



ACA

**STETSON UNIVERSITY**  
**MFA in Creative Writing**

**DECEMBER 2025**

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Writers and Creators of Stetson's MFA,

As I write this, I'm sitting in an airport lounge, just having cleared US Customs. As usual, the border guard asked about my visa and what I'm doing in the US. When I told him I was a professor, he asked what I teach. As usual, I answered somewhat sheepishly, "Creative Writing." "Oh, good," he said, "that's important. The world needs that. More of that. Anything to declare?"

Last year, our current Florida governor cut \$27 million in funding for the arts. The stated reason? Not financial or budgetary but because, he said, he had concerns about sexual content at the Fringe Festival in Orlando "and stuff like that." More recently, DeSantis reversed the arts cuts under new rules, stipulating which kind of art the government would like to be produced (the answer and first funded project: A bust of George Washington). And of course there have been cuts at the Federal level with news of cancelled funding and pulled projects and laid off staff coming so fast it can be hard to keep up: NPR, The National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, etc. Closer to home and only last month, Volusia county withheld all arts funding over concerns about of the staging of "non-family friendly events, including some pride and drag events in the county." The particular event, so egregious and debauched? A long-running 18+ mounting of Rocky Horror Picture show at the theatre in DeLand.

I left that customs interview standing a little taller. Because the guard was right and it's good to remember, or to be told sometimes that we're not alone in thinking it: the world needs art. Needs art for adults. Art for kids. Art for art's sake. Art the State doesn't like and art it might. I don't know if it needs another bust of George Washington or yet another production of Rocky Horror Picture Show but I do think Florida is richer for supporting the Atlantic Center for the Arts and Burrow Press and that investing in the arts pays off, creates jobs, improves the economy, and enriches our lives.

To that end, I'm happy to present the program guide and schedule. In the following pages you'll find important information about our upcoming residency at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, including general information, a schedule, maps, contact info, housing information, and more. You'll also find bios on your fellow writers alongside our new and returning faculty and guests, including returning core faculty Shastri Akella, Sarah LaBrie, and Terri Witek. After wonderful stints in the exploratory sessions, we've added two new additions to our core faculty, Kenzie Allen and Jeff Parker, both joining us as core faculty for the first time. For our exploratory

afternoon workshop offerings, we've got Gabrielle Civil returning by popular demand, teaching a class on "Cosmic Lineages," alongside Lydi Conklin with a class on "Emotional Stakes," and, for the first time, Kevin Moffett joining us to teach a class on "Adaptation." And bringing this all together, we have our usual wonderful staff, including program coordinator Savannah Kater, Ryan Rivas, our publishing coordinator, presenting a talk with Zoe-Aline Howard, as well as Shelby Smotherman, back in the booth.

For the nine days that we're together, the world gets a little smaller, the size of a writing or dance studio, a program of about thirty or so people, the world of a residency in an estuary, and that world, at least, needs your art. And that's what our residency is for. Whether joining us for the first time or returning for your final semester, we can't wait to see you and to see what you get up to.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B~B~" with a flourish at the end.

Brendan Bowles  
Director, Stetson University's MFA in Creative Writing



## **GENERAL INFORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE ACA**

Welcome to the Atlantic Center for the Arts. We hope your experience here will be productive, creative, and rewarding.

### **ABOUT THE ACA**

The Atlantic Center for the Arts (ACA) was founded in 1977 by artist and environmentalist Doris Leeper, with its main campus in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. The ACA opened its Master Artist-in-Residence program in 1982. The organization was inspired by Leeper's belief in interdisciplinary collaboration and has since grown to include the community-focused ACA at Harris House, which opened in 1991. The Atlantic Center for the Arts (ACA) was envisioned by Doris Leeper as a residency program for artists of all disciplines to collaborate with prominent artists in a nurturing environment. Leeper, a painter, sculptor, and environmentalist, saw the potential for an artists' residency to foster the creation and sharing of ideas. Learn more. Currently, in addition to hosting artists in residence, the ACA hosts community events throughout New Smyrna Beach with a mission to promote the arts.

### **CODES TO ACCESS PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS**

Front Gate Code: **0-2-1-3**

Studio Code: **2-1-3**

### **INTERNET**

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Wireless internet is available in all housing units and in the Leeper Studio Complex.

The password is **atlantic** (all lowercase)

### **SECURITY**

All residency participants are responsible for the security of all buildings. If you are the last person to leave a building, please lock the door as you leave. Also, please turn off all lights, appliances, computers, and electronics. Everyone in the residency will know the building codes so lock the doors, even if you plan to be back in a few minutes.

### **STUDIOS SPACES AND SHARED RESOURCES**

Please keep shared spaces organized and available for the use of others. If you are finished using an ACA computer, please save your documents and close the programs that you were using so the next person can start working without worry. Please don't take mice and keyboards from shared computers, we have additional ones that you can borrow.

### **EQUIPMENT**

Due to the ever-changing needs of artists, we **STRONGLY** encourage artists to bring items or equipment that is specialized to their practice.

ALSO, we **STRONGLY** encourage artists to bring their own technology, especially technology that is required for production or directly necessary for their practice.



ACA has many items and pieces of equipment available for artists to use during their residency. Many of the items listed are housed in their various studio locations. Some items/equipment are kept under lock and key in the Main Office, or in a studio locked closet. If you require an item or piece of equipment, please contact tech goddess Shelby Smotherman for assistance.

We ask that all artists return equipment to its rightful home after use.

