Core Apprentice Program 2026–27 Information Session

Faciliated by:
Julia Brown, Artistic Programs Manager
Emma Busch, Professional Resources & Education Associate

Recorded on January 7, 2026

Julia: Well, hello. Welcome to our information session on the court apprentice program here at Playwrights' Center. My name is Julia Brown. I'm the artistic programs manager and I am joined by...

Emma: Hi, I'm Emma Busch. I use she/her pronouns and I am the professional resources and education associate.

Julia: Awesome. Emma and colleagues Hannah Joyce and Alayna Jacqueline Barnes are the primary folks who run this program. And I'm here to help assist with this information session. And now someone has started hammering above me. This is just a day all over. What we're going to do today is I'll share my screen to show you where to find information about this program. Emma's going to talk a little bit about the purpose, the benefits, eligibility, the specifics of this program, and then I'm going to take you through step by step of what the application looks like. And we'll have time for questions at the end. Feel free to chime in with questions any time though, whether that's raising your hand, unmuting, or dropping something in the chat. All of that is fine.

So, I'm going to start off with a screen share and this will take you to the Playwrights' Center website. This is our programs page. You can get to that by pwcenter.org and then clicking on this programs tab at the top. You'll see all of our programs listed. You may be eligible for more than one program. So, do take a look at all of them. One of our upcoming deadlines is for the Core Writer program, which is our most open eligibility. So, you may also be eligible for that program. There are also programs that will open up in the fall that you may want to look at, including the Jerome and Many Voices Bellowships. But for today, we're talking Core Apprentice. So, we'll click on that. And Emma, would you like to talk a little bit about the program?

Emma: Yeah. So hopefully you are all here today because you attended a New Plays on Campus school. And if you aren't familiar yet, New Plays on Campus is a college and university partnership. And so through this a university gets a membership each year that is then given out to a number of students who get additional resources, the ability to attend special seminars and events, and access to all of the Center's member benefits. But particularly what's so special about New Plays on Campus is that any students who attend one of the schools is eligible to apply for our Core Apprentice program. So each year, the Core Apprenticeship supports two student playwrights. This is what makes the Core Apprenticeship stand out from the rest of our

programs, is it's available to current undergraduate students, graduate students, or anyone who has graduated in the past year. So for us that's sort of May 2025/June 2025 graduates are still eligible by this for this application cycle. What the apprenticeship entails? It is a mostly remote year of a program. So you are doing wherever you're at school and living, and every month we have cohort checkins and so you and the other student playwrights meet with Hannah Joyce and myself, and we'll have check ins about what the rest of your year will look like. Additionally, you get a 9 month mentorship with an established playwright and we work really hard to pair you with a playwright who is specifically helpful for whatever you are developing. So, we take your input into that. So, we're not like, "This playwright is assigned to you," you get to tell us, "This is who I want to work with." And so if you're on your first musical and are really interested in getting to work with composers or you need that kind of pairing or if you are curious about what it means to work in both theater and television, we can find a writer who's also a TV writer. So on this screen here you can see some of our past mentors. This year I believe we also have Misha Chowdhury is one of our mentors. Last year we had [inaudible], so lots of dream big and possible. Additionally the apprentices get to come out to the Playwrights' Center here in Saint Paul, Minnesota at some point in the spring to have a 12-hour development workshop of the script that they applied with. And so we provide a director and a cast of professional actors and you are paid for your time. You are in your workshop and you get to be here in the Twin Cities, see some theater and have a reading of your play. Afterwards, you can see the other benefits: you get membership for two years, to also take a lot of our educational offend any seminars that we have scheduled throughout the year as well as intensives—I'm seeing an audio question.

Julia: Yes, Jessica. It is not just you. I am not getting the echo, but Emma has had. Have you been able to hear what she said or do we need to repeat some of it? I'm hearing a thumbs up.

Emma: That's really annoying to listen to. It's annoying for me to be listening to.

Julia: I'm not quite sure how to fix it on the fly, but if it might—

Emma: I can log out and rejoin—

Julia: Great. I will keep it going and uh—

Emma: Great. And I will pop on.

Julia: Sounds good. No problem. This always happens. Nope. Thank you, Jessica, for interrupting. It's good for us to know. We were trying to troubleshoot it before the session and have been running into some issues. So again, you can see all of the benefits here as part of the Playwrights' Center, essentially fellow cohort as a Core Apprentice. There will be opportunities that are shared throughout the year. You'll get a monthly newsletter with some opportunities and updates. And then at the end of the term, you'll become an Affiliated Writer. And that means basically in perpetuity, you are in relationship with the Playwrights' Center. So there are certain opportunities that are open to Affiliated Writers each year, including being able

to apply to be part of our public season and to potentially teach classes and seminars and things like that.

So, as we look on, we can see the eligibility that Emma went over. If you are not currently at a school that has a New Plays on Campus membership, there is still time for your school to join. So, talk to an administrator, reach out to Emma about how to get that set up or how to sort of help advocate for your school to join so that you're eligible to apply for the program.

One thing to note is that you may not have had more than one play produced by a professional theater at the time of your application. And how do we define that? Right? It doesn't matter the size of the theater. It doesn't matter if the performers were union or the other folks working on the project were union. What matters is it ran for at least three performances, public performances. It was built as a full production as opposed to a reading or a workshop. And everybody involved got paid: yourself, all the actors, the creative team, the tech team, the crew, everybody got paid and was paid what we call reasonably, meaning not just 10 bucks for the bus or some bagels, like an actual payment for their labor on that project. So that's our definition. If that has happened more than once on more than one play for you, then you are not eligible for this program, but you may be eligible for others.

You do not need to be current residents of Minnesota though you may be. If you are out of state we will bring you in for your workshop. You do have to be over the age of 18. And because we pay you, you do need to be able to be paid in the US, but citizenship is not part of the eligibility.

