

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

99th Annual Meeting

November 17 – 21, 2023

Report of the Executive Director

The 2022–2023 academic year found the higher education community working to emerge from a period marked by unprecedented change and unexpected realities. Leaving behind aspects of the past, institutions were greeted by yet another casting of a “new normal”—one that required concerted efforts on the part of institutions to review, reconsider, and re-evaluate long-standing traditions associated with nearly every aspect of life as it pertains to music education and training. Although challenges were faced and in many cases remain in abundance today, the fortitude and spirit of the members of NASM have without question been unwavering—in short, they have served as a beacon of hope and possibility during these tumultuous times. Throughout these last many months, the members of NASM have remained true to their missions, unwavering in their commitment to educate to the highest level students enrolled in music study. NASM applauds the unflinching and enduring efforts of its members and appreciates the efforts of each and every individual involved in this noble pursuit. As we settle into the 2023–2024 academic year, one marking NASM’s 99th season of service and support to its members and to the field, efforts to support and advance music as a profession, as a critical and indispensable aspect of collegiate study, and as an integral part of our nation’s fiber which binds us together, remain a central focus. The effectiveness of NASM’s work in various areas, including accreditation, professional development, research, and monitoring and analyzing policy pertaining to higher education and the arts, continues to be reviewed, discussed, improved, and enhanced. As NASM serves an ever-growing and diverse membership, its projects in accreditation and beyond continue to broaden and evolve. The Association’s principal activities during the past year and issues of note are presented below.

Accreditation Standards and Procedures

Much of the yearly work of NASM involves accreditation. This includes preparation for the meetings of the Commission on Accreditation and Commission on Community College Accreditation; scheduling accreditation visits; arranging consultations for member and potential member institutions; communicating with institutions preparing accreditation materials; receiving and reviewing accreditation materials; and reviewing and developing standards, guidelines, resources, and educational programs in support of the accreditation review process. All individuals involved in these activities—including institutional representatives, faculty and staff members, the members of the NASM Commissions, visiting evaluators, consultants, presenters, and National Office staff members—work to make this service a valuable component in the advancement of music programs in institutions of higher education, and music as a specific disciplinary field of study.

Maintaining its responsibility to review accreditation applications, the work of the Commissions has continued without pause during these last years, aided in large part by the dedication of the members of the NASM Commissions. The NASM Commissions continue to review applications for accreditation, renewal of accreditation, Responses, Progress Reports, Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing applications, requests for Substantive Change, and the like. The work of the Commissions is significantly assisted by the work of the NASM corps of visiting evaluators. NASM continues to take steps to expand the breadth and depth of its pool of visiting evaluators. During this Annual Meeting, NASM will offer training sessions for new and experienced evaluators, and a briefing for the entire evaluator corps. NASM deeply appreciates the service of those assuming this important role, and the assistance evaluative teams and consultants provide to applicant institutions. It is highly recommended that representatives from accredited institutional members consider participating in

evaluator training. In addition to the assistance provided by evaluators to institutions and NASM, this service can be invaluable in the opportunities it presents to broaden the perspectives of music administrators.

The NASM *Handbook* includes all current national standards and guidelines for degree- and non-degree-granting institutions offering programs of study in music, as well as the Association's Constitution, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, and Rules of Practice and Procedure. NASM continually reviews the information in the *Handbook* and conducts annual as well as multi-year comprehensive reviews of the entire *Handbook*. Such reviews provide to NASM an opportunity to focus on all standards. Though the most recent comprehensive review process, begun in 2015, was concluded in 2019, the standards as a whole remain open for comment. NASM welcomes feedback at any time. Following its commitment to proactively review in detail all standards in the *Handbook* on a scheduled basis, the next comprehensive review process is slated to begin in 2026. An amended *Handbook* typically is released following the Annual Meeting. The NASM *Handbook 2023-24* is expected later this fall. It will include current standards and guidelines as approved by the appropriate NASM deliberative body. Institutions are asked to remain cognizant of NASM standards and guidelines, and to consult the *Handbook* regularly, whether preparing for an NASM comprehensive review, planning institutional initiatives, and/or designing new curricular programs.

A comprehensive review of the Association's *Procedures* documents was conducted during the 2022–2023 academic year. Due to the magnitude of this project, the new editions of these documents will be released just before the beginning of the 2024–2025 academic year. Institutions are asked to continue to use the current editions found on the NASM website.