For an updated list of studio equipment, see here:

[https://atlanticcenter.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/ACA/EXeHLbfBWNNr\\_EZ6RTRcvMB6vDXmFeSkZ89auyly7QHY-Q?rttime=CkGnO4\\_g20g](https://atlanticcenter.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/ACA/EXeHLbfBWNNr_EZ6RTRcvMB6vDXmFeSkZ89auyly7QHY-Q?rttime=CkGnO4_g20g)

## **CELLPHONES**

Please be aware that cell phone signal (coverage) is very spotty on ACA property. Some carriers have better connections than others. Other solutions for making calls while on our property:

- Make sure the settings on your phone are set to WI-FI calling
- Use WhatsUp Application by downloading from Apple's App Store or Google Play

## **MAIL & SHIPPING**

Mail is placed on the table at the entrance to the Whatmore Commons around lunchtime (Mon-Sat). It is each artist's responsibility to check for mail. There is an outgoing mailbox in the office copy room. We can help you answer questions about shipping items in the office. For shipping, we prefer UPS, as we have had trouble with FedEx pickups. You are responsible for packing your boxes and purchasing shipping (UPS recommended).

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## **SMOKING**

Smoking indoors is prohibited at Atlantic Center for the Arts. Please smoke outdoors and away from the entrances to ACA's buildings. Please dispose of your cigarette butts in the concrete containers located around the campus and not in the flammable brush.

## **PETS**

No pets are allowed at ACA or in housing. Please contact us if you have a service animal or other questions about this policy.

## **OUTDOOR COOKING / FIRES**

Cooking outdoors or any type of fire is prohibited.

## **BICYCLES**

There are approximately 8 bicycles for you to use that are normally located in the back of the Sculpture Studio. The lock code is **1414**. Please use these for trips outside of ACA's campus and not to go on the boardwalks or from building to building.

## **RECYCLING & TRASH**

ACA recycles all clean paper, cardboard (not pizza boxes), glass, plastic, and metal containers. Please place all recyclables in the blue containers in the studios or in your room. The recycling dumpster is located across from unit 28 and is outside of the fenced area. The non-recyclable garbage dumpster is located inside the fenced area.

## **PABST VISITOR CENTER AND GALLERY (& ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES)**

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Monday to Friday - 10AM - 4PM; Saturday 10AM to 2PM; Closed Sunday

## **PHOTOCOPIES**

ACA has a copy machine in the Administration Building. Please see “Office Hours” for availability.

## **WHATMORE COMMONS (DINING HALL)**

As a communal space, the kitchen and facility should be treated with appropriate care and cleanliness. The Commons is equipped with commercial appliances. No utensils or glasses should be removed from the facility.

## ***ARTIST HOUSING***

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### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

ACA Artist Housing consists of 24 individual units and 4 accessible suites divided into two wings. Each individual unit is equipped with a full-size bed, work desk, chair, radio alarm clock, refrigerator and private bathroom with shower. Bed and bath linens are also provided. If you have a favorite pillow, you might want to bring that. The rooms do not have a telephone or TV, but wifi access is available. Password: **atlantic** (all lowercase)

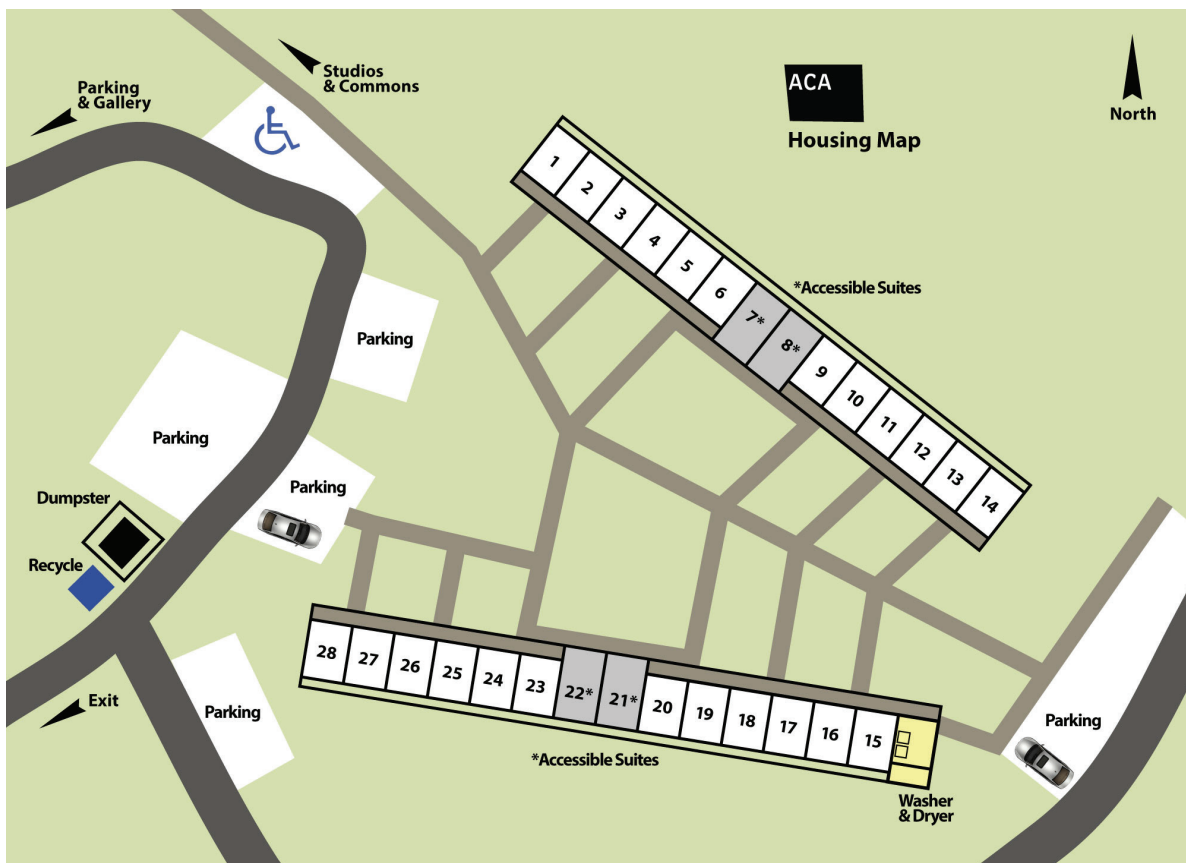
No guests are permitted in the housing units.

