

Executive Summary

UVA Acts, a theater-based faculty development program, has successfully run for two full academic years since its re-launch in 2022. With incredible word of mouth and a return to primarily live (in-person) performances, UVA Acts has steadily reached a significant number of faculty and staff with its growing repertoire of programming. Consistent re-bookings and survey feedback suggest that UVA Acts has made a valuable impact on the community of the University of Virginia in creating spaces to work and learn that are more welcoming, communicative, and engaged.

Mission

Through performance and dialogue, UVA Acts promotes preventative practices that foster vibrant, equitable spaces for working and learning at the University of Virginia.



Description

Drawing on practices from Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre for Dialogue, and community-based performance, the UVA Acts Ensemble performs original, interactive workshops for an audience of faculty, as well as staff, post-docs, and graduate students who serve UVA in an instructional capacity. We've also been commissioned to create and facilitate workshops to audiences beyond academics and/or Grounds. The workshops incorporate different types of theatrical performance: a single story that is told over time, brief introductions to several different characters, a variety of scenes woven together, and elements of direct interaction with the audience, such as Q&A between characters and audience or audience members engaging with the characters to change the outcome of the scene by practicing intervention strategies. Our programming is developed and delivered with a focus on faculty and staff practices that promote equity in the workplace and the classroom.

Over the past two years, UVA Acts has increased its offerings from four to fourteen. Of those, two are available in micro-workshop versions of 30-45 minutes (as opposed to our typical 90-minute format). Our scripts are living documents, which means that we are continuously taking survey feedback along with ensemble feedback to adapt and enhance our content to best serve our audiences. Below is a list of our current offerings, with comparison data on their use over the past two academic years.

Accomplishments

In the academic year 2023-2024, UVA Acts reached an audience of **750 participants** through **30 workshops**, occurring primarily in-person. Only 4 of the workshops were hosted by UVA Acts as “public” university-wide programming. The majority of the workshops were booked by UVA stakeholders, with a growing number of recurring bookings (designated with ~) and two commissioned programs (designated with *).

Associate Deans of Academics	Provost Office, staff
Associate Deans of DEI	NSF funded conference: Disclosing Failure*
Biocomplexity Institute	School of Data Science~
CTE – SPARK teaching orientation	School of Education & Human Dev., online grad course
CTE – Teaching as Graduate Students~	School of Engineering, dept. of biomedical engineering
Facilities Management*~	School of Engineering, new faculty orientation
Faculty Affairs, staff	School of Medicine, dept. of Obstetrics & Gynecology
Institute of World Languages	Undergraduate Research/ Citizen Scholar Mentors~
Leadership and Academic Matters, alumni	UVA Library, Archives Leadership Institute
LGBTQ+ Faculty and Staff Committee	UVA Library, Library Residents Summit
New Faculty Orientation	UVA Library, managers~

Word of mouth and past participation in a UVA Acts workshop continue to be responsible for the majority of our annual bookings. More and more, we’re having multiple bookings lined up with a given stakeholder, demonstrating a commitment to developing an ongoing conversation around topics of belonging and access over multiple semesters.

The two commissioned programs (*Skills Needed: Implicit Bias in Staff Hiring* for Facilities Management and *It’s About Time: Gender Equity in STEM* for the NSF funded conference “Disclosing Failure”) were projects that took more than a year of planning, research, and collaboration to produce and they were charged because they were entities associated with the university but beyond the Academic (Provost Office) realm of UVA Acts’ traditional scope. The former was booked for three performances within the same week in April 2024, for a total of 70 participants while the latter was booked for a single performance in June 2024, for a total of 38 participants. Both stakeholders were immensely pleased with the outcomes of the workshops and have already begun booking repeat performances for 2024-2025. The commissions only charged stakeholders for the costs of the actors’ wages (rehearsals, performances, and travel time).

In 2023-2024, the UVA Acts Ensemble held steady at around 10 local actors and 6 student actors. Additionally, 3 one-time actors were hired to perform (one of which will become a full-fledged Ensemble member for ’24-’25, the other two have since moved out of the area). The understudy system continues to support UVA Acts programming, limiting the number of postponements or cancellations needed.



Budget

For 2023-2024, we ended up being quite underbudget. Reasons for this include the two commissions that brought in some income and the fact that the Ensemble Members are far more well-versed with the majority of our programming repertoire, which minimizes the rehearsal hour needs. Also, when looking at the overall attendance numbers versus workshop numbers over the past two years, we've had a much greater average number of participants per booking this past year; fewer bookings mean fewer actor hours overall without sacrificing the reach of our content. Also, actor wages remained stagnant for the academic year, given the uncertainties around personnel costs. This will change for 2024-2025 when actors who have worked for more than a year with UVA Acts will receive a \$2/hour wage increase for their talent, reliability, and commitment to the mission (\$1/hour for those having worked between 6-12 months for us).

