

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**  
**Annual Meeting 2012**

**Report of the President**

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It is a great honor and pleasure to be with you today in San Diego. It is interesting and rather sobering to remember that this Association has been working and meeting since before any of us were born. Times have changed, certain things are different, but at a high conceptual level NASM represents a continuity of basic purpose. This purpose is centered in relationships among music, the people who work with music professionally, and the various types of work they do. In every meeting from the first until now, those representing member institutions have met special responsibilities to this basic purpose, a purpose that can only be fulfilled by NASM as a corporate entity. We are that corporate entity. We and our successors must keep continuity and change in a productive relationship. I am confident that we and they will do so. I will talk a bit more about our corporate responsibility and the continuity/change relationship in the first part of this report.

This year's meeting marks my last as your President. NASM has been a very important part of my professional life for nearly 30 years. The honor of being your president is one of the greatest treasures I hold. The colleagues and friends I have made through my association with this organization have amused, enlightened, and supported me throughout many years in music administration. My appreciation is boundless.

As I will also be completing my work as dean at Florida State this Spring Semester, I am looking back with considerable gratitude for the years of rewarding work I have enjoyed as a music administrator. My experiences have been rich and varied and have included tenures at small and large institutions, both public and private. While the governance models in place at these institutions varied widely, in each I was privileged to learn a great deal about effective administration in collegiate settings. I will share a few observations about individual administrative work in the second part of this report.

I will close by considering briefly the relationship between our corporate and individual responsibilities and the meaning of that relationship for the future of music in higher education.

Let us begin considering our corporate responsibility with something immediate. Let's talk about change. This year NASM has reviewed and approved standards and guidelines in areas that connect music to technology and also music and technology to the other art and design forms. We have revised and extended our standards on sacred music to address new opportunities and conditions. We are continuing to address the undergraduate curriculum. Together, we have

noted the tradition-bound nature of prototypical curricular models currently in place, as well as the many agents of change encouraging us, even forcing us, to consider and adopt more relevant, nimble curricular modes. We are exploring together how we can best ensure that our students leave us with the preparation they will need for long, successful careers. On other change-oriented fronts, the Commission has worked with institutions that are developing new curricular ideas. The National Office Staff has kept us informed of policy events changing the landscape, and provided analyses to help us understand what is happening and make informed decisions at home. We have engaged in productive work that connects us with related fields. For example, addressing health and safety in new ways, working on content and curricular issues with the other art forms, and making new connections to technology.

These and other changes contribute to the Association's continuity. How is this possible? The answer is a simple one. We, the members of NASM, acting corporately have today, once again evolved the work of the Association. This year's attention to change continues NASM's long history. Year after year we have voted on proposals that grew from member innovations, situational analyses, developments in the field, and the lessons of experience. Change is our tradition. It is fundamental to what NASM does.

In my own case, NASM is a different organization than it was thirty years ago, but in the best ways, it is the same. This is the continuity part. The best continuity comes from constant adherence to fundamental transcendent principles that have always guided the Association. These principles provide a solid foundation for decision-making at more detailed levels. These principles are outlined in NASM publications and address themes such as music and the nature of music, artistry and intellect, teaching, the primacy of local action and control, the individual/community relationship, rule by consensus-based standards, cooperation, diplomacy, building the field, service, protection, counsel, independence, and patience—all in the service of helping students get the best possible education.

The principles do not prevent change. Instead, they require us to consider new things, and to question constantly what is current. But they also require us to act in a framework of reason and to change responsibly, no matter how radical a departure the change may produce.

It helps to remember that there was a day when our Commission on Accreditation reviewed the first application for the Bachelor of Music degree, for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree, for degrees in music therapy, jazz studies, ethnomusicology, music industry, recording technology, music technology, digital multimedia, and for degree programs combining music with an outside field, just to name some of the major categories that now represent major streams of continuity.

These historic decisions supported and ratified then new creative advancements developed by local faculties and administrators that have benefited students, institutions, and the field. Few if any of us here know the Commission members who made those decisions, but those decisions were made and became the basis for further advancement. Those Commission members acted creatively with new ideas under the transcendent principles of NASM. The continuity/change relationship was at work then as it is today.

This example reminds us of a truth. All who remain in administration for a few years learn how dependent we are on the work of others not just in terms of who they are, but in terms of what

they do. We cannot know or begin to thank all who help us because we cannot know all the ways we are being helped. My years in NASM have vastly expanded my understanding of this reality.

Look around you and you will see colleagues you may not know who are helping you in ways you do not know. Likewise the Association itself, and the ways it brings us together to support each other. NASM has worked and continues to work to help us in ways that we may not see. In many settings it nurtures and debates quietly on our behalf.