Housekeeping services are not provided during the Residency. Housekeeping items such as toilet paper, soap, and basic cleaning supplies can be found in the laundry room cabinet.

Cooking is not allowed in the housing units; however, the Whatmore Commons (detailed above) is accessible 24/7.

### **LAUNDRY**

Laundry facilities (a washer and dryer) are located next to Unit 15 at the Housing facility. A wash requires 6 quarters; dryer requires 4 quarters. The main office can make change during business hours. ACA also sells single load detergent packets that cost \$0.50 each.



## **CHECKOUT PROCEDURES**

**CHECK-OUT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, BY 12:00 NOON**

### **HOUSING**

Remove all items from the refrigerator. You can bring sealed or unexpired food items to the commons that other artists can use.

Discard all garbage and recyclables in the appropriate dumpsters (located opposite unit 28, dumpster outside fence is for recycling, dumpster inside of fence is for non-recycling garbage).

Please put the air conditioner on a cool setting at 78 degrees or number 3.

Place your unit key on the counter.

Please turn off all lights.

Lock all windows and lock the door upon final exit.

### **STUDIO SPACES**

Discard all garbage and recyclables in the appropriate dumpsters. The recycling dumpster is located across from unit 28 and is outside of the fenced area. The dumpster located inside the fence is for non-recycling garbage.

All artwork is the associate's responsibility. All preparation for shipping and all arrangements for shipping must be made prior to your departure.

ACA is not liable for any items left in the studios or digital files left on ACA computers.

Return any other items you may have moved or borrowed to their original location.



## ***SAFETY MEASURES FOR THE 2025 RESIDENCY AT THE ACA***

On behalf of the students and faculty of the Stetson MFA program, the following protocols will be set in place at the upcoming Winter residency.

This nine-day residency will include approximately 27 participants, including approximately 14 MFA students, 6 faculty members, 4 staff members, and 3 guests who will be arriving from across the country and a few international locations.

Some local community members will be invited to attend evening events.

Most residency attendees will be able to remain on the ACA campus for the duration of the residency, but others may commute from home or off-site hotels. The residency events will include group workshops, readings, meals, and free time to socialize.

The MFA will abide by the COVID safety measures set in place by the ACA and Stetson University. This document has been created in collaboration with the ACA.

We propose the following measures to ensure compliance with ACA and university policies:

- Stetson University follows the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for COVID-19. Therefore, this transfers decisions to personal responsibility for our faculty, staff and students to monitor for symptom development and self-isolate when needed, as per the CDC's COVID-19 Isolation Protocol.
- Students will be responsible for notifying their professors, the Program Director, and any close contacts of their isolation status. Employees will be responsible for notifying their supervisors and close contacts.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. You are likely most infectious during these first 5 days. Use the CDC's Isolation and Exposure calculator to assess your dates and for additional information on when to end isolation.
  - o Please note: students who test positive are responsible for developing and executing their own isolation lodging and contingency plan. We suggest you do this ahead of arrival as the accommodations at the ACA may not be available past the date of Stetson's original booking. Any costs associated with isolation is the responsibility of the student, staff member or instructor.
  - o We continue to support mask wearing for those who prefer it and for those who are advised to wear one based on their immunocompromised status, but universal mask wearing is not required.

**For any life-threatening medical emergencies, participants should immediately dial 911.**

**For non-life-threatening medical emergencies:**

- ACA staff can provide assistance with calling clinics or doctor's offices and help to arrange the use of the ACA van or call a taxi service, during office hours: M-F 10am-4pm and Saturday 10am-2pm. If a participant needs transportation outside of office hours or on the weekends, they should request a Uber, Lyft or a taxi.
- All participants please inform MFA faculty/staff who will then proceed to inform ACA staff of any COVID-19 related health situations and medical emergencies that take place on campus.

## **IN CASE OF NON-LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CONTACT:**

- Brendan Bowles (Stetson MFA Director): (647) 403-3453
- Ryan Rivas (Stetson Staff): (786) 547-0430
- Savannah Kater (Program Coordinator): (386) 341-6809
- Dan Stillwagon (ACA Staff): The after office hours contact, which means after 5pm and weekends, via text (386) 562-2337 & Morgan Coppola (ACA Chef) if Dan is not available, Morgan can be reached via text at (386) 314-6398

ACA Main Office: (386) 427-6975. During Hours (M-F 10am-4pm, Sat 10am-2pm)

For general questions regarding the residency, you can also send a message to the MFA What's App group. All students, faculty, and staff are part of the group.

## **EMERGENCY NUMBERS** (Medical, Fire, or Police) 911

**MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:** For medical emergencies, dial 911. An ambulance can be at the ACA within 10 minutes. You will be taken to one of the 2 hospitals in the New Smyrna Beach area. Please text or call ACA Emergency number (386-451-9608) to let us know about the situation as soon as you are able.

Advent Health New Smyrna Beach, (386) 424-5000 401 // Palmetto St., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168

Halifax Health Medical Center, (386) 425-4000 // 303 N. Clyde Morris Blvd., Daytona Beach, FL 32114

For any medical issues that require immediate attention but are non-emergency, we highly recommend that you go to local urgent care or to the hospital. For transport, if during office hours, we will be able to take you if staff is available. If staff is unavailable or if it is after hours, we highly recommend requesting a Lyft, Uber, or taxi. You will need to meet them outside the ACA gate as they will not know the code.

