

UCLA SCREENWRITERS' SURVIVAL GUIDE CLASS OF 2018



Welcome to UCLA and congratulations! You did it!

Many questions may be bouncing around in that noggin of yours:

How exactly do I pay for this? (loans, etc.)

When can I enroll in classes? (first week of school)

Where should I live? (Lots of good options)

Will everyone else be better than me? (no, but some will be)

Am I screwed if I haven't written screenplays before? (no)

How will I juggle my classes with family and work? (you'll be fine)

A great thing about the UCLA screenwriting program is the collegiality among the students and faculty. People here like and help each other. So if there's any question that the pages below don't cover, or you're a talker not a reader, or you're just freaking out and need a beer, damn it, do not hesitate to reach out to your mentors or anyone else. Whatever you're dealing with, someone else has already dealt with the same issue, and is looking for an excuse to drink.

In the next year you will go through every step of the hero's journey. Before you know it, the year will be over and you'll be looking at your name and log lines printed in the Showcase program, feeling a mixture of relief and pride.

Savor every bit that you can. Especially the hard stuff. It's all going to make you a better writer.

Congratulations again, and welcome. Now it's time to get down to business.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	3
THE FIRST YEAR	5
LISTSERVES	9
ONLINE ID, EMAIL, URSA, ID CARD, BILLING	12
INTERLUDE: "INCOMING" BY TFT	15
INSTRUCTOR LINDA VOORHEES	
ENROLLING IN CLASSES: THE 434	18
TV WRITING	
PTEs	
CREATING AND WRITING FOR TELEVISION	23
YOUR FIRST QUARTER	24
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS	25
HOUSING & PARKING	31
FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS, TA'SHIPS	35
INTERNSHIPS	37
HEALTH INSURANCE & RESIDENCY	38
INTERLUDE: "GOT A FAMILY? READ THIS. "	39
ON CAMPUS FACILITIES	41
FINAL INTERLUDE BY TFT	45
INSTRUCTOR TOM NUNAN	
INSTRUCTOR JOE ROSENBERG	
THE 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD DO NOW	48
PARTING SHOTS	49
APPENDIX A: SCREENWRITING RESOURCES	53

Words to Live and Write by Your First Year in Film School

“Take advantage of everything offered to you. Screenings, theater, department performances, film executive lectures in the Producers Program. Be well rounded. And HAVE FUN!” – Tim Albaugh, Faculty

"It's going to move faster than you anticipate, and once it starts there's no slowing it down. If there is anything besides writing you want to do in the next two to three years, do it now." -- Tony Baker, MFA 2011

“90% of your classmates will wait until the night before class to write their pages. If you simply keep up with your work, or God forbid, get out ahead of it, you will stand out. You can't control who your parents are, where you're from, or your innate level of talent, but you can control how hard you work. Do so. This is not a rehearsal.”
– *Byron Hudson*, MFA 2009

“The most important skill you need is to listen to and creatively use criticism. When you hear it, it will hurt. You're not alone. Everyone would like to be perfect on the first draft. Nobody is. Turn off your ego and open your ears.”
– *Lorelei Armstrong*, MFA 2002

“Find a comfortable writing environment and an uncomfortable story. I played it too safely in my first 434, but my best writing comes when I am willing to abuse and expose my characters.” – *David Radcliff*, MFA 2008

“Pick story ideas that you are excited about, not ideas that you think other people expect you to write.” – *Jennifer O'Keiffe*, MFA 2008

“Remember that we are here to WRITE, not think about writing.”
– *Chumahan Bowen*, MFA 2007

“Structure, structure, structure. You'll hear it a lot this fall—listen and get the basics down. Cut the parentheticals. Read Lew Hunter's “434”. Rewrite. Explore every opportunity this fall, and decide your priorities early. The first year goes by in a breath. Figure out what you want from the program and go for that.”
– *Deborah Murphey*, MFA 2005

“Don't be late. It's okay to get frustrated and overwhelmed. It's not okay to give up. You are a writer. Be nice to everyone behind their backs. To their face is a given.” – *David Granger*, MFA 2014

“Opportunities to learn at UCLA are little gems to be hoarded for future use. Like a squirrel, fill up those cheeks with nuts of wisdom for the long winters ahead.” - *Suz Curtis Campbell*, MFA 2015

“The greatest wisdom is the lesson we learn from pinball. Score as many points as possible while the ball is still on the table.”

– Hal Ackerman, Co-chair, Screenwriting Program

“The lesson? Get with the program. Don't cut corners. Take it one day at a time, one script at a time. Don't get overly savvy about the biz, and remember that it's all about the writing. It really, truly is.”

– Richard Walter, Co-chair, Screenwriting Program

PART I. “THE HORROR, THE HORROR”: BUREAUCRACY

No matter how often I say you can't enroll until the first week of classes, some of you right now are still saying to yourself, yeah, but when can I enroll for classes?

And the answer is still, the first week of classes.

Class registration at UCLA is a unique beast. For us, there is no pre-registration, except for when there is.

Yes, that's contradictory. Here's what you need to know this second: as a brand new student, you cannot enroll until the first week of classes. Really.

And for those who are not satisfied by that and want to know more right now, turn to page 18 and you'll find a thorough explanation of how registration works, and what you need to do to get what you want.

The Most Important Thing You Need To Do Right Now

The lifeblood of our program is the listservs: five e-mail services through which the school communicates important information, opportunities, events, etc. You must – yes, I say **MUST** – get yourself on these listservs. The sooner you do this the better, because come the summer, things will start to pop up that are important for you. The only way you will find out about important details is through the listservs. You can email your mentors right now, email faculty or staff – and they may have some information, but not all of it. They certainly won't know when the audition information will be sent out. You just have to follow the listservs.

On the next page, you'll find the links to the five listservs. When you go to those links, you'll be asked a bunch of questions, including where you want these messages to be sent. Choose whatever email address you check regularly.

This can be a pain in the butt at first. Many times you'll get the same message 3 or 4 times, because the same information has been posted on multiple listservs. But in the end you will be much happier getting the multiple notices immediately than having it all sent to some other email address you don't often check. Trust your narrator on this – she/he has listened to many UCLA students complain after they missed a notice on important auditions or other cool events. In almost all cases, the problem was either that they weren't on one of the listservs, or they weren't checking.

Avoid the option to receive these emails in 'digest' form. Sounds tempting to get them all in a convenient bundle, right? If you do, you'll miss last-minute notices of events, first-come-first-serve sign-ups, brief deadline extensions, and other time-sensitive material. You don't need to

check your email every ten minutes but you won't do yourself any favors by delaying these emails.

The Screenwriter Listserv is for screenwriting faculty, staff and students to post information specific to the screenwriting department such as news about 434s, Showcase, scholarships, and anything else program related.

<http://lists.ucla.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/screenwriting-l>

The Writer-Producer Listserv is for screenwriting and producing faculty, staff, and students to communicate information relevant to both programs.

<http://lists.ucla.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/writerproducer-l>

The MFA – FTV- BB Listserv serves as a bulletin board for TFT department faculty, staff and students to post department related information—anything from film showings to crew needs. The key is the post must be related to your film work at school.

<http://lists.ucla.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/mfa-ftv-bb-l>

The MFA – FTV- CC Listserv is for TFT department faculty, staff and students to post all non-school related announcements such as garage sales, apartments for rent, and parties.

<http://lists.ucla.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/mfa-ftv-cc-l>

The UTA Joblist provides a list of industry related jobs and will be sent to you automatically through the Listserv once you sign up.

<http://lists.ucla.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/weeklyjoblist-l>

Why don't you take a moment right now and get on these listservs.

Unfortunately, many of us have experienced some severe problems with UCLA's bureaucracy. Mistakes are made which can affect just one person or hundreds of people. There's also a good chance you'll encounter admin staff - yes, even within TFT - who will seem uninterested, resentful, or simply incapable of helping you.

The best solutions are:

- 1) Be vigilant. If you're a little surprised to see an email from Student Financial Services reminding you about a balance on your account, you'd better check it.

Many mistakes made on your BruinBill Account are fixed automatically (you'll see the record of these transactions and the fixes when you check your statement). Other times, you'll need to contact Financial Services, but that experience can be remarkably painless.

- 2) Don't automatically trust the information you get, whether it's a mass email, or an individual response to a direct question you've asked.

- 3) Share information with each other. Ask the group when you're confused. Chances are, someone else has or had the same experience. Your FB page is ideal for this.

4) Don't be afraid to befriend Cheri Smith, graduate counselor for TFT (Room 103, East Melnitz). She'd love to see you from time to time.

On the flip side, your screenwriting chairs can be receptive and interested in how the program is working on your end of things. I don't mean to suggest that you go to them instead of the admin staff to solve your individual problems, but they want the number and type of courses offered to match the needs of the current students. You know, the ones who will be looking for work soon.

Other Bureaucracy You Want to Get a Handle On Right Away

1) LOGON ID

In your years as a student at UCLA, you're going to be going to UCLA websites a lot. Class information and registration, financial aid, payments, class information, grades – it's all handled online.

