



STATEMENT OF BELONGING

A School for Life. A School for All.

Rooted in the Folk School tradition of non-competitive, community-based learning, we honor the belief that everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Through intentional programming, staff training, and value-driven practices, we strive to foster a culture where individuals are seen, respected, and celebrated. Personal growth is nurtured through shared experiences, joyful making, and the recognition that the wholeness of the individual is found in connection with others. We believe that equity, inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and belonging are essential to our mission and founding principles.

Our School

In 19th-century Denmark, philosopher, bishop, and poet N.F.S Grundtvig introduced a new model for education as a response to the standard schooling of the time. Called "The Folk High School," this new model made education accessible to folks of all economic backgrounds. Grundtvig envisioned a school where dialogue across differences is an essential part of the learning process. In his vision everyone learns by talking with each other and having their voice count. Folk High Schools or "Schools for Life" were to assist people in understanding their own identity and to strengthen and empower the communities that they live in.

The John C. Campbell Folk School is a part of the Danish Folk School tradition. Our values of joy, kindness, stewardship, and a noncompetitive atmosphere are key to a more equitable experience for all.

Our Path

The Folk School is committed to actively supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) by creating a welcoming, safe, and empowering environment for all who come here. This includes better reflecting the demographics of the 423-county Appalachian region—which spans 13 states.

Our commitment to this community of belonging is firm. We acknowledge that the Folk School is on a journey, and we haven't always gotten things right. We know this is a work in progress and are committed to maintaining an openness to the many voices, experiences, and knowledge that help us take each step on this path. We will keep "singing behind the plow," celebrating each new voice added to the chorus, and even sing and write some new tunes together.

Our Goals

- Celebrate diversity by welcoming highly qualified instructors of different races, ethnicities, gender identities, physical abilities, sexualities, religious backgrounds, and ages with the goal of having a more diverse audience of students.
- Provide accommodations, resources and assistance to create a safe, accessible, and kind environment for all individuals on campus.
- Offer cultural competency training to all staff to encourage inclusive behaviors and understanding across differences at work.
- Help steer new policies to be inclusive and support the path laid out in our Statement of Belonging.



Our Why

This work is inherent to our mission and identity, and we are committed to the spirit and practice of the legacy we've received from Grundtvig, Olive Dame Campbell, and Marguerite Butler Bidstrup. Our dream is for a Folk School where everyone feels safe, valued, included, and free to create and experience the transformative power of making while in a judgement-free community. We still make things. We're better makers when we make community together.

Some of the Work We Have Done

- **Code of Conduct:** Completed and posted on website and in all studios. Students must acknowledge receipt upon registration, and it is included as part of instructor contracts. We have used this to facilitate discussions with students, staff, and instructors. This is also our primary tool to hold our community accountable. (2023)
- **Community Partnerships:** African American Craft Alliance/Folk School Alliance, Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual Co-Op, Texana Community Development Club and other similar organizations. These partnerships extend our reach, deepen our understanding of community needs, and create opportunities for collaborative programming, shared promotion, and cultural enrichment. Together, they help position the Folk School as a trusted, inclusive leader in the preservation and advancement of craft traditions.
- Achieving a \$15/hour minimum wage in 2023 was an important milestone in supporting our commitment to fair compensation and workforce sustainability. This increase reflects our dedication to valuing employees' contributions, ensuring that all staff are paid a living wage that better aligns with current economic conditions. It also enhances staff retention, morale, and recruitment by making the organization a more competitive and equitable employer in our region.
- **Accessibility on Campus:** All studios are equipped with live caption TVs, ramps and thresholds into most buildings, fully accessible housing options, golfcarts for loan. These efforts ensure compliance with accessibility standards while advancing our long-term goal of making craft education available to all. By prioritizing universal access, we create a more welcoming and adaptable environment that supports participation from a broader and more diverse community.