## **NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

- Poison Control, 1-800-222-1222
- New Smyrna Police Department, (386) 424-2000  
246 Industrial Park Ave., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168
- New Smyrna Fire Department, (386) 402-8125  
238 Industrial Park Ave., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168

## **WALK-IN CLINICS**

- Urgent Care Clinic, (386) 663-3061  
1860 Renzulli Road, New Smyrna Beach, 32168  
Hours M-F, 8AM- 6PM, Sat. and Sun. 9PM-3PM
- Prime Care Urgent Care, (386) 767-2402  
1327 Saxon Dr, New Smyrna Beach, FL, 32169  
Hours M-F, 8AM-7PM, Sat. and Sun. 9AM-3PM
- Halifax Health Medical Center of Port Orange, (386) 425-4700  
1041 Dunlawton Ave., Port Orange, FL, 32127  
Open 24 hrs.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURROUNDING AREA**

### **ABOUT NEW SMYRNA**

New Smyrna Beach has a deep history connected to the Timucua Native American people and monuments like the Turtle Mound stand as testimonials of their profound connection with this land.

New Smyrna Beach is a resort town on Florida's central east coast, situated between the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian River Lagoon. The area is known for its 17 miles of white sand beaches, surfing, and a thriving arts and cultural scene. Long before the present settlement, the Timucua Native American people lived and thrived in these lands, and monuments like the Turtle Mound stand as testimonials of their profound connection with this place.

New Smyrna Beach is a famous spot for surfers and beach lovers. It is known worldwide as a great place to catch waves and embrace the ocean, recognized as "one of the world's top 20 surf towns" by National Geographic. The area also offers opportunities for wildlife viewing, including dolphins in the lagoon and manatees in certain areas. Nearby the ACA, the Indian River Lagoon, called an "Estuary of National Significance," is known for its rich diversity of life. If you go kayaking in these calm waters, you may see dolphins, manatees, ospreys, herons, and even a lone bobcat.

The two main streets of New Smyrna Beach, which are the sites of shopping, restaurants, etc., are Historic Canal Street & Flagler Avenue (which leads to the beach). Other attractions include the New Smyrna Sugar Mill Ruins State Historic Site, Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, and Smyrna Dunes Park, with its boardwalks and scenic overlooks.

### **FOOD**

#### ***BREAKFAST***

- Dutch Oven Bread Co: Newly opened bakery offering delicious homemade pastries & bagels. Open Wednesdays-Saturdays. On Canal Street.
- Wake Up Cafe: Unique breakfast options - inspiration from Argentina & Spain.
- Mermaid Cafe NSB: Right on the main strip of Flagler Ave, known for their beignets and over-the-top breakfast options.
- The Little Griddle: Located on Canal, centrally located to the shopping district; mom and pop style diner that also has an ice cream counter and a shop featuring local artists.

#### ***LUNCH***

- Paco Submarine: Local family-owned sandwich shop. Everything is made in-house. Also features fresh local seafood options. Quick counter-service with inside and outside seating.
- The Taco Shack: Outside seating, a walk up & order taco & fusion venue. Known for homemade crunch wraps, Cuban sandwiches & more.
- Prima NSB: Open for lunch and dinner most days. Off of Canal Street, a café-style pizza place. Locally owned by well-known chefs. Their sister restaurant, Bar Leona, is a newly opened, upscale pasta and wine bar.



## *DINNER*

- Norwoods Treehouse: Famous treehouse restaurant with made-from-scratch food, fresh squeezed drinks, and live music in the treehouse every night. Open for brunch on Saturdays and Sunday & dinner every night.
- Spanish River Grill: Tapas style restaurant. James-Beard finalist chef. Small cozy restaurant. Reservations recommended.
- Third Wave NSB: Open for brunch, lunch and dinner. Garden style patio w/ live music. Unique homemade cocktails & food. On Flagler Avenue.
- AA Garden Fusion: On Flagler Avenue, award-winning fusion restaurant. Known for items like “lobster Rangoon,” noodle burritos, pho & more.

## *LOCAL ATTRACTIONS*

- Flagler Avenue: The avenue, named after prominent railroad builder, Henry Flagler, is filled with shops, restaurants, galleries, and more. It is an ideal spot to visit for shopping, beach life, and year-round events.
- Canal Street: Pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined street offers a vibrant blend of parks and historic buildings, specialty shops and service businesses, fine dining, art galleries, cultural attractions and the New Smyrna Beach Museum of History.
- Smyrna Dunes Park: Smyrna Dunes Park is an 184-acre inlet park along the southern shoreline of Ponce de Leon Inlet. The park has over 2 miles of wide, elevated, handicapped-accessible boardwalk.
- Janes Art Center: Ceramic arts center & art studio. Open Tues-Sat, 10-5 for visits.
- Arts on Douglas: Arts on Douglas was established in 1996 by artist and Atlantic Center for the Arts (ACA) founder, Doris Leeper and, artist/benefactor, Ed Harris. Located in historic downtown New Smyrna Beach, the building was formerly a used furniture warehouse, and originally a 1920s era Ford showroom and service center. The building was transformed into a 3,500 square foot exhibition space that presents 18 exhibitions a year. The gallery’s ongoing exhibition program features a broad spectrum of artistic styles, media and temperaments, including experimental genres in its newest addition, the alt\_space. Open Tues-Friday, 10-5 & Saturday, 10-4.
- Hub on Canal Art Gallery: The Hub on Canal is located in the heart of the Arts District in NSB. Now a little over 10 years old, The Hub is home to about 65 local and regional artists. Sixteen have working studios. Current Exhibition: The Impact of Little Things Showcase. Open Monday-Saturday, 10-5 & Sunday, 10-2.
- Marine Discovery Center: The Marine Discovery Center is a non-profit organization in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, dedicated to protecting and restoring the Indian River Lagoon through education, conservation, and research. It offers various programs for all ages, including guided boat and kayak eco-tours to see local wildlife, educational exhibits, and hands-on activities. The center’s physical location has free admission and features live aquariums, interactive exhibits, and a gift shop.
- New Smyrna Event Calendar: New Smyrna Beach always has community events happening, especially for the holidays. From art festivals to parades, use this resource to find out what’s going on in your downtime.
- Farmers’ Markets: Full of vendors, fresh produce & homemade goods, this area is known for its Farmer’s Markets.
- Wednesday Volusia County Fairgrounds Farmers Market (Deland) 3050 E New York Ave, DeLand, FL 32724 7:00 AM -12:00 PM
- Saturday New Smyrna Beach Farmers Market (NSB) 210 Sam’s Ave., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168 7:00 AM – 12:30 PM
- Saturday Norwoods Farmers Market (NSB) 400 E 2nd Ave. New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169 8:00 AM -12:00 PM
- Saturday Pavilion Farmers Market (Port Orange) 5501 S Williamson Blvd, Port Orange, FL, 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

## NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

• **MOAS (Daytona):** The Museum of Arts and Sciences has everything from modern artwork, vintage cars and trinkets to life size dinosaur displays, butterfly rooms & a giant sloth skeleton found in South Daytona. They also house a large planetarium with daily shows about the galaxies and nighttime laser music shows. Current exhibitions include:

- Bugs Outside the Box: Discover the Art Within the Sciences
- It's a Ship Show: Florida's Maritime Canvas
- Tide Pool: Exploring Coastal Communities
- Shoosty Bugs: An Art Infestation

• **Riverfront Esplanade & Beach Street (Daytona):** Newly built walking trail along the river, often decorated for the holidays & host to local events. Located parallel to one of the main shopping and restaurant districts of Daytona.

• **Daytona Aquarium (Daytona):** At the Daytona Aquarium & Rainforest Adventure you can see exhibits like a large shark tank and a reptile den and have interactive experiences such as feeding stingrays in a touch pool. The attraction also features a rainforest section with tropical birds and sloths, along with other amenities like a VR room, arcade, gift shop, and various educational presentations and special events.

• **Marine Science Center (Ponce Inlet):** At the Marine Science Center, visitors can view seabird and sea turtle rehabilitation, get hands-on in a teaching lab, explore exhibit galleries and a nature trail that illustrates the story of marine life in Volusia County. A smaller, less expensive version of the Daytona Aquarium. It is right around the corner from Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, as well as the beach & a handful of community-staple restaurants.

• **Ponce Lighthouse (Ponce Inlet):** Step back in time and discover Florida's rich maritime and social history as you tour the world-famous Ponce Inlet Lighthouse and Museum, and the Constance D. Hunter Historic Pacetti Hotel Museum.

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## Alternative Housing (If Not Staying at ACA)

Here are a few highly rated hotels on Flagler Avenue (which is the main street of NSB, where all the restaurants and shops are). Flagler Avenue is about a 10 min drive from ACA:

- SpringHill Suites Flagler Ave
- Hampton Inn Flagler Ave
- Inn on the Ave
- An option that's about a 15 min drive from ACA, but is highly rated and right on the ocean:

<https://saltymermaidnsb.com/>

## Beach Parking

Most beach parking in NSB is by day-pass only: <https://www.cityofnsb.com/1002/Parking-Pass-Information>

More information about local free lots & beach parking: <https://www.visitnsbfl.com/parking-lots-driving-beach-access>

## CORE FACULTY



**Shastri Akella's** debut novel, *The Sea Elephants* (Penguin India, Flatiron Books USA) was named a most anticipated debut by Good Morning America. He won the 2025 Desperate Literature Short Fiction Prize, with judge Otessa Mosfegh calling his entry a 'tender and haunting' story of queer love on the Kashmir border." Lauren Groff selected his story for the 2024 Best American Short Fiction. His stories were also winners in the 2025 Galley Beggar Prize, the 2024 William Faulkner Prize, and the 2024 BLR Goldenberg Contest. His fiction was published in 2025 in *The Massachusetts Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, and *Wasafiri London*.



**Kenzie Allen** is a Haudenosaunee poet and multimodal artist. Her debut poetry collection, *Cloud Missives* (Tin House, 2024), was a finalist for the National Poetry Series, the CLMP Firecracker Awards, the Indigenous Voices Awards, and the Maya Angelou Book Award, and was long listed for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Kenzie is the recipient of a 92NY Discovery Prize, an inaugural James Welch Prize for Indigenous Poets, the 49th Parallel Award in Poetry, grants from Ontario Arts Council, and fellowships from Vermont Studio Center, Aspen Summer Words, and In-Na-Po. Her poems can be found in *Narrative Magazine*, *POETRY*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Best New Poets*, and other venues, and her work extends into concrete poetry, digital media, and site-specific arts. A first-generation descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, she teaches creative writing and Indigenous literatures at York University in Toronto.



**Sarah LaBrie** is a TV writer and the author of *No One Gets to Fall Apart*, a memoir published by HarperCollins in 2024. The book was named a *New York Times* Editors' Pick and Notable Book of the Year and was highlighted by *Elle*, *NPR*, and *Esquire* as a best memoir of the year. Lorrie Moore calls *No One Gets to Fall Apart* "a brilliant memoir... a triumph of every kind of literary perseverance," and the Los Angeles Times hails it as "extraordinary." LaBrie has also written for *The Guardian*, *Guernica*, *Joyland*, *the Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Electric Literature*, and other publications. Her libretti have been performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Apollo Theater, and she has written on television series including *Minx*, *Blindspotting*, *Made for Love*, and *Love, Victor*. She has received fellowships from the Ucross Foundation, Yaddo, Sewanee, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and was nominated for Best Television Comedy Script at the 2024 Women's Image Network Awards for her work on *Blindspotting*. LaBrie earned her BA from Brown University in Comparative Literature and Literary Arts and an MFA from New York University as a Writers in the Schools Fellow. She grew up in Houston's Third Ward and now lives in Los Angeles with her husband, filmmaker Justin Lerner, and their dogs.





