

Candidate Statement

Dr. Heather Akou

Associate Professor of Fashion Design

Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture + Design

I started my career at IU in 2004 as an assistant professor in the department of Apparel Merchandising and Interior Design. As a remnant of the department of Home Economics (founded in 1913 and disbanded in the mid-1980s), AMID never had a PhD program and was severely underfunded. 80% of my faculty colleagues were lecturers or adjuncts. In 2016, we merged with part of the Hope School of Fine Arts to become the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture + Design. As the last chair of AMID, I was heavily involved in the merger, which was both exciting and maddening, a real peek behind the administrative curtain.

The first time I served on the BFC (2018-20), shared governance was still something that administrators claimed to respect and often did respect in their actions. I thought I might be interested in a higher-level administrative position, so I decided to serve on the BFC to gain more insight into campus-level decision-making. When my two-year term finished, I decided to step back and focus on my research for a while. This year, as an active member of the University Alliance for Racial Justice (a statewide organization that advocates for the civil rights of students, staff, and faculty in higher education) I have been working hard to limit the harms of anti-DEI legislation in this state.

My reasons for serving on the BFC now are very different from my previous term. It is time for the Bloomington Faculty Council to take the **faculty** part seriously. We are not just here to bend the knee to administrators. We are here as scholars and educators to serve the people of Indiana with our deep knowledge and passion for science, business, law, the arts, technology, history, languages, and many other topics. We have so much to offer our students and our communities, but we—as faculty—need to decide on our priorities and make our needs clear. You might not be aware that at IU-Indianapolis, our colleagues on the IFC spend time in every bi-weekly meeting discussing topics of immediate relevance such as the impact of SEA 202 on classroom instruction and faculty careers. Agendas and other materials are posted on a website that anyone in the public can access: <https://facultycouncil.indianapolis.iu.edu/Meetings/Meeting-Materials-And-Minutes> If Indianapolis faculty can enjoy this level of transparency and shared governance, I see no reason why we cannot here in Bloomington.