But in order to get access, you need to create a UCLA Logon ID.

To do that: Go to "<https://logon.ucla.edu/>" and click on "Create UCLA Logon ID." You'll need your birth date and also your university ID number – which you should already have now – and you'll be all set. It's easy, and it's free.

2) UCLA EMAIL

You will be given your UCLA e-mail address when you create your Logon.

It's perfectly fine to keep using your current e-mail address. But, if you don't already have one (or if your current account involves a rather embarrassing nickname, and you want something a tad more presentable), you can take advantage of your new UCLA e-mail address.

Business Tip: It also doesn't hurt to have "@ucla.edu" as an e-mail address when you start handing out those business cards at industry events and Showcase, or after you graduate. In our line of work, everyone's looking for something that will get the reader to give them a second look. Your UCLA credential is a good asset to use.

Once you've got that stuff out of the way, you'll have the chance to go to your MyUCLA Page, which has lots of different links for you to check out.

3) My UCLA

One link that you really need to know is My UCLA -- Enrollment. My UCLA is the site by which you can look at class descriptions; enroll in and later drop classes; view financial aid information; update personal information; connect to the Bruin Card site (where you can put \$ on your ID). For you, My UCLA will be of *major* importance. (That pun worked better when it was called URSA last year... because astronomy and bears... anyway..)

My UCLA's address: <https://www.my.ucla.edu/>

To get into the site, you'll see a box on the right hand where you need to log in.

4) BRUIN CARD (ID CARD)

Since I mentioned the BruinCard, here's the link to that site:

UCLA Bruincard - 310/825-2336. Website www.bruincard.ucla.edu (Available for pick up starting early September at 123 Kerckhoff Hall, Driver's License or passport required to pick up your Bruincard).

Your Bruin Card is your passport. You use it to get into the gyms, to check out books; you can put money on it and use it for meals, as a debit card or calling card, or to print photocopies (and oh, the photocopies you will be printing!). It allows you to get on certain buses for cheaper fare. And, as a student in the College of Theater, Film and Television, you'll be able to use it to get into some films and events for free or at a discount.

As a new student starting in the fall, you can't pick up your card over the summer. However, you can submit all your paperwork and a digital photo online ahead of time. On the BruinCard website, click on "Apply for a Card" and follow the instructions.

Your ID will be a little different than other UCLA students because you are a TFT rock star. (That is actually the technical term by which other programs will refer to you. "Hey, it's a TFT rock star!" Correct response: "Hellz yeah.") In order to get that full rock star status, when you come to pick up your card in September, you will need to bring with you a special form from TFT Student Services (103 East Melnitz – NOTE: East Melnitz is the full name of a building. It's weird. You'll get used to it.).

So, on the day you're going to pick up your card, stop by East Melnitz and get the TFT ID form. Make sure that the form is filled in before the next step (preferably by the TFT staff as they're supposed to, even if said staff tries to tell you otherwise).

Your card can then be picked up at 123 Kerckhoff Hall (E-5 on map). Make sure you have your student number and a driver's license, state ID or passport when you go.

You can also pick up your card at 107 UCLA Wilshire Center and at 150A Sproul Hall.

If you run into other questions about the Bruin Card, give them a ring at (310) 825-2336.

5) BILLING

On the My UCLA Main Menu, under FINANCES AND JOBS you'll see "BruinBill." That's where you go to see what you owe.

At UCLA, we pay by the quarter. Your bill is posted a month before it's due. And it will generally come due a week before the quarter begins.

This is an extremely important thing to note, and it's different than a lot of other universities, so let me say it again: Your bill will be due and must be paid a week before the quarter begins.

Why that's important: If you fail to pay your bill by the time it's due, not only will you given a late fee, any classes you have registered for will be wiped out and you will have to start again. Argh.

Given that many of the classes you will enroll in will be in demand, this is not a situation you want to find yourself in. (Trust me. Omniscience only comes after lots of errors.)

I am told that UCLA automatically emails students of any money that you have outstanding twice a month. So ideally anytime you have a balance, you should hear from UCLA about it. Should you just trust UCLA to watch out for you? Do you feel lucky? Well do you? Punk?

Bottom line – mark your calendar about when you can start paying your bill, and when it's due. (You can get the exact dates from the Bruin Bill office come the fall.)

The Bruin Bill office: 310-825-9194.

6) TFT INTRANET

You may notice emails from the department that end with something like “For more information, see the TFT Intranet.” In 2011, this was sort of like a joke you keep repeating, hoping it will get funnier.

But the Intranet seems to be growing in importance. You'll definitely be using it to apply for Donor Awards (more on those below) and might use it to browse internships or download course material. Use your UCLA login and password to check it out:

<http://intranet.tft.ucla.edu/>

7) CLASS FACEBOOK PAGE

If you don't know it already, your class has a facebook page, UCLA MFA Screenwriters Class of 2018. Here's the link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UCLAMFAScreenwriting2018>

Hopefully you're a member of this group already. And even if you're not a regular user on Facebook, it can be helpful to check in on this page over the summer. Other students will post questions that you, too, are wondering about, and older students will provide answers. You can simply troll if you want, gleaning information, or you can use the site to help set up Dangerous Liaisons with your future classmates.

INTERLUDE: “Incoming”

by TFT Instructor Linda Voorhees

First Year is about learning the ropes of UCLA and the program. Along the way, you learn stuff about writing in spite of yourself and in spite of your panic and doubt. More importantly, you learn about yourself as a human being.

The professors keep talking about “finding your voice,” and writing your “truth.” But you don’t exactly know where to look for what seems to be missing. And you say to yourself, “Isn’t that why I’m here? Isn’t that what someone’s supposed to teach me?” But the professors seem more intent on teaching you “process” rather than “formula” and you wonder if your time and money would not have been better spent by signing up for a couple of Bob McKee weekend seminars rather than committing to the Master’s program at UCLA.

Fall Quarter Second Year you realize you spent last year roaming the halls of “Mel’s Nuts” and sitting in the airport lounge drinking bad coffee from the vending machine—and you still haven’t written the million-dollar-plus blockbuster script. Those near and dear to you begin to question whether the sacrifice was worth it and you feel pressure to prove yourself.

Envy settles in as you notice the names of former grads in the trades because they’ve made impressive sales. You cut it out and post it on the refrigerator door for motivation.

To make matters worse, the new batch of “incoming” arrives and you’re now the person mentoring, escorting, hosting, guiding as though you’re the big expert on UCLA. But you don’t feel like an expert. Additionally, the new students seem bright, exceptionally talented and ravenously committed. They ARE the competition.

Your desperation and determination settle in and you resolve to write your signature movie. This will be the script that brings Hollywood to your door. It won’t just be a movie—it’ll be a franchise. You spend hours watching high concept films. You read every script of every movie that’s ever been done in the genre so you can study the formula.

You bring your new attitude to the 434 Workshop. You pepper the professor with questions; you seek honesty in the critique; you relentlessly write—cranking out page after page, fixating on the material with an OCD-like intensity.

But the professor ignores your personal agenda and picks on you more than ever. You find yourself endlessly defending your writing and pissing off the few students who are still allies. You declare a “cold war” against the faculty secretly promising to smear them at the first opportunity when Hollywood makes you an uber-player.

When you grumble, the other students are encouraging, but they tend to agree with the professor’s critique and wonder why in spite of all the elements of formula your stuff seems to

have lost its humanity and is disturbingly unengaging. They look at you with an expression that says, “get therapy.”

You declare a “cold war” on them as well.

Spring Quarter is the competition quarter, and indeed you win some impressive awards; but amazingly the awards go to the little “heart and soul” script you begrudgingly wrote as an assignment to cover the Quarter while you were still honing your dick-flick. Baffled but thrilled, you realize that while you were working on your formula movie, you inadvertently wrote a little jewel that spoke to the essence of your fear, desperation, and obsession.

You finally spoke your truth and in speaking the truth you found your voice.

Now, you love UCLA like it’s the first day all over again! You love being a member of our little community and even find yourself wearing Bruin paraphernalia. You love your professors and make a promise to name your next child, grandchild, or puppy after them.

Fall Quarter Third Year you have status, the other students look at you with a sense of admiration and envy. You realize it’s your last year on campus and you’ve got to make the most of it. No more bullshit about chasing the trends and chasing the industry, you’re going to write what you love and love what you write. If it isn’t about truth, passion, humanity then what’s the point?

As much as you wanted out last year, you now dread the thought of graduation and departure. You want to stay forever. You want to live, raise your family and die on North Campus. This is home.

Okay, now do you get it?

What you want is less important than what you need.

You’re going to have to trust us to help get you there as a writer. Our primary obligation is to create an environment and community that offers you an opportunity to grow and learn. There are no guarantees, and the first rewards are rarely monetary. But if you’re a real writer (which is another way of saying, a real human being), you’re in a place that will challenge, nag, provoke, prompt, and celebrate your effort.

