

Throughout the year there are various fellowships and labs available to filmmakers and television writers -- including the Sundance lab and ABC/Disney Writing Fellowship but also ones that are not as well known, such as the CAAM Fellowship or the Toronto Film Festival Lab. Each newsletter, CUE will include short interviews with past Columbia participants of fellowships with approaching deadlines. They will tell you what exactly you do in each of the programs and any application tips they picked up in their time.

### **FILM INDEPENDENT "PROJECT INVOLVE" - GEOFF QUAN (FILM '08)**

<http://www.filmindependent.org/labs-and-programs/project-involve/#.UxOMhPRdVWQ>

Deadline: April 28, 2014

#### Basic Info:

Project Involve is Film Independent's signature diversity program dedicated to cultivating the careers of filmmakers from communities traditionally underrepresented in the industry. The program, which runs from October through June, selects filmmakers from diverse backgrounds and filmmaking tracks – a mix of writers, directors, producers, DPs and editors, as well as those seeking work in acquisitions, marketing, distribution and agencies. During the nine months, the Fellows receive one-on-one mentorship, participate in a series of master workshops on the craft as well as the business of filmmaking, and work together to create a collection of short films. The program concludes in June when their short films premiere at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

*When did you graduate from Columbia? What was your concentration?*

I graduated as a producing concentrate in 2008.

*When did you participate in this program?*

I participated in Project Involve from fall 2010 to spring 2011.

*How did you learn about it and decide to apply?*

I actually can't remember when I first learned about the program, although I knew other filmmakers who had previously participated. At the time, when I was applying, I was living in New York and considering a move to Los Angeles. I was looking for an opportunity in LA that would provide me with a landing pad of sorts.

## Fellowship Survey 2014

Written by CUE Editor  
Monday, 10 March 2014 00:15

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*What specifically did you do over the course of the fellowship?*

The fellowship consisted of three parts - monthly workshops and networking events, a mentorship with an established industry professional, and the opportunity to make a short film.

*What was the most beneficial aspect of it?*

I think most of the fellows my year had really different experiences depending on their mentors and their respective experiences with the shorts. For me, I was really fortunate to have the terrific director Jan Eliasberg as my mentor, as well as the opportunity to direct one the sponsored shorts (I graduated from Columbia as a producer, but also occasionally direct, and participated in PI as a directing fellow). Even though I had lots of experience making shorts from my time at Columbia, I'm always grateful for the opportunity to practice my craft, especially when I'm not the one paying for it!

*Who would you recommend apply for this? Any tips or advice of applicants?*

The program is geared towards increasing diversity across multiple practices (directing, writing, producing, editing, cinematography, etc) within the industry. As such, the program selects a wide range of individuals with varying interests and levels of experience, which has both its advantages and disadvantages. I would say that because of the short film component, the program offers the most to directors and then writers. Regardless, applicants should have a strong idea about their potential mentorships and what their seeking from those relationships. Film Independent tries really hard to pair fellows with great mentors, but the more specific you can be, the more you'll get out of it.

### **SUNDANCE SCREENWRITING LAB - RUSS HARBAUGH (FILM '11)**

<http://www.sundance.org/programs/screenwriters-lab/>

DEADLINE: May 1, 2014

#### Basic Info:

The Screenwriters Lab is a five-day writer's workshop that gives independent screenwriters the opportunity to work intensively on their feature film scripts with the support of established writers in an environment that encourages innovation and creative risk-taking. Through one-on-one story sessions with Creative Advisors, Fellows engage in an artistically rigorous process that offers them indispensable lessons in craft, as well as the means to do the deep exploration needed to fully realize their material.

*When did you graduate from Columbia? What was your concentration?*

## Fellowship Survey 2014

Written by CUE Editor  
Monday, 10 March 2014 00:15

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2011, Directing

*When did you participate in this program?*

January 2013

*How did you learn about it and decide to apply?*

I'm not sure when I first learned of the labs. I think prior to Columbia I was vaguely aware that the program existed and was supporting filmmakers I admired. When I was a second year in the program, John Magary, Felipe Barbosa, and Moon Molson all went through the program, followed by Myna Joseph a couple years later. That made the program seem accessible, if also still intimidating (those are some really terrific filmmakers). I applied several times with LOVE AFTER LOVE before being invited this past winter.

*What specifically did you do over the course of the fellowship?*

The screenwriter's lab is 5 or 6 days. You have two script meetings a day. The rest of your time is spent in screenings, group discussions, or various presentations.

