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Intercollegiate and Community Collaboration: Film  
Productions for Students and Community Volunteers

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# Intercollegiate and Community Collaboration: Film Productions for Students and Community Volunteers

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EMILY EDWARDS

## The “Tribulations” of Collaborations

THE COLLEGIATE SYSTEM PUTS MUCH STRONGER emphasis on intercollegiate competition than it does collaboration, so the idea of intercollegiate collaboration carries a peculiar burden even for film and video productions, where the notion of collaboration is a necessity. Campuses are more often competitors than collaborators. The long tradition of intercollegiate sports competitions in America has firmly established this kind of thinking. Campuses do not compete only in sports; they compete for status, for students, for funding, for honors, and for standing within their communities. Each college wants its team, its programs, its students, and its faculty to be on top. The concept of intercollegiate parity on collaborative efforts is not an idea that comes naturally, and it takes commitment to maintain.

Even within a single institution, it is often difficult for some administrators to evaluate collaborative work. The assessment of faculty in tenure and post-tenure systems in many American colleges and universities provides an example of the value placed on individual authorship in the collegiate structure when coauthored research or creative works do not have the same esteem or weight in a candidate's portfolio as single-authored pieces. Similarly, for students, the collegiate structure

often esteems independent work over group efforts, possibly because it is easier for faculty to evaluate individual student efforts without the support of a team, which may mask or flatter the individual student's contribution.

Although there have been some success stories for faculty collaborating across institutions on traditional academic research, university collaborations with community organizations and individuals have generally had less success. As Sieber suggests, even faculty in the sciences who seek to collaborate with community agencies run up against conflicts and challenges (137). Integrating community partnerships and service into a health sciences curriculum seems a natural partnership for universities and community organizations. However, adopting this philosophy as part of student education in other disciplines has been more difficult, though there are examples of where university and community partnerships have been expanded to other disciplines.<sup>1</sup> The problems for creative faculty are compounded. Administrations in academic institutions are more likely to undervalue the contribution such creative collaborations make to communities and community artists, particularly when external funding for such ventures is inadequate.

Despite the tribulations, intercollegiate and community collaborations have definite value. This article is a report on attempts at intercollegiate and community collaboration through the formation of Carolina Collaborations<sup>2</sup> and the endeavors of this group to combine the talents and resources of multiple schools

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and communities in the production of several large-scale narrative film projects. Carolina Collaborations' projects have been complex media productions, shot on a soundstage or on secluded locations, mimicking Hollywood processes and following union production rules in order to better expose students and community members to this type of working environment. However, the productions remained educational endeavors at their core. Yet, these are not exclusively student films. Most above-the-line positions have been retained by faculty, professional volunteers, and paid professionals. Involving faculty and professionals in the work provided opportunities for students to see how their instructors perform as producers and also allowed students to be mentored by working professionals as well as an engaged faculty. Students and community volunteers seeking film production experience filled most below-the-line positions.

In the case of Carolina Collaborations, both ideology and necessity founded unique and ever-evolving partnerships.

## A Background for Collaboration

I met Michael Corbett in the summer of 2001 at a professional conference in Colorado Springs. We were both teaching media production at colleges in the Piedmont area of North Carolina. I had just won an award for a screenplay I had written and was looking for a way to produce it on a very limited budget of two very small grants. Corbett was looking for a project for his classes. We brainstormed and discussed the impact that intercollegiate collaboration would have on the educational process and came to the conclusion that there was a benefit to pooling talent and limited resources on a larger project.

Many North Carolina universities, schools, and community colleges offer programs in film production, scriptwriting, directing, lighting, sound production, acting, music, set design, graphic design, animation, food services, and hospitality. All the talents, skills, and critical thinking that these programs foster are necessary in the production of large-scale media

projects such as narrative feature films and television series. Combining the special curricular emphases of various schools and the talents of individual faculty, students, and community members, along with the resources of separate institutions, to partner on collaborative film and video productions would provide students and community members opportunities to apply their skills in a context larger and more diverse than what might be offered by a classroom exercise in a single institution. This desire to create for students and faculty the opportunity to make something that would take them beyond the confines of a single classroom assignment created one requisite for our collaboration. Equally important to this enterprise was the philosophy that better networked media production students and professionals would ultimately create a stronger and more vibrant media production climate in North Carolina.