	2022-2023 (estimated)	2023-2024 (budgeted)	2024-2025 (budgeted)
Personnel Wages	\$50,000	\$52,000	\$52,000
Catering/ Space Rental/ Parking	\$4,500	\$8,500	\$8,500
Cost Sharing - special programs	-\$5,000	-\$8,000	
Office Supplies	\$500	\$1,000	\$800
Marketing & Promotions	\$6,750	\$4,200	\$2,250
Software subscriptions	\$300	\$300	\$250
Conference Travel			\$1,200
Total	\$57,050	\$58,000	\$65,000

Results

The survey data feedback about the workshops of 2023-2024 was again overwhelmingly positive. A mix of 5-point Likert scale questions and open-ended questions were asked in an anonymous Qualtrics survey that attendees were invited to complete near the end of a given workshop. Survey response rates were far better than in the previous year: 54% (402 out of 750).

Participants found the situations and characters relatable (from their portrayal of power dynamics to the different attempts one makes to navigate tricky moments). There were some who commented on the exaggerated quality of the performances, though many understood it as an educational tactic. Many believed they would change their behavior as a result of the workshop (from more awareness to actively speaking up in moments of bias, from slowing down and listening to using tools such as the CARE framework or the 5 D's of Intervention). Respondents honestly shared their hesitations or obstacles in changing their behavior, citing power dynamics and time as notable factors (though many specified that "nothing" would prevent them from trying to put into practice such behavioral changes. See Appendix A to review the '23-'24 data more fully.

We've also been able to track UVA positionality of attendees (i.e. Faculty, Staff, Graduate Student, Other) as well as assess how many participants were attending UVA Acts for the first time. Of those who chose to identify themselves according to their status at the university: 91 faculty, 98 staff, and 86 students. Of those who chose to specify if they were encountering UVA Acts for the 1st, 2nd, or more times: 23 had attended multiple previous UVA Acts workshops, 32 had attended one previous workshop, 133 attended their first workshop and were eager to attend another one, and 93 attended their first workshop but were not sure if they would attend another one.

Appendix B includes various charts comparing the data for the last two academic years (2022-2023 versus 2023-2024). There you can see how often individual workshops have been booked, along with their average attendance. There are also overall numbers of workshop bookings and attendance, along with survey response rates and repeat booking rates. While overall participant numbers aren't vastly different between the years, the average attendance per workshop is much improved as are the survey response and repeat booking rates. This means we've been able to glean a more accurate picture on the impact of the UVA Acts programming, using both quantitative and qualitative data. Our positive reach is directly tied to the number of stakeholders who book additional workshops with UVA Acts in future semesters.



Goals for '24 - '25

*Revisit and revise actor recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts. Having representation of different ages, races, and genders (identities that are typically deemed as visibly distinctive) is key to realistically portraying scenarios in a university setting.

- Continue engaging with HR reps to determine other means of securing ensemble members, based on how other entities around the university pay when they employ actors for interactive education
- Reconnect and extend new partnerships with various organizations in the community to further spread our reputation as a desirable option to earn supplementary income.
- Increase efforts to recruit graduate students and post-docs to join the ensemble
- More opportunities for undergraduate student ensemble members (in addition to actors, incorporate research assistants and assistant directors into the mix, bringing more "behind the scenes" support)

*Continue developing new workshops in collaboration with various university stakeholders, such as:

- a workshop inspired by the conversation around a "pedagogy of kindness"
- a workshop about English-language bias
- a workshop within a clinical setting to explore patient bias towards medical team members' identities