All current accreditation-related documents, standards, and procedures are available for download from the Association's website located at <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org>. Institutions are reminded that the standards are set in a framework which allows for flexibility and creativity in approach. Should representatives wish to explore the depth, breadth, and latitude inherent in the standards, which can be invaluable when addressing local conditions and realities, contact with the NASM National Office staff is recommended.

The Association continues to encourage consideration of the use of the NASM review process and/or materials, particularly the national standards, in other review contexts. Consolidating reviews may assist institutions to conserve resources and realize economies of scale. Many institutions are finding efficiencies by combining required NASM comprehensive reviews with internal and/or other external reviews. The Association is willing to work with institutions and programs interested in exploring options in this regard and to assemble NASM reviews that are thorough, rigorous, efficient, and suitably dovetailed with other internal and external efforts.

The Association is cognizant of the many hours devoted by member and applicant institutions to research, study, consider, prepare, and present accreditation materials for review by the Commissions. NASM is deeply grateful for these efforts extended on behalf of the field of music and congratulates the institutions and their representatives for their many accomplishments and successes resulting from their work.

Annual Meeting

The NASM Annual Meeting is an integral opportunity for individuals to connect, communicate, and come together in community. The Annual Meeting offers the opportunity for music administrators to share and receive information which can broaden and hone understandings, particularly with regard to current and salient issues, and can assist administrators to address local and national realities. As well, the Annual Meeting serves as a venue which enables the Association to conduct its required business. NASM was pleased to return to its tradition of in-person assembly in 2022 and is equally delighted to gather in community on-site in 2023. NASM looks forward to connecting with past attendees and welcoming new registrants.

Annual Meeting content is driven largely by the feedback offered by member institutions and Annual Meeting attendees and is informed by current issues faced by administrators responsible for guiding and leading collegiate programs in music. NASM welcomes your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, and stresses the important need for your feedback. NASM offers to all registrants an opportunity to provide comment through the use of the Annual Meeting app. In addition to the app, and subsequent to the Annual Meeting, NASM circulates a questionnaire to all members and Annual Meeting attendees requesting feedback. Please consider taking a moment to participate in these initiatives, and/or to merely communicate directly with the NASM staff.

Availability of Informative Materials

NASM maintains a robust library of material focused on topics such as accreditation, professional development, policy analysis, and research. These materials are intended to assist accredited institutional members to navigate the constantly changing higher education landscape. A recent addition to the NASM library includes an extensive web-based resource entitled, *Leadership: Navigating Difficult Situations and Conditions* (see <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/leadership/>). Offering a wealth of information, this site is divided into six sections: *Facts, Principles, Considerations: Important Reminders; Strategic Thinking—An Intellectual Endeavor: Developing an Abiding Approach; Informed Decision-Making: The Importance of Distillation and Synthesis; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); The Long View: The Place of Reasonableness; and Concluding Thoughts: Support and Appreciation*. This and many other published resources found on the NASM website assist music executives as they are called upon to articulate the benefits of and necessity for music study. Whether looking for rationales or assistance to develop talking points, NASM publications are a sterling source of support, assistance, and information. It is recommended that representatives of member institutions visit and review the site's content often and as needed, as well as the extensive list of publications available within the "Publications" section of the website (see <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/publications/>).

Financial Planning

Although the Association's Managed Assets account has not escaped the recent tumultuous movements of the market, the balance of funds in the account is growing at a slow and steady pace. The solid base now in place is intended to support NASM's work to advance its objectives and ensure its future, and therefore its ongoing contributions to its members and the fields.

Projects

NASM participates in the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA) with NASAD (art and design), NASD (dance), and NAST (theatre). The Council is concerned with issues that affect all four disciplines and their accreditation efforts. The NASM President (Michael D. Wilder) and Vice President (Tayloe Harding) are the music Trustees of the Council and represented NASM during CAAA meetings, which in January 2023 were held in person in Arlington, VA. CAAA sponsors the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS), which reviews arts-focused schools at the K-12 level. Currently, there are 17 institutions accredited by ACCPAS. This undertaking is valuable in that it assists to connect precollegiate and higher education efforts. Peter T. Witte of the University of the Pacific is the music appointee to the ACCPAS Commission.

