, please raise your hand if you wish to speak or type your questions into the Q&A box.

Within the week, we will send out a follow-up e-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint slides and a copy of the webinar transcript. You can review supplemental materials and notes you take during the webinar. Our next lightning talk will take place October 24th at 12:30 p.m. The

registration link can be found in your chat box. I invite you to connect with us using #VSAwebinar. On Twitter we are VSAINTL and we would love to engage with you. With that, I'm going to hand it over to today's presenter, Emily.

>> EMILY THIELL: You'll be introduced to a program that offers internships with individuals with intellectual disabilities, also provide advice to organizations interested in instituting a program like this. The program I'll be discussing, we focus on intellectual disabilities. It makes the internship exclusive to individuals with ID. The reason it exists is because people with ID require more -- require more structured support and landing and maintaining their internship at the Kennedy Center than with other disabilities. But the problem specialized supports, they're able to learn new tasks. Despite the people with intellectual disabilities are able to learn a variety of jobs. If they're employed, they're most commonly found in skilled labor, janitorial or food service related jobs. But the Kennedy Center wanted to inspire others to fill. It's worth mentioning the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities are hovering around 70% unemployment rate. Almost 88% are only employed part time. And most importantly, while this population is skilled in many aspects, they are often seen as unemployable, especially compared to other disabilities. Often, individuals with intellectual disabilities are turned down for governmental support to gain meaningful employment since funding and staff is limited.

In my role at the Kennedy Center, I coordinate the internship program which was established in 2000 with the focus in removing barriers to careers for persons with intellectual disabilities. My interns gain real life work experience within an arts organization and obtain professional development through seminars and leaders. They're also to continue to nurse their love of the arts. EI entrants are paid which have two benefits. The first is that they're able to earn an income for the work they're completing. Payments require that they're able to manage their own money. Which is the first step towards independence. And lastly, throughout the internship, interns produce materials which eventually go into their portfolio. When they're leaving the internship, they're able to highlight strengths and work history in order to gain competitive employment.

The internship went on a brief hiatus before it was re-launched in 2017. During this break, it revisited the original structure in order to ensure the program met the current needs of the D.C. metro community. Since the hiatus, the Kennedy Center internship program has evolved by adding a course about working in an art institution and created more structured professional development opportunities. These changes require there is a constant collaboration between the special education team and the following group of people. Intern supervisors, the Kennedy Center internship team and the EEI community council. The EEI internship has frequently had experts in the field serve in advisory capacity, but we convened a new community council that was particularly invested in the re-launch of the program. It consists of program alums, community members and service providers and are truly the right hand of this program as we bounce around problems with them.

Another area of importance was to ensure it is universally designed so it could be applicable to other arts institutions. That way we're continuing the mission of being an example of successful internship for persons with intellectual disabilities can look like in organizations of all sizes. Throughout the internship, interns produce materials which will go into their portfolio. When they leave the internship, they're able to highlight their strengths, interests, and work history in order to gain competitive employment. In line with the portfolio, rigorous goals focus on hard and soft skills and are reviewed with their supervisor, service provider and myself. This slide contains

program priorities which serve as the north star that guides our program. These program priorities were established during a community meeting where we invited service providers, advocates and alums to come. Through the discussion we determined there were several program priorities.

Meaningful work experience within the Kennedy Center. Another value that continues to remain a program priority is full inclusion. Especially since people with disabilities learn the most of their non-disabled peers. They have application mapped to a rigorous job application experience. Previously the interview was with a large group and interns listened to all the available supervisors and then went to interview in unorganized groups with the supervisors they are most interested in. We restructured this experience so all can interview equally with all supervisors and they must fill out the application with a service provider along with a resume.

Most of the entrants apply because they have a deep love of the arts. It's important they continue their exposure of the arts. This core value has continued to be something we believe allows internships at art organizations to stand out against other work sites as it's a unique value add that interns love to take advantage of. We provide two tickets to shows of the EEI entrant's choosing. They're able to invite a friend to the show thus forming meaningful friendships. Here's advice in running a successful internship program. The most important is the importance of constant collaboration across multiple groups of people. Alums of the program, intern supervisors, experts in the field, et cetera provide so much value to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of an effective internship program. Make sure your internship has a strong foundation. Are the program priorities realistic? If they aren't, it's important to go back and see what's relevant. Everyone should accept that the foundation will change over time. The supports your able to provide are determined before an internship cohort begins.