*Share our work

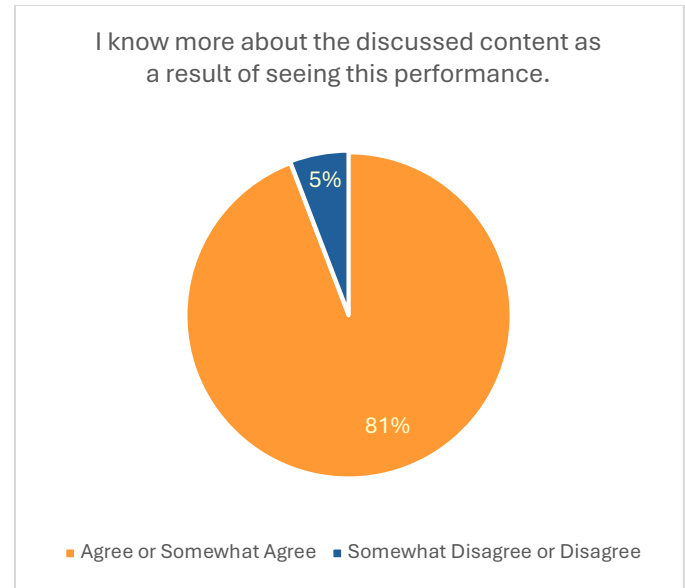
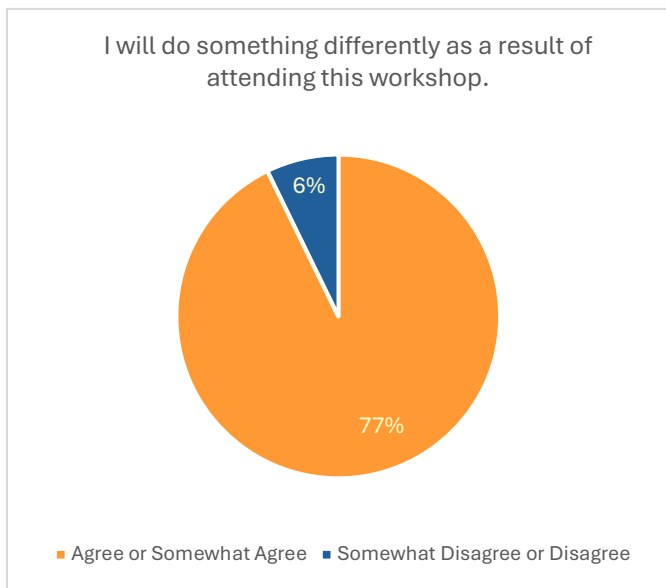
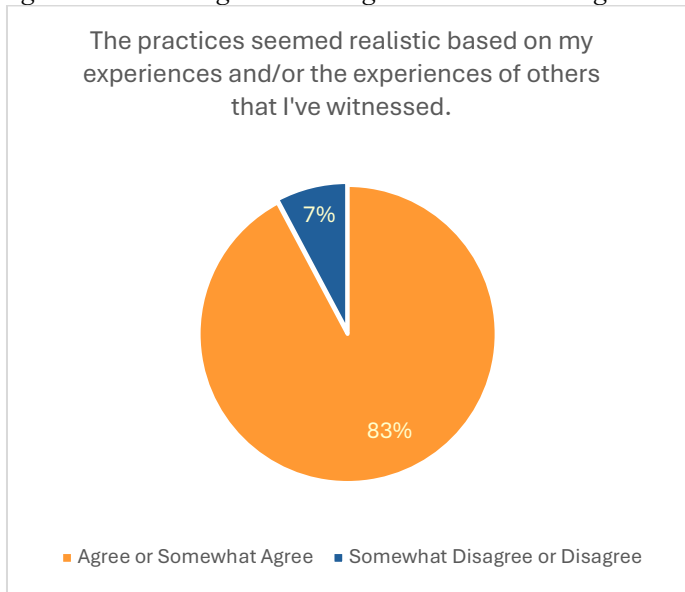
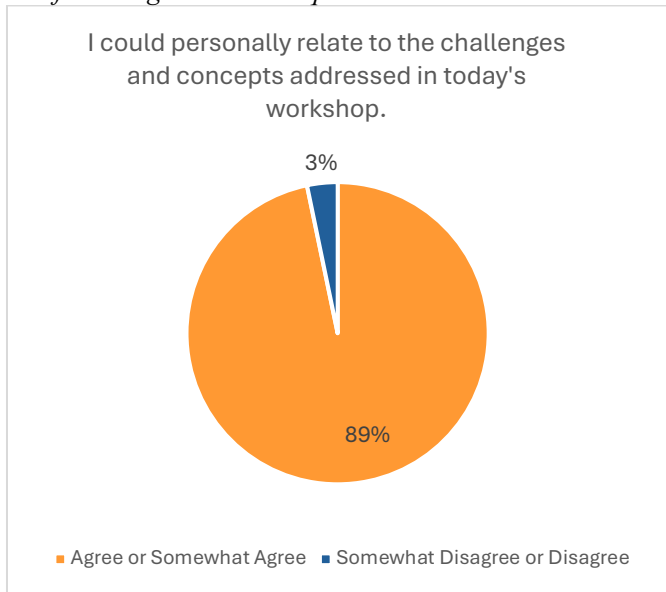
- co-author articles for publication with enthusiastic stakeholders
- co-present at stakeholders' discipline-specific conferences
- continue networking with leaders of similar programs at other institutions

*Pilot new programming to reach new audiences and/or serve our enthusiastic returning audiences with new material and methods of engagement and learning

- offer an ongoing drop-in class to practice listening, adapting, and creating on the spot
- create a readers theater where excerpts of published plays are read & discussed in connection with UVA Acts' mission

Appendix A - Survey results for 2023-2024: 54% response rate (402 out of 750 total)

The following Likert scale questions were scored and divided into Agree/Somewhat Agree vs. Disagree/Somewhat Disagree.