You can see a little bit about the program from a previous participant. And then there's a breakdown of the application. I'm not going to take you through that right now because we're about to just go look at it. One thing to note down here at the bottom is the link to access the application. I'm going to show you here. When you first go on the page, that popup doesn't appear automatically. You have to scroll down a little bit before it pops up. So, sometimes folks will visit the page and kind of not scroll at all and say, "Oh, there's no link." So just scroll a little bit down and then you'll find the link.

So, I'm going to click apply and it's going to take us to this new page. Even though it says Playwrights' Center in the corner, do not be deceived. We have left the Playwrights' Center website. That's important to note because if you are a current member of Playwrights' Center and you're used to logging in to look at the opportunities database or update your profile or things like that, you have a login for that website. Because this is a different website. This is a platform called SlideRoom. You do need to make a different account. You may already have one from previous applications, but if you don't, click this sign up button. It will take you to a page where you can sign up for your account, make a password, etc. I, however, already have an account, so I'm going to put in my information. Is there an echo on my audio as well, or was it just Emma's? Okay. I wonder why it's different. Great.

So, when I've logged in, it's taking me to this kind of dashboard page. One thing it will show is all of the applications that I have in progress. I also have all the applications that I've completed in

the past. That can be helpful if you've applied for things before. You want to know what artistic statement did I use? What play did I submit? How did I answer this question? But for right now, I'm going to show you this directory. This is all of the programs that are open at Playwrights' Center. If you are applying for a different organization that also uses SlideRoom, you'll find that name in the upper corner. So, this is how you can make sure I'm looking at the directory for Playwrights' Center. I'll also highlight here at the top, I see my name. If I click that drop-down, all activity is that dashboard we were looking at. If I need to change my name, my email address, my password, my the address on file, I can do that by clicking account information. So, if any of those things have updated for you, that's where you can make that change. But for the moment, we're going to click on the Core Apprentice program.

Great question from Jessica. If you have a professional production scheduled for after the deadline, that does not count for this year. So we only are counting productions that open before the application deadline. And again, if this is your first production that, if you have had one production or have one production coming up, you are still eligible to apply. The cutoff is if you have had more than one play produced.

So here you can see a breakdown of kind of everything we've talked about. In SlideRoom, blue is sort of our action color. Blue things are things you can click on. Underlined things are also things you can click on. So, if you'd like, you can preview the application if you want to get your materials kind of together before you start. But we're going to click the blue begin application. And you'll see it has a little thinking wheel. And I have so many tabs open. It has to do a lot of work to think.

The application will mostly autosave. You'll see at the bottom of the screen there's a sort of saving thing that will pop up. And so you can always leave and come back to the application. So if you want to, you know, start for certain parts of it and then continue later the save and exit button will allow you to do that.

So the first thing we have here is our lovely general application form. So of course we have contact information, the mailing address. We just moved and I kind of remember our zip code. Pronouns are completely optional, but do note that throughout the selection process, the evaluators and staff will be talking about you and your work. So, the pronouns allow us to do that in an accurate way. Then, we've got our writing sample. I'm just going to put title as the title. And we'd love to know how you heard about the program. Whether it's through your school, through friends of yours, through our social media, that really helps us understand kind of how we're reaching people and kind of gather some of that data. Now, we're asking which New Plays on Campus school are you affiliated with? This is going to be how Emma checks to make sure that you are eligible for the program. So, I'm going to pretend I'm a student at Augsburg University. And then when will you or did you graduate? Again, this is to check the eligibility. So, I'm saying I'm graduating this May. If you graduated in 2025, you are eligible for this year.

We have a breakdown of the eligibility. Yet again, we kind of reiterate some of this because you would be surprised how many people every year apply and go through the whole process of

putting together an application and a writing sample, letters of recommendation, while all along being ineligible and kind of breezing through and skipping over this part. And really we want to save you that time. We do check eligibility and if you are not eligible, we do not consider the application. And I'm not trying to be kind of like a hammer on that, but I just this week have had three applications for another program where the person says, "I'm not eligible, but I hope that doesn't impact my consideration for the program." And it does. Because we can't award you a program that you are not eligible for. So, I will read through all of those and I'm going to say yes, I'm eligible to apply. One thing about SlideRoom is that if you click no, it is not quite smart enough to kick you out. It doesn't know like, "oh, they said they're ineligible. They shouldn't fill out an application, right?" So it will let you continue but just know if your answer is no, then leave it be and work on an application for a different program like Core Writer. Then I certify this is correct information. When I want to move on to the next step there's a few different ways to do that. There's this continue to next step button and there's the blue next button here. They will take you to the same place.

This is our next form, which is the last form that you fill out. It's a demographic information form. And I'm not going to go too granularly through this so that we save some time. But there's a few important things to note about this form. There's a long paragraph here that talks a little bit about how and why we use this information. It's something that we use to track our outreach. We also have our evaluators fill this exact same form out, so we know who is on the decision side of things and who is on the application side of things. It is also important to note that a demographic form isn't our way to get to know each person as intimately and individually as possible. It's a way to track anonymized data over multiple years. Right? So, you don't need to share a ton of extra information unless you really would like to. This is not going to be affiliated with your name in the long run. It's going to be put in sort of a mathematical analysis over time. So I want to just highlight that. The last and most important thing is that this form that you're looking at right now can only be seen by Playwrights' Center staff: myself, Emma, Hannah Joyce, and our producing artistic director, Nicole. The evaluators and panelists do not have access to this in any way. And in fact, they don't even see that this form exists. They don't even see a note saying, "This applicant filled out this form." They don't even, you know, they know that they have filled out the form. They know we're asking you these questions, but they don't have access to it. And I highlight that because we hope that for some people that makes it a little bit more comfortable to fill out a form like this, knowing that it doesn't impact the evaluation process. But also if there is information in this form that you feel is important for the evaluators to know about you, identity markers, life experiences, anything like that, you need to make sure it's elsewhere in your application like your statement somewhere, resume, you know, wherever you want to put it. They will not see this. So they will not have any of that information. So, I am going to continue on here and click that I've read the explanation.

