

2020 SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE VISION

ATTITUDE

The SFA is a culturally focused, academically grounded, and documentary driven nonprofit that places foodways in regional, national, and global contexts. We record, construct, and share narratives that complicate understandings of identity, place, past, and future. SFA work puts foodways at the center of dialogues about race, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

SFA documents the past and present, which we believe instructive for the future. We are broad because our region is dynamic. We succeed through a rigorous adherence to inclusion. We lead, instead of follow.

SFA work reveals histories and truths. SFA asks more questions than we answer. We share stories we know and seek stories we want to know. These stories are inspired by the South, by other places that affect the South, and by how the South affects other places. Those stories spark reflection and foster progress.

SFA is a model for organizations and institutions doing similar work. We take our work seriously, but we don't take ourselves too seriously.

SCHOLARSHIP

The SFA invests deeply in University of Mississippi campus life. Recognition of our mission and value has increased dramatically among students, staff, and faculty. Foot traffic in and out of SFA headquarters is frequent.

The Southern Studies graduate program has expanded the number and the quality of foodways-focused applicants, as students recognize that the University of Mississippi offers the best program for the critical study of regional foodways. Competition for Nathalie Dupree Graduate Fellowships is fierce.

We attract students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Four graduates of the Southern Studies program who showed strong interest in foodways have gone on to doctoral programs and will soon share the foodways gospel with audiences everywhere.

Our tenured foodways professor published her first book last year. Our oral historian just turned in the final draft of her book length survey of contemporary foodways oral histories. The SFA has revitalized the post-doctoral program to encourage new foodways scholars, offer them experience in the classroom, and promote publication of their dissertations.

In 2018, we launched the Southern Foodways Consortium, which brings together scholars and students to share best practices, syllabi, and other tools. Our foodways professor and postdoctoral fellow lead this effort.

The annual Graduate Student Conference, now in its eighth year, has expanded to 50 students. They come from throughout the United States and beyond to share research and ideas that link foodways to our annual symposium theme. SFA publishes an annual online journal based on the conference, featuring the keynote lecture and three of the best graduate student submissions.

SFA documentary workshops are at the heart of a new summer program, administered by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, that brings oral historians, filmmakers, and other practitioners of documentary expression to the University of Mississippi campus.

CONTENT

SFA is the premiere thought leader, producer, and distributor of stories about Southern foodways. A recent survey found that 80 percent of our members recognize that our greatest assets are documentary work and SFA created media. Events rank third, a strong third, but still third.

The SFA is the trusted steward for complex stories. The best writers, photographers, illustrators, audio producers, filmmakers, scholars, and other storytellers clamor to work with us. We compensate content producers well and share their work with a large and diverse audience.

SFA staff produce, manage, and distribute our content. Content managers meet during regular editorial retreats to establish and maintain calendars and maximize cross-platform opportunities. We optimize SFA content for each unique platform.

Our oral history, film, and audio broadcast programs have expanded to include a second full-time oral historian, several contract oral historians, a film fellow, and a talented bench of contract reporters and editors. At least two of the contract documentarians are bilingual, and SFA has a list of language consultants who assist with translation of other languages.

SFA's commitment to inclusivity and its spirit of active welcome begin with our storytellers. Our collaborators are as diverse as our readers. We specifically seek and collect stories from new Southerners who emigrated from other regions and countries. Our oral history program documents difficult subjects, including an ongoing series on poverty and hunger and another on migrations.

Academic advisors consult on each documentary project, lending a voice of expertise on background research and narrative possibilities. Our oral history program favors depth and quality over quantity. SFA documentary colleagues speak the many languages now spoken in the region. Our oral historian teaches one documentary class a year. Our filmmaker does, too.

All SFA activities generate content. SFA shares its symposia via community events throughout the nation that draw new audiences. Our films, exemplars of quality and candor, are showcased in festivals throughout the nation and world. Two popular commercial streaming services distribute SFA films.

Gravy magazine, published six times each year, includes seamless integration with the web. New technologies facilitate member engagement, podcast downloads, oral history listening, and video watching. The web version of *Gravy* utilizes the best multimedia capabilities to deliver beautiful and elegant content. *Gravy* podcast is internationally recognized as smart, compelling, honest journalism that delivers both pleasure and entertainment.

SFA WAY

For new employees, students, and interns, SFA hosts an orientation program, grounded in an engaging, thorough, and creatively designed digital encapsulation of our mission, vision, and values. We offer a supplement that familiarizes new collaborators and staff with our documentary work, content, and events. For peer institutions and the general public, we offer a modified version, delivered via the SFA website.