Corbett and I both mourned the condition of the media production opportunities in North Carolina, which had once been vibrant but which by 2001 had lost ground to neighboring states and other countries. States such as Louisiana and South Carolina were creating generous incentives to lure production projects to their communities, which meant fewer internships for our currently enrolled students and fewer jobs for graduates. We worried that the larger film projects were being wooed away from North Carolina by both foreign countries and neighboring states.<sup>3</sup> Since 2006, the production climate in North Carolina has improved with the state's passage of its own incentives package, but the number and quality of projects is by no means ideal for a hungry professional workforce, new graduates hoping to enter that workforce, or students demanding internship experiences.<sup>4</sup>

The idea for the collaborative was that it would offer a large-scale project that would model the professional working conditions and the production values the professors wanted to encourage in their students and in the North Carolina professional media community. These productions would provide a place for students to cut their production teeth before they em-

barked on to making their own movies. This would be where many community volunteers could get their first film production experience. It would provide an outlet for professionals in local communities to keep their creative skills honed between jobs. Perhaps one of the strongest inducements toward collaboration included the need for faculty to remain active in their various areas of expertise, demonstrating to students that faculty do not only sit in judgment of student work but are willing to keep abreast of technological changes and are prepared to put their own performance and creativity into a public arena. Though the dwindling of production opportunities may have been one original inspiration, this need for faculty to keep production skills up to date, to share technological knowledge, and to keep their own creativity dynamic kept the collaboration in place through four major film projects.

This intercollegiate model is rare but not unique. Michael Corbett had been involved in a similar model when he worked at Valencia College in Florida. The general concept in Florida was that the technical schools would provide below-the-line skills, and the other colleges would provide the project and the above-the-line creative team. We adapted this model somewhat so that the type of school less rigidly defined above-the-line and below-the-line boundaries. We also more heavily involved community and professional volunteers. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation's efforts to expand collaborative partnerships between communities and universities provide examples of where these alliances have flourished across disciplines. Don Johnson's reflection on a collaborative community and college theater production at East Tennessee State University provides a model for university and community collaborations on artistic endeavors. They can happen successfully, especially with an administration's encouragement, external funding, released time for faculty, supplies, support, and equipment (43).

In the spring of 2002, I set out with some small individual arts grants and mutual university resources to produce the film *Dead Write*

(2003). The story dealt with hoarding disorder and would have a set filled with the debris collected by the character that suffered from this disorder. The production challenge was to maintain continuity from take to take, as characters moved this debris around the set. This turned out to be a particularly valuable lesson, helping students learn to pay attention to small visual detail.

One of the unexpected benefits of the usual intercollegiate rivalry on the set was the tendency of students from different schools to try to outdo each other in the area of production knowledge and behavior. Students in one program were eager to show off their production knowledge for students in other programs. Students acted like professionals or at least feigned their best performance of how they believed a professional crew might behave. Corbett felt it was important to remind students and community volunteers that the project was at its core an educational endeavor. This was not an independent film production. On the first day of shooting, the student in the position of first assistant director reminded everyone that this production was to be an instructional process, that learning was as important as the finished film. Any question was legitimate. Any student or faculty member could call a time-out to ask a question or "lecture" on a small point, as long as the question or commentary did not interrupt actual filming. The educational parameters for these projects meant that although we would try to mimic professional standards, there would always be fundamental differences between a studio or independent film and a Carolina Collaborations production. Because these projects honored the educational value of process, mistakes—however regrettable—would not have the power to damage a career but might be regarded as opportunities for learning. However, when the first AD called "lock it up," the priority immediately pivoted to the "for picture" mission of the production. The thirty people on the soundstage became completely silent and focused on the production. It would be difficult for a visitor to the set of *Dead Write*

to believe that this was anything but a professional production.

