

Connie Canaday Howard: Inspiring Generations Through Theater and Teaching

For many College of DuPage alumni, Connie Canaday Howard is more than a professor—she is a mentor, a director, and a lasting influence on how they see the world.

Over her 24 years at COD, Connie brought a unique blend of professional experience and deep passion to the classroom. A ballet dancer turned actor and director, her career spanned touring productions, choreography, and work across theaters and universities before she found her true calling in teaching.

“I really feel that this is where I’m meant to be,” she once shared. “And I learn, every term, in the classroom, along with my students.”

That spirit of shared learning defined her approach. Connie believed that theater was not just about performance, but about understanding others. She challenged students to step outside their own perspectives—to “walk in another’s shoes”—and in doing so, helped shape more thoughtful, empathetic individuals.

Her impact extended far beyond the classroom. As artistic leader of Buffalo Theatre Ensemble (BTE) for 24 seasons, Connie guided the company with vision, generosity, and a commitment to ensemble-driven storytelling. Under her leadership, BTE grew in ambition and reach, becoming DuPage County’s only professional Equity ensemble and a vital force in the local arts community. Today, she continues her work with BTE as a director, actor, and Ensemble Member.

Connie’s excellence as an educator was recognized with the NISOD Excellence Award and as College-Wide Outstanding Full-Time Faculty. She also contributes her expertise to the Jeff Awards Artistic and Technical Team, supporting excellence in Chicago-area theater.

Whether in the classroom or on stage, Connie’s legacy is one of curiosity, compassion, and connection—qualities that continue to influence her students and colleagues alike.