The first question is about racial groups that you're affiliated with. And I'll kind of show you how each of these questions work. These are check boxes, which means you can check as many or as few as apply for you. There's also always a write-in button. If you click on it, the little extra, you know, area to type will pop up. So if you don't see it immediately, it still exists. You just have to click the check box to make it pop up. There's also always a decline to answer button if there

is a question that you don't want to answer. And you're welcome to decline every single question if you would like. The form will just make you click that each time. So it doesn't let you skip the entire form. So, I'm going to answer it for myself. There's also a box here if there's anything else you'd like to share with us regarding racial groups you're affiliated with, if you want to provide more specificity, or if these check boxes did not provide language that's accurate for you.

Our next question is about gender terms. Again, as many options as are relevant for you or decline or write-in.

Then we have a question about sexual orientation which is also the same structure as the last question. Then we have a question about if you identify as neurodivergent and/or a person with a disability or multiple disabilities. We've got some definitions in the explanation here in case this is new language. There are some folks who use both terms interchangeably for their own life experience, but there are also plenty of people who use them as two different things. So, it's completely up to you how you want to answer the question. If there are multiple, you know, answers that make sense for how you identify, I'm going to answer it for myself. There is a write-in button here, but there's also a larger write-in if you would like to provide more context about your experience of disability and/or neurodivergence. The reason we're adding this little extra box that's completely optional is that we're always trying to make our programs and processes more accessible, more inclusive, and we want to make them work better for everybody who's applying. So, if you'd like to give some information that might help inform how we shift things, every year we tweak this process based on feedback that we get from people. So if there are ways in which we can have more assistance or make this process smoother for folks, that's super helpful to know. But again, only if you feel so moved to share the information.

Then there's a question about English language proficiency. This is about languages that you use as primary languages in your day-to-day life. So we're not necessarily asking like, "I took a semester of Japanese." We're asking sort of what do you use to, you know, in your speech, in your writing as you move through the world. There's also a box here if you'd like to share what other languages you use as your primary languages. The reason we're asking for that is we currently don't have the resources and capacity to support multiple languages in this process, but that could change in the future. And having this data helps us, you know, track what those numbers look like so that if we have the capacity to provide other resources in other languages, we can see, "Oh, this is where the majority of support would make sense to start."

Then there's the question about your age. Pretty self-explanatory. Of course, welcome to decline.

And then education level. This is sort of the most recent or most advanced education stage that you've experienced at this point. So, if you've graduated, that may be bachelor's or post-graduate. If you're currently enrolled, that may be some college. If you're, you know, in an associates program, anything that makes sense for you. And feel free to choose other. Or if these don't make sense because you're in a really specific like certificate program or something like that, then write-in might make sense for you.

Then there's a question about household income. This is your estimated annual household income before taxes based on like your salary, etc. If you're unsure, there is a button for that. don't stress too much. You don't have to pull tax returns or anything like that. Just an estimation is helpful.

And finally, we have a space to give us any feedback. As I mentioned, we're always tweaking things from year to year. We want to make our language clearer, more inclusive. And we know that asking folks to check boxes about who they are is reductive, obviously, and is an unpleasant and often harmful experience. So, if you had an experience filling out this form or you have ideas for how it could be less harmful or more clear or more convenient for you, we would love any of those. But again, only if something comes to mind, don't stress too much to come up with something if you don't have ideas off the top of your head. Totally optional.

So, now that I'm done with the forms, this is all the forms we need to fill out at the moment. So, I'll continue to the next step. You'll see SlideRoom likes to give us a happy green check mark when we've completed a stage. So, now we're into the attachment section. This is really the meat and potatoes of your application. This is what is really being evaluated. A couple of things to note is that when the evaluators fill out their evaluations, they will focus on a weighted rubric, right? So, they have, they're sort of scoring on different criteria. The script sample that you provide is weighted for 25%, the artistic statement for 30%, and the proposal for 35%, the other materials for 10%. So that kind of helps you. Obviously, all parts are important. But what this really tells you is that this program is really about potential and process. It's not asking for the most polished piece that you're production ready, don't need to work on it at all. It's really about developing this piece over time with your mentor and through your check-ins and through your workshop. So that's why the most important part or the heaviest weight is the project proposal. It's really kind of what do you want to do in this program. This isn't a play award. This isn't the Tony's with the Obie or anything like that. This is really about investing in your development and your craft.

There's also one note here as I mentioned before that the primary language that's used by all of our evaluators in this process is English. That doesn't mean we have evaluators who don't speak other languages. It just means we cannot guarantee that evaluators who read your work have a facility in another language. You can certainly have other languages in your play or in other parts of your materials. Just know that if it is untranslated or there's not a note about it, some evaluators may not understand that particular part of the application. And if that's the experience you want them to have, that it's untranslated, that's totally great and wonderful if that's your intention. But if you do want that understood, you might need to add a little bit of context.

So, the first thing that you're going to attach here is your resume. You'll see each of these documents says PDF only. This is my other bone to pick with SlideRoom. If you try to upload a different format, SlideRoom will let you do it. However, we cannot open it on our end. So, if you have a pages file, a plain text file, a word document, I will, or Emma will email you and say,

"Hey, we can't access your document. Can you please upload it as a PDF?" If you have issues creating a PDF or you haven't done that before, you can contact Emma and she can help you out with it. Important things to think about in your resume: if you do have any professional productions, make sure you note those clearly so we can again check and make sure that you're eligible. Also when you think about things to add, sometimes when folks are applying for this program, they say, "Well, I'm a student. I don't have a ton. I don't have any productions. I haven't written a ton of plays. I don't have a ton of experience. What do I put on this resume? Do I put that I worked at Subway? Do I put, you know, what should I do with this?" And so I would encourage you to add pieces that are in progress, writer groups you've been a part of, classes perhaps you've taken or TA-ed for. I wouldn't necessarily say you have to focus on non-artistic work unless it's relevant to your application. So if for example I worked at Subway for five years, if I don't talk about that anywhere else, it may not be super relevant information. If my play is set at the subway I worked at, it might be kind of useful to have that information that that's my lived experience. Or in my artist statement, if I say, "You know, I write characters like the people I worked with at Subway," maybe it's interesting to have that on your resume. But in general, focusing on your artistic and creative work tends to be the most focus and make the most sense. If you're an artist in other ways, in other disciplines, like perhaps you're an actor, a musician, a dancer, visual artist, a poet, that can all be interesting to add as well.