For example, we require all applicants to fill out the application with their service provider and they must provide a job coach to ensure a smooth transition for the entrant at the work site. Echoing the importance of a strong foundation, there's a need to be clear what priorities you want your interns walking away with. All internships should focus on evaluating the success of the interns. Are interns leaving your program and going onto other opportunities or is their career static? If they aren't able to obtain meaningful employment, perhaps more can be done to give credibility to the strength of your program. It's important to see that those values are represented in the internship itself. The intern's work needs to reflect the values of the institution. The Kennedy Center considers excellence in the arts, inclusiveness, respect, and learning to be the core values we hold near and dear. You can see them throughout the internship.

We all tend to work in silos. It's our goal to unite people across institutions. Whether it's through internships, professional development, governmental support or civil rights lawyers. By uniting these silos, we become stronger across D.C. When we think about the theme of constant collaboration, breaking down the silos is the only way we can implement meaningful change and inclusive opportunity for people with disabilities. Let me pass this over to Genna.

>> Thank you, Emily. So we have now reached the question and answer portion of our webinar. So if you haven't already, now is the time to enter a question into the Q&A box or raise your hand. So let's go ahead and get started. So the first question I've got is how you go about identifying jobs for potential interns with intellectual disabilities.

>> EMILY THIELL: That's a great question. It's something that I constantly think about. The first thing I do is think about what I want the intern to get out of the internship in general. And so going backwards, I want them to have a similar experience to all of the other interns. I want them placed in work sites similar to what the other interns

would do. So I will usually coordinate with the KC intern supervisor and ask her, you know, what supervisors are taking on interns, what supervisors are good supervisors. And from there, I just pretty much reach out to people that are able to devote a lot of time as a supervisor and are very communicative with their interns. But I also do reach out to the heads of departments of places where we haven't placed interns before. I think it's important to constantly let people know that the internship exists and that we have interns that are able to do the work that they're doing and also offering opportunities to say, hey, you haven't taken an intern, but this is the value that an intern can provide. And just meet them for coffee. And people have been very receptive to that.

>> Great. You started to touch actually on this next question as you finished up that answer. What are some tips that you have to advocate for more inclusive hiring practices kind of thinking across an institution?

>> EMILY THIELL: Oftentimes I find that people want to support this program. I haven't run across anyone at the Kennedy Center that isn't pro-inclusive work environment. But oftentimes if there is hesitation, it tends to be they do not think they are uniquely qualified to take on an EEI intern. As a result, I think it's very important that I let them know that I'm available, having a special education background, to help break down the work that they want the intern to do, to help train supervisors on how to work with people with intellectual disabilities, and also let them know we do require that a job coach comes on site. There is another service personnel checking in throughout the internship process. That tends to make people less nervous about a new experience of taking on an intern, and I'm happy to report that most of our supervisors actually become repeat supervisors. They have a really positive experience the first time, and then they become interested in just continuing to support this program.

>> Great. So we have time for one more question. And this question is, can you talk a little bit about how inclusion works in your program.

>> EMILY THIELL: So our program is fully inclusive which means that everything the Kennedy Center interns do, the KC interns being college students and recent graduates, what they do -- my interns are also there. Whether it's professional development opportunities, listening to leaders speak about what goes on within their department, workshops to create a strong portfolio or KC class, I touched on this previously. It's an arts management level course truly focused on figure out what kind of worker you are. My interns are there. Inclusivity might range for different internships, so it might be partially inclusive. Maybe interns only attend certain things as deemed appropriate. But for us, we truly believe all the interns learn best from each other. We do as much to expose them to each other as equals.

>> Great. So that concludes today's webinar. I'd like to ask you, our webinar participants, to please keep your window open following the webinar. The survey will generate automatically on the screen. Your feedback is always appreciated. Finally, thank you for joining us. If you have questions or comments, you can contact Emily by e-mail. Or by phone at 202-416-8742. Have a great day.

[ Webinar concluded at 12:48 p.m. ET ]