**Jeff Parker's** latest work is the novella *G v P* (Panhandler Books, 2024). He is also the author of *Where Bears Roam the Streets: A Russian Journal* (Harper Collins), the novel *Ovenman* (Tin House), and the short story collection *The Taste of Penny* (Dzanc). His many collaborative books and anthologies include: *Clean Rooms, Low Rates; Erratic Fire, Erratic Passion: The Poetry of Sportstalk; A Manner of Being: Writers on their Mentors; Rasskazy: New Fiction from a New Russia; Amerika: Russian Writers View the United States*; and *The Back of the Line*. His short fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *American Short Fiction, The Best American Nonrequired Reading, McSweeney's, Ploughshares, Tin House*, and others. He teaches fiction in the MFA in creative writing at UMass Amherst and is the co-founder and Director of the DISQUIET International Literary Program in Lisbon, Portugal.



**Terri Witek's** newest books include *Down Water Street* (aboveground press) and *copies: I loved you in the hard old way* (Sigilist Press). *W/\ SH*, a dystopian collaborative work with poet Amaranth Borsuk (Anhinga Press/ Visual Poetry Series), is forthcoming in 2026. Her work has been included in many journals and anthologies, including two from 2021: *JUDITH: Women Making Visual Poetry* (Timglasset) and *WAAVe* (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets). Witek's art/text mixes are often featured in collaboration: she teaches Poetry in the Expanded Field in Stetson University's low-residency MFA of the Americas with Brazilian visual artist Cyriaco Lopes; they also lead The Fernando Pessoa Game at the Disquiet International Literary Program in Lisbon. Their collaborative work has been represented at ARCO in Madrid and in Seoul, Chania (Crete), Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Lisbon, and Valencia, Spain.

## MFA STAFF



**Brendan Bowles**, Director of Stetson's MFA, is a writer from Toronto, Ontario. His work has been published and produced for stage and radio and has won some of the largest short story awards in Canada. He was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and a Fiction Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He is currently the Director of Stetson University's MFA in Creative Writing.



**Savannah Kater**, MFA Program Coordinator, is a New Englander who currently resides in Port Orange, Florida. Her work has been published in *Collateral Journal* and the *WAAYe* (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets) anthology. She has also curated site-specific visual poetry addressing the multi-generational effects of war. She is the CEO and founder of the nonprofit Scrap the Waste Corporation and is passionate about community outreach. Kater received three degrees from Stetson University, including her MFA.



**Ryan Rivas** is the author of the text-image artist book *Nextdoor in Colonialtown* (Autofocus, 2022), the novella *Lizard People* (ThirtyWest, 2023) and the forthcoming suburban gothic novel *The Estuary* (Texas Review Press, Fall 2027). He is the Publisher of Burrow Press, and the Coordinator of MFA Publishing at Stetson. This year, he's running a monthly haunted house book club at [ryanrivas.substack.com](http://ryanrivas.substack.com), where he also writes at the intersection of Florida, history, the gothic, colonialism, literature and art.



**Shelby Smotherman** is a writer, artist, and theatrical technician working in the Tampa Bay Area. Most often, she works with paint and lighting and uses language from her technical background to fill her poetry, as well as taking heavy influence from pop culture.

## EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP FACULTY



**Gabrielle Civil** is a black feminist performance artist, poet, and writer, originally from Detroit, MI. She has premiered over fifty original performance works around the world, most recently “s e a i n g” (2025), *My San Francisco* (2024), and *Black Weirdo School* (Pop Up Critique) (2023). Her performance memoirs include *Swallow the Fish* (2017), *Experiments in Joy* (2019), *(ghost gestures)* (2021), *the déjà vu* (2022) and *In & Out of Place* (2024) which documents her time making performance as a Fulbright fellow in Mexico. Her writing has also appeared in *New Daughters of Africa*, *Kitchen Table Translation*, *Migrating Pedagogies* and *A Mouth Holds Many Things*. Foundress of the Black Weirdo School, she earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from New York University and teaches at the California Institute of the Arts. The aim of her work is to open up space.

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**Lydi Conklin** has received a Stegner Fellowship, four Pushcart Prizes, a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award, a Creative Writing Fulbright in Poland, a grant from the Elizabeth George Foundation, and fellowships from MacDowell, Yaddo, Bread Loaf, Sewanee, Emory, Hedgebrook, Djerassi, the James Merrill House, Lighthouse Works, and elsewhere. Their fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *One Story*, *McSweeney’s*, *American Short Fiction*, and *VQR*. They have drawn cartoons for *The New Yorker* and *Narrative Magazine*, and graphic fiction for *The Believer*, *Lenny Letter*, and the **Steppenwolf Theater** in Chicago. They’ve served as the Helen Zell Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan and are now an Assistant Professor of Fiction at Vanderbilt University. Their story collection, *Rainbow Rainbow*, was longlisted for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Award and The Story Prize. Their novel, *Songs of No Provenance*, was longlisted for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize.



**Kevin Moffett** is the author of two short story collections, as well as *The Silent History*, a narrative app for mobile devices. His work has been awarded the National Magazine Award, the Nelson Algren Award, and a literature fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts. *Only Son*, published in November 2025, was longlisted for the National Book Award. He teaches in the creative writing program at the University of Virginia and lives in Charlottesville.



## PUBLISHING PANEL SPEAKER

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**Zoe-Aline Howard** joined Howland Literary as an intern while earning her BFA in Creative Writing and Publishing Certificate at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and has since graduated from both into building her list as an agent. She has had the privilege to work across publishing in multiple capacities, including an internship at Lookout Books, and her current role as a literary publicist at Pine State Publicity.

## GRADUATING ARTISTS



**blaze** is an interdisciplinary artist and human from Tallahassee, FL. blaze is quite literally the product of many fires a(blaze). blaze is most enlivened by performance and time-based media, as well as installation, multi-media art practices and the word. blaze also relishes the space and potential of a sketchbook.

**Daniella “Ella” DiPasquale** is a poet, amateur photographer, and final-semester MFA student at Stetson University. She has authored and self-published a chapbook of poetry titled *Boyfriend(ish)* (2022). Her poems and photography have been featured in several online publications and showcased in an art exhibition at Stetson University. Ella’s recent work explores the phenomenology of the feline species, delving into how the animal world, particularly that of cats, intertwines with humanity and spirituality. Affectionately known as the “Crazy Cat Poetess” at Stetson, Ella is renowned for hosting cat funerals in fountains and gifting cat hair to her fellow MFA residents.



## ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE



**Hoyt Bankston** is an aspiring from Central Florida currently focused on a historical fiction novel set during the first crusade.



**Jonathan Burton** is a Writer, Actor, and Director native to Brooklyn, NY. His multidiscipline approach to storytelling brings unique life to all his creative endeavors, especially in the realm of film and live performance. Jonathan's artistry is a dedication to his passion for Black Liberation, his Caribbean heritage, and love for the world of sci-fi. He treats every form as a conjuring, a prayer to the truth, and a ladder into the abyss, hoping to one day uncover something worth leaving behind.

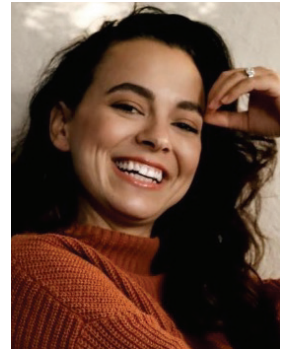


**Ryan Forrest** is currently a student at Stetson University working on publishing his second novel and writing his third publication. Ryan has found his "calling" with goals to improve his skills and eventually teach others how to write creatively.



**Dejah Griffin** is a bi-racial Black poet, designer, and single mother living in Washington state. She earned her BA in Graphic Design from Flagler College in 2018 and brings a multidisciplinary lens to her creative work, blending design, spoken word, and poetry. Her work explores relationships, spirituality, and the way time and space shape who we are. She shares her writing in community spaces and workshops, guided by a deep interest in the stories we carry, the ones we choose to tell, and how curiosity before assumption can build deeper connection. For her, poetry is a powerful tool for understanding the world, especially when it's honest, unfinished, and a little messy.

**Courtney Hanks** is a writer, illustrator, and educator based in Orange City, Florida. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from the University of Central Florida and is currently pursuing an MFA in Prose at Stetson University. Her work is characterized by lyrical prose, emotional resonance, and a focus on themes of memory, identity, and the quiet complexities of everyday life. As both a storyteller and visual artist, she is drawn to narratives that explore the intersection of beauty, wonder, and human vulnerability.



**Bret Hoveskeland** is a writer, editor, poet, local spoken word artist, and program advisory coordinator for Full Sail University. A Midwesterner by birth, he now lives in Orlando, FL, with his wife and two children. He has held roles as a typesetter, book designer, and editor for a local book publisher, doing everything from writing back cover copy and social media book ads to completing developmental edits for a variety of authors' work. He holds a B.A. in English and Communications, with a certificate in publishing, and his fiction and poetry have been published in online literary journals and print. He is active in the Orlando literary scene and has been a prize-winning spoken word artist/poetry slam competitor, in addition to being a prior nominee for Orlando Weekly's annual Best Spoken Word Artist competition. You can follow him and find more of his work at [thewritelight.com](http://thewritelight.com).



**Deidre Jackson** is a quintessential romance junkie who once devoured 200 romance novels in a single summer before their senior year. They've always enjoyed writing stories and sharing them with others. Their publishing career began in the fourth grade with a best-selling class newspaper, which was quickly shut down by the school principal for competing with the school's official one. These days, Deidre is channeling their passion for the written word through teaching English and Drama to high school students.



**Robin Mimna** hasn't quite settled on whether she wants to be a journalist, novelist, historian, or poet — so she's doing all of them just to be safe. Based in Lake Helen, Florida, she writes for *The West Volusia Beacon* and other publications, covering community stories, local history, and LGBTQ+ issues. She's also active in several arts and heritage groups, including the Enterprise Museum, the Lake Helen League for Better Living, and Volusia Pride. Her first novel, *Hating Jessie Harmon*, was published in 2022. She is currently developing a project on Henry Flagler and forced labor in Florida, and her poetry has appeared in *Caliope Magazine* and *Deep South Magazine*. Her writing — both prose and poetry — centers on local stories and overlooked histories.







As the owner of Healing Through Artistic Mediums LLC, **Ayoola Olubukola** is a narrative artist, multimedia expressionist, published poet and self-titled griot. She is a prolific creative who centers vulnerability and intentional release, using her voice, intuition, poetry, oil pastels, meals, gouache, and visual media graphics as some of her differing creative mediums. Her work dissects elements of intergenerational inheritance, while focusing on cultural identities and medical experiences through poetic ethnographies & narrative performances. Her artist tag—A.O.Catharsis—and poet persona—Her Silence Speaks—inspire her to advocate for a need of catharsis in our healing communities. With almost fifteen year's worth of service within the Sickle Cell Disease community as an ambassador, creative researcher, health coach, liaison, patient advocate, and presenter, Ayoola is also a Temple University Alumna and current MFA graduate student at Stetson University.



**Zoë April Poulette** is a Florida based sound artist, writer, and somatic practitioner, among other things. Her work investigates themes of embodiment, queerness, and ordinary acts of transcendence.



**Melanie Rufrano**, Stetson MFA Prose student, is a writer from Long Island, New York. While publishing poetry in literary magazines throughout university, Melanie focused her studies in cognitive sciences, psychology, and neuroscience. She is a Magna Cum Laude graduate from USCB, and member of The National Society of Leadership and Success, now pursuing her passion in fiction.



**Marie Ketsia Theodore-Pharel** (prefers to be called Ketsia--ket-see-uh) was born in Port-au-Prince Haiti, currently lives in South Florida with her two youngest children and husband. Ketsia earned a bachelor's from Tufts University and a Masters in English from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She was a recipient of the 2017 and 2019 State of Florida Folklife apprenticeship award for storytelling.