Really, when you're putting this application together, you're telling a story. You're creating something cohesive that tells us who you are as an artist and as a person. So anything that informs your work. Anything that's been part of your artistic lineage and how you've developed might be interesting to add to your resume.

So, in order to do that, I'm going to click this blue choose a file button and I will it will open my finder window and let me grab my PDF. You'll see it always thinks. If it's got that processing little—I don't even know what you call it—little animation—don't X out of this page or back out of this page while that's happening because it hasn't saved yet, basically, if that's still in process. You'll know it's successfully uploaded because you'll see the file name and you'll see this little thumbnail of the first page of that document. If I come back and realize, "Oh, I need to update my resume or that's not the right document," I can click this little trash can. It will get rid of the old document. You can upload a new one.

The next document is the artistic statement. And pardon me. I'm just kind of keeping an eye on my chat to see if Emma is able to fix, because I would like her wisdom and input on this. But if she's not able to come back to the Zoom—

Emma: I'm here, Julia, but it sounds like it's still echoing.

Julia: Oh, you are. Cool. I might toss to you just for a little brief moment. Do you have any thoughts on the resume and what to include on the resume for this program?

Emma: I think you covered it as well, just like professional and educational experiences within an array of artistic experiences.

Julia: Perfect. The next thing is our artistic statement. We are asking for one page. If it goes over by a line or two onto the second page, that's okay. But if it's a full page and a half, two pages, Emma will get in touch and let you know, "We need a shorter artistic statement." So, do keep an eye on that limitation. And what we're asking for is for you to describe how this program, both the mentorship, the workshop, the opportunity to work with Playwrights' Center staff would be transformative for you. So, what are your goals? What do you hope to achieve by the end of that apprenticeship year? And kind of how does that fit into your overall trajectory both in your craft and in your career. I would say in our experience some really successful artistic statements have focused on both. So not just, "I want to make some connections and get a production." Great. Everybody wants that. But also what do you want to develop as a writer? Do you feel like, "I'm, you know, I want to work on my third act of my plays? I'm not really sure how to finish them up. Or my dialogue I feel like is really strong, but I'd like a better sense of physicality in my plays. Or I'd really, I've written plays about my peers and people my age, but I'd really like to explore characters who are older and that's something that I want to work on in my craft." You know, these kinds of things that really tell us that you've thought about not just, "This would be a great opportunity for me to meet some people and get my work out there in the world," but that you're ready to dig in and you have some sort of frame of reference for where you might need to focus. That will really help an evaluator feel like this is a person who can take advantage of this opportunity. They don't need to be sort of dragged by the hand and told here's what you should work on in your writing. They really know and they've self-reflected. They've sat back and they've looked at their overall body of work and sort of figured out where they want to focus for this next year.

It's also important to read the description of the program and make sure it is specific to this program. So again, if someone says, "I really think my play deserves a production." We don't give you that. We're not a producing theater. So really make sure that the evaluators know you're applying for this specific program. I know when you're applying for jobs, usually you like save a master cover letter and then, you know, change certain details. I would recommend that for writing an artist statement for a program like this, really start from the top. Maybe there are lines that you grab from other statements you've written, but really tailor it specifically to this opportunity.

I also want to let you know that we have a class on this coming Monday night, the 12th, about writing artist statements. Saymoukda Vongsay, who is an incredible playwright and an incredible grant writer, getter of fellowships. She really knows her stuff when it comes to applying for things. She is going to lead that session with me. It is free. It is on Zoom. We are at capacity, but we do have a wait list. And I will be sharing the materials from that session, the slideshow, the transcript, and I think the recording as well with folks after the fact, if you'd like. So, feel free to reach out to me or to Emma and she can forward it to me if you're interested in receiving those materials. It'll be a mix of kind of advice and specific writing prompts that will take you through addressing an artist statement from different perspectives.

While I get my file attached, Emma, any specific thoughts based on your experience of the program of what helps the artistic statement?

Emma: I think is this phone audio by the way?

Julia: It is.

Attendee 1: I wonder if it's echoing on cuz I'm echoing on Julia's.

Julia: Oh, I don't hear it from any of you.

Attendee 1: I wonder—

Julia: Should I leave and come back and see if that makes things better?

Attendee 1: —turn your sound off while Emma's talking if that would work?

Emma: And I'm going to try talking.

Julia: That's so weird. We're not anywhere near each other.

Emma: No, we're in a completely different building.

Julia: Cool. I will mute myself.

Emma: Thanks Asher. I think the whole thing, and this sort of goes into the next section with the proposal is just making sure that your artistic statement, your project proposal and your script sample are really cohesive together. And so, we'll go into more depth in a moment, but it's yeah, centering who you are and where you are at now and why all of these three things, why this program is right for you. Now, I'll go into more detail, I think, after the next few.

Julia: Awesome. The last thing that I'll say about this is sometimes I like to talk about these application parts as prime real estate, right? And so you have both an artistic statement that's a page and a project proposal that's a page. You also have a resume. I would say it's most effective to not repeat your materials from piece to piece. You've got a really specific amount of space to get your point across and to really cover all this ground. So, if you spend half your artistic statement saying, "Here's all the classes I've taken and here's all the plays I've written," that you've already put in your resume, and if you spend your artistic statement saying, "And this is my proposal." And then you have a proposal. You know, really take the opportunity. The artistic statement is really about who are you as a writer? What are you looking to transform as a writer? Not necessarily specifically for this project, but overall in your career and your craft, where do you see yourself fitting into the field? Where do you see what moment are you at?

