

Hoang-Anh Tran Interview Responses

1. Can you give me a brief overview of your work history?

For most of my life, I have worked in administration within an academic setting where I am surrounded by students, faculty, and staff who were pursuing a higher calling to impact and change the world in some minute way using their gifts and graces. Prior to my foray into the financial services industry, I was very blessed to have had the opportunity to work in a variety of educational settings, from theological education at an Episcopal Seminary in Berkeley, CA, to legal education at Wash U Law in St. Louis, and then higher education at a Division I university, Syracuse University. Each teaching institution has taught me the value of the trifecta of teaching, research, and service. That is, regardless of role and position in life, we are called to continuously learn, develop, and give back to the communities that have shaped our sense of identity.

I currently work at UMB Financial Corporation in the Human Resources division, where our focus is on attracting, developing, and retaining the best talent to serve our customers and clients in a variety of ways. Some people have asked about my departure from academia and wondered why I chose to join a bank and/or a corporate setting. For me, it is not about a departure per se, and more like a life-changing exploration to shore up on what it means to be in the people industry, to focus on helping people achieve their highest potential.

Regardless of the institution and the industry, whether academia or finances, my goal remains the same: to help influence and enhance the communities where I work and live, and to support and elevate the people whom we serve. No matter which organization I collaborate with and commit to, I focus on bringing a broader awareness of diversity & inclusion, strategic direction and relational development and management. The *relational* aspects of my work over the years keep me buoyed and energize me into innovative collaboration; I strive to make a difference through my actions, amongst a group of like-minded peers, and try to follow through with my commitments because as the Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho observed, “[t]he world is changed by your example, not by your opinion.”

2. What history do you have in philanthropy?

James Baldwin once wrote: “Now this country is going to be transformed. It will not be transformed by an act of God, but by all of us, by you and me. I don’t believe any longer that we can afford to say that it is entirely out of our hands. We made the world we’re living in and we have to make it over.”

I firmly believe that we can “make it over” and transform our world through the steady, frequent actions of committed individuals dedicated to peace, social justice, community, and philanthropy. As I’ve migrated and transplanted myself from the West coast to the East coast of the U.S., and then in recent years relocating to the Midwest, I strive to contribute in impactful ways through a variety of organizations. I am currently serving on the education committee of the board of Kansas City Young Audiences, the largest non-profit arts education provider in the region; our mission is to help provide programming that strengthens a child’s understanding of key educational concepts and to empower educators to integrate arts into core curriculum. Arts-integrated curricula will be vitality important to the holistic development of every young person whom we want to train up to join our future workforce. It is a necessary and rewarding investment in our future.

Not only is it important to invest in our younger generations, it is equally important for our communities to continue developing our workforce of all generations and backgrounds. That is why I also serve as a member of the Business Engagement Advisory Committee for the KC Degrees initiative, which provides support services to help students return to college for post-secondary credentials. The advisory committee focuses on helping connect regional business partners with talents who have a desire and need for continuous learning. We live in a robust midwest region with increasing diversity and vitality, and businesses are beginning to realize that the ROI for developing our workforce far exceeds any expectations that we might have projected, and ultimately, is priceless. What better way for us to continue this trajectory of growth for our city and region?

3. Why come to the Folly Theater Board? Do you have any major goals you want to accomplish in your full tenure at the Folly?

When my spouse and I transplanted to Kansas City – I from Syracuse, NY, and he from St. Louis, MO – we both sensed the boutique charm of this lovely city. We continue to be amazed when learning about the rich histories embedded in the memories of the people as well as the buildings and structures here. I've heard some native Kansas Citians say that they wished we had the grand beauties like the architecture in Chicago or perhaps Paris or Amsterdam. I feel differently. I am excited by our burgeoning populations and businesses because that means we are embracing diverse cultures and peoples. I am thrilled that we continue to grow and stretch our spaces by balancing the old with the new, and by enhancing structures and innovating programs. I believe that what is being provided by the Folly Theater is immensely critical to maintaining the vitality of our city, by expanding our experiences and appreciating what history teaches us about our human-ness. We are committed as Kansas Citians to preserving our histories in variegated ways, and I am honored to be able to serve on the Board of the Folly Theater to help preserve Our Lady. As one of the newest members of our board, I look forward to partnering with fellow Board members to explore how to deliver on programming and sustain The Folly in all her regal glory.

4. What is a weird/funny/interesting fact about you?

Three interesting things about me:

- Because I work in the financial industry, most people are surprised to find out that I have a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing, specializing in poetry and creative non-fiction.
- I am a geographical hybrid: I was born in southern Viet Nam, raised in southern California, studied in Dallas, TX, and Wilmington, NC, and worked in Berkeley, CA, before coming to the Midwest.
- When I was five, my family used to have a pet turkey that terrorized me to no end. It is not without pleasure that I thoroughly enjoy turkey during our family's Thanksgiving holidays.

5. Where can individuals learn more about you/your company?

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