

ETCP POV: Why ETCP certification belongs in higher education

BY MARILYN “COOKIE” HETZEL, PH.D. WITH CARMEL ALSTON, MEGAN EULER, BRIAN KELLEY, AND JACOB WELCH



AS A METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY of Denver Professor Emerita in Theatre, an ETCP Council Member since its inception, and a theatre professional with over sixty years of experience, I have steadily maintained, “Yes! Being an ETCP Certified Technician serves higher education in numerous ways.”

To address the question of “How does being ETCP certified serve higher education professionals?” more fully, I turned to four valued theatre colleagues who represent a wealth of experience and varied perspectives. I asked them to share with me—and *Protocol* readers—how they would address the above question. Please consider their four distinctive, supportive responses below.

Jacob M. Welch

**Full Professor and Chair of Theatre and Dance
Metropolitan State University of Denver
ETCP Certified Entertainment Electrician**



In 2017, I chose to pursue and complete my ETCP Entertainment Electrician Certification. I was a tenured full professor in Lighting Design at MSU Denver and was looking for a meaningful sabbatical project. Pursuing and achieving ETCP certification helped me in several ways.

1. I have become much more fluent in electrical safety procedures so that I can more safely and effectively recognize and manage any potentially harmful situations.
2. I have added depth and breadth to my knowledge of lighting, control, and distribution systems so that I can better supervise the lighting program at MSU Denver with its existing lighting systems while exploring potential upgrades.
3. It's provided me with a depth of knowledge that allowed me to better update my Introductory and Advanced Lighting class content and class projects.
4. Our BFA Applied Theatre Technology and Design Program has monthly specialty supplementary training workshops, and I am

able to share new and updated content with our students.

5. Certification has benefitted my consulting work. The knowledge I've gained has helped me better support my venue clients with their theatrical lighting system and equipment upgrades.
6. I have gained a greater depth of knowledge working in various professional and amateur theatres that have varying levels and quality of dimming, control, and lighting distribution systems. I am better equipped to troubleshoot problems and communicate with electrical and theatrical contractors.
7. Finally, ETCP certification is a point of pride for me and for the Department to share with prospective lighting and technology students and their families. Having this certification shows that our department prioritizes currency, health, and safety in our lighting program.

Megan Euler

**Production Manager, AEA Stage Manager
Metropolitan State University of Denver**



As a Production Manager in charge of a university theatre program, having team members who are ETCP certified means that I can expect a specific standard of work, background, safety, and excellence. The safety standards and best practices ensure that our students learn those very standards and practices. These drive a safe

working and learning environment for students, performers, and audiences. ETCP certifications also mean that our technical standards align with current professional best practices and standards, which in turn enhance the students' learning outcomes and strengthen their own skills, making them more competitive in our industry upon graduation. ETCP certification in team members also means a higher level of efficiency, allowing for strong critical thinking skills, deeper understanding of complex systems, and the ability to quickly solve problems; saving time and money. Supporting ETCP shows that we, as an educational unit, value and prioritize health and safety in our shops and educational processes.

Brian Kelley

Full Professor, Technical Director Metropolitan State University of Denver



ETCP certification is a powerful tool for theatre education professionals. Certification ensures that professors and staff are instructing the next generation of technicians in the safest procedures and practices used in the entertainment industry. Young professionals should only be taught the best work practices and approaches to various rigging and electrical projects. With this as a foundation to their learning, safety is an integral part of their education, not something that has to be added to their education later. ETCP's website states that the certification is to "evaluate and validate the knowledge and skill base of the upper third of riggers working in the entertainment industry." In an ideal world the best people in any industry eventually go on to teach the next generation. This heavily vetted certification shows that any professional educator is, in fact, one of the best in the industry.

Carmel Alston

Sales and Service Oasis Stage Werks



I have been privileged to work in this industry for 45 Years! I have worked as a shop tech for a rental house, a manager, a factory authorized service provider for various manufacturers, a salesperson, a tech workshop presenter at LDI and USITT, a system designer, and a project manager.

I was a part of the original Theatrical Dealers Association that became ESTA, and at the request of the ESTA executive director at the time, helped moderate the first open public roundtable discussion about whether as an industry we needed a technical certification program, and how ESTA could achieve that.

Needless to say, with around 150 of the top professional practitioners in the production world present, it was a WILD meeting! Everyone had an opinion based on their successful use of equipment and their own best practices. Everyone thought there was one "right way" to do everything.

The two biggest takeaways from the meeting were: As an Industry we needed a "common measuring stick" to recognize whether a person knew and could practice safely, a common set of procedures and skills. As an employer, the only recognized credentials at the time were theatre degrees from a university, or an IATSE card. Even then you couldn't rely on that, couldn't know that an employee truly possessed and practiced universally accepted and recommended skills, safety, and knowledge. The second takeaway was that we needed to collect, refine, and make testable an agreed-upon Uniform Body of Knowledge. Through a LOT of hard work and determination, the

ETCP Council achieved that.

Due to my age and experience, a lot of people ask my opinion about how they can advance in the industry. They may be working in a venue, working for the Union, teaching in higher education or secondary ed, touring or wanting to tour, working at a dealership, or for a factory. My main advice is, "Get credentialed!" There is still only one recognized credential in the industry that is attainable in a predictable, fair, and open setting: ETCP.

If, as a potential employer of an entertainment technician in any setting, I have two candidates who seem to have an equal background and competitive resumes, if one of the candidates has an ETCP Certification, they are an instant hire! If an employee on their own changes their status by becoming an ETCP certified technician, I will either instantly elevate their position or lose them to another company who recognizes and needs their superior skills. The "common measuring stick" is as valid today as it was at ETCP's inception. ■



Have a Certification to Renew?

You should submit your renewal application at least 8 weeks before your expiration date.

That form is found in the ETCP Information Portal:
<https://etcp.esta.org/etcp/portal.html>

Please note:

- Self-employed people or business owners must list someone else who can confirm their work and education credits.
- Before you begin to fill out the form, please have the following ready:
 - A headshot/selfie from the last 12 months (no head coverings or sunglasses)
 - Name and email address for a supervisor or another professional who can verify your work hours
 - Any certificates or wallet card for trainings that you completed during the last five years
 - If you don't have proofs of completion, have the name and email address for a person who can verify your training attendance.
 - Proof of employment or membership if you work for an ESTA member company or are in an IATSE local.

IASTE members who work in multiple venues may list their local's business agent or another officer to verify hours.

If you have any questions please email or call ETCP at christina.smith@esta.org or (304) 300-9405