The last thing that I'll say—I keep saying the last thing that I'll say—sometimes when you apply for things, you know who the people you're writing to are. Sometimes you don't. What I can tell you about these evaluators is that they are all theater professionals. They are playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, artistic directors, lit managers, educators. They are people who've dedicated their lives to theater and are active, working theater professionals. That means they know theater's important. They know storytelling is important. They know art is important. You don't have to convince them of the form or the discipline. You don't have to spend your precious page trying to convince someone that theater is worth funding, that stories are worth telling, right? Perhaps if you're applying for like a municipal grant in your city for your parks and rec program to do a theater program, maybe in that case, you need to say, "Theater is worthwhile. Here's why." Everybody agrees with that. It's what we do full-time. It's what they all do full-time. You can really focus on you. Why are your stories important? Or not even important, but why are you focusing on the stories you're you're telling; what is your specific view on theater? So that is just my last piece of advice on that.

Emma: And I actually have one more as well.

Julia: Yes.

Emma: As with most of our programs at Playwrights' Center, but again I want to reiterate with this one—the evaluators are selecting a playwright, not a play so you're choosing your script sample that you want to develop and that you are proud of, but at the end of the day they're not choosing, This is the play I want to see commissioned or this is the play I want to see in production." They're choosing, "This is the playwright I want to support on their overall growth." And so that's the part where you really get to let that shine through.

Julia: Awesome. Thank you. The next element is the one-page project proposal. Again one page. And this is talking about how you would benefit from a workshop of this specific play at Playwrights' Center. So the artistic statement is a place to talk about all of the different benefits. This is specifically about the development workshop. What are your goals for that? What would you want to develop in this particular piece? Where do you feel like it needs work? How do you think bringing in a professional director and a dramaturg and a cast of actors, what will that teach you about the play? You know, where would you focus? All of that kind of thing. So this is really the part that connects who are you as a writer, what do you want to develop in your craft? And then it connects that to this very specific play. In other programs that you apply for at Playwrights' Center, your script is a writing sample. It's not necessarily the play that you would work on if selected. That is different for this program. This is one of the few programs where you actually are proposing to work on this play. Emma, can you talk a little bit more about the this project proposal?

Emma: Yeah, as a result of us knowing that this is a script that's in development for you, we don't expect it to be finalized. If you're struggling with the structure, that's okay. If you're struggling with a character, that's okay. The reader might read it and be like, I was a little confused by XYZ. But then if they see in your project proposal that you are aware that that is an

area that is not working for you right now, they can see as long as you are aware of where you need to grow, where you need to develop and you are able to then articulate that in the project proposal, that's what your evaluators are really looking for.

They also, a lot of our evaluators are very familiar with Playwrights' Center. They know the resources that are offered through this institution and this organization and so they want to see that you also know that. So if you are newer to Playwrights' Center, spend some time browsing our website looking at some of the other playwrights who have been here in the past, plays that have been developed in the past, to understand how this environment might be like really impactful for you at your process where you're at and with the script in particular. Is there a reason why a dramaturg would be particularly helpful for this one aspect element of the play you're struggling with? Is it specific like makeup of cast that you don't have access to in your own school community? Things like that, that are really individual to you in this play make a huge difference in this project proposal.

Julia: Thank you. That is great advice. And I do want to highlight the last thing that Emma said, which is one of the things that this program gives you and one of the reasons this program exists is because it gives you access to people and processes outside of your school, right? So, professional actors of different ages, of different backgrounds that may not be represented in the pool of actors and collaborators you have been used to writing for. So, if that's part of what you're looking for, definitely highlight that.

And also, that leads into how to pick which play you're proposing to work on. Think about that as a particular benefit. Perhaps if you have multiple plays, one of which is all about college students and you've worked on them with your current cohort, you know, multiple times. And then you also have a play that you're equally as excited about and you have goals for but you haven't been able to get an accurate cast for it. That may weigh what you pick one versus another. Again, we reiterate and reiterate, this is not a finished play. You're not even sending the whole script, right? This is a piece that needs work, that you know needs work, but also that you're excited about, right? I would say it might be tricky if you wrote it last night and then you're submitting it because in that case, you probably haven't spent the time to percolate on it and really dig into the details about what you want to focus on. So I would say something that maybe you've been living with for at least a little while thinking about, maybe you've had a reading or a workshop of it or maybe you wrote it for a class or a writer's group. And Ella, we will get to your question in just a moment. So that's just, you know, thinking about which project. If you've written one play, that makes it pretty easy to pick which one you're going to work on. But I think to get a sweet spot between, "I've been working on this forever and it really just needs a final polish and we're good to go" versus "This is brand new. Like I have no idea where it's going. All I've written is 15 pages and I really won't know what I need until I've worked on it more." So I think that sweet spot.

There's not really any rules about when the draft needs to have been written, but I would say if it's a piece that you wrote a few years ago, you may want to give some context in your project proposal about like, "I put it down and I want to pick it up again for these reasons." Or "There

was a version that I wrote, you know, when I was a freshman and I really want to knock the cobwebs off and I'm revisiting it and I've updated my draft." Because sometimes if there's a year on it that says, you know, 2019, the evaluators might say, "Oh, I wonder why they picked the slightly older play. What have they been doing since? Have they been working on this play for 7 years?" You know, giving some context for that might be helpful.

You're going to be asked to give a 15–25 page sample of the play that includes a play synopsis and the casting description. and Emma, tell me tell me if I am wrong as this is very much your program, but if you know when we talk about the synopsis— actually I'm going to frame this as a question. Emma, when we talk about the play synopsis, are we asking for if you know where the play is going outline, kind of the beats of the play or sort of the whole plot that you know about, or are you thinking of it more as like a blurb/teaser like you would put on marketing materials that kind of doesn't necessarily spoil things but gives you a sense of the themes? What do you think would be most useful for an applicant?

Emma: Leaning towards the second one on that one. So just like a brief kind of tagline, short description. If you are move on to the finalist round and you don't have the full play written out yet, that's at what point you you'd be more than welcome to include the road map of this is where the rest of the play goes. I don't have the final three scenes written yet, but here's where I envision it. We do want these samples to like, enough to orientate the readers so that they're not dropped in blindly, but we want them to really evaluate and stand in those 25 pages, rather than be like, "I really didn't get much out of this sample but it said it was going to do this. Like, we want the writing itself to be the main focus.