Beyond its standards and accreditation responsibilities, NASM makes and maintains important connections to institutions, to higher education as a whole, to governments, and to other organizations. It monitors and responds, and when appropriate, reports to us, and asks us to be aware or to consider or to help. Its scope of attention is wide, its knowledge of history, vast.

It is a practiced virtuoso in the art of connecting dots, and always has been. In 1924, NASM's founders projected the higher education needs of a democratic industrial society and the geographic expansion of higher education. They then made a connection with the potential to foster exponential growth in an infrastructure for developing American musical culture. They acted to form an association of institutions to build in ways that no individual institution could, to support individual institutions in ways that they could not support themselves.

The result is a cultural advance unprecedented for its scope, speed, and depth. Now, as then, our corporate participation makes this analytic, dot-connecting, supportive resource possible. The resource is invaluable. Indeed, it is irreplaceable. For reasons I have stated and for many others, if we did not have NASM we would have to invent it.

Let us turn now from the corporate to the individual. NASM is one means of bringing corporate or community assistance to the work of individuals, and particularly to individual administrators. Music administration is not easy, but it is rewarding and fun, at least at times. My experience tells me that cultivation of an effective personal style is critically important, especially if you want to keep the prospect of fun a real possibility.

I would like to share with you a few observations about leadership styles gained from years of experience in various types of institutions. I do so hoping that many of you might find something useful in these observations as you serve as agents of change in your institutions. I'll begin with an early learning experience.

In my first role as director of a comprehensive music program, I adopted an "open office hour" protocol initially instituted by my predecessor in response to the constant interruptions to his workday. For two hours each of two days every week, faculty, staff members, or students were encouraged to drop by and discuss issues of concern to them. While initially this model worked well for me, in a very short amount of time the traffic dried up—virtually no one came to visit.

Upon reflection, it occurred to me that it might be better to view the constant interruptions as a fundamental attribute of the job—to embrace them. I then decided to simply open the door whenever I could do so, and within a short amount of time the traffic picked up again. While I did encounter many "interruptions," as often as not the visitor merely wanted to say "hi." Interestingly, within a couple of weeks, everyone settled into the more informal model and the "interruptions" became a normal part of my daily routine. While problems were frequently

brought to my attention during these impromptu meetings, usually the problems were at an embryonic stage, and the solution was readily at hand. It became clear to me that a short conversation at the onset of a problematic situation can avert a subsequent urgent e-mail message and perhaps eventually a crisis or even a lawsuit. I was beginning to understand the importance of effective communication and early intervention in problematic situations.

And while I am on the subject of e-mail, let me state unequivocally that I'll take a face-to-face discussion over an e-mail communication any day of the week or even a simple phone conversation for that matter. Given the effortless execution process and casual nature of e-mail correspondence, messages frequently are not carefully constructed—even worse, they can tend to be too long and copied to too many people. Misunderstandings seem to arise much more frequently from e-mail communications, and such misunderstandings can be very difficult to untangle. For me, an effective e-mail message or response to one is short, very sweet, and absolutely unequivocal.

As I continued to engage in impromptu, casual conversations with my colleagues during my initial years in administration, my relationships to those colleagues became—not surprisingly—more collegial. Beyond making life in the workplace much more pleasant, I noticed many practical benefits that enhanced my ability to conduct business successfully. First of all, my faculty colleagues generally seemed to trust me to do the right thing. As a result, I felt comfortable being forthcoming about matters of concern to the unit, and my colleagues sensed and valued this apparent transparency. This comfortable interaction with my colleagues proved most valuable in addressing stressful situations. Over time it became more and more apparent to me that while the authority to act comes from one's superiors, the ability to do so *effectively* can only be granted by one's colleagues.

The importance of trust cannot be overstated. As an example, when my colleagues and I faced difficult budget reductions, I always found it useful to make some preliminary suggestions to cover, perhaps, 75-80% of the problem. I then presented for thorough discussion various options for the final 20-25%. Once the entire model was agreed upon, it was presented to the unit leadership and subsequently to the faculty for approval. I used this approach at least five or six times at different institutions and found that it worked well. If the administration/faculty relationship is not based upon trust, a collaborative approach such as this will not work. In addition, when trust is firmly established, it becomes quite easy to admit quickly and completely to mistakes, and doing so tends to enhance rather than weaken one's ongoing ability to lead.

Getting to know my colleagues also enabled me to understand their individual characters more fully, and this understanding gave rise to a better sense of what motivates each of them. On more than one occasion, I noticed that their apparent "intentions" were quite different from the "outcomes" of their actions. Noting the difference between these two things is very important. Over the years I have come to believe that it is important to assume the very best intentions from your colleagues for as long as you can do so. The more care taken to ensure that inappropriate blame is not visited upon a colleague, the better.

