

**Jesús De La Rosa, M.F.A.**

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Dear Committee Members:

I am honored to be nominated for the position of Associate Director at the School of Arts, Communication, and Literature at TAMUK. As a full professor of art in the ACT department, I currently teach studio courses, oversee gallery exhibitions, and manage the painting lab facilities. I am also an author with a forthcoming article titled "Our Ancestors" in the (MAPC), Mid America Print Council Journal, and I am co-authoring a book: Jesus De La Rosa / Stephen Pentak, Design Basics, 10th Edition, Cengage Publishing, which is scheduled for release this fall.

My professional contributions extend across multiple university committees, supporting institutional initiatives and shared governance. An active record of scholarly work and exhibitions reflects an ongoing commitment to creative research and professional engagement. For example, I have supported programs like MASI (Mexican American Studies Institute) by providing artwork for its location. My teaching experience spans a broad range of studio disciplines, including design, drawing, painting, digital painting, printmaking, and graphic design, providing a comprehensive understanding of curriculum development and interdisciplinary collaboration. Additional responsibilities include student advisement, recruitment and retention efforts, and sustained community engagement. These experiences have strengthened a commitment to creating student success, supporting faculty development, and advancing programs that are both academically rigorous and responsive to the needs of the community and the region.

I have worked in academia for 21 years, starting as a graphic designer and later advancing to the role of Publications Production Manager in the Office of Public Relations and Marketing at The University of Texas–Pan American (now UTRGV). In that position, I supervised four full-time designers and several student workers. At Ohio State University, I taught design and drawing courses while completing my degree. After finishing graduate school, I worked as a full-time graphic designer at South Texas College while teaching evening studio art courses at UTPA and managing my own art gallery in Mexico.

I have a strong background in digital imaging, with extensive experience using the latest Adobe software in both my studio practice and teaching. I value collaboration across disciplines and actively work to integrate digital technology into traditional foundation studio courses. For example, I developed a digital painting course that combines traditional painting techniques with Adobe tools. This approach reflects my belief that students benefit from a balanced integration of high-tech and hands-on learning experiences. This class was integrated into the current digital certificate degree we offer and is the first digital course in this format in South Texas. I also proposed a new MFA program in Visual Narrative that would integrate collaboration across all areas of the proposed new school.

I teach students from diverse backgrounds, including first-generation and international students, and represent a wide range of identities, experiences, and abilities. They include both studio art majors and nonmajors. Teaching is central to my identity as an educator and leader, shaping how I approach administration, collaboration, and program development. I view leadership in higher education as an extension of teaching, one that encourages growth not only in students but also in faculty, staff, and the broader community.

My commitment to education is deeply personal. I am the son of a migrant worker; my father traveled from northern México to California to harvest crops. Although he aspired to become an architect, limited educational opportunities prevented him from pursuing that path. His encouragement to pursue an education in the visual arts shaped my own journey. As the first in my immediate and extended family to earn a college degree, I understand the transformative power of access, mentorship, and opportunity. This perspective continues to guide my work in creating inclusive, student-centered academic environments.

My early teaching experience with underserved high school students in a South Texas mural program grounded me in the importance of access, representation, and community engagement. These students drew on their lived experiences to create a collaborative public artwork, gaining confidence and a sense of ownership in the process. That experience not only shaped my teaching philosophy but also informs my leadership approach: creating spaces where diverse voices are valued, and education serves as a catalyst for personal and collective transformation.

In the classroom, I challenge students to think critically about their work and its broader social impact, such as through assignments that engage with contemporary issues and encourage reflection on values and audience. Through my leadership approach, I encourage faculty and students alike to engage in meaningful, relevant work that connects with communities and addresses real-world concerns. My teaching philosophy is rooted in fundamentals, application, and critical inquiry, which shape my leadership style. I prioritize clear communication, structured yet adaptable systems, and an environment that requires constructive dialogue and shared governance. I believe strong academic programs are built on transparency, mutual respect, and ongoing improvement.

Mentorship and advising play a key role in my leadership philosophy. By providing personalized guidance, building trust, maintaining professionalism, and fostering open communication, I create an environment where individuals feel supported and empowered. I am dedicated to collaboration, innovation, and academic excellence. I would use this approach if selected to serve as Associate Director of the School of Arts, Communication, and Literature.

## **1. Vision**

The school is uniquely positioned to connect disciplines, communities, and career paths. The vision for the School of Arts, Communication, and Literature is to establish it as a highly visible, regionally rooted, and nationally engaged center for creative practice, communication, and cultural inquiry. Building its identity will involve strategic visibility, program growth, and active community involvement, highlighting faculty and student work through exhibitions, performances, publications, and public programs, thus positioning the school as a vital cultural hub in the region. I aim to contribute to expanding opportunities for students and boost the visibility and impact of the arts and humanities. A key focus will be on developing sustainable, high-impact initiatives that drive enrollment growth and ensure long-term relevance. I am particularly interested in creating graduate and certificate programs that link disciplines across the school through storytelling, media, art, theater, literature, and emerging technologies. This work will be guided by strategic planning, careful resource allocation, and collaborative leadership aligned with institutional priorities. In partnership with the School Director and Dean, I would support the development of sustainable, inclusive programs that meet the evolving needs of students and serve the broader South Texas region.

## **2. Strategies for advancing student recruitment, retention, and academic excellence**

- **Develop a South Texas Creative Pipeline Initiative**

A structured recruitment and outreach program linking regional high schools, community colleges, and the university through exhibitions, workshops, and summer intensives. This could begin with an annual juried visual arts and creative writing competition.

- **Establish an Interdisciplinary / Experimental Narrative and Visual Arts Lab** A collaborative platform that brings together faculty and students from all areas.

- **Implement a Visiting Artists, Writers, and Scholars Program**

An expanded residency initiative bringing nationally and regionally recognized practitioners to campus.

- **Support student success through recruitment pipelines, enhanced course coordination, clear degree pathways, and experiential learning opportunities such as internships, exhibitions, and community-based projects.**

## **3. Approach to faculty development and collaborative leadership**

I work in an environment of shared governance and embrace a consultative approach to decision-making. I will contribute to a partnership with my colleagues. My leadership approach is collaborative, transparent, and grounded in shared governance. I will support faculty through mentorship, professional development, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration between all areas.

## **4. How will I support program identities while advancing interdisciplinary initiatives**

- Each discipline should uphold its curricular integrity, accreditation standards, and faculty-led decisionmaking.

- Encourage interdisciplinary initiatives for collaboration, such as shared courses, thematic projects, exhibitions, and public events.

- Planning / Scheduling of events and programs where they don't overlap to create a culture where areas are both distinct and interconnected, allowing interdisciplinary work to develop naturally.