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## Report of the President

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*Of all the threats to the institution, the most dangerous come from within. Not the least among them is the smugness that believes the institution's value is so self-evident that it no longer needs explication, its mission is so manifest that it no longer requires definition and articulation.* — A. Bartlett Giamatti, former President of Yale University and former U.S. Commissioner of Baseball

I believe that it is fair to say that NASM, with its extensive and ongoing efforts in the area of advocacy, has fully embraced the need to define and communicate effectively the importance and value of an education in music.

As we all know, though, during the past few years the need to communicate the value of our work has escalated significantly. Our budgets are down, our endowed funds seem under constant threat, the prospects for improvement in the foreseeable future are dim, and the national conversation about higher education is focused on escalating tuition costs and the dismal job market. To add to the drama, a number of books have appeared recently challenging the whole of higher education in fundamental ways. During the past couple of months, I took the occasion to read a few of the more prominent of these books in an effort to gain a sense of the place of music in this evolving national conversation. While much of the dialog in these books raises issues of major concern for all in higher education, at the end of the readings I found a renewed appreciation for our work as musicians in the academy. Allow me a moment to explain.

The first work I examined was *Higher Education: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids – And What We Can Do About It* by Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus. The authors assert that “higher education has lost track of its original purpose: to challenge the minds and imaginations of this nation’s young people.” A central criticism is that the “Professorial Campus,” as they call it, has lost the “primacy of students and...and an appreciation for an activity as joyful and useful as teaching.” While Peter Brooks of the *New York Review of Books* considers this work “short on reason and long on animus,” the notion that professors are focused only on their research and profoundly disinterested in teaching students is very much out there, particularly among those in political power.

Another high profile voice belongs to Mark C. Taylor whose 2010 book *Crisis on Campus: A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities* notes the extraordinary financial challenges faced by both students and institutions and considers the current system unsustainable. He too believes that institutions do not give appropriate priority attention to excellence in teaching.

A more recent work gaining considerable attention is *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* by Arum and Roska. This work also raises doubts concerning the quality of undergraduate learning in the United States. It notes in particular the minimal exposure to rigorous coursework and the modest investment of effort by large numbers of students with the result that overall gains in learning are disturbingly low. The Collegiate Learning Assessment test is used to confirm the dismal outcomes described throughout the text. The authors also assert that

the “over-reliance on student course evaluations creates perverse incentives for professors to demand little and give out good grades.” While Peter Brooks is again somewhat critical, finding this work to be “an indiscriminate flailing about in criticism of the university, some of it justified, some of it misdirected, and some pernicious,” the evidence presented is disturbing and does not speak well of the work of higher education today.

So what about music? How are we doing? I believe very well indeed. Across the scope of my career in higher education, I have witnessed a most remarkable advance in the technical accomplishment and musical sophistication exhibited by our students. No one with the capacity to judge could assert that our programs are musically “adrift.” Furthermore, as leaders of these programs we have every reason not to accept these criticisms. Public performance provides nowhere to hide.

While the extraordinary advance in performance skill may be attributed to many things, including the ready access to near flawless recordings and the ongoing improvements to musical instruments, I would suggest that central to our success has been the fine work of music faculty members who have remained focused upon excellent teaching—the one-to-one model may be expensive, but it is also quite effective. Clearly, the welfare and education of students have remained top priorities in our music programs.

Rather than citing problems and challenges in higher education, Davis and Goldberg focus on ways to move the enterprise forward in *The Future of Learning in a Digital Age*. In this report, the authors discuss new opportunities for shared and interactive learning made possible by the Internet. Of particular interest is the notion of participatory learning, a mode of interaction where students use the new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, and comment on each other’s work. Interestingly, the authors note that participatory learning at its best produces “learning ensembles” in which members both support and sustain each other’s efforts. The parallel to musical ensembles is not perfect, but it is quite interesting. Collaborations, both digital and musical in the traditional sense, can certainly be seen as activities leading to outcomes not available through individual effort.

A digital interaction of an entirely different sort occurred in the School of Music at Ohio State University on April 1, 1991, a little more than a year before I arrived on campus. A performance event titled “Live But Not In Person,” was broadcast on WOSU featuring a reproducing concert grand piano. This computer-controlled instrument might best be described as a midi-keyboard on steroids. The physical actions of the mechanism during a performance are represented by digital values that can be accessed by the attached computer to reproduce a performance with remarkable accuracy. During “Live But Not In Person,” the computer-controlled grand piano played back recorded performances in an empty hall—a fascinating, clever, and fun event, but certainly not a warm and fuzzy one.