So very much about successful administration, I have learned, is based upon highly effective communication, and at the core of such communication is trust.

If your colleagues fundamentally trust you and view you as transparent in your decision-making, they will be inclined to assume your best intentions rather than your worst when faced with challenging circumstances. As noted earlier, this is particularly valuable in times of fiscal crisis. In that fiscal crises seem to occur more regularly these days, I'll now offer a few suggestions and observations concerning money matters that I have found to be associated with highly effective leaders across many, diverse institutions. The first concerns transparency.

A fiscal model presented by administrators as transparently as possible protects against the tendency for colleagues to replace a lack of knowledge with an assumption of monkey business.

While I very much believe that faculty colleagues frequently tend to fill in the blanks with assumptions of monkey business, I do not believe the same is true for upper administrators. Over the years I have noticed that my superiors seemed to take a lack of "noise" (if you'll pardon the expression) from the music unit as a sign that things were being properly handled. So—let the *only* "noise" drifting upward be the lovely music performed by your students. And remember to let the welfare and education of those students remain at the center of your focus at all times. This is yet another trait of effective leaders—their ability to keep the central focus of discussions, regardless of the severity of the challenges being faced, on the welfare of students, their education, and the joy they bring to the enterprise. And during times of protracted financial difficulties, effective leaders generally maintain a positive, yet fully realistic style while simultaneously planning for continuing and even worsening challenges ahead.

Also along the lines of fiscal management, administrators who treat one-time funding sources as though they were continuing funding streams typically do not remain administrators for long. Such a fiscal approach is no more sensible than using one's Visa card to pay off one's MasterCard balance. That final comment, among many like it, was offered in a Commencement speech by Ohio State University President E. Gordon Gee.

Effective budget managers are frequently on the conservative side and many have assistants whose fiscal style is even more conservative.

And finally, an individual recognized for effective budget management is typically one who communicates well and engages others in the process. Successful money management has very little to do with numbers and a great deal to do with one's personal management and leadership style.

I would now like to mention a few more general observations concerning leadership styles of highly effective administrators.

To begin, I have noticed that excellent leaders consistently recognize both excellent outcomes and excellent effort. Things can take a while to accomplish in the academy. A little positive reinforcement along the way is always welcome.

This is particularly true when viewed from the context of faculty recognition and reward systems such as promotion and merit pay. While both of these tools are core attributes in many, if not most, higher education governance models, they are at best, blunt instruments in my view. It is never wasted effort to identify and recognize excellent work done by those who may fall outside the promotion and merit pay systems. The world-class teacher who never achieves the rank of

full professor because her focus has been on student success rather than personal success comes to mind. There are other examples as well.

In negotiating challenging conversations, highly effective leaders remember that diverse opinions are to be expected from a faculty cohort recruited for their individual and differentiated talents and interests. While differing opinions strongly held can make compromise and even ongoing discussions challenging, they are to be expected and to the fullest extent possible, should be welcomed to the conversation.

And in these conversations, strong leaders demonstrate a willingness to compromise to the greatest extent possible. When two parties approach a problem, each intending to achieve a solution that includes at least half of their opening position, more often than not, the solution is not achieved. In such instances, the two intransigent halves rarely make a productive whole.

And of course, each of us needs a place to hide at one time or another, a place to retain personal dignity after a bad move—many of the finest leaders I have known make every effort to find such a place for all involved in a difficult situation, even those individuals who may not necessarily deserve such cover. While there are times when it is best to expose the individual responsible for a difficult situation, in many, perhaps most cases, such treatment does not serve a positive end, but rather simply alienates the individual further.

The most successful leaders learn and own all of the details of their positions while remaining aware of the key issues facing their campuses and the academy at large. Knowledge is power in higher education. Further, any apparent lack of knowledge will weaken one's position and as well as one's ability to conduct business effectively.

Successful administrators never underestimate the importance of "fairness." If faculty colleagues believe that they have been treated fairly, they are much more willing to take on extra burdens or special responsibilities if necessary.

Highly effective leaders are also patient. Aircraft carriers do not turn on a dime, and neither do large, diverse, and complex institutions. As an aside, let me emphasize that even relatively small, private liberal arts institutions are complex, at least at the level of the whole. As noted by Charles Barrow, former dean of the Baylor University Law School: you cannot tell faculty members what to do, you need to "mosey them along."