**Cynde Valenti** is a writer and interdisciplinary artist in Ormond Beach, Florida. She graduated with an Associate of Science degree in interactive media from Daytona State College in 2017. Upon graduation, she was inducted into the college's Hall of Fame. She then graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in digital arts from Stetson University in 2019 and is a recipient of Stetson's Ethan F. Greene Award. She has written professionally for WNDB News Daytona Beach and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU). In the Office of Alumni Engagement at ERAU's Daytona Beach and World-wide campuses, she managed digital communications, edited Talon Talks podcasts, and wrote for the alumni magazine, Lift. Cynde is currently writing a memoir of her Covid experience between visits to the beach and creating poetic works.



**Taylor West** graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University with a BA in English and a minor in Creative Writing. There, he served as the executive editor of his student magazine, the Mangrove Review, and attended the Sanibel Island Writers' Conference. Ever since he was a kid, he's always been drawn to stories that bend time, twist genres, or take unexpected turns. In his spare time, he likes to play Dungeons & Dragon and Magic: The Gathering, use his AMC A-List pass as much as humanly possible, and do improv comedy when the fancy suits him. At Stetson, he hopes to keep creating stories that transport and inspire readers.



# DECEMBER 2025 RESIDENCY SCHEDULE

NOTE: Student attendance is required at all events unless otherwise noted.  
NOTE: All program-wide events take place in the Blackbox Theater unless otherwise noted.  
NOTE: All meals, for those who have opted for meal plans, will be served in the Commons.  
NOTE: Welcome and Closing dinners are open to all and will be served in the Commons.

## SATURDAY, DEC 6: DAY 1, ARRIVAL

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- 1-4:30pm** Arrival and check in at the Atlantic Center for the Arts  
*Welcome Center (First large building beside parking lot)*
- 4:45pm** Tour of campus (optional, encouraged for new students)  
*Meet at the Welcome Center*
- 6:30pm** Welcome Dinner for all students, faculty and guests.  
*The Commons*

## SUNDAY, DEC 7: DAY 2

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- 8-9:30am** Breakfast
- Morning** Individual Student Conferences with Core Faculty
- \*10am** **\*For graduating students only:** tech run-through with Shelby
- 12:30pm** Lunch
- 2-3:30pm** Exploratory Workshops  
*Session 1 Exploratory Workshops will meet in the following:*  
Gabrielle Civil: Dance Studio  
Lydi Conklin: Writing Studio
- 5:30-6:30pm** Dinner
- 7-8:15pm** Graduating Student Performance and Q&A  
blaze and Daniella “Ella” DiPasquale

## MONDAY, DEC 8: DAY 3

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-12:30pm	Core Faculty Workshops <i>Faculty workshops will meet in the following locations:</i> Shastri Akella: Field House Kenzie Allen: Music Studio Sarah LaBrie: Writing Studio Jeff Parker: Sculpture Studio Terri Witek: Library
12:30pm	Lunch
2-3:30pm	Exploratory Workshops <i>Session 1 Exploratory Workshops continued</i>
5:30-6:30pm	Dinner
7-8:15pm:	Evening Performance Kenzie Allen & Gabrielle Civil

## TUESDAY, DEC 9: DAY 4

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-12:30pm	Core Faculty Workshop
2-3:30pm	Exploratory Workshops <i>Session 1 final workshop</i>
5:30-6:30pm	Dinner
7-8:15pm:	Evening Performance <i>Lydi Conklin, Jeff Parker &amp; Ryan Rivas</i>
8:30pm	Submission party & Burrow Press Pop-up (optional) <i>Field House</i>

## WEDNESDAY, DEC 10: DAY 5

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-12:30pm	Core Faculty Workshop
12:30pm	Lunch
2-5:30pm	Free afternoon
5:30-6:30pm	Dinner
To follow	Free evening

## THURSDAY, DEC 11: DAY 6

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-12:30pm	Core Faculty Workshop
12:30pm	Lunch
2-3:30pm	Exploratory Workshop: <i>Session 2 Exploratory Workshops will meet in the following:</i> Kevin Moffett: Dance Studio
4:00pm	Pitching Boldly: Zoe-Aline Howard presentation and Q&A on book publicity and literary agents
5:30-6:30pm	Dinner
7-8:15pm	Evening Performance <i>Shastri Akella &amp; Terri Witek</i>



## FRIDAY, DEC 12: DAY 7

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-12:30pm	Core Faculty Workshop
12:30pm	Lunch
2-3:30pm	Exploratory Workshop Session 2 exploratory workshops continued
5:30-6:30pm	Dinner
7-8:15pm	Evening Performance Sarah LaBrie & Kevin Moffett

## SATURDAY, DEC 13: DAY 8

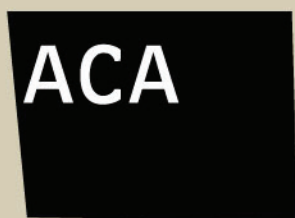
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8-9:30am	Breakfast
10am-11:30am	Exploratory Workshops Session 2 final workshop *** Note: no core faculty workshops today ***
12:30pm	Lunch
2:00-2:45pm	Tech run through with Shelby ahead of student performances
4:00-6:00pm	Student Performances
To Follow	Closing dinner for all students, faculty and guests

## SUNDAY, DEC 14: DAY 9, DEPARTURE

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8-9:30am	Breakfast
by noon	Goodbyes and check out



- a Pabst **Visitor Center & Gallery**
- b Bell **Administration Building**
- c Urban **Ampitheater**
- d Wilkinson **Library**
- e Whatmore **Commons**
- f Hubbard **Music Studio**
- g Thompson **Fieldhouse**
- h Pugh **Sculpture Studio**

- i Everbach **Painting Studio**
- j Roberson **Dance Studio**
- k **Writer's Studio**
- l Harris **Theater**
- m **Associate Housing**
- n **Master Artist Cottages**
- o **Community Artist-in-Residence Studio**

**Hours:** Mon-Fri 10AM-4PM  
 Sat 10AM-2PM  
 Sun & holidays closed

**ATLANTIC CENTER FOR THE ARTS**  
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