*What was the most beneficial aspect of it?*

Having smart people with no ulterior motivation, nor any real concern for your feelings, describe their experience reading your script, pointing out what's not working, what could be improved, etc. Also, from purely a practical stand point, the project's affiliation with the labs is a very real advantage in getting the script read and, hopefully, produced.

*Who would you recommend apply for this? Any tips or advice for applicants?*

Everyone? It's a great program. I feel lucky to have had the experience.

**NICHOLL FELLOWSHIP - KEN KRISTENSEN (FILM '08) and COLIN MARSHALL (FILM '08)**

<http://www.oscars.org/awards/nicholl/>

Deadline: May 1, 2014

Basic Info:

## Fellowship Survey 2014

Written by CUE Editor  
Monday, 10 March 2014 00:15

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The Academy's Don and Gee Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting is an international screenwriting competition established to identify and encourage talented new screenwriters. Up to five \$35,000 Fellowships are awarded annually.

*When did you graduate from Columbia? What was your concentration?*

KK: I graduated in 2008 with a concentration in screenwriting.

CM: 2008, directing.

*When did you participate in this program?*

KK: My Nicholl Fellowship period -- where I was actually being paid by the Academy to write a new script -- started February 2009 thru January 2010.

CM: 2009/2010

*How did you learn about it and decide to apply?*

KK: I was a "screenwriting contest whore" between 2002 and 2009 -- probably entered 40 contests during that time. The Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting Competition, as it is officially called, is the Holy Grail of screenwriting competitions, so it was on my radar.

CM: I knew about the Nicholl Fellowships but it was Ken's idea to submit our script. I was completing my thesis film at the time. I probably still owe him a beer for that one.

*What specifically did you do over the course of the fellowship?*

KK: The way the Fellowship works is that you submit a feature (this year more than 8,000 scripts are expected to be submitted) and if you are one of the fortunate five winners the Academy then pays you for a year to write another feature. You hand in pages every 3 months and they write you a check. I handed in about 30 pages every 3 months for that 12 month Fellowship period. CM: The economy had just imploded and I had just paid for my thesis (after paying for five years of grad school), so I kept working full time and wrote another screenplay at night.

## Fellowship Survey 2014

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*What was the most beneficial aspect of it?*

KK: I think by far the best part of winning the Nicholl Fellowship is being part of the Academy community. It's not like other screenwriting contests where you win and it's over. You're a Fellow for life, and you become a part of this group that meets regularly. In fact, this weekend our fellow Fellow Creighton Rothenberger has his movie Olympus Has Fallen coming out and all the Fellows are getting together at several screenings, including the official Academy screening, to support him. And I've had many fellows (including Colin!) come out to my book signings in the last month. It's a hugely supportive crew to be part of.

CM: The credibility it gives you as a screenwriter. After the Nicholl win everyone would read my stuff.

*Who would you recommend apply for this? Any tips or advice of applicants?*

KK: After finishing the Fellowship I decided to take a role in judging, and have had the pleasure (and pain) of reading hundreds of submissions over the last few years. The Nicholl Fellowship is open to anyone who has not been paid more than \$25,000 for writing a screenplay. Critics try to make a case that there are certain genres that don't succeed in the Nicholl competition, but every year I see a pretty wide variety of genres make it to the finals. That said, if you've got a slasher script or a gross-out comedy it better transcend the genre. Best advice -- make sure, whatever genre you're writing in, that your story connects emotionally with readers. Because with 8,000 scripts to read, it's the emotion that will elevate your work from the rest. I would also encourage people to check out the official Nicholl Fellowship Facebook page where you will find lots of advice and tips from the administrators of the competition.

CM: Anyone with a script! What do they have to lose?! Get your script ready, send it in and then don't let the results discourage you. It's a very subjective process with thousands of submissions. I believe Little Miss Sunshine was cut in the first round of the Nicholl but went on to win Michael Arndt an Oscar! Also, if a script doesn't win one year keep sending it in. Some winning scripts were submitted multiple times.

### **Disney-ABC TV Writing Program - Tony Wei (FILM '09)**

[http://abctalentdevelopment.com/programs/programs\\_writings\\_fellowship.html](http://abctalentdevelopment.com/programs/programs_writings_fellowship.html)

Deadline: Spring 2014, specific date TBD, check website

Basic Info:

Writers become employees of Disney | ABC Television Group and will be paid a weekly salary

## Fellowship Survey 2014

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Monday, 10 March 2014 00:15

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of \$961.54 (\$50,000.00 annualized) plus any applicable benefits for which they are eligible in accordance with the then-current Company benefits plans. The program is designed to expose writers to key executives, producers and literary representatives – all essential in the development of a writing career. Additionally, while in the program, writers have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a current programming or development executive to create spec scripts of series from the current broadcast season. The ultimate goal is to prepare the writers for television staffing.

