

NU RTVF Casting Guidelines

The following are guidelines for casting a student media project in Northwestern's Department of Radio/TV/Film:

1) Before casting:

- a. *create role descriptions for each character and a one to three line script summary of your film* that includes the film's title, genre (comedy, drama, horror...), estimated running time, the director/producer, and your anticipated filming dates. A script need not be final at the time of casting.

Example of a SYNOPSIS and ROLE listing:

THE FAREWELL, drama/comedy, 120 minutes

Synopsis: After learning that their beloved matriarch is terminally ill, a Chinese-American family decides not to tell her and instead plans a wedding as an excuse to gather everyone together to spend time with their dying mother and grandmother.

Director: Lulu Wang

Role: Nai Nai, 70s/80s, Chinese, the family's bold and fearless matriarch who would do anything to ensure her children's and grandchildren's happiness.

Filming: April 23-25 on campus

- b. Please *indicate clearly any physical demands, nudity or intimacy required* for the role. Remember that actors MUST at all times be given proper information to consent, and it is your responsibility to clearly indicate what a role requires at all stages of the casting process.

2) Use the RTVF Self Tape Database as the first step in the casting process:

Student actors regularly submit self-taped auditions of their choosing. Browse through the self-tapes link and find several actors who you think might work for the roles you are casting.

Current (2021-22) self-taped auditions can be found: https://nuwildcat-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/krh165_ads_northwestern_edu/Etdj8PLveEdKtsPIKS05K-EB7ofcYXZkrMLuG_jQU38ijg

If you choose to cast actors outside of Northwestern, you should familiarize yourself with Screen Actors Guild (SAG) student film agreement process. Please note in casting calls if you are able to work with SAG actors and will be signatory to their Student Film Agreement. For more information see: <https://www.sagaftra.org/production-center/contract/817/getting-started> and contact the Chicago Local Director, TV/Theatrical Contracts Kathy Byrne for guidance: kathy.byrne@sagaftra.org

3) Invite chosen actors to either in-person or virtual callbacks:

This is an opportunity for you to see those actors read a specific scene from your script and get to know them better. It is a good idea to always meet an actor in person or virtually before offering a role.

- a. *Schedule a time for callbacks*, allowing each actor 10-15 minutes, depending on the size of the role. When requesting a callback, send the actor the film synopsis and the role you would like to see them read, as well as the dates you are planning to shoot your film. Callbacks can be done in person or virtually.
- b. *If the actor agrees to the callback, send them "sides."* Sides are a short scene or two, usually no more than two to three pages, from your actual script that give the actor a chance to show the character in different situations/moods. Ideally, you should provide the sides to the actors at least 48 hours IN ADVANCE of the scheduled call back. When sending the sides, also provide the FULL SCRIPT to actors so they can see the sides in context. If any role requires nudity or simulated sexual contact with another actor, clearly also indicate to all actors this will be a requirement BEFORE they audition.
- c. The RTVF Dept requires all student films now to adhere to the *Times Up Foundation* audition safety guidelines and best practices to create safe workplaces free from sexual harassment and assault. Please download, review and adhere to all guidelines in "Know Your Rights in Auditions" at <https://timesupfoundation.org/work/times-up-entertainment/entertainment-safety-initiative/>
- d. If the sides you chose involve dialogue, you may need a reader to read the other parts i along with the actor. You may also choose to schedule actors in pairs or groups and have them read with each other.
- e. *During the callback, consider giving the actor a few notes on their performance and have them read the scene again to see if they can take direction.* For example, "Let's try it again, but this time instead of being outright upset, what if the character is trying to hide the fact that they're upset and playing it off like it's not a big deal?"
- f. *There should only be one callback with an actor.* Use that time wisely to work with the actor and determine if they are a good fit for your film.

4) Offering a role:

If you would like to offer a role to an actor based on the general audition or the callback:

- a. Email the actor with a clear subject line, something like NEEDS ATTENTION. Make the actual offer in the body of the email, including the dates you would like to book the

actor.

- b. Include the title, logline or brief premise, and a character breakdown for the role in question in the email. If available, attach the full script, especially if anything has changed since they last read it.
- c. Make offers to one actor per role at a time and wait to hear back from them. It's fine to give them a deadline for making their decision, for example: by noon tomorrow.
- d. If you have the actor's phone number, feel free to make a follow-up call after sending the email.
- e. After an offer is accepted you must contact all other actors to thank them for their auditions and tell them you have decided to go with someone else.
- f. If an offer is rejected, thank the actor for auditioning, then move onto the next actor on your list to make a new offer. Continue process till all roles are cast.

When dealing with casting, always treat everyone with respect and respond to all questions and emails promptly.

If you have further questions about the casting process, please contact the faculty advisor on your film, your student group faculty advisor, class instructor or production area head.

Have fun, be considerate, be brave, be excellent!

- RTVF Production Area Faculty