It’s a happy journey; we’re honored to walk it with you.

Welcome to UCLA.

PART II “SHOP, DROP, EN-ROLL”*

By and large, all classes in TFT require a Permission to Enroll (PTE) Number. Writing classes have their own unique process of enrollment, but it still results in the accepted students being given PTE numbers to enroll.

A) FEATURE SCREENWRITING CLASSES – THE “434”

434 is the main writing class for most screenwriting students at UCLA. You write a whole screenplay in 10 weeks. And if that sounds crazy, well, some days it is, but you’ll get better at it.

To help you settle in, first quarter students do not take a 434. Instead, all first years spend the fall quarter in a 431 section assigned during orientation. 431 consists of lectures, writing exercises, and the production of the first act of a script (about 30 pages). You’ll also read others’ pages aloud, allowing you to hear one another’s work. And after the reading, the instructor and peers will offer constructive feedback.

Some students will take the first act from their 431 into their winter 434. Others will start fresh. And a few might write not only the first act, but a whole screenplay in their 431. That is not the expectation, but 431 instructors are certainly open to giving feedback on whole scripts.

After that first quarter, you will join your peers in 434. And this is how enrollment in 434 works:

1) THE PITCH: Just before the first full week of school, you’ll get an email from the listservs about who is teaching the 434 sections and where/when they’re having their pitch sessions. Yes, that’s right, pitch sessions. You and many others will show up at that time and date and give a brief log-line style pitch of the screenplay you want to write that quarter.

In some sections, that’ll be it. You’ll say your piece, the teacher will say thank you, and they’ll move on. In others, you might get quizzed on your piece. Or the teacher might alert you ahead of time if he or she wants more than the log line; they want to know the basic beats of the whole screenplay, as far as you know them right now. Or they might want you to also bring a writing sample. Or they might want you to bring some information on a 3x5 card. Every teacher does it a little differently, so before you show up at any pitch session, you’ll want to check and double check that you are bringing the materials they want.

A Piece of Advice: Although you are not taking 434 your first quarter, if you write the instructors and they agree, you can sit in on their pitch sessions. And that is a good idea – you will see how these sessions work and get a feel for the kinds of pitch that will work for you, and just how brief you need to be. You’ll also get some sense of instructors that you might want to take down the line.

Most instructors will have no problem with new students sitting in. Just be sure to check in with the professor ahead of time.

2) THE DRAFT: At the end of that first week, you'll send an e-mail to Richard and Hal's student assistant indicating your top three choices. (The politically correct way to phrase this is to say "this is what works out best for my schedule this quarter.") The teachers you pitched will do the same thing. And then, about 24 hours later, you'll receive an email telling you, this is who you have.

Have no fear: as a screenwriting student you will absolutely get into a 434 section. And most of the time you will get one of your top 3 choices.

Each and every instructor is here for a reason and will approach the process a little differently. Taking a variety of instructors will make you well rounded as a writer. So just go with it. And know you get to do it all again next quarter!

THE EXCEPTION TO PITCHING: PRE-ENROLLMENT

Some instructors allow students to pre-enroll in their sections prior to pitch week. These emails will be sent out before Pitch Week.

B) TV WRITING CLASSES

As mentioned above, getting into TV writing classes generally requires some sort of writing sample. Sometime late in the previous quarter/over Christmas break, you will be emailed the details of what you need to do, with a turnaround time of maybe 10 days.

(Question: Have you already signed up for the listservs? DO IT NOW.)

What does the writing sample look like? It might be the first 5 or 10 pages of a pilot, or a 2 page sketch of a comedy idea, or a scene with specific parameters, or a short story. Each teacher does it differently.

After the audition process is over, the teacher reads the audition pieces and picks their class. An email goes out informing you of whether you've been accepted. And then in the first section, you get your PTE #. It's acceptable to decline your spot in the class if your schedule doesn't permit it, though you'll be asked to let the instructor know immediately.

Some TV writing classes are in comedy. Are you wondering if you're funny? Are you sure you aren't funny? Go ahead and take a shot anyway. Plenty of people who have never written comedy before have gotten into these classes. It's not as exclusive as an 'audition' makes it sound. As for those deadly serious people who have gotten in -- some of us have confirmed that we're not that funny, but we learned anyway. Some of us have had amazing experiences, discovered new sides of ourselves, gotten exposed to the vital television side of screenwriting, and left with one more piece for the portfolio.

C) QUEST FOR THE PTE

If you're enrolling in a TFT class that's not covered above, to get your PTE number you will need to do one of three things:

- 1) PITCH/AUDITION – Keep your eyes open for these announcements.
- 2) SHOW UP FOR THE FIRST CLASS – Sometimes you go to a class without a PTE number and things can still work out. Even a class that is full already will sometimes take extra students if they come to the first section. This is the exception rather than the rule. But if you don't get a PTE number, don't hesitate to go to the first class anyway and see what happens.
- 3) WRITE THE PROFESSOR / TA TO GET IN – The names of the instructors teaching a particular class can be found in the Schedule of Classes (discussed below). The email addresses of most all of the TFT full time faculty can be found at <http://www.tft.ucla.edu/faculty/>

When you see a class posted that you want to take, you should reach out to instructors immediately. This is a normal part of the UCLA program. If you're writing too soon, or it's not going to work out, the instructors will be most clear about that. Also, don't feel bad about asking for a PTE number if you're not sure whether you're going to end up in the class.

There are three main online sources of information about classes:

- The Schedule of Classes tells you what's being offered in the current quarter, and includes the weekly schedule, room number/building, and instructors' names. (But not their emails - that would be too easy). <http://www.registrar.ucla.edu/schedule/> It's important to remember that, like everything else, this information is subject to change, mistakes, or a general kind of Fog of War. This schedule doesn't have a description of the class.
- The Course Catalog has the descriptions of the classes, but the course list pertains to the entire academic year - not all courses are offered every quarter. You might want to bookmark our department's page once you navigate to it (and once the 2012-2013 Catalog is online) because of these multiple steps: Starting at <http://www.registrar.ucla.edu/catalog/>, click 'Curricula and Courses', then select our department, then click 'Course Listings'.

- The third way to view course information is through the CLASSES/Enrollment Menu on My UCLA. This is the system you use to actually add or drop classes, and it has information from both of the above sources, but in a clunkier interface.

COURSES FROM THE CMS AND PRODUCERS PROGRAMS

Screenwriting students often take classes from the Producers Program and the Cinema Media Studies (CMS) Program.

A number of courses in the CMS and Producing programs change from quarter to quarter, so they appear in the course catalog with vague all-purpose descriptions. In other words, the catalog doesn't reveal the specific topic of study in a particular quarter.

One example from CMS is the 'Film & Other Arts' class, which in Spring 2014 specifically concerned Costume Design. Similarly, in the Producers program, several classes are offered each quarter as sections of courses 298A and 298B. The subject of these classes changes by quarter, and is not described in the catalog. So how do you plan ahead to line up a quarter of great classes?

It's a trick question. *You don't!*

If you're hoping to take a CMS class, you spend the first week running around and attending the first day of the classes that fit in your schedule. You'll probably get a syllabus, a description of the class, and you might get a PTE number (you're under no pressure to use it!).

This all sounds stressful, but except for a few special classes, things usually work out.

Television Writing Workshops and Running the Room

By Fred Rubin

Fred Rubin, UCLA TFT Lecturer: Since 1977 he has served as a writer on 15 network series and has been the producer of such shows as “Diff’rent Strokes,” “Archie Bunker’s Place,” “Mama’s Family,” “Webster,” “Night Court,” “Family Matters,” “Step by Step” and “Two of A Kind.” His career has included writing 60 episodes of primetime television, 10 pilots and two made-for-television movies.

Currently he is taking time off from producing and turning his skills towards teaching, specifically classes at UCLA in comedy writing and screenwriting. He is also an ongoing instructor for the Warner Brothers Writers Workshop, the Disney Writers Fellowship, the Nickelodeon Writers Fellowship, Columbia College at Raleigh Studios in Hollywood and the ABC Talent Development Program.

“The rumor that has been whispered around Hollywood for the last few years is now out in the open and being shouted loud and clear: Television is the best place to be working. Industry insiders will tell you consistently that currently in the television landscape there is more creativity, originality, depth, and variety than films are offering. More importantly there is greater opportunity to find work in television, because the medium needs a thousand times more product than the film industry produces. Simply stated, the chances of first jobs being in television far outweigh the chances of starting out in film. And, for the growing writer, there is far more decision making power, security, salary, and opportunity to advance in television than in features. These days another thing that is being hollered loud and clear is that UCLA is the place to learn how to work in television.” – Fred Rubin

The audition process for TV writing workshops is announced via the listservs late in the summer. What is asked for changes from year to year – It could be a 5 page dramatic scene and a 5 page comedic scene with specific parameters, or a short comedic writing sample with certain specifications. Who knows what this year holds?