The second endeavor, *Root Doctor* (2005), brought together faculty and students from four higher education institutions along with community actors and local musicians to score the soundtrack. The second project also had an associated documentary, *Folk Medicine* (2005), a music video based on the title track of *Root Doctor* as well as a CD, which provided different types of production opportunities for students. Several schools brought diverse and specialized skills to the table. Piedmont Community College involved its skilled technical faculty from the film and video production program. Guilford Technical Community College christened its new audio studio in its entertainment technology program by recording all the music for the soundtrack and providing a stage for recording the music video. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro involved faculty and students in costume design, directing, acting, and editing (“Collaboration Is Key to Success” 16). Other schools such as North Carolina A&T provided students as production assistants through internship-type programs. This project more clearly honed the mission to bring North Carolina artists together in the production of media that celebrated the history, culture, and folklore of the state. The subject of the movie dealt with the traditional medicine of North Carolina root doctors, which has a rich folk history. This allowed our educational mission to include subjects other than production processes. Students became involved in researching the history of “rootlore” in North Carolina. They also learned about the mixture of magic and herbal remedies in the practice of Dr. James Spurgeon (Jim) Jordan, North Carolina’s most famous root doctor or conjure doctor (F. Johnson 36–40). This research inspired the design of the set and the creation of realistic props.

The tendency for students to try to “out-professionalize” one another was true for the production of *Root Doctor* just as it had been in *Dead Write*, at least until the last few days of shooting. Toward the end of the production, some slack student behaviors crept onto the

set, replacing the professionalism exhibited at the beginning of the shoot. For example, one day the entire sound department did not show up at call. We learned that the night before, the students had gone out partying, had drunk too much, and had decided to skip the production call. Call time came and went, and after more than two hours had passed, it was clear that the sound department was not going to show. A frantic but lucky telephone call found a community volunteer experienced with a mixing board who was willing to donate his time as a sound mixer. Moving production assistants into the position of boom operators enabled the production to complete the day’s shooting, having lost only the morning. Other student behaviors also crept back into this production, possibly because of more familiarity and less rivalry among students from the different campuses, including more flirting, more joking around, more hanging out at the craft services table, and more concern about what would be served for lunch than the “for picture priority” of a professional cast and crew.

The third project completed, which premiered in April of 2007, was *Scripture Cake: A Southern Cuisine Movie*. This project involved four campuses (Wake Forest, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Piedmont Community College, and Forsyth Technical Community College) but turned out to have a heavier community involvement than any of the previous projects. More than 200 actors from as far away as Virginia, South Carolina, and both ends of North Carolina auditioned for twenty-two roles. This project also had several professionals and technical consultants from the community who volunteered their time. The special production challenges of this film were the coordination of a huge cast (ranging in age from two years to seventy years old), the use of a historic mill as one primary location, the challenges associated with building a working kitchen on the soundstage, and “food styling” for what was essentially a “cuisine movie.”<sup>5</sup> We initially intended to expose students to the work of a professional food stylist, but resources to pay the salary for a food stylist and

the availability of professional food stylists in North Carolina turned out to be limited. As one professional volunteer finally observed, “This isn’t the kind of production that can afford the time to photograph a steak as it is sliced for two hundred or more takes until the slice achieves that precise fall where the light reflects perfectly off the juices of the meat.”<sup>6</sup>

Another challenge with *Scripture Cake* came with the nine children’s roles in this movie, several of which were significant. Some very young children were spending a lot of time on the set. It was important that college students behave professionally around these young people, limiting swearing and sexual jokes, which they were able to do with a few reminders. One mother of a very serious young actor expressed to us that the experience of working on this project taught her child more than the very large number of expensive acting classes and workshops in which her child had been enrolled. She was especially impressed with the respect with which the student crew treated her child on the set, as if this young actor was already a working professional. Child actors learned that a professional actor comes to the set knowing all her lines. Young actors who were struggling with lines worked with one of the college students after we had done initial blocking and they had been released to costume and makeup. Child actors learned to take questions about the meaning of a scene to the director and to listen to the director to understand their blocking. Young actors also learned the language and the slang of the film set. They learned to hit a “mark” and were soon learning

to look forward to the “martini,” or that last scheduled shot of a long day. Finally, young actors learned firsthand the differences between the reality of the set and their lived experiences of making the movie from what would be the final edited film, a key lesson in media literacy.

Shortly after the *Scripture Cake* wrapped principal photography, one young actor, Ruby Crawford, landed a role in the Broadway production of *The Color Purple* and later in the feature film *Bolden!*<sup>7</sup> Ruby’s mother credited the production of *Scripture Cake* with helping to launch her daughter’s career.