Julia: That's awesome. Thank you. I'll talk a little bit more about kind of rules and regs and then I will toss to Emma about the all-important question of how to pick that sample. A couple things that I want to highlight in here. This is an individual program for a single playwright. So we cannot accept a co-written play. because it will only go to one of you. We also need to be able to evaluate your work specifically. So if this is a script for a musical, you must be the book writer. Also, if there are lyrics, you need to highlight who wrote the lyrics if that was you or if you had a separate lyricist. Basically, the evaluators need to know they're evaluating your work.

If you move on to the finalist round, as Emma mentioned, you will be asked for the full draft of the play. Again, knowing this is a play that is very much in process, you won't be asked for a polished production-ready draft as a finalist. And one last thing is if you are applying with a musical or something that has perhaps had a student production or something like that, you may only submit the text. So, no sheet music, no audio files, no video files. If there are hyperlinks in your script, we will be asking you to either take them out or we will be directing all of the evaluators not to follow the links. They'll be told not to look for supplementary materials. So, no demos, things like that.

So, Emma, I know we have a couple of questions in the chat. Awesome. Thank you for that. Emma, can you talk about what's the best way to pick that sample? What part of the play?

Emma: So, a few best practices and yeah, page count. That was what I was going to start with. The 25 pages, we do give a wiggle room of about two pages. We start page one on the first page of dialogue or scene description. Stage directions. So, if you have a title page and then a single page of character breakdowns and that little synopsis. So that could be one, zero, zero, and then we'll go through 25. But make sure that those extra pages at the top aren't like five additional pages of a break like we were talking about earlier, a full breakdown of the script or extra long. But it is a strict 25-page once the scenes start. So, I will be going through and checking and I might have to email you and say, "Sorry, you're a page or two over. Can I get a fresh PDF with a few last pages taken out?" So, just be mindful of that cuz I don't want to have to do that cuz I don't like taking away your writing.

But as I'll just reiterate from the question in the chat, the synopsis can go on that character breakdown page at the top of the script sample. It doesn't need to be in the project proposal. So yeah, also don't need to outline the entire play, what it's about in the project proposal because they will learn that from the script sample. As Julia said, no need to duplicate information.

As for where to select your sample from, often folks select their first 15 to 25 pages and that is often successful because it is how you are entering setting up your play. The readers are guided into it as an audience is guided into it. But it doesn't have to be that. If you feel you have a stronger section somewhere, whether that's just a stronger character moment, a really vibrant scene between two characters that you feel is a better demonstration of your work, that is more than okay to do. As we said, you have that synopsis to sort of set it up a little bit. A few, something that came up a couple of times last year is that all playwrights use space on their page differently. And so if you write rather poetically or lyrically or you like to use space and so you may have more sparse dialogue, that's okay. But we still stick to those 25 pages. And so if you only have a couple of lines per page, your readers might not get enough of a sense of your style or of the plot or of the depth of what your play is by the time they reach the end of the sample. So, I would recommend making sure that you feel satisfied with what you are handing over. Yeah.

Oh, you're still muted, Julia.

Julia: Any last questions about that script sample as that is kind of a, or how the sample and the proposal work together? Ella?

Attendee 2: Yeah. I—Oh, sorry. Sorry. I guess I'm curious about whether the sample should be like the part of the play that I think is the strongest or the part of the play that kind of illustrates what I want to work on as a playwright and what I want to work on in the play during the reading?

Emma: That's a really good question. I think both are strong options honestly. Like if you want to show,, like this is what's really strong and this is what's working and this is what I can do as a playwright and this is where I want to grow later. That is, I think both are persuasive and it just

depends on how you frame your application and that's where it really comes into what is the whole picture, not just the sample, not just the project proposal.

Julia: Yeah?

Attendee 3: I have, the play that I'm thinking about submitting has let's say about 20% Spanish throughout, maybe more. I'm thinking how can I include the translation for evaluators without it taking too much space? I don't know if I can add an addendum at the end. Yeah. I don't know. What do you suggest.

Emma: Julia? I'm not sure if you have more experience with this specifically?

Julia: Yeah, there's a number of different ways that I've seen this done. Sometimes folks do like a line, you know, a line in Spanish and then underneath it or following it a translation, you know, a parenthetical, italicize, bolded, you know, something like that to distinguish that this is a translation. Sometimes folks like to use a footnote if, for example, it's only a few lines per page or a few words per page so that people can see the translation. I have also seen folks do, I had a play recently that was majority or had a lot of Korean in it and what they did was a side-by-side essentially like a table structure that had the Korean dialogue here and the English dialogue here, so that you know when this particular character was speaking you still knew okay when this you know characters on stage they're speaking all Korean, but this is what they're saying so that the reader and the actor have that information. And then sometimes people do a, you know, if it's say one monologue, perhaps they might say, "Look at the end of, you know, the script for the translation of this monologue." I would say it tends to be easiest for a reader to track if they don't have to switch back and forth between, you know, the end of your sample and the beginning of your sample. Also because they're reading this right on a screen, so they're scrolling. So, it can be a little tricky to go, "Okay, I got to scroll down to page 25 and then I got to scroll back to where I was on page seven." So usually if you do want to provide a translation to have it somewhere near the language that you are translating probably will help that process be a little bit smoother. So those are just some ways that I've seen. I'm sure there are other creative ways to do that. And maybe a note at the beginning of your script that says, you know, "Red text is translation, isn't read by the actors," or "To see the Spanish translation. Here is where, you know, here's how you look at that." So, you can kind of teach the reader how to navigate your script in a way that I think a lot of playwrights do. "This is the symbol I use for this. This is what happens at the end of a line." You know, any way that you sort of orient your reader to your script. Emma, I have one more question about this. Is it, in your experience, more effective to have one running set of 25 pages that happen in a row? Or can people break it up and do 10 pages from the first scene, 10 pages from the third scene? Are there rules about that or things that you think are sort of the best choice?

