

## Passion becomes career for USI liberal arts grad

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With a background in art and an interest in performance, A.J. Jones found his niche in the University of Southern Indiana Theatre Program. Four years, and countless hours in the costume shop later, Jones is taking his talents to Massachusetts this fall where he will begin a master's degree in costume design at Boston University.

Although he was involved in high school theatre productions in Jamestown, Indiana, Jones wasn't introduced to costume design until his sophomore year at USI, and took to it naturally. In the years that followed, he left lasting impressions at each competition he entered, taking home various awards from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and winning the national award for costume design in Washington D.C. this year. He graduated from USI's College of Liberal Arts in May.

"USI has opened my eyes to what is out there in the world, and how I can be a part of it. It's shown me that I can have an impact on others. USI has given me all it has to offer, and now it's my turn to take this great learning experience and apply it on a grander scale," said Jones.

Jones not only left a lasting impression at a national level, but also with faculty he worked closely with throughout his time at USI. "AJ was a wonderful student who always looked at every challenge given to him as an opportunity to learn," said M. Shan Jensen, associate professor of theatre at USI. It was a pleasure watching him grow as a student and a young costume designer. I know his future will be exciting and bright."

What Jones finds most exhilarating about costume design is being able to make a character's personality come to life, and visually communicating that personality involves months of planning. From reading the scripts to researching time periods of productions, he sets out to visually tell a story with every costume he designs.

At the University of Southern Indiana, he learned that costume design could be more than a passion, but a profession as well. The Theatre Program gave him creative control, as well as ample resources and opportunities to showcase his creativity. "I was able to do and learn so much here. I just don't know where else I could have gone to get all of the knowledge, experience and opportunity that USI has given me," he said. It was this innovative and hands-on style of learning that allowed him to impact individuals visually with his costumes—something he previously didn't think possible.

The personal connections that small class sizes at USI allow students to have with their professors influenced him to further pursue his passion. "They've really mentored me tremendously, not only in costume design, but also in preparing me for my future by educating me on how I can reach my goals," he said. "They were more than professors, they were mentors in academia, and in life."