The fourth production by Carolina Collaborations was *Bone Creek* (2008), which wrapped principal photography in the fall of 2007. This was a high-definition feature dealing with North Carolina folklore surrounding the making of moonshine whiskey. Because the story deals with folk legends such as the magic of Cherokee Indian “witches,” the production challenges included successfully managing the magical realism of the story and its special effects as well as introducing students, faculty, and community members to the challenges of high-definition technology. The project also featured a guest director of photography (DP), Emmy award-winning cinematographer Flip Minott, who was on set for five of nineteen shooting days. Finally, many local musicians were involved in the production of a soundtrack and an associated CD, *Popskull and High Art*.

Because so many people count on these productions to provide meaningful additions to their résumés, the social pressures on all of



Photo 1: Michael Corbett (center) with students on the set of *Bone Creek* (2008).

these projects have been tremendous. External evaluations of the completed works are important to contributors for assessing the aesthetic value of the collaboration. Assessments let students and volunteers know that the collaborative enterprise is not limited to its function as an educational laboratory. The external assessments supply the evidence administrators need that these projects accomplished the mission to provide a showcase for North Carolina talent both in front of and behind the camera. For these reasons, it is important that collaborative work gets exhibited and reviewed.

Following its premiere in 2003, *Dead Write* was broadcast on *North Carolina Visions* and received a University Film and Video Association award of merit. Since its premiere in 2005, *Root Doctor* has won awards or been an official selection in festivals such as the Blue Ridge Film Festival, the Oxford Film Festival, the George Lindsay Film Festival, the Cape Fear Film Festival, the Urban Film Festival, and the Backwoods Film Festival, among others. The associated documentary, *Folk Medicine* (2005), received distribution on South Carolina Public Television's *Southern Lens* series. *Scripture Cake* has been an official selection in the Appalachian film Festival and has received three awards from the Broadcast Education Association's Festival of Media Arts (screenplay, award of merit, and technical merit), as well as awards in subsequent festivals. *Bone Creek* is still in postproduction as of this writing. Both students and community volunteers have landed paying jobs in other feature films as cast or crew following their work on these projects.<sup>8</sup>

Though our productions did not combine the obligation to manage artistic distinctiveness with the business pressures for financial profit that exist for independent filmmakers in the professional film industry (Alvarez, Mazza, Pedersen, and Svejenova 863), there were direct and indirect stresses that coupled a degree of both of these forces with the necessity to create a compelling learning environment. In short, the expectation was to complete an artistically distinctive product that would lead all collaborators toward professional success

as filmmakers and—for the faculty—as educators. From the perspective of the institutions, there was essentially a business pressure: that of faculty finding sufficient external funding for these endeavors. The mission was to involve students and faculty from various area colleges, professionals, and community volunteers in ambitious, well-conceived projects that tested professional expertise, developed technical skills, promoted free inquiry and reasoned debate, enlivened our sense of human possibility, and explored questions about our heritage as well as our future.

## Making Collaborations Work

Perhaps the single most important factor to remember in the process of intercollegiate and multi-community collaborations is that institutions do not collaborate—individuals do. It is the individuals who have the creative ideas and the drive to put those ideas into production. Institutions bring to the collaborative table layers of bureaucracy, procedural policies, and paperwork that are unlikely to fit well with the production requirements of a feature film. It is individuals who must find solutions to the obstacles that bureaucracies inevitably create. The machinery of one institution may have processes and schedules that do not accommodate the machinery of another institution or the joint production and its schedule. This can result in delays that can ultimately challenge the production values of a film. Grant recipients may find that getting access to the funding requires major paperwork that can delay or derail reimbursements to faculty. It is nearly impossible to transfer grant monies from one institution to the institution that needs to spend the funds, which usually means a faculty member may have to make personal funds available and hope that faculty at the collaborating institution remember to get receipts. Some institutions may have restrictions on the types of materials that can be purchased. For example, food for craft services during principal photography is essential to a happy and productive crew; however, it may be a challenge to justify the large



expenditures for food to someone not familiar with the requisites of feature film production. Participants need to be aware of institutional regulations and procedures that can delay aspects of the production and must have creative solutions to keep institutional policies from derailing the project. For Carolina Collaboration's projects, most of the issues involved ordering supplies and materials or anything that dealt with hard cash expenditures. There was never a truly happy solution to some of these problems, which occasionally meant that a faculty member or community volunteer ended up making a personal investment in the project.