The exact timeline – when the process will be opened, due dates – is fluid. In 2011 the notice for the auditions went out in August; auditions were due early September. There were 10 spots. In case of a tie, preference was given to those who turned their materials in earlier. Be warned: writing a full-length screenplay and a sitcom/drama at the same time can be, well, a sitcom/drama of its own.

The bottom line: If you want to learn how to write a spec or pilot half hour comedy, hour drama, or anything in between, you can. The cluster of courses may be called something different but the quality of the instructors doesn’t change. Popular courses continue, and new ones like Fred Rubin’s “Running the Room,” were picked up for a second season. Stay patiently tenacious and maintain a quality arsenal of writing samples.

PART III. “START ‘ER UP”: YOUR FIRST QUARTER

A) HOW MANY UNITS DO I TAKE, & IN WHAT?

The Graduate Division requires that all graduate students be enrolled in 12 units to be considered full time. However, FYI: currently the Financial Aid Office considers 8 units full time. If you’re going to go below 12, good to check in with Cheri Smith, the graduate counselor for TFT. cheri@tft.ucla.edu.

To give you a measurement – a 434 is 8 credits. Many CMS classes are 6 credits (and involve a research paper at the end). Most producing classes are 4 credits, as are most TV writing classes.

Credit load is not necessarily indicative of workload. Writing a half hour spec or a dramatic pilot can be a lot more work week to week than some producing classes, but they’re the same number of credits.

In general, students take between 12 and 18 units.

Your main work here is in the screenwriting program. Screenwriters generally take a 434 every quarter except their first.

You’re welcome to take classes in other UCLA disciplines, either within or outside TFT. You just have to remember, 1) you’re here first and foremost to write. And 2) the same PTE system applies outside TFT – you still need to chase down faculty to get PTEs, and you probably need to do that long before the quarter begins. Also, since you’re not a member of their department, you’re lower in the food chain. They may ask you whether TFT allows its grad students to take undergrad or grad classes. The answer is that we are allowed to take both.

Being in film school can be a little bit like being a kid in a candy store. In TFT alone, you will find so many great classes and instructors, experienced professionals bringing in other top talent in the industry. It can be easy to say yes to too much. For most people it is a good idea to go easy that first quarter, learn what works for you and also get to know your classmates.

USEFUL NOTE: DROPPING CLASSES

You can drop classes in TFT any time in the 10 weeks without grade penalty. If you do so after the second meeting there is a sliding fee. Also, a drop done after the 2nd-4th weeks, depending on the class, leaves a notation of the drop on your transcript.

B) FIRST QUARTER SCHEDULE

As already mentioned, first quarter MFA students are required to take FTV 431 (4 units). You are also required to take FTV C430 (2 units). FTV C430 is an undergraduate Introduction to Screenwriting lecture. Whether you've already written 100 screenplays or never picked up a pen, you are required to take FTV C430 (colloquially known as "Storytime with Richard").

Beyond those six credits, your first quarter schedule is up to you. Your mentors will have good suggestions as to teachers and classes to keep your eyes out for. And watch the listservs.

Donor Awards (see page 38) and Showcase (page 39) glower over Winter Quarter like ravens on the bust of Pallas. (FYI: Don't ever use lines like that in your screenplay.) Keep all this in mind when deciding on classes and whether or not to continue your 431 script.

C) REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

Again, questions about requirements can be directed to Cheri Smith, our graduate counselor. In general, beyond 434, you have three requirements you must fulfill for graduation.

1) You must take two Cinema and Media Studies (CMS) classes. CMS classes often involve a major paper, as well as a lot of in class time (particularly if the class involves weekly viewings). CMS majors have first priority and 2nd and 3rd year screenwriters sometimes get dibs on empty spots. Do yourself a favor and get at least one CMS class out of the way your first year. And definitely ask 2nd and 3rd students for recommendations.

2) You must take one class that is either producing, animation or directing. There are challenges if you're interested in taking a directing class that involves actually shooting something.

3) You need 72 credits within the TFT program. That's only 12 credits a quarter over 6 quarters. This should be a no brainer to hit. The classes you're required to take and the classes you will want to take will hit the 72 credits in no time at all.

D) WRITING IN 434

You want to ask if you're *really* restricted to writing original scripts, and what exactly that means. You want to know if you're expected to write commercial material, or maybe you're expected to do the opposite.

The truth about 434s is that you can write pretty much whatever you want, if you can deal with the consequences. If you want to spend ten weeks writing a story you don't have the rights to, or haven't researched, or have no hope or selling or filming, you probably can – if you're prepared to deal with all those consequences, plus potentially annoying your instructor.

Instructors vary in many ways, including how focused they are on writing for 'the industry'. Talk to your peers, attend pitch sessions, and try to find the instructor who's right for your script

and/or attitude. Once you *have* an instructor, the best thing is often to submit to their system and try to learn what that instructor can teach.

But you are the one responsible for your script – whether you reject good notes, or let misplaced notes ruin your script, it's your choice. Instructors want to see you're learning what they're teaching, but they're not keeping score. It's not about the grade, it's about the script.

There's no specified software you're required to use at UCLA – assignments are generally delivered in paper or PDF. However, some sitcoms require specialized formats that something like Final Draft can handle, and you might get a warning from an instructor that the industry expects writers to use Final Draft. **Really, just get Final Draft.**

E) A FEW NOTES ABOUT CLASSES

1) Don't be late.

You came here to be a professional. So be a professional. Come on time. Given the traffic of LA, this also means, leave for school early. Unless you live near campus, you will experience traffic issues.

2) When receiving feedback, try to keep your ears open and your mouth shut.

It can be hard not to get defensive or just plain expository when people start critiquing your work. But feedback time is generally not the moment for you to justify every decision you made.

So, when you're getting feedback, try to just take it in. To listen is not to say you're absolutely going to turn everything upside down the way a classmate might suggest. It's just polite. Also: some comments that might seem crazy in class might end up making a lot more sense later.

3) When giving feedback, try to offer solutions.

That's not always possible; but it's a great goal to strive for.

4) Turn in your script in proper format.

When you turn a final script in, it should be three-hole punched, with brads at either end. If you don't know what a brad is, ask someone. My omniscience ends at office supply definitions.

5) Do what is asked of you.

If a teacher asks you to put contact information on everything you turn in, make sure you do it. If you're asked to exchange regular feedback with a classmate, make sure you do it. If you're asked as part of a class to read another person's script, make sure you do it. If you say you're going to be some place or be at an event, make sure you show up.

6) Independent Study units are not a right.

If an instructor agrees, you can earn units through an agreed upon, personalized course structure. Ask nicely, put in the work, and get as much as you can from the partnership.

PART IV. “LIVING LA VIDA UCLA”*

A) HOUSING

Deciding where to live in L.A. can be as difficult as trying to figure out whether to fasten your script with two or three brads. (The correct answer is two.) Here are some links to get started.

UCLA housing information: 310-825-4271. Website www.housing.ucla.edu/myhousing

The online UCLA Community Housing off-campus housing listings system, which allows you to view ads from private landlords: <http://www.data.cho.ucla.edu/>

(Note: To access the database you will need your student number and pin.)

Online rental listings used by many landlords and renters throughout LA. \$60 to view for 60 days: <http://www.westsiderentals.com/>

Craigslist -- Free online listings: <http://losangeles.craigslist.org/>

The Daily Bruin also has an extensive classified section for apartments, condos, houses, etc.: <http://dailybruin.com/classification/apartments-for-rent/>

B) NOTHING IS CERTAIN BUT DEATH AND TRAFFIC

As mentioned already, traffic can be a significant issue -- perhaps not as bad as you've heard, but still, depending on where you live and when you're traveling it can take a considerable amount of time to get to and from school.

LA Traffic Tips

9. California is hands free – you cannot hold a phone while driving. As of 1/6/11, the first ticket is \$148. The next is \$256.
8. California moving violations are also steep. You can easily pay over \$300 for a speeding ticket.
7. Talk to Angelinos to learn short cuts.
6. Around campus, surface streets can be faster than freeways.
5. KNX 1070 AM radio has traffic updates every 10 minutes.
4. If traveling across town, have a freeway map handy so you can modify your route in case of traffic or an accident. (Or use Waze)

3. Drive with your doors locked.
2. Wear comfy shoes, cuz you're not going to park by the front door!
1. Give yourself at least 30 minutes just to park and get to class. Expect traffic off-campus, and hassles on-campus.

C) PARKING

Unless you're living on campus, you're going to have to think about parking. There are at least 5 strategies for dealing with this issue.

Strategy One: THE PARKING PERMIT

Applications for parking permits become available as of July 1st, due by July 26th. Here's the link to apply for a permit: Parking Services - 310-825-6918. Applications available starting July

1. Apply via website: <https://main.transportation.ucla.edu/campus-parking/students> by July 26. Parking permit rates are posted here: <https://main.transportation.ucla.edu/campus-parking/ucla-parking-rates-and-fees>

NOTE: Those living in the 90024 zip code are in the same category as those who live in the dorms. You will pay a higher rate and be placed in a lower permit priority.

