

UNT Department of Dance and Theatre:

Bob Hess is one of the few professors I formed a genuine connection with during my time at UNT. Bob always strives for the extra 1% with all his students. He sees potential in everyone and has a gift for unlocking talent from within students they didn't even realize they could achieve. He is truly one of the most genuine and encouraging mentors I've had the pleasure of knowing, and UNT is fortunate to call him a member of its staff.

I was lucky enough to be placed in Bob's Realism class the fall of my senior year. I had heard great things before taking the course, but I didn't realize how lucky I truly was to take Realism with Bob until I got to experience it for myself. This class taught me that acting isn't pretending; it's genuinely feeling an emotion and then portraying it into a scene as a character. Bob expressed this through his emotional memory exercise, which is something I still think about years later. This lesson has carried into my acting throughout my last semester and into my post-grad career. The positive comments I have received about my acting appearing so genuine and realistic since then is all thanks to Bob. He also drilled the importance of always being prepared on set and knowing your lines so that you can be an effective actress. You can't receive feedback and apply it if you don't know your lines well enough. With this, I also learned the importance of pacing and how cutting out the dead air between lines is necessary for the scene to have the proper dynamics and audience response. This one critique has reigned true as I've progressed in my acting career, and I intentionally keep both of those things in mind with each new job I take.

With classes filling up quickly due to course completion requirements, Bob advocated for me to take Acting for the Camera with him the following spring semester, knowing I'd be graduating. I am forever grateful I was able to take that class as it is the most beneficial class I took at UNT. The work Bob put into his Acting for Camera students unlocked something in me I didn't know I had. He pushed me to go deeper in my monologues and challenged me to take chances and make bigger choices in order to get noticed by casting directors. I had a habit of playing it safe, but by the end of the semester, I became one of the students my peers always had positive comments for during class feedback opportunities. The last day of in-person class before the pandemic shut everything down, I delivered a film monologue that showed me just how effective of an actress I could be. My performance was believable and made my peers feel the intensity of the scene with me. I remember how proud I was of myself after being nervous I couldn't get to that place with having no personal connection to the scene. Bob encouraged me to go for it, and provided extra help and suggestions to ensure my scene would be successful, which it was. The best part about Bob is that he gives assistance and encouragement to any student that shows the initiative, he doesn't play favorites, and I respect him so much for that. He rewards effort and then becomes your biggest cheerleader when you achieve your goals, making him a joy to learn from.

Bob is the first person I think of when I need advice about head shots, suggestions in applying for representation, or a recommendation letter, even years later. I know I can count on Bob if I ever need anything acting related, and I'm blessed I got the chance to learn from him. You can tell how much he loves being a professor and mentor for his students, and I hope he continues to instruct and support young actors for as long as he can.

-Cassidy Wiedman