In our collaborations, all the projects were required to have received rigorous external evaluation beforehand; the scripts all received juried review and came with some sort of award attached to them. Although this could not guarantee the quality of the final film, it did help create initial confidence in the project's potential. Such a prior external review may be essential to get the cooperation of faculty and the enthusiasm of professional volunteers. Community members who volunteer their time need to feel like there will be a professional payoff for their contributions. If a paying opportunity comes along during the production, the professional is likely to drop her obligations to the volunteer job in favor of the salaried one unless she feels an emotional dedication to the work. As Jones notes, trust is both cognitive and affective (5). There was one case during our productions when a volunteer turned down a paying opportunity to fulfill her obligations to a Carolina Collaborations film project. In this case the artist's reasoning was that the volunteer job was a bigger creative challenge, helping her to grow professionally in ways that the paying job would not. However, I personally believe she just did not want to let us down. We also had one instance where the opposite was true. During the filming of one project, a volunteer actor dropped out of the project before she had wrapped her role in the production. She just failed to show up on the set when she assured us she would be there. She would not answer our anxious phone calls. It became

obvious that she was not coming back to the production, and we did not have the resources to re-shoot her scenes with a new actor in the role. We finally decided to shoot around the missing actress with a body double and adjust the script to accommodate a new actor. What might have been a tragedy for the production instead became a good teaching moment and a reminder that all productions, even well-heeled ones, have creative problems to solve. For example, Natalie Wood died before the principal photography on the film *Brainstorm* (1983) could be completed. The film's director had to use outtakes from scenes shot earlier, a body double, and reverse camera angles to create her performance. On another film, we had to work around an actress who needed to go to an important party and miss a scheduled call that could not be rescheduled to accommodate her. This was another instance where a body double filled in for an actress.

Unless the participating institutions and individuals have a large travel budget, it helps during the period of principal photography for the collaborators to be located near each other. In the case of Carolina Collaborations, the longest commuting distance between schools was fifty-three miles, a commuting time of about an hour given the winding, rural roads. However, some community volunteers had longer commute times, and we had to make allowances in the schedule for these. As the cost of gasoline began to climb rapidly in the fall of 2007, volunteers needed transportation or assistance to cover travel costs. Carpooling helped but also tended to increase travel time as one vehicle drove around to pick up cast and crew to transport them to the location or set.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the toughest hurdle for volunteer collaboration was the scheduling. Scheduling a ten-hour shoot day within the spring or fall academic calendar, around the course loads of faculty and students, and accommodating the working schedules of professional volunteers is a considerable challenge. Any time you ask community volunteers to freely give their time, the schedule has to be flexible enough to accommodate those things that might have a



higher priority for them, things such as paying jobs, auditions for other (paying) roles, and even birthday parties. For example, the role of young Newley in *Scripture Cake* had to be recast five times because so many talented nine-year-old girls have big, busy lives with schedules that just cannot accommodate film production. It became increasingly clear each time we attempted to juggle our production schedule around dance competitions, piano lessons, horseback riding lessons, school plays, and cheerleading tryouts that both students and community volunteers would need to be able to make an honest commitment to the production, or we could not involve them in the project. Principal photography was usually scheduled for weekends and that rare occasion when the spring breaks and holidays of institutions overlapped.

Key attributes for the success of any large collaboration are open and clear communication among individuals, mutual trust and respect, and voluntary compliance on a shared method for the production process. For successful intercollegiate and intercommunity collaboration, the participating individuals need

to get past the idea of competition to the notion of shared objectives and mutual trust and respect, to see themselves and each other not as representatives of institutions, but as contributing artists who are trustworthy as individuals. Relying on colleagues and building trustworthy relationships are essentially risky because of the ever-present prospect of unmet expectations, lack of reciprocity, and even artistic jealousies. As Khodyakov observed in the study of orchestra management, when many players with different artistic ideas come together, disagreement and personal animosities are very possible (2). Artists with antagonistic histories from one institution can bring that acrimony with them to the new collaboration. The politics can become delicate. Jealous faculty, students, and community members not involved in the production sometimes mount aggressive opposition, hoping to derail the creative efforts of the collaboration with their criticisms. My solution for this problem is just not to listen to the gossip and to pretend with confidence that the hostility does not exist. When outsiders hit the collaborative effort directly with unfair criticism, one strategy is to pretend that the critic is trying



Photo 2: Emily Edwards with Avelon Tate, age 2, and Ruby Crawford, age 9, two of nine children on the set of *Scripture Cake* (2007).

to be helpful, even when all evidence suggests otherwise.