Skip ahead a number of years and we encounter the Met Broadcasts. Called *Live in HD*, these broadcasts have gained great popularity in many communities. From the standpoint of the empty hall event at OSU, one might consider the Met HD series as an example of “Live and *Considerably More* in Person.” Though the contact with the artists is still at “digital-arms-length,” the overall presentation provides remarkable intimacy with the performers. With such compelling performance experiences available at local theatres, it is not difficult to understand why some in higher education might fear that future musical performances will eventually detach themselves completely from living, breathing musicians. A recent research report published by the National Endowment for the Arts, though, finds that “people who engage with the arts through media technologies attend live performances or arts exhibits at two to three times the rate of non-media arts participants.” This is good news, particularly for those of us involved with the training of living and breathing musicians.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that our work as music teachers has been and continues to be very successful. Our students are better at what they do than the students enrolled in our institutions 20 or 30 years ago, and our instructional model, with its emphasis on both individual achievement and the collaborative engagement of ensemble performance, feels particularly good during a time when higher education is under attack for failing to educate students.

While I clearly believe that our music programs are full of good news, the ongoing emphasis on advocacy by NASM underscores the challenge associated with the effective communication of that excellence. We can't roll out scores from the "Collegiate Learning Assessment" test to demonstrate our excellence, and frankly, we wouldn't want to do so in any case. Even though our many public performances provide ongoing evidence of the quality of our programs, it is essential that we continually seek other opportunities to present our excellence and affirm the importance of our work.

As I have observed music programs operating within their local constituencies during the past few years, I have come to believe that perhaps the greatest return on the effort to communicate excellence occurs in situations where our students are most directly involved. As a result, I believe it is both timely and very smart to seek new ways to connect our students and their good work directly with those in our campus and surrounding communities. I am advocating "Live and *Absolutely* In Person" enhancements to the many activities that music programs traditionally do on campus and in the community. When our students are performing in intimate settings—when they are interacting *directly* with donors and friends—such occasions provide perhaps the best opportunities for them to demonstrate their excellence and by extension, that of the programs that have educated them.

A number of years ago it occurred to me that one of the least effective annual events at my institution was actually the one designed to celebrate the accomplishments of our most gifted students—the annual spring semester Honors Awards Convocation. This event, as traditionally staged, involved a highly structured sequence of award presentations in the main performance venue. At the end of the event, I always felt that neither the audience members nor the excellent students were terribly well served.

We now host a new and, to my mind, much improved event. Rather than a presentation in a performance hall, we host a luncheon. Approximately 200 people attend annually, comprising annual donors, major donors, scholarship recipients, and university administrators. The actual ceremony lasts no more than 10 minutes with presentations of awards and scholarships made only to the very top students. The other honored students are not left out, however, as their names as well as those of all donors and annual supporters are listed in the program. The remainder of the time, the donors enjoy lunch with the students and administrators. To the extent possible, major donors share tables with the students supported by the scholarships they have funded. Both donors and students are enriched by the opportunity to get to know each other on a more personal level with the result that each understands and values the other to a greater degree. A similar emphasis on donor/student *direct* interaction is used for each of the various events we host annually to thank our local community supporters for their presence at our performances and their generous gifts.

I have found that experiences like these leave very positive impressions in the minds of campus administrators and move new friends of the unit to enthusiastic annual supporters and even major donors over time. This *in person* approach has generated only enthusiastic response and has helped sustain a positive buzz around the program, both on campus and in the community.

I offer these examples not because they are particularly innovative—many programs host similar activities—but rather to underscore the value of focusing on the core of our work—the highly effective education of our student musicians. It is not possible, nor is it even important for us, to influence everyone all the time. Rather, if each effort at such personal outreach and engagement reaches only a few, over time, the overall appreciation of the quality of the program and its important work will be significantly enhanced.

In addition to serving as a resource for live musical performances, our music units also have wonderful opportunities to serve the local community as educational resources. The importance of such engagement is evident in the new Community Engagement Classification by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This designation is awarded to institutions that have demonstrated partnerships with the local community of a truly reciprocal nature where benefits accrue to both the institution and to the community partner. Such partnerships can involve music students in teaching and performing opportunities in local schools—another opportunity for direct, personal engagement by our gifted students.

In addition to developing and nurturing more direct interactions between our students and our donors and community partners, it is equally important to take every opportunity to demonstrate value and excellence to our faculty and administrative colleagues within our institutions.

A recent and ambitious effort is the initiative launched by Christopher Kendall and his colleagues at the University of Michigan. This initiative entered the national conversation through a meeting hosted on the Michigan Campus in May 2011 titled *The Role of Art-Making and the Arts in the Research University*. This meeting aimed to provide a showcase for arts-integration initiatives in universities across the U.S., to initiate a trans-disciplinary program on research, to begin a national effort to make a sophisticated case for integrating arts-making and the arts into the research university, and to build a network among leading U.S. research universities to support further efforts along these lines. Future issues include curricular strategies, co-curricular strategies, research efforts needed to support the enterprise, and methods for case-making and advocacy. The Michigan Initiative clearly has the potential to enhance the place of the arts in research institutions—perhaps its outcomes will also benefit institutions with other missions.

We will continue this discussion on Advocacy and the Community with two sessions scheduled for this meeting. The first of these sessions focuses on the relationship of the music unit to the larger institution, while the second considers opportunities for engagement with the surrounding community.