The following qualitative questions were coded and the answers appearing more than 15 times are below:

What aspects did you relate to?

poor communication/ power dynamics	114
rushed/ distracted/ unprepared	86
bias/ tokenism/ (lack of) inclusion	53

What seemed unrealistic?

character's behavior was exaggerated	67
nothing (it was realistic)	39

What will you do differently?

more effort, awareness, or intention	105
intervene/ use my voice/ act/ address bias/ check in	49
transparency/ slowing down	36
using tools (5 Ds, CARE, etc)	30

What might prevent you from trying some of the practices featured?

uncomfortable/ fear/ power dynamics	63
nothing	43
too busy	17

How would you describe this program to a friend or colleague?

active learning/ better than traditional training	78
engaging/ fun/ excellent	64
useful/ helpful/ recommend	60

In what ways does this workshop better equip you to have discussions with your colleagues on the topic of inclusion?

framework/ strategies/ sincerity	69
shared examples (role play)	57
multiple perspectives/ safe environment	28

Appendix B – Comparison data 2022-2023 versus 2023-2024

Looking at individual workshop bookings per year

Series	Workshop Title	time (min)	total # wksp 22-23	avg # attend 22-23	total # wksp 23-24	avg # attend 23-24
Building an Inclusive Culture	<i>It's About Time: Gender Equity in STEM</i>	90	0	0	1	38
Building an Inclusive Culture	Saying No: Finding Confidence in the Decline	60	3	37	1	40
Building an Inclusive Culture	With Respect to That: Ally Intervention Strategies	75-90	1	28	1*	5
Building an Inclusive Culture	You Can Call Me: Name Pronunciation	45-60	6	16	2	12
Improving Team Communication	<i>Improv(ing) Team Communication</i>	90	0	0	2	13
Inclusive Teaching Toolkit	Building Belonging	90	4*	11	1*	3
Inclusive Teaching Toolkit	First Impressions	90	5	9	1	9
Inclusive Teaching Toolkit	Leading Small Teams	75	4	37	0	0
Leadership & Development	<i>Feedback Needed</i>	75	0	0	1	27
Leadership & Development	Flying Colors: Addressing Accountability	75	1	6	3	8
Leadership & Development	<i>Stick to the Goals: Addressing Conflict Management</i>	75	0	0	2	23
Search Committee Signals	Implicit Bias in Academic Hiring	90-120	9*	13	6*	22
Search Committee Signals	<i>Implicit Bias in Staff Hiring</i>	90-120	0	0	3	23
UVA Acts Appetizer	My Name Is**	25	3	74	3	74
UVA Acts Appetizer	<i>It's Not a Trend: Using Pronouns</i>	25	0	0	3*	20

*includes virtual workshop(s)

Italics denote programs created in 23-24

By the numbers: overall participation (bookings, attendance, & surveys)

	22-23	23-24
Total participants	791	750
Total workshops	46	31
Average attendance per workshop	17	24
Survey response rate	19%	56%
Repeated bookings	9	13
% repeated bookings per year	20%	42%

The following Likert scale questions were scored and divided into Agree/Somewhat Agree vs. Disagree/Somewhat Disagree.

I could personally relate to the challenges and concepts addressed in today's workshop.	22-23	23-24	The practices seemed realistic based on my experiences and/or the experiences of others that I've witnessed.	22-23	23-24	I will do something differently as a result of attending this workshop.	22-23	23-24	I know more about the discussed content as a result of seeing this performance.	22-23	23-24
Agree or Somewhat Agree	91%	89%	Agree or Somewhat Agree	88%	83%	Agree or Somewhat Agree	75%	77%	Agree or Somewhat Agree	82%	81%
Somewhat Disagree or Disagree	5%	3%	Somewhat Disagree or Disagree	7%	7%	Somewhat Disagree or Disagree	6%	6%	Somewhat Disagree or Disagree	9%	5%

The following qualitative questions were coded and the answers appearing more than nine times are below:

What aspects did you relate to?	22-23	23-24
poor communication/ power dynamics	20	114
rushed/ distracted/ unprepared		86
bias/ tokenism/ (lack of) inclusion	23	53

What seemed unrealistic?	22-23	23-24
character's behavior was exaggerated	14	67
nothing (it was realistic)	10	39

What will you do differently?	22-23	23-24
more effort, awareness, or intention	17	105
intervene/ use my voice/ act/ address bias/ check in		49
transparency/ slowing down		36
using tools (5 Ds, CARE, etc)	23	30

What might prevent you from trying some of the practices featured?	22-23	23-24
uncomfortable/ fear/ power dynamics	20	63
nothing		43
too busy	11	17

How would you describe this program to a friend or colleague?	22-23	23-24
active learning/ better than traditional training	17	78
engaging/ fun/ excellent		64
useful/ helpful/ recommend	20	60