And this last suggestion is perhaps the best advice for making large-scale collaborative enterprises work: approach each project and each day of production with optimism—not an ordinary cheerfulness but a blind, confident faith that there will be a solution for every problem, that the project will be completed, and that it will exhibit the artistic distinctiveness for which producers hope. In short, principal players need to be convinced that the collaboration will succeed. Any reasonable producer considering the prospect of producing a feature film with the constraints of an amateur cast and crew, an inadequate budget, a staggered schedule, professionals who are likely to abandon the project if a better opportunity arises, faculty asked to cover a large number of course offerings in addition to work on the film, students with their own priorities, and the bureaucratic demands of multiple institutions might conclude that this is an idea doomed from the outset. Pessimism, even pessimism that is justifiable, based on accurate observation and past experience, will end the partnerships and the project. Unreasonable, Pollyanna optimism can, however, keep the boat afloat. For intercollegiate collaboration to work, students and faculties from the different programs need to acknowledge the mutual benefits of working together and come to a sense of belonging to the joint production. For the collaboration to work well, participants need to see how the diverse skills complement one another and agree that the endeavor is a worthy undertaking. It takes creative people with the discipline to make the imagined become visible even when it seems least possible.

### **Collaborative Aspirations and Sustainability**

Since 2003, Carolina Collaborations has developed a Web site and a business plan as a nonprofit enterprise. In order for the large-scale ambitions to work, the collaborative would need to have a separate nonprofit entity for

two important reasons: cash donations and the ability to sign union professionals to our projects. The independent nonprofit status is important so that individuals who want to make contributions to the idea of Carolina Collaborations can receive a tax credit for their donations. Currently, tax-deductible donations must go to the separate schools and cannot be designated exclusively for Carolina Collaborations productions. Money donated directly to a Carolina Collaborations production is not tax-deductible and has been project-specific.

Another important reason for the separate nonprofit status is the ambition to be able to bring union professionals to mentor students and community members during production and then be able to distribute the resulting film. An early, painful lesson we learned after casting a Screen Actors Guild actor in our first production was that North Carolina state institutions could not sign contracts based on California state law.<sup>10</sup> If we want to provide exceptional educational opportunities to the community by bringing in outstanding media professionals (nationally recognized directors, actors, designers, and cinematographers) as guest artists and mentors to assist on our projects, we will have to create an independent entity with nonprofit status. This ability to bring in nationally known guest artists and professional craftsmen to serve as mentors not only would provide our students with valuable insight into the guest artists' respective areas of expertise, but would also create additional networking resources for those students and community members involved in the production. Finally, by being located outside of any one school but with allegiances to several, the nonprofit could use the resources of collaborating schools to offer professional development workshops that are not necessarily part of a degree or certificate program. By supplementing educational experiences, such partnerships could create fertile ground for sowing the seeds of alliance among institutions and communities as well as help professionals and faculty stay current and actively engaged with the ever-changing media technology.

In some ideal future, a nonprofit collaborative would be able to help deserving artists find funding for their films by providing fiscal sponsorship and an administrative framework for receiving grants. The Collaborative would allow filmmakers to seek and accept funds from foundation and government sources that would normally be unavailable to them as individuals. In turn, the partnerships formed between institutions and among individuals make for bountiful artistic communities. Carolina Collaborations could help grow the indigenous film community in some very meaningful ways.