We also have sessions designed to continue our exploration of the undergraduate curriculum. In past years we have talked about this topic together as a whole. This year, we are looking at a number of the parts. We are honored to have specialists from the fields of musicianship and theory, ethnomusicology and musicology, and performance and ensemble. We are grateful for their work and that of the professional organizations in these fields, and we look forward to their perspectives on the undergraduate curriculum topics we have been discussing.

Also, our undergraduate curriculum work was greatly enhanced about five weeks ago with the NASM Web publication of *Question Sets for Undergraduate Programs* and *Sample Patterns for Music Education Degrees*. More about these important resources a bit later.

In a related area, we are offering a session devoted to a discussion of graduate entrance and diagnostic examinations—a topic of increasing importance, given our current emphasis on undergraduate studies. I believe that it is *essential* that graduate diagnostic examinations not be a barrier to curricular innovation.

This year we will also continue our work on multidisciplinary multimedia, initiate a discussion on hearing health, and provide three sessions on management issues of particular significance in these challenging times. I would like to extend special thanks to all who are presenting as well as the Regional Chairs for their work in developing programs.

Recognition also goes to the members of the NASM Working Group on Music Teacher Preparation that will complete its task at this meeting. Robert A. Cutietta, Betty Anne Younker, Leila Heil, Linda Thompson, Janet R. Barrett, William Fredrickson, and André de Quadros deserve our thanks for multiple contributions including the development of the just published *Question Sets and Curricular Patterns*, a pre-meeting workshop, and a session on synthesis.

NASM is grateful for the work that has been accomplished on hearing health, made possible in part through the new relationship between NASM and the Performing Arts Medicine Association. We look forward to future common efforts to support the work and health of musicians.

Another noteworthy achievement has been the Web publication of resources on creative multidisciplinary convergence and technologies. The CAAA Working Group has done an outstanding job in distilling information to assist administrators. We thank in particular Douglas Lowry for his work with this group, and also his colleagues from the other arts.

And of course, I must recognize our outstanding staff in Reston and our Executive Director, Sam Hope, for his truly extraordinary contributions to NASM and the other arts accrediting organizations. More than anything else, his wisdom, his skillful management, and his visionary leadership have shaped NASM over many years into an organization that has served and continues to serve our profession in remarkable ways.

Previously I spoke about community. We all recognize the importance of cultivating community. I want to speak briefly about another essential community, the community in this room including the institutions not personally represented this hour. Our continuing mutual cultivation of this community is critically important. Many challenges lie ahead, and any loss of community *here* would weaken the capabilities of music in higher education at the worst possible time. Our togetherness protects us in many ways, and enables us to meet local challenges with mutual support. Our interests are connected, as is our future.

It is essential that we face one issue head-on whenever it appears in our local efforts, and that is the notion that the NASM Commission will not approve new ideas or approaches. This is simply not the case and never has been. It would take another speech to review all the ways NASM has supported innovation over the years. Today, I simply ask each of you to join me in leading our colleagues on campus to a clear understanding of what NASM is doing now to promote local curricular reviews for the purpose of seeking better ways to teach and learn. It helps to point out that the traditional ways of delivering instruction are not the standards used by NASM. The *tradition* is *not* the standard. The texts of the standards are the standards. There are many ways to meet the competencies, some not yet discovered. Let's help everyone get away from the practice of saying "we can't do that because NASM won't let us" every time they are opposed to something.

While our current focus on the undergraduate curriculum was initiated for a number of reasons, one of the key reasons concerned the need to move our thinking from a "tradition-bound" model to one of flexibility. The *Question Sets and Sample Curricular Patterns* just posted on the Web site are ample current evidence that the Association is encouraging diverse approaches. NASM's position is to think and explore.

And, if thinking, exploring and experience show that the standards need to be changed, NASM has a strong consultative procedure for finding a new consensus on issues large and small. Please do not assume NASM's position on an idea. Contact the staff, and they will help you clarify quickly so that your campus discussion can proceed unencumbered by misperception or misinformation.

These matters of community, creativity, and clarity are more important than ever for another reason. As noted earlier, in his work *Crisis on Campus*, Mark Taylor makes the argument that higher education as we know it today is unsustainable. As events have unfolded in local, state, and national contexts over the past few years, it is not at all difficult to appreciate his point of view. Change will occur, and we all must adapt. While much in our future is clearly beyond our control, we can certainly prepare ourselves to be as flexible as possible in the manner that we respond to these challenges. If, to use Giamatti's word, we *explicate* our strong programmatic outcomes and the student-centered, high quality work of our colleagues; if we continue to allow our students the creative space to exemplify the excellence in our programs; if we constantly seek ways to add value to our campus community and our surrounding communities; if we work together and support each other; and if we can approach any curricular or resource challenges we might encounter with a sense of flexibility and a belief in the core value of our efforts, I am confident that we will be in the best position to find a path forward that will enable us to preserve our excellence and continue to advance our profession whatever the times may bring.

Thank you.

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