Emma: You are able to break it up. And so that kind of goes back to Ella's question of like well I sort of want to do my strongest and I want to show the area of growth. That is one way you can do it. I would just make it clear that there is a jump happening when that happens so that the readers don't go from wait we didn't know this and now suddenly we discovered this information

when did we discover it? Making that clear. And so both are possible, and I would say again go to what supports your script the most. I think more often we get single sections in longer chunks. That doesn't mean that that's the only or right way to do it.

Julia: One thing that I will add to that point, and also as somebody who runs a program that, is for other theater artists that sometimes has video clips, is theater is often—so not this program. This doesn't have video clips—but it's a similar structure of putting parts of pieces together, right? Theater has a duration to it as an art form. And so do be aware when you're, if you are going to cut your piece up, if the build of a scene or the arc of a moment is really important to get a sense of your writing and what's happening, that can be hard if every five pages you're jumping, for example, and just the most climactic moment or like just that really sick monologue that I wrote. If it's important, you know, I would really read your full play and really say, "Okay if this moment I find really effective or this moment is what I really want to work on," if it takes lead up or lead down in order to experience it the way you intend, just keep in mind what information your readers have, right? They're not in your head. They don't have the experience of the rest of the play. And so sometimes what I've seen in other programs is, "Here's a really quick clip of something I'm great at and here's a quick clip of something I'm great at and I'm great at all these things," and then for the panelist it's like, "Oh my god all, these big things happening one after another and there's crying and then it's so funny and then this is happening, Ah!" And maybe that's how you wrote your play. You want it to be overwhelming. You want it to be sensory overload. If you didn't write a play that has those elements, you know, keep in mind, are you presenting the play as it is and as the way you want it to, knowing that this person has zero context? So that is my last piece of advice on that as somebody who's seen a lot of like overwhelming stuff.

So these are our materials. This is the big part of the application. So I'm going to click next which takes us to the references section. What SlideRoom calls references we call a letter of recommendation. So you are asked for one letter of recommendation from either a faculty member that you've worked with or another individual who is familiar with your work as a playwright. Playwrights' Center staff and current board members can't write letters for you. So this letter should talk about why you would benefit from a Core Apprenticeship at this point in your development. What are your strengths as a writer and what areas do you have room to grow? We'll talk a little bit more about, you know, advice for this letter, but I'll first show you how to request it.

Letters are due at the same time as the rest of the application. So, please reach out to your letters of recommenders now, as soon as you can. We are about a month away from the deadline. You want to give people time to write something really thoughtful. If you don't ask them in advance and they just receive the automated request, they might delete it. They might not read it at all because they're not prepped for it. And if you don't ask them in advance far enough, they may say, "I don't have time to do this." It's really application season, which means it's letter of rec season, especially for faculty members at colleges and universities.

So, what you're going to do once you've spoken to that person and they said, "Yes, of course, I'll write you a letter." Click add reference. And what it's going to do is ask for their name. You can provide any other information if you'd like, but the things that are required are their name and their email address. So, I'm going to have my friend Emily write the letter for me. You might want to put a message saying, "Hi, this is the letter we talked about." You may also want to give more context for here's what I'd really like you to touch on. This check box basically says I'm going to allow Emily to fill out the letter and then just send it right in without it having to stop at me. If you uncheck that, it will go to you first. You won't be able to edit it or anything like that. So, it's just an extra step. So, just note that if you uncheck this, it's a little bit of a slower process. So keep that in mind as you are planning. But most people I think just waive the right to review and just let it go straight through because you've already talked to your recommender about what you want it to be.

Now, as soon as I click send request, that email gets processed automatically. What Emily will see in her inbox is an email from SlideRoom review saying, "Letter of recommendation requested for Julia Brown application. Here's the link." Emily will click on the link and it will give her the option to either upload a PDF of a letter or type a letter directly into a text box and then submit it. This if, if you're leaving and coming back to your application, this is where you can check and see, you know, what the status is. So it says that I requested the letter today. Once Emily fills it out, the status will say completed. If Emily says, "Oh, I deleted the link. Can you please resend it?" You just click this button. And if Emily comes back and says, "I have a new email address, actually." I can click edit and put the new information in and it will resend that request. I would recommend doing this early. Even if you haven't finished your statements or things like that, go to this tab and request that letter just so they have the most time possible.

A couple of things to think about with who to ask, right? For this program, it's often faculty members because they're probably the folks you've worked with most closely and because you're specifically asking them to essentially evaluate your craft and where you could, you know, improve or where you could focus and develop. Somebody who perhaps has had an educational experience with you and has evaluated your work and perhaps given you advice or given you dramaturgical feedback, they've already thought about this. If you're going to have a classmate or, you know, an actor you've worked with or a designer you've worked with, you know, make sure that that's somebody who does have a dramaturgical perspective on your work and can say beyond just saying, you know, "Emma's amazing. Emma's my best friend or I think Emma's brilliant and writes amazing plays and deserves every opportunity." That's lovely. That's not all that we're asking, right? So, make sure that you do pass along to your recommender exactly—this sentence here—exactly what we're asking for, so that it ties in with your project proposal of here's what I think I need to work on. Here's an independent party who also thinks that's what I need to work on. Because what that tells the evaluator is this writer has a strong point of view and also a perspective on what they need that is based, you know, kind of in experience and in reality.

One thing that I'm just going to note because I've seen it before is a recommendation from a partner or a family member tends to be less strong. I see it multiple times that people might say,

you know, "Oh my sister is my biggest support or my partner is my biggest support or my dad has read all of my plays." Somebody coming in who has that close of a familial or romantic relationship will read to the evaluators as not objective, as biased, as, "This is a person who might you know benefit from you being selected or has an interest other than just knowing your work in you being selected." And so I have seen that be less effective for applicants, if they choose people who have that kind of close, that kind of familial relationship. It also says to the evaluators maybe this person doesn't have you know doesn't have experience, hasn't taken a class or hasn't had a relationship with an educator who has read their work before. So that's just one kind of piece of general advice I would say for every application at least here. So somebody who you have kind of a creative, artistic, professional, educational relationship tends to be most effective. Emma, I would love your thoughts on choosing a recommender and also teeing them up to write a strong letter.