*What was your concentration?*

Directing.

*When did you participate in this program?*

2011

*How did you learn about it and decide to apply?*

The first time I learned about the Disney-ABC Program was back at Columbia. I remember every year there would be these leftover flyers from Disney-ABC lying around the Film Office. At that time, I was super interested in their Directing Program. So when I graduated, I immediately applied and got flat-out rejected. But while trolling their website, I ended up discovering their TV Writing Program. I was surprised I hadn't known about it sooner, but I guess I was so focused on directing that I was blind to everything else. Anyway, I gathered up my writing samples, took my chances, and applied.

*What specifically did you do over the course of the fellowship?*

There were a bunch of awesome workshops at the beginning of the program. There were also a lot of meet-and-greets where the 8 writers were introduced to literally every exec at ABC, ABC Family, and The Disney Channel. We were then paired with executive mentors. After that, we were sent out on meetings with agents and managers. Then came the staffing meetings with showrunners. And if there was a good fit, you got staffed on a show for the rest of your time in the program.

*What was the most beneficial aspect of it?*

The most beneficial aspect of being in the program is probably what happens after the program. People seem more willing to meet with you when they find out you've been in the Disney-ABC Program. In some way, I suppose they feel like somebody had already vetted you for them, since you were subjected to an extensive application process when applying to the

program, which also included several rounds of in-person interviews.

*Who would you recommend apply for this? Any tips or advice for applicants?*

Anyone who has an interest in making writing their career, be it in TV or in features, should apply. Just don't tell the people who run the program that you have any other interest besides TV writing! Another advice for potential applicants is that when applying, be very clear about what kind of TV writer you'd want the program to represent you as. If it's comedy, then submit only half-hour writing samples. If it's drama, then submit hour-long samples. The 8 writers each year are labeled by the program as either comedy or drama. If you're in-between or have a passion for both, it makes it tough for the program to know what to do with you.

### **TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL FILM LAB - SAMI KHAN (FILM '09)**

<http://tiff.net/industry/programmes/talentlab>

Deadline: May 28, 2014

#### Basic Info:

Talent Lab is an artistic development programme during the Toronto International Film Festival® that provides emerging talent with an unparalleled education experience and an introduction to the global community of filmmaking. Over a four-day period, selected participants have the opportunity to interact with and learn from internationally acclaimed filmmakers. Using the Festival's outstanding relationships with world-class filmmakers, Talent Lab fulfills a tremendous need in the film industry, providing invaluable and incomparable artistic mentorship and development opportunities to a new generation of filmmakers. Talent Lab is presented by TIFF Industry and takes place from Wednesday, September 3, to Saturday, September 6.

*When did you graduate and what was your concentration?*

I graduated in 2009 from Columbia as a directing concentrate (I graduated after my fourth year).

*When did you participate in this program?*

I participated in the TIFF Talent Lab in 2008.

## Fellowship Survey 2014

Written by CUE Editor

Monday, 10 March 2014 00:15

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*How did you learn about it and decide to apply?*

I'm not sure how exactly found I out but, THE WORKOUT, the short Christian and I made together got into TIFF that year so it made sense for me to apply to the Talent Lab since I was going up to Toronto anyway. Plus I'm Canadian and TIFF has been incredibly supportive of me as an emerging filmmaker so I always keep tabs on the innovative programs they're running.

*What specifically did you do over the course of the fellowship?*

The TIFF Talent Lab is similar to the Berlinale's Talent Campus but it's on a much smaller level which means you really get to know the mentors in the program and they get to know you - Olivier Assayas and Stephen Wooley were two of the mentors in 2008 and I got to spend four or five full days with them, joking around, talking cinema, and talking about our work. Stephen and Olivier are just wonderful - really gregarious and generous. There are also other filmmakers that come in and speak at the Talent Lab - in 2008 I remember listening to the Dardenne brothers, Samira Makhmalbaf, Brian DePalma, and Atom Egoyan.

*Who would you recommend apply for this? Any tips or advice for applicants?*

I'd recommend it for filmmakers who like to talk about global cinema at least as much as they like to schmooze - it really helps if you know the trends in world film and aren't just a brownnoser.

My biggest piece of advice is to keep applying if you don't get in on your first try.