You can buy a permit for the whole school year or quarter-by-quarter. (NOTE: summer parking requires a separate application in May).

You'll also be asked to give your top 3 choices in parking structures. Most of your classes and meetings are going to be on what's called "North Campus" – more particularly, the northeast corner of UCLA. The absolute closest structure to your classes will be Parking Structure 3.

It seems like most people who want parking in Lot 3 get it. However, the permits are given on a first come, first serve basis. So, if you want Lot 3, better not to wait to apply.

AUDITS: Believe it or not, the information you submit on your parking permit application is subject to audit. Sometime after school starts, you may receive an email asking you to prove that you live where you said you do and work as much as you said you do. And if it's discovered you fudged the facts, UCLA will take away your permit. So, make sure you've got documents to prove your address and employment. And if that information changes, you may want to update the parking office.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students are required to be enrolled in at least 4 units before applying for parking. Cheri Smith will give you a dummy course that you can use to satisfy this requirement.

Strategy Two: Daily Parking

If instead of a year-long pass you want to opt for daily parking, you have two options.

Option A, PAY BY SPACE: Certain spaces can be paid for by machine (by credit cards or cash) for a few hours or all day. These spaces often sell out (in which case a sign will be posted at the entrance) but may be a better deal if you only need to be on campus for an hour or two. (Note: Most classes are at least 3 hours long.)

Option B, DAILY PERMIT: At the kiosk off Wyton near Lot 3, you can buy a parking pass for the day for \$10. (Between 5:30 and 7:00 p.m you can buy your ticket right at the gate, as you enter Lot 3.) However, if you have a class before 4:00—and you will—this parking is tricky. There are only a limited number of daily parking passes available. The parking kiosks open at 7:00 a.m., and daily passes can be gone as early 7:30. Also, UCLA gives out more passes than there is actually space for, if everyone shows up at the same time.

So even if you have a daily permit, you still might not find a spot in Lot 3.

Strategy Three: Other Garages and the Shuttle

UCLA has a free shuttle system, “Campus Express.” If you park in Lot 32, down by Wilshire and Veteran, you can take a shuttle bus up to North Campus.

Shuttle information (including route maps) is available at

<https://main.transportation.ucla.edu/getting-around-campus/bruinbus-schedules>

The shuttle is a great way to get around our expansive (and hilly) campus, or to pop down to Westwood. Shuttle buses stop running at 7:00 p.m.

There are also a few private parking structures in Westwood where you can park all day—but you’ll still need to take the shuttle or walk across campus to Melnitz/MacGowan – our main class buildings. Prices vary (especially if there are events happening in Westwood) but are usually deeply discounted after 6 p.m.

Note about Lot Parking: Be cautious after dark. Campus is generally quite safe, but parking structures give attackers places to hide. At UCLA, should you ever need help, there are blue boxes with emergency phones inside located all over campus.

Strategy Four: The Bus

If traffic is the most maligned aspect of life in Los Angeles, the second most maligned part has to be the public transportation system. And yes, it’s true, when it comes to public transportation, we don’t have as much as other places.

But we are not completely without our resources here. Public buses run from UCLA in pretty much every direction. Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus and the Culver CityBus are also part of the BruinGo! Program; it's 25 cents a ride with your Bruin Card.

Most students will tell you, if you can afford to drive to school, you're probably better off, both for convenience sake and because sometimes there'll be spontaneous after class socializing, and you might not want to have to worry about catching a bus. But, any number of students do rely on city buses to get to and from class. If it's something you're considering, you might reach out to your mentors or other older students for advice on how you can make this work. Info on buses can be found at: <https://main.transportation.ucla.edu/getting-to-ucla/public-transit>

Strategy Five: The Street

You will find almost nothing in the way of street parking near North Campus. If you're willing to drive a ways back into the nearby streets, you may have luck, but you should not count on that.

Speaking about city parking more generally, parking lots can be found in most every area of Los Angeles. Many of them are extremely inexpensive, even in some of the more hip, chic and trendy parts of town. So, before you drop \$18-\$20, look around (or get an app for your phone and have it look for you). Angelinos also seem to forget about side streets.

In many places there are also parking meters -- machines that grant you up to two hours of immobility, usually for fifteen minutes per quarter.

Speaking of quarters: Squirrel them away in your car. You will often need change for parking in L.A., especially in Santa Monica (also in your laundry). And you will hate yourself when you nab a meter, but have nothing to feed it. Or you'll take a risk and park there anyway – and potentially get a major ticket.

D) SHOW ME THE MONEY

Scholarships, Fellowships, and Grants

Graduate Division Special Fellowships

With a December 15 deadline, the GDSFs are the first opportunities to look out for. The only way to get the Fellowship Application for Entering Graduate Students is to download it off the internet — <http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/asis/entsup/fellproc.htm>. You'll fill out one form, checking off all of the fellowships for which you qualify—based on things like academic merit, disabilities, ethnic background, etc. There's one for cancer survivors, another for Armenians. You get the picture.

You'll be competing for these funds with other university students. NOTE: Three faculty recommendations are required, so start getting this together well before Winter Break.

TFT Fellowships (often called Donor Awards)

The Donor Awards are wide array of scholarships large and small administered by independent donors ranging from John Frankenheimer to the George Burns estate and available only to

students in the School of Theater, Film & Television. Some awards require full TV or feature scripts; others ask for an essay; others need only a simple form to be filled out.

A basic information session about the awards (i.e. mostly the same information you'll find right here) happens in Winter Quarter. The site listing the details of the awards goes live for two weeks toward the end of the Quarter; application materials are generally due sometime around finals week.

NOTE: The financial end of the donor awards is a bit confusing. You'll be told that the awards are meant to be used to pay off tuition, yet they are received long after you've already paid for the final quarter of the year. If you have loans, the money can be put to that. Or if you have some TFT project or need you want to put it toward, for example a new computer or a shoot you want to do, you can petition to use the money in that way.

And if you don't have loans, the cash can go in your pocket. Feel free to use some of it to take an omniscient narrator out for a drink.

Other financial aid question can be answered at: Financial Aid Office – 310/206-0400. Website: <http://www.fao.ucla.edu/officeinfo.html>

Contests & Competitions

There are tons of independent screenwriting competitions. Often announcements will come out over the listservs. The major UCLA ones to know about are:

The Sloan Foundation (<http://legacy.tft.ucla.edu/sloan/>) offers a \$10,000 prize for the best screenplay about science. Applicants must attend a one-day seminar in the fall, submit a script proposal, then work with a scientist mentor before entering a screenplay in the competition.

The Samuel Goldwyn Award (<http://legacy.tft.ucla.edu/goldwyn/>) provides five awards, including a Grand Prize of \$15,000. Any student in the UC system who is eligible can submit. Script submissions are due in late May, with finalists and winners announced over the Listservs early in the Fall Quarter.

UCLA Screenwriters Showcase

Screenwriters Showcase is an annual event at the end of Spring Quarter designed to introduce outstanding student work to the industry. Students are invited to submit feature-length and TV scripts which will then be read and critiqued by industry experts. The chosen winners have a scene of their script acted on stage by professional actors on Showcase night.

Usually scripts are due the week after Winter Quarter ends. In order to enter, you are required to volunteer to help with the event. Showcase is entirely student-run. Meetings will begin in the Fall Quarter to bring you up to speed.

Incoming MFA-ers are welcome to attend in June.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT SHOWCASE: All scripts submitted for Showcase must have been written at UCLA. That amazing piece that you used to get into the program, or that you've been working on in your spare time cannot be considered.

Writing Contests, Programs, and Fellowships

Features + TV

UCLA Screenwriters Showcase (Feb / \$60 for one category – \$80 for both)
Austin Film Festival (Screenplay: 1 May / \$40) (Teleplay 1 June / \$30)
Humanitas College Fellowship (Comedy and Drama: 15 May) *See University rep
Samuel Goldwyn Screenwriting Award (3 June) *Check with Cheri Smith
PAGE International Screenwriting Awards (15 May) *Fee rises after early deadline.
Slamdance (Earlybird: 25 March) *Feature, Horror, Short, TV
Scriptapalooza (Feature: Early 7 Jan / \$45) (Teleplay: 15 OCT / \$45)
Final Draft Big Break (Early – 30 Apr / \$50)
The Tracking Board (Launch Pad) (20 Nov / \$65) *Members get 10% off
Acclaim Scripts (Early – 30 Aug / \$40) *Student discount \$25

Features

Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting (Early: 1 Mar / \$35 – Final 1 May / \$65)
American Zoetrope Screenplay Contest (Early: 1 Aug / \$35 - Final 4 Sep / \$50)
BlueCat Screenplay Competition (Feature: Early 1 Sep / \$60 – Short 15 Nov / \$29)

Television

FOX-NYTVF Comedy Script Contest (Begin: 20 May – End: 3 Jun / \$0)
CBS Writers Mentoring Program (2014 Submissions: Late Sep through 2 Apr)
NBC Writers on the Verge (Submission Period: 1 May - 31 May) *Check back in spring
WB Writers' Workshop (2014 Submissions: 1 May – 1 Jun)
ABC/Disney Writing Fellowship (Submission Period starts spring) *Check site / has a
Latino Writers' Program (Submit late Aug – Early Sep)
Nickelodeon Writing Fellowship (Submission Period 2 Jan – 28 Feb)

Notes:

- i. Most of the dates and fees pertain to prior submission periods. Please check with the websites to confirm that year's submission periods and rules.
- ii. These contests are listed because people in the program have had positive experiences with them. There are many more, so let us be the first of many to advise you to do your own due diligence if you decide to put your work out there.