Carolina Collaborations has not currently applied for nonprofit status, though we have competed in entrepreneur programs with our business plan and have discussed nonprofit possibilities with the technology transfer staff at UNCG. At this current stage, Carolina Collaborations is still an idea, though we have acted successfully on that idea through four feature film productions. Whether this idea is sustainable for future productions depends on the ability to secure substantial funding to support existing partnerships and develop new ones. Production costs have doubled for every line item. Under increasingly tight budget constraints, public institutions are asked to do more with less. Faculty feel the pressures to teach larger classes with fewer resources. In an increasingly hostile economic environment, it is tough for institutions to encourage the freedom to risk and the freedom to fail that are natural to the creative process. This same environment also strains the economic means of community volunteers. Finally, it is exhausting for individuals to maintain unreasonable optimism for extended periods of time. Individuals have their own life currents to navigate: they get sick, retire, move away, and have family dynamics that can impact the collaboration in various ways. For the idea of a large multi-institutional collaboration to sustain itself, the institutions will have to understand the strain on creative individuals and do more than provide bureaucratic policies. Institutions must acknowledge the contributions that collaborative activities such as these can make to the creative economy and

make a sincere effort to encourage the work with release time for faculty, supplies, and support.

## NOTES

1. For an example of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's efforts to develop community and university collaborations over a range of activities, see *Pursuing Opportunities through Partnerships: Higher Education and Communities*.

2. See [carolina-collaborations.org](http://carolina-collaborations.org).

3. The movie *Cold Mountain* (2003), which was set in North Carolina and should have been filmed there, was shot in Romania. By 2002, Louisiana passed its incentives package, attracting projects like *Because of Winn-Dixie* (2005), a Twentieth Century Fox motion picture, which was originally slated to be shot in Orlando, Florida. Louisiana's film tax credit is one of the most generous in the United States, with no caps or limitations on its incentives. Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina quickly followed with their own incentives programs.

4. North Carolina would not get its own incentives package until August of 2006, when Governor Mike Easley signed into law a bill that provided a 15 percent tax credit on productions a quarter million or more, with a credit cap per project of 7.5 million dollars. North Carolina's bumpy road toward these more modest incentives took another hit in 2007 when Republican senator Phil Berger wanted to revise the incentives program, believing legislators should have script approval before awarding financial encouragement to film projects. The uproar was over the movie *Hounddog* (2007) because it contained a scene depicting a brutal sexual assault on a child character (played by Dakota Fanning). Berger felt that government money should not go to support production of stories some people would find to be morally repugnant.

5. Students screened and discussed several "cuisine movies" prior to production and how these movies tended to be about family and tradition, something we hoped to reproduce in *Scripture Cake*. These included movies such as *Babettes gæstebud* [Babette's Feast] (1987), *Como agua para chocolate* [Like Water for Chocolate] (1993), and *Soul Food* (1997). A subgenre of the cuisine film involving cannibalism also excited some student discussion. These included films such as *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1990) and *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991).

6. Jay Cantrell, a manager at a Greensboro branch of Golden Corral, provided the craft services for this production. Because he had been involved with several of the restaurant's commercials and many food photo shoots, Mr. Cantrell volunteered his advice on food staging. His best advice was not to let our little

production become sidetracked with food photography.

7. *Bolden!* is a biopic about the life of jazz musician Buddy Bolden. The film was directed by Dan Pritzker and produced by Wynton Marsalis. As of this writing, the movie is still in production.

8. For some of the more seasoned actors, Carolina Collaborations projects have been an opportunity to “keep working between jobs.” There had been a shortage of opportunities for actors in North Carolina, especially for older actors in meaningful roles. Many of the professional projects come into the state with all but minor roles or extras already cast. Actors told us that Carolina Collaborations productions fulfilled an important need for community talent. One of the community actors who received some measure of success performing in local commercials said she would always be eager to be involved in a Carolina Collaborations production because of the opportunity to play something more than an extra.

9. The distance between colleges meant that call times had to include a fair travel cushion. The impact of rising gasoline prices also ate a considerable hole in the budget for both *Scripture Cake* and *Bone Creek*, which already had reduced budgets because of fewer grants. Some of the community actors had a considerably longer commute, coming from as far away as Columbia, South Carolina, and Raleigh. We ended up giving them an honorarium to offset travel costs. Toward the end of principal photography on *Scripture Cake*, a deer decided to commit suicide on my van one night while I was carpooling actors between the soundstage at Carolina Pinnacle studio and residences in Murfreesboro. Luckily, no one but the deer was hurt, and this van was not the picture car, which had also been forced into double duty as carpool transportation.

10. The university lawyer who advised us on this production also expressed the concern that entertainment unions are inherently litigious and did not want to involve the university in any activity that might put the university in a precarious position.

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