Generally speaking, the flatter the administrative structure, the more it promotes effective cross-disciplinary discussions and understanding. Even in larger programs that may require administrative hierarchies, many effective managers actively promote an unfettered access to administrators and colleagues in all disciplinary areas and at all levels.

And finally, administrators who are taken seriously by their colleagues are usually not the same folks as those who tend to take themselves too seriously.

The leadership principles I have mentioned here are the ones that seem to have contributed to successful outcomes in many different institutions. While the emphasis here has clearly been on working successfully with others, at times, unequivocal leadership is simply required. So, lead when you need to, but collaborate whenever you can. The most successful working environments I have known operate very much like seasoned chamber ensembles—collaborative leadership,

transparent intentions by all parties, and minimal or no surprises among them. My personal success in exemplifying these behaviors has varied considerably. In retrospect, though, I can confirm that the further my behaviors were from those presented here, the less positive the outcomes of my efforts. Likewise, my greater successes were usually based upon a leadership style more fully incorporating these principles.

While I have offered the foregoing as suggestions based upon observations of the fine work of others, I would now like to close with a couple of final suggestions—I know from personal experience that these are true.

- Regardless of the nature of your institution, it is good practice to empower those around you and avoid micromanagement as much as possible. In the case of leaders who own all the details of their positions, delegated responsibility and authority helps build a redundant structure, yielding both fewer errors and happier, more engaged colleagues. Perhaps most important, however, such a structure provides time and energy for the unit leader to pursue the kinds of activities best suited to his or her skill set.
- Perhaps the best way to help ensure a long career in music administration is to change jobs frequently. There is nothing more stimulating than the move to a new location and a new set of challenges and opportunities.

This morning I have spoken about our responsibilities for NASM as a corporate entity and our responsibilities as effective leaders of music units.

I hope as I have spoken you have already been making connections between these two sets of responsibilities, and perhaps connecting those relationships to the future of music in higher education.

I believe these kinds of connections are going to be more important than ever. As I envision the next few years, I continue to see a high probability of ongoing financial challenges. These challenges will be combined with others such as core content, delivery systems, relationships among disciplines, assessment, organizational structures, and distributions of administrative control. And there will always be the interplay of good and bad ideas.

Thus, more than ever and probably at a faster rate than ever before, administrators will need to take the lead in considering possible ramifications and consequences as proposals are developed. Change is a given. Wise, effective change is not a given. This is why thoughtful transformational leadership will be needed to nurture and guide the relationship between continuity and change in individual music schools and departments. Not one national model of transformational leadership, but large numbers of individuals with the capacity to provide transformational leadership in and for specific institutions and circumstances.

Effectiveness seems to depend on intensifying positives in our situation even as we evolve them. This intensification applies to ourselves, our local situations and to NASM. We must address the challenges of the immediately unfolding future without making decisions that restrict or close off possibilities in the evolving future we cannot see. The key here is to advance and evolve while keeping our positives, including our principles, our personal and corporate creativity, our institutional independence with regard to artistic and academic decision-making, and our art. As

has been said before, we *in* NASM and we *as* NASM cannot control the future, but we can control the principles we use to address and create the future.

I leave the presidency of NASM with three great positives intact in my understanding of the way things are for music in higher education. First, there is no substitute for hundreds of effective individual local administrators and faculty who nurture and build their programs day by day. Second, there is no substitute for the corporate energy, spirit, wisdom, and support that NASM provides. And third, there is no substitute for the relationship between the work and constant actions of institutions and NASM. This relationship builds and builds and builds. It builds trust, it builds possibility, it builds capability, and it builds the field.

NASM is an institutional membership organization, but individuals are essential. Each of you is essential, both at home, and here at NASM working and contributing for the good of the whole. If you look around at all the challenges we face and worry, you are simply being realistic. The challenges are great and the stakes are enormous. But another set of truths resides alongside the dangers and concerns. I invite you to look at the history of music in the United States. Look at where we have been, how we as individuals, institutions, and association have grown in capability and capacity. Look at how we are continuing to move forward, including the business transacted in this hour.

I invite you to look at all these positive things working together over several generations and to have faith—faith in the future, faith in our continuity, faith in our principles, faith in our ability to change wisely, faith in the power of our mutual trust, and above all faith in the kind of work in music that higher education addresses.

This coming July 1, I will formally assume a music professorship at Florida State University. Should anyone wish to contact me, either by phone or e-mail, please do so prior to that date. I intend to melt into the faculty cohort and will not be pursuing compulsive activities such as responding to e-mail and returning telephone calls. I wouldn't want anyone to assume that my transition from administrator to full-time faculty member was less than complete.

Please accept my best wishes and sincere thanks for your support, your friendship and for your contributions to NASM and to our profession.