Teaching Assistantships

A few assistantships are offered to Screenwriting students.

Since events like Showcase are student-driven, the faculty also seems likely to reward those who rank among the most active. TAs are not only paid a salary, but, as university employees, also benefit from registration fee waivers and paid medical insurance.

Furthermore, unlike Work Study, administered by the Financial Aid office, Teaching Assistantships offer academic experience specific to our field of interest, rather than clerical or service work elsewhere in the university.

TIP: Depending on your undergraduate work, language skills, etc., you might consider looking elsewhere in the university, like the Classics or English departments, for a T.A. position. A number of Screenwriters have been successful in doing so.

NOTE: 1st years cannot apply for a TA position within TFT (you can TA in academic departments outside TFT under that program's specific guidelines).

TAs need to be aware of the 12 units needed to receive financial aid. A 50% TAship translates into 4 units but there are others that fall below that percentage and only count for 2 units.

Internships

Students in our program have the opportunity to intern at production companies. These are almost always unpaid positions, but you will earn units to apply toward your MFA that quarter – in fact, the internship is considered a “class”, with its own academic requirements. To get all the details, check out TFT's Internship Office website: (www.tft.ucla.edu/internships).

Internships are by no means required. It's possible that most students won't have one. But the experience has a lot to offer even for those who don't want any job except plunking out screenplays:

- Learn what producers want and don't want, like and don't like, and how they think and speak
- See how professional writers conduct themselves
- Make contacts
- Read lots of scripts, including scripts going into production. Read multiple drafts of scripts to see how they've changed
- Become more comfortable with people and places in the industry
- Actively participate in the development process

If you do decide to intern, first you have to find *or create* an internship somewhere. Did I say *create* an internship? You're creative, aren't you? You aren't restricted to positions that are already posted. Past students have zeroed in on companies producing work they like, and then called or emailed. Others have reached out to their working friends. But many great internships are posted on the TFT Intranet or sources outside of UCLA.

However you do it, it's up to you to line up a position, though the internship coordinator (internships@tft.ucla.edu) is ready to talk if you want some help. After you send your resume, you'll probably go in for a little interview.

Most of you will be 'doing coverage' as an intern – reading spec scripts and discussing them with your employers. Some will do variations including research and development of a story, or coverage of non-script material, like a novel.

So once you've navigated these choices and shaken hands with your new exploiter, I mean employer, you'll need to get a stack of TFT forms signed by yourself and your supervisor, and return them to the Internship Office (225B East Melnitz) BEFORE your internship starts. Download the forms in the Internship Packet from www.tft.ucla.edu/internships. Your supervisor

may require a letter from UCLA proving your student status, so leave plenty of time for all of this.

Finally, if you've turned in your paperwork, you'll get a PTE number to enroll in FTV 498. That lets you put 4 or 8 units on your schedule, depending on how much time you spend interning.

At the end of the quarter, you'll have to turn in a signed timesheet and a 8-10 page 'research-based critical analysis' of your company. You'll get plenty of information on that from the Internship Office.

TWO FINAL FINANCIAL ISSUES

1) HEALTH INSURANCE

Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan (GSHIP)

Grad students must have some kind of health insurance. You probably already received info on UCSHIP, which is a pretty good deal.

If you don't want to get health insurance from UCLA, you must prove that you have some other form of adequate health insurance. You can find information on waiving UC SHIP here:

[http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/Lists/ChannelContent/CustDispForm.aspx?ID=6&Title=Student%20Health%20Insurance%20Plan%20\(UC%20SHIP\)&Channel=Insurance](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/Lists/ChannelContent/CustDispForm.aspx?ID=6&Title=Student%20Health%20Insurance%20Plan%20(UC%20SHIP)&Channel=Insurance)

And you'll also find the phone number for the Ashe Center Insurance Office.

2) RESIDENCY

Refer all residency inquiries to:

Establishing California residency: Residence Deputy (310/825-3447)

Website: <http://www.registrar.ucla.edu/residence/index.htm>

Office hours are Monday – Friday 9am-4:30pm.

INTERLUDE: Got a Family? Read This!

How to survive film school, from one working parent to another

by Asher Garfinkel

When I first learned that I had been accepted into the MFA in Screenwriting program, I did the requisite Dance of Jubilation.

And then I had to tell my wife.

Don't get me wrong. Wendy knew all about my application—she just never thought I'd actually get in. When I did, she covered well and was adequately supportive of the endeavor, just not very convincing.

Here is what I emphasized: it's a world-renowned program, my writing will certainly advance to another level, I'll be meeting so many great people, career opportunities can arise from it, it's only two or three years, and finally, think positive, they'll probably throw me out after the first quarter. Here is what she heard: I've found a mistress whose name begins with a U, I don't plan on making any money or seeing you or our two young children for 2-3 years, now make me dinner and let's celebrate! Which is all to say that to Wendy, MFA meant Move Family Aside.

Hence, for my sake and my family's, I immediately scrambled for answers: "Can an MFA in Screenwriting student simultaneously commute to school from the San Fernando Valley, maintain some level of income, and give time to family?"

A sweet, soothing, experienced graduate counselor told me it has been done. I didn't believe her. Three hardened, jaded student mentors told me they were doing it. I didn't believe them, either.

Then, I arrived for orientation day, during which my fellow incoming first-years crammed into a room and were asked to briefly introduce themselves and their backgrounds:

"Hi, my name is Jennifer, and I have a newborn child in Orange County."

"Hi, my name is Elizabeth, and I have two-year-old twins."

"Hi, my name is Paul, and I'm commuting from Cleveland, where I have three children."

And it went on like that for 20 minutes. At one point I doubted I was in the right room—it was beginning to sound more like a parent support group than a venerable screenwriting program. I didn't believe any of us were going to make it.

But hey, I'm writing this a year later now, and, as of this week, I'm still in the program, still married, the kids still recognize me, and we haven't filed for bankruptcy. I think I can say the same for my child-rearing peers. So, how did we do it?

A few tips for the married/parenting/working/commuting student on how to survive The Big First Year Adjustment:

COMPARTMENTALIZE YOUR TIME. When you are certain of your schedule for the quarter, sit down with yourself and then with your spouse or significant other and establish the regimen early on, so that there are no surprises. You will find that a week now seems like it lasts only a day, so parcel it out wisely and stick to it religiously: this is work time; this is family time; this is school time; this is “I have fangs for the two weeks before my script is due and I WILL bite” time.

TWO SPECIAL NIGHTS OUT PER QUARTER. It’s really a subhead to the above, but it warrants its own bullet. If you can do more than two nights out, I applaud you (oh, and can I borrow some money?). We found it crucial to have dinner and a movie or a concert to look forward to every few weeks (I recommend concerts since the noise drowns out the monologue about failed plot points and character conflict constantly running through your head). Map these celebrations out—perhaps one early in the quarter and one later on—and then keep them sacred.

UTILIZE THE SUPPORT NETWORK. I can’t say that—upon bumping into classmates on campus—the first words out of their mouths were always: “How’s the script coming along?” Learn from each other; vent to each other; take comfort that you’re not alone.

INVOLVE THE FAMILY. Much as I was relieved to discover that I wasn’t alone, your family might benefit from knowing the same about themselves. My wife appreciated meeting others in the program and, of course, commiserating with their spouses. Her nebulous vision of the program as some Nefarious Other slowly melted away as she began to meet real faces to accompany the names. When possible, jump at the opportunity to bring your family along to both casual and more formal occasions. To share the sense of accomplishment and to keep it tangible, I even created a checklist representing each quarter; my wife gladly checks them off upon completion.

CHANGE YOUR OIL. You can read into that however you wish. I meant for your car, before the quarter begins.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, COFFEE! My favorite aspect of the UCLA campus is not the beautiful sculpture garden, the comprehensive film archive and script library, or even Richard Walter’s stand-up routines ...err, “lectures.” No, I recommend checking out the Nescafe machines sprinkled about campus. Best buzz for your buck? Espresso roast, triple intensity, \$1. There’s something they’re putting in there that’ll prop you upright for hours—and makes Richard’s “lectures” even funnier.