Emma: Yeah, I think everything that Julia has already said, re-emphasizing it's great when it's someone who has seen you develop work. So, if it's someone who has seen you in a workshop setting in the past is a really strong recommender because they can speak to you how you are in a collaborative setting in a room and why you would benefit again from that experience. I think it's always helpful to send your recommender the program page for which you're applying so that they know the— they write so many recommendations. They may or may not be familiar with the Playwrights' Center and the Core Apprenticeship. And so a letter just stands out a a little bit more when the writer is able to be specific about the student and Playwrights' Center in the program rather than just general. And finally, you are welcome to reuse letters from previous years. So if you applied last year and feel still strongly about that mentor who wrote it and want to use that same letter again, you're welcome to. Just send me an email. And in this section where it says like name, email, you can put in my information actually and I will be able to pull last year's letter and then upload it for the evaluators. Yeah. So, that's how that process works if you want to. But, as this blurb says, give me at least 2 weeks just to make sure that everything is correct and in the right place. And we can get it all confirmed ahead of the deadline.

Julia: Great. Well, when our references are all in, that's all the parts that we need to submit. So, we go to our last page, the submit page. Once you have submitted your application, you can no longer edit it. However, if you realize you've changed your mind about something, something is inaccurate, if it is before the deadline, you can reach out to Emma. Emma can un-submit your application. You can make edits and resubmit. Do this before the deadline. Do this before 15 minutes before the deadline. Really, you know, give yourself time if you need to make edits. Once your application is in and has gone on to the evaluation round, we can't make changes to it unless you are a finalist and we are requesting the full draft. So if, you know, 3 weeks after the deadline you rewrite the play and you realize, "Oh, you know, that section that I sent in now is a lot stronger." We can't, the evaluation process is already happening right? So we can't change things out once the evaluators have started reading.

So what's going to happen after you submit is Emma's going to check through all of the parts of your application. Make sure you're eligible. Make sure all of your documents open. They're all PDFs. Scroll through, make sure it's the right page count, make sure that you didn't just upload

your resume four times, which has happened multiple times. If there are any issues, Emma will reach out and say, "Hey, we need this in a different format or we need a different page amount or things like that." Then they will go to evaluators who are all theater professionals. These are folks who will read every part of your application, besides the demographic form of course. They will give numerical scores on all the criteria along with detailed written feedback for us. And so based on the scores and the feedback every application is read by at least two different people in this round. So based on all of that we will narrow down to a finalist pool. At that point, Emma will get in touch with those finalists and say, "Here's what we need from you very specifically. Here's when we need it by." Then that will go to a final panel of playwrights who will read all of the finalists work, meet in a conversation, and throughout a multi-hour conversation, reflect on all of the finalists, and make the selection of our Core Apprentices. You can see here kind of how they'll base this on your craft, your goals, and your commitment and ability to make use of the resources.

The staff does not participate. We just facilitate. So Emma, myself, Hannah, we're not reading your full scripts. We will not be giving our personal thoughts at any point in this process. We simply make it possible for other people to read and give their thoughts.

So now I'm ready to submit. This is awesome. I can review my application and print a copy at that point if I would like, if you're a hard copy kind of person. But I'm going to click the blue submit button and we get the big happy green check mark which means it's over. It's in. You will see everyone gets a confirmation number. You don't need it. If Emma needs to look you up, she'll look you up by name or by email address. But I know some people find that numbers feel really official and that makes them feel good. So to feel like, "Hey, it's done. I have a confirmation number." You can print this confirmation page. You can print your whole application. But then you see this note saying you've submitted your application. It's great. You will be notified if you're a finalist or not by the end of May. We will let you know either way in terms of the selection process.

That is everything that I have in this preview. And Ella, I think we just answered that question about timeline, but I know we're over by a little bit, but I would love to open it up for other questions if there are any.

Attendee 4: Yeah, I have a question about the—so, the references cannot be written by a current Playwrights' Center staff. Does that apply to all Affiliated Writers?

Julia: It does not. It only applies to people who are currently on staff as employees like myself, Emma, full-time, part-time employees. Affiliated writers are not employees of the Center.

Attendee 4: Thank you.

Emma: And your question in the chat, Jessica, the program will run from July 1st to June 30th. So, it'll begin July 1st, 2026.

Julia: Great. Any last questions or thoughts? This recording will be available on the website in the next day or two if you need to revisit any part of it, but I'm volunteering Emma. Contact Emma anytime you have questions. She's really the wisdom behind all of this. And please ask your questions early and ask your questions. You know, people say there's no such thing as dumb questions. A late question is going to be more inconvenient for you than a dumb question. So, if there's something that will impact how you fill out your application, make sure you give yourself time to make those decisions after you get the answer. And also know that it's application season, so Emma's got a lot of questions coming in from a lot of different people. So just really build in your time.

I also want to highlight one thing that we have on each program page. We have a conversation with previous Core Apprentices and that can be an interesting watch to really see what kind of benefits this program has. And then there's this link here which is advice from previous applicants and fellows who've been selected. I highly recommend taking a couple of minutes to read that because these writers are so insightful. They've applied, most of them multiple times and then were selected. So they can really speak to what made the difference, how they sit down and actually approach an application, how they select things, all of those kinds of things. And particularly if you haven't applied for a lot of fellowships before and maybe this is your first program that you're really applying for specifically as a playwright, that is such a great place to start to get some wisdom and some tips and tricks. So do take the time to do that.

The last thing that I'll say is we offer feedback on every application if you would like it. So whether you're selected or not, that is open to you. If you're not selected this year, you'll be notified via email. And in that email, it will say, "Here's how you request feedback on your application." And then over the course of the summer, Emma and I will provide that feedback from the evaluators. So, we hope that whether or not you're selected this year, you will still get some useful information about your work and your statements to help you write more successful applications in the future, both for Playwrights' Center and for anywhere else you're applying for. With that, oh, I have one more—Okay, great. Thank you so much for joining us. I am going to stop the recording but reach out anytime and we cannot wait to see your applications.