The SFA hosts SFA Way workshops at our headquarters yearly. These cross-trained workshops introduce collaborators to the SFA staff and each other, expose them to the culture of our organization, familiarize them with our standards and methods, and share our past and present work. Our full-time staff also frequently lectures at conferences throughout the country on the SFA Way.

EVENTS

We are as quick to hug the necks of longtime members as we are to offer a hand and pull up a chair to the table for new members. Our event audience thinks and looks diverse, curious, earnest, and irreverent. The SFA makes events accessible and affordable. While every gathering is responsibly budgeted on a break-even model, SFA has developed an equitable system to manage event demand and match event price to attendee ability to pay.

Through local and national events staged each year, SFA welcomes audiences from every corner of the socioeconomic landscape. These events include various combinations of live performances, oral history listening stations, well-produced and economically staged theater presentations, documentary films, and digitally

recorded symposia presentations. They offer a wide range of inclusive opportunities for people to learn and share SFA Stories.

Members have the opportunity to buy symposia tickets through an equitable system that facilitates increased member participation and protects the integrity of small-group interactions.

On the University campus, SFA hosts quarterly dinners for guests to share a meal and discuss a current topic that impacts a community. The guest list includes a subject matter expert, interested community members and organizations, and SFA staffers. SFA oral history theater productions are performed bi-annually by university students and community members in intimate black box settings.

STAFF

SFA bustles with purposeful activity. A mature organization, sure in its mission and values, the SFA staff serves its audience and its university with an entrepreneurial, energetic, can-do spirit.

The founding director leads fundraising efforts as well as theme setting and goal setting. The founding director also attends major events and engages donors. Two co-directors oversee staff, operations, and budgets. They meet regularly with the founding director and report those meetings to the staff. Their leadership and long tenure with the organization inspire confidence in staff, members, donors, and other partners. They steward the SFA relationship with the Center and with the University.

Four new fulltime colleagues have joined the SFA, including a Pihakis film fellow; an outreach manager focused on engagement, audience growth, member satisfaction, and donor development; and a content manager with digital, writing, and design skills who directs contract documentarians and collaborates with the managing editor. Our new oral historian is bilingual and smart. Our managing editor job has been reclassified to reflect added management duties. A contract part-time event coordinator has also joined the team.

While many employees spend considerable time on the road making films, collecting oral histories, and staging events, Oxford remains the spiritual, intellectual, and physical home of the organization. A new office space, which now seats twelve and will accommodate SFA growth over the next decade, opened two years ago, with a familiar bullpen at the center as well as two editing suites and two conference offices.

SFA encourages and enables staff to find balance between work and home responsibilities while attending to their own mental, physical, and intellectual health. SFA staff engages in community, University, and family events. An SFA employee just won the award for University staffer of the month.

Compensation and benefits are competitive and attractive. For senior staff who have reached University salary caps, SFA co-directors have negotiated job reclassifications. Staff retention and growth is one of the SFA's greatest strengths.

The SFA board of directors works with standing committees of subject matter experts to advise the SFA staff on the mission, strategic plan, budgets, and finances. Board members promote the purpose and agenda of the SFA in their daily life and work. Board members also advise and consult with SFA staff on fundraising initiatives.

FINANCES

The SFA reserve account maintains a balance of \$250,000 that may be borrowed from and repaid as needed to sustain growth and serve the mission. Fully funded endowments pay the salaries of the SFA Foodways Professor and the Pihakis Film Fellow. An endowment of two million dollars funds new SFA initiatives that seem almost bonkers and ensures we don't become sticks-in-the mud.

The fully endowed John Egerton Prize distributes a \$5000 award each fall to a deserving recipient whose work uses the lens of food to address issues of social justice. A second prize, for the best foodways book published each year, is also fully endowed and is awarded each year at Food Media South.

Grants support SFA documentary initiatives. Each year, SFA submits one major grant application. The SFA has recently won a challenge grant funding to support an SFA postdoctoral fellowship. Fundraising to endow the position has just completed, with the SFA providing half the monies and the College of Liberal Arts providing the other half.

The SFA budget does not rely on membership dues as a significant source of income. Memberships are offered at discount rates, or given free to individuals who cannot afford to pay.

The average corporate donor now gives the SFA \$50,000 annually. Product placement and SFA endorsement of goods and services are not conditions of funding. Donors give money to the SFA because they believe in our mission and good work. SFA budgets and spends money frugally and fearlessly.

NEXT

SFA is now planning a new visioning session. Again, we will host Ari Weinzweig, who will join us for a day-and-a-half of intense conversations and imagining about our NEXT five years. Ari plans to stay an extra day on campus to consult with another University office, which has also begun to work with ZingTrain.