Certainly, you will have to Move Family Aside on occasion. There’s no way around it. But it can be done with minimal damage if you play your cards right. If you have any questions or

concerns regarding the above, talk to the graduate counselor, your assigned mentors, or feel free to contact me—my wife should get back to you soon. Good luck.

PART V. “WHAT’S A BRU-IN’?”: ON CAMPUS INFO

Interactive and PDF Campus Maps: <http://www.ucla.edu/map>

Internet Access

Many areas of campus offer Wi-Fi. Visit <http://www.bol.ucla.edu/services/wireless/> for complete information and instructions to connect to the wireless network.

Wi-fi code for TFT rooms: K1rib@ti

UCLA Campus Computer Labs

You can use computers, borrow laptops, and print and copy at several locations on campus. Note that the printers/copy machines do not take cash; you will need to have money on your BruinCard.

Computer lab locations: <http://map.ais.ucla.edu/go/1004110>

Printing and copying: <http://www.library.ucla.edu/service/2078.cfm>

Printing & Photocopies

As a screenwriting graduate student, you’re going to be killing a lot of trees. Most weeks, in fact, you’re going to be expected to bring in 5-10 pages for the rest of your classmates to read. 10 pages x (8 classmates + 1 teacher) = 90 pages.

There are different strategies to the whole printing situation. Some prefer to print their pages at home. The advantage of this is that when they get to school, they’re not running around like chickens with their heads cut off, trying to get the copies done. The downside is, you’re not printing money with all that ink.

Others will print their pages at or near school. There are Kinko’s in Westwood at 10924 Weyburn Ave. and 1520 Westwood Blvd. Even better (but not closer), Maziar at ScriptCopier on Wilshire (<http://www.scriptcopier.com/>) is said to have a special rate for UCLA screenwriters. We trust him with all the printing for Showcase, but he does small jobs too.

You can print copies at many of the campus libraries, including Powell Library or the closer-to-your-classes Research Library using your BruinCard. (To use your BruinCard in this way, you need to deposit money to the card. You can do this online at the BruinCard site. You can also add money at the Research Library.)

The Graduate Resource Center allows grad students to print 250 free pages per quarter – paper is supplied, even three-hole-punched! It's located in the basement of the Student Activities Building, Room B11. The GSRC (<http://gsrc.ucla.edu/>) uses computers, not copiers, so either email yourself the file or bring a memory stick and print away

The Screenwriters' Lounge: Located on the third floor of MacGowan Hall (next to Professor Richard Walter's office). There is a printer with computers for your use. Make sure you have an alternate plan; toner has been known to run out for periods of time. There's also a blu-ray player and TV.

To get it, you have to punch in the code on the lockbox that hangs from the door knob. This opens the box, which has a key inside. Use the key to unlock the door. Put the key back in the box and close it. (Code: 5741)



Again, the KEY IS IN THE LOCKBOX.

Having dropped all that knowledge, you may be better off printing things out at home and bringing them to school. Because things happen and then you're stressed, you're late and/or you're out of luck.

Mailboxes

You have your own mailbox in Melnitz Hall. The mailboxes are located near the "airport lounge" (i.e., the chairs near the elevators). You'll generally be told if something important is left there for you.

The Arthur Ashe Student Health Center

This is UCLA's outpatient clinic and is located next to Wooden Gym (D-4 on campus map PDF). Their services are free for the most part. If you are enrolled in GSHIP, you also get a lower co-payment on pharmaceuticals and free visits to medical specialists.

They take walk-ins or you can call for an appointment at (310) 825-4073. They also have a nurse you can e-mail questions to at www.studenthealth.ucla.edu.

The Ashe Center is probably one of the most underused resources available to students. If you've suffered through private insurance with high deductibles, outrageous co-pays, and limited prescription coverage, trust me, this is a nice change. Appointments are easy to get, they're free, and there's an on-site pharmacy with low-cost prescriptions, and even discounts on over-the-counter stuff. Plus, you can get a free flu shot in the fall. Score!

You have no excuse to avoid seeing someone about that nagging cough before it turns into pneumonia and keeps you out of class for a couple weeks.

Recreational Athletics

UCLA offers a great variety of recreational opportunity, from weights, exercise machines, aerobics and rec sports to special instruction on such things as surfing, sailing, rock climbing, gymnastics and tennis.

As a student, you have access to all of UCLA's gyms and classes. (NOTE: Most classes involve additional fees. Always check the fine print. In the case of both aerobics classes and yoga classes, you can buy a pass for something like \$25 that allows you to go to any and all sessions in a given quarter.) The main gym on campus is the John Wooden Center.

The Kinross Recreation Center has exclusive facilities for grad students (yes, that's you now!). <http://www.recreation.ucla.edu/krec>

Here's the general site for UCLA Recreation: <http://www.recreation.ucla.edu/>

Libraries

All library collections can be searched from www.library.ucla.edu. UCLA has a fabulous film archive and its library system is first rate.

The Young Research Library, located on North Campus, has some great places for studying, particularly its "garden level". Powell Library in the center of campus (F-4) can get crowded, but offers both group study lounges which can be reserved 24 hours ahead of time, and lots of different study spaces.

Security

The police department provides a free campus escort service every day of the year from dusk to 1 a.m. Specially trained students can walk you between campus and local living areas or Westwood Village. Call 310-794-3755.

There's also a free evening van service that provides a safe, accessible form of transport around campus at night. They can be reached at 310-825-9800. Visit <http://map.ais.ucla.edu/go/1000840> for more information.

UCLA Sports

You can't attend UCLA and not take in at least one football game at the Rose Bowl and one basketball game at Pauley Pavilion. You can get tickets to every home game of the football team and the men's basketball team for a total cost of \$100.

Glorious Food

There are lots of places on campus and off campus to eat. On campus, Ackerman Union has the biggest variety of food and the most eating on campus, including freshly baked pretzels, Panda Express, Rubio's, a salad bar, and pizza and pasta on the 3rd floor, and Jamba Juice, Taco Bell, sandwiches and Carl's Jr. on the 2nd. It's also got books, clothes, pens and paper, a bank and hair salon.

Next door, Kerkhoff Hall has a great coffee house upstairs, but is usually crowded. It also has a Baskin Robbins for you ice cream junkies.

The Others: South Campus

This portion of campus houses the math, science, and engineering departments. We tolerate and respect each other's power. Formally known as the Bomb shelter, the Court of Science Student center's food court has Subway, Southern Lights, Yoshinoya, and Fusion.

Our Turf: North Campus

The North Campus Student Center, often referred to as Northern Lights, located between Rolfe Hall and the Research Library, has great atmosphere and so-so eats such as sandwiches, salad, pizza, and other lunch-type food. (The hot food options shut down mid-afternoon except for delectable mini-pizzas and Northern Lights Coffee House, which offers coffee, bagels, rolls, muffins, sushi, cold sandwiches, frozen yogurt and some crazy-ass paintings.) There's a little store with notebooks, cough drops, etc.

Another coffee shop, which is confusingly called Untitled, lies on the second floor of the Broad Arts Center, a few feet west of Macgowan. In the space between MacGowan and Melnitz you'll find the new Stage Canteen, a coffee shop with packaged sandwiches and sushi.

LuValle Commons, south from MacGowan, (F3) has some healthier lunch options, as well as another coffee house, and is open into the evening. The mini-bookstore under LuValle is also the only place on campus that sells Film School T-shirts and coffee mugs, as well as textbooks

and other publications pertinent to the program. There's a little copy center below, which is handy but not especially cheap.

For a complete list of the Union's restaurants and their hours and locations check out www.asucla.ucla.edu/restaurants/index.asp.

A note about Westwood – the police are unusually strict about enforcing laws on jaywalking and cycling. Be safe and also aware of lights and crosswalks.

FINAL INTERLUDE

Congratulations on your recent admission to UCLA's Graduate Screenwriting Program. Your talent, hard work and persistence have gained you entrance into the most elite and competitive major in the entire University of California's admissions program (when judged by applicant numbers against those admitted).

As a graduate of UCLA's undergraduate Theater, Film & TV school ('84), a former network and studio president, a 15 year Visiting Professor here and an Academy Award-winning producer (CRASH), I can tell you from experience that UCLA's Graduate Screenwriting program is the cream of the crop among its competitors - - AFI, NYU and USC. While the other programs have many esteemed graduates, UCLA is particularly well known for grooming commercially successful writers whose work is consistently singled out at Oscar time. Look at the posters on the walls in Melnitz. They tell the tale most convincingly.

The road ahead will be challenging, exhilarating, frustrating, joyful, dramatic and certainly rewarding. I've been asked to give you a few pointers that I've learned along the way, to help smooth some of the bumps you may experience. I hope these suggestions help as you embark on what I'm certain will be the most exciting creative journey of your adult lives.

#1 - - It's not the lessons: it's your fellow students.

