

Root Doctor is the name of an unusual film that combined the efforts of students at four North Carolina film studies programs. **Piedmont Community College, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina A&T, and Guilford Technical Community College** and other schools joined forces to provide a professional production environment, make better use of state and sponsor funding, and strengthen the network of media production professionals in the region through production of a narrative film.



COLLABORATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS

“Carolina Collaborations grew out of faculty frustration,” says Emily Edwards of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Department of Broadcasting and Cinema. “In recent years the production climate in North Carolina has offered fewer opportunities for professional producers, fewer film internships for students, and limited opportunities for communities to tell their stories. Through this program, the different colleges combined their production expertise, resources, and students to create a learning environment that is richer and more exciting. We are able to take our students beyond a simple classroom exercise to make something that challenges all of us on a variety of levels.”

Part of the idea for Carolina Collaborations is to bring North Carolina artists together in the production of narrative films that celebrate the history, culture, and folklore of North Carolina. Another goal is to lure more production to the region based on a skilled talent pool.

“We believe that partnerships formed between institutions and among individuals provide a showcase for university and community talent as well as an opportunity for learning,” says Edwards.

The story follows four women as they search for a cure for their troubles from an infamous root doctor, Onzi Jack. The man is rumored to have magical power beyond a simple cure for warts or relief for a colicky baby. The legendary magical powers of root doctors are part of the oral traditions in rural communities throughout the state.

Work was divided up based on the expertise of the various faculties and the interests, abilities and needs of the students. Edwards wrote, produced and directed. Michael Corbett, who is on the faculty of Piedmont Community College co-produced and served as director of photography. His students performed roles in camera, grip and electric, art, and sound departments. Professor T.J.

Johnson of Guilford Technical Community College directed the recording of the musical score along with his students, who engineered the music recording and mix for the soundtrack and CD.

Local members of the community also donated their skills and expertise, which included stunt driving, dancing and acting. The Carolina Pinnacle Studios donated use of a soundstage. Much of the equipment was loaned to the production.

Corbett says that film was the medium of choice because it was the only way to capture the full range of color and contrast necessary to visually tell the story. “The story takes place at golden hour or night,” he says. “I needed the latitude and color range that one only gets from film. Most of the actors on this project were African Americans, each with subtle differences in flesh tones. It required a medium that could capture the full range of contrast and subtle color differences in both the black-and-white faces.