As important as the lectures are, the key take-away from film school is: ***Make friends, build key relationships and form a strong writer's support group.*** You all already know the fundamentals of writing. Now you need to create a community. You simply cannot and will not succeed on your own. Look around you. Find people you like and respect and offer your help. Meet outside of class. Read each other's material. The primary reward you'll get from this program is the bevy of relationships with students *and* faculty. The folks you sit next to in your classes are going to be the first people who hire you, or help get you hired. And they'll be your friends and allies and your most reliable resources for the rest of your career. This is a fact.

#2 - - Trust the process. Surrender and Be Willing.

Most "green" writers are childish, irresponsible and defiant. They think that originality trumps everything, most significantly - - structure. They will come up with all kinds of examples of great writers who don't use outlines (Quentin Tarantino), don't follow the 3 Act Structure (James Brooks) or write dialogue at a length and breadth that defies the norm (Aaron Sorkin). But what do all of these geniuses have in common? They ALL wrote in the classic manner FIRST, then adapted and customized their voice, AFTER attaining real success. It's the old story. Picasso was one of the best realist artists around, BEFORE creating his signature abstract style. Every studio and production company expects you to follow the rules of writing. UCLA teaches you these rules. Follow them.

#3 - - Don't procrastinate. Create a disciplined and realistic plan, and stick to it.

This program asks and expects you to put out an enormous amount of material. You can do it. But if you behave like most writers, you'll be erratic and wreak havoc on yourselves and everyone around you with your poor planning and terrific excuses for missing deadlines. You only hurt yourself and others when you don't deliver.

Part of delivering is turning in material on time. The other part is showing up to class and your writing groups, as promised and expected. Remember: this program is NOT "all about you." How you show up for your faculty, fellow students, friends and family members helps define you not only as a reliable writer, but also as a reliable adult. My advice: set aside two sets of two hour writing periods per day, and you will do fine. More importantly: treat your writing time like a job. That means schedule your time, show up on schedule and WRITE. Like every old saying, there's a lot of truth in this one: Inspiration is for Amateurs. Get your ass in your chair and WRITE.

#4 - - Create and write a Vision and a Mission.

Think seriously about what you want from this program. Your Vision is your big picture goal. For example, you may write, "My Vision is to finish two screenplays I'm proud of which will not only sell to the studios, but will get me a fantastic agent who can help further my career." Your Mission includes the STEPS you take to accomplish your Vision. So, your Mission may be: "I'm working on four screenplays, I'm doing all of my assigned work for UCLA and I'm meeting twice weekly with my writing group."

It's important that you WRITE OUT both your Vision and Mission. Share these with you friends and family. Hone them. Be specific. These sentences make you accountable and it helps create the right energy around your career intentions. It focuses your goals with this program and helps you answer a question you probably haven't asked quite so bluntly now that you've been accepted: Why am I doing this, what do I expect from it and how will I accomplish it?

#5 - - Don't forget to be a good human.

Finally, it's important to maintain and hopefully improve on who you are as a person, as you go through this program. Here are 10 "Nunan Nuggets" I give to all of my students in an effort to round them out and make them as attractive as possible to the world, as they finish the program:

- a. Be Kind.
- b. Show Gratitude to others and yourself every day.
- c. Work Harder. You can always do 10% more; prove it.
- d. Stay Informed. Commit to one national/global/entertainment periodical and/or website a day.
- e. Change your Routine. Keep your work disciplined, but add some variety to your life weekly. It keeps the juices flowing.

- f. Nurture your Passionate Interests, and share them with others. It's what makes us individuals.
- g. Meditate, and pray if you like. The debate's over: experts from all walks of life know that clearing your mind, at least 5 minutes a day, works wonders.
- h. Contribute. Be of service to others. It's the most direct and instantaneous path to happiness and it's also the right thing to do.
- i. Keep fit. None of this matters if you're not well.
- j. Remain in the present. Do this properly and worry, fear and resentment disappear.

I'm wishing all of you Godspeed, good luck and well wishes. I admire all of you and hope your journey carries with it accomplishment, fulfillment and lots of fun!

Sincerely,
Tom Nunan

Rosenberg's Words

Joe Rosenberg's experience stretches across the Hollywood executive ranks. His career started in representation as an agent at CAA where he represented A-list talent such as Ridley Scott, David Fincher, Michael Bay, and Terry Gilliam. Moving from agenting to development, Rosenberg oversaw Radar Pictures' well-funded development slate and executed similar responsibilities for Revelations Entertainment. In an industry where relationships are currency, Joe made a living across every agency and studio. He has identified and negotiated over 250 development and production projects for both the major studios and over 100 internationally acclaimed film artists. He currently teaches courses in the Producers Program and is a good friend to TFT; and he says:

A Successful Person...

- Is a creative risk taker / stretches boundaries / uncommon.
- Gives without expectation of early returns / a part of the team / doesn't chase recognition.
- Touch multiple worlds / has interests outside the business / a citizen of the world.
- Creates luck through preparation / does the leg work / puts in to get out.
- Constantly reinvents / Stagnant = irrelevance = death / avoids comfort.
- Is excited by the unknown and what comes next.
- Finds a mentor that inspires and takes time with them.
- Rejects a plan B / maintains a no matter what attitude / if you have an out, you'll take it.
- Is authentic / knows and embraces their positive qualities and strong suits.
- Has humility / they're right sized / the middle.
- Maintains their original voice / the business changes but not their POV / honest and real.
- Knows about the people they will meet / be educated.
- Reads, reads, reads; and sees, sees, sees / it speaks to their passion.
- Stretches themselves even when uncomfortable, to move forward.
- Surrounds themselves with supportive people.
- Does what say they're going to do / keep commitments / be impeccable in all your affairs.
- Takes care of themselves / diet and exercise / meditation / conjure endorphins.

- Knows their body and what it needs to be at its best / rest it.
- Adheres to the belief: “Better done than perfect.” – M. Zuckerberg / perfection is debilitating.
- Thinks about who they want to work with (writer, director, producer, actor, the best) and finds a way to seek them out / have a plan even if it’s just, “Hi.”

PART VI. “AND SO IT BEGINS...”

Here, in short, are the 5 things you most need to do right now:

- 1) Get on the listservs.
- 2) Set up your UCLA account online.
- 3) Apply for on-campus parking (as of June 1st).
- 4) Keep your eyes open for information and audition announcements.
- 5) Check the Facebook page.

A lot of the rest is going to take care of itself. It really is.

You will be receiving information later this summer about UCLA’s graduate orientation and the TFT orientation, both which take place right before school starts. The TFT orientation is mandatory and will orient you to your new life in film school. The general UCLA orientation is much larger and doesn’t cover anything specific to TFT, but it will offer a tour of campus, talk about the libraries, residency, etc. Arrange a meet up with your new classmates and enjoy the day.

Otherwise, you’re all set. Enjoy your summer. We’re looking forward to having you!

APPENDIX A: SOME SCREENWRITING RESOURCES

Writing Screenplays that Sell	Hal Ackerman (co-chair)
Essentials in Screenwriting	Richard Walter (co-chair)
Screenwriting 434	Lew Hunter (on faculty)
Rewrite	Paul Chitlik (on faculty)
The Poetics	Aristotle
The Art of Dramatic Writing	Lajos Egri
Bird by Bird	Anne Lamott
Save the Cat	Blake Snyder
Story	Robert McKee
101 Things I Learned in Film School	Neil Landau (faculty)
The TV Writer’s Workbook	Ellen Sandler
Writing the TV Drama Series	Pamela Douglas
And Here’s the Kicker:	Mike Sacks
Conversations with 21 Top Humor Writers	
Desperate Networks	Bill Carter
Where Did I Go Right?	Bernie Brillstein
When I Stop Talking,	Jerry Weintraub
You’ll Know I’m Dead	

SOME GOOD WEBSITES

For Scripts:

<http://gointothestory.blcklst.com/free-script-downloads/>

<http://www.planetmegamall.com/screenplays/screenplays.html>

<http://www.simplyscripts.com/>

<http://www.dailyscript.com/index.html>

<http://sites.google.com/site/tvwriting/home>

<http://www.celluloidmonkeys.com/>

For Writing:

Diary of a Screenwriter, the David Mamet interview:

<http://diaryofascreenwriter.blogspot.com/2013/04/the-writers-craft-david-mamet-interview.html>

A Ton of Useful Info about Screenwriting: <http://johnaugust.com/>

The Artful Writer: <http://artfulwriter.com/>

A Writer's Life: <http://leegoldberg.typepad.com/>

Living the Romantic Comedy: <http://www.livingromcom.typepad.com/>

The Crafty TV & Screenwriting Blog: <http://complicationsensue.blogspot.com/>

The [eventual] sitcom writer: <http://eshawcomedy.wordpress.com/>

By Ken Levine: <http://kenlevine.blogspot.com/>

For the Business:

Deadline: <http://www.deadline.com/hollywood>

Hollywood Reporter: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/>

Variety: <http://www.variety.com/Home/>

Writers' Guild of America: <http://www.wga.org/>

Academy of Television Arts and Sciences: <http://www.emmys.tv/>