Just prior to the onset of the pandemic, NASM finalized, and anticipated launching in 2020, its new Annual Meeting app. This app was designed to provide to Annual Meeting attendees streamlined access to Annual Meeting, hotel, and venue information. NASM released the app for use during the 2022 Annual Meeting. The app is offered again to attendees in 2023. Noting the functionality of the app to provide Annual Meeting logistics

and information, subsequent to the 2023 meeting, NASM will sunset the provision of hard-copy Annual Meeting packets. For those who have chosen to use the app to navigate the 2023 Annual Meeting, NASM welcomes your feedback.

During the 2021–2022 academic year, the National Office staff, in partnership with an external third-party vendor, began work to design and implement an accreditation data management system that will enable institutions to submit accreditation materials electronically. Among other attributes, this new tool will enable NASM to sunset its requirement for hard-copy accreditation submissions. Work to complete this project is expected to continue at least through 2023. Launch and use of the new platform is expected at the earliest possible time. Further information outlining use of the system will be provided by the NASM staff once the new system is operational. Helpful and informative sessions regarding the operation of the system will be offered during future NASM Annual Meetings.

In addition to the initiatives outlined above regarding the Annual Meeting app and the electronic collection of accreditation information, NASM, in conjunction with NASAD, NASD, and NAST, has been working diligently for the past several years to upgrade the HEADS Data Services Project, moving it to a new platform. This upgrade entails refreshing the HEADS Data Survey instrument, sunsetting the well-known HEADS Data Summaries, and introducing navigable dashboards. The new platform is intended to feature modern aesthetics and is designed to be user-friendly and intuitive in approach. Users will find the data entry process similar in form and function to that previously in place (the Data Survey). However, the traditional Data Summaries and Special Reports features have been replaced as the primary source of data presentation by a user-driven ability to compare data points; customize reporting options; and create, view, and save visual presentations of data and data comparisons—features provided through the use of interactive dashboards. The new platform has been populated with five years of historical data, enabling users in the first year to review six-year trends. This perspective will increase each year as new data is added to the system. It is hoped that this tool will provide invaluable information and will serve to inform institutional decision-making considerations. The new HEADS Data Survey tool was launched in its second year on November 1, 2022. Completed Surveys were due January 31, 2023. Participation by member and non-member institutions in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) Project during the 2022–2023 Survey period remained strong. At this time, delivery of data encompassing the 2022-2023 academic year has yet to be released. NASM hopes to make this latest year of data available at the earliest possible time. With regard to the past degree-granting HEADS Data Summaries, NASM has made available at no charge all of the HEADS Data Summaries compiled during the last several decades. This information may be found on the Association’s website at the following address: <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/services/heads/heads-data-summaries/>. For administrators interested in historical data as it relates to the disciplines of art and design, dance, and theatre, NASAD, NASD, and NAST offer on their respective websites, copies of discipline-specific historical HEADS Data Summaries at no charge. NASM extends deepest appreciation to its members for the patience each has offered as NASM works to finalize and launch successfully all aspects of the new platform. Should questions arise regarding the HEADS Data Survey, please feel free to contact Nora R. Hamme in the National Office (nhamme@arts-accredit.org). With regard to the HEADS Navigable Dashboards, please contact Angie Elkins (aelkins@arts-accredit.org).

Policy

Leadership of Congressional Education Committees

The 118th Congress convened in January 2023 and saw a return of Virginia Foxx (R-NC) to the position of Chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce; Ranking Member is Bobby Scott (D-VA). The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) is chaired at this time by Bernie Sanders (I-VT); Bill Cassidy (R-LA) serves as the Ranking Member.

Higher Education Act of 1965

The Association continues to follow and monitor carefully various federal and state initiatives and issues—one of particular import is the Higher Education Act (HEA). This Act was last reauthorized in August 2008 and expired December 31, 2013. Although in recent years there have been attempts to re-energize the reauthorization process, to date, reauthorization has yet to begin in earnest. Given other pressing initiatives before the U.S. House and Senate, action regarding reauthorization is not anticipated in the near term.

Lack of timely reauthorization (expected every fifth year) has resulted in substantial efforts to regulate and re-regulate the existing law (HEA). Although regulations are intended to clarify existing law, the re-regulation of various aspects of the law can and often does lead to re-interpretations of original and/or various rewritten regulations, the result of which requires institutions of higher education participating in Federal financial aid programs to remain abreast of and pay careful attention to federal activities in this regard. Information provided below outlines initiatives pertinent to higher education which have either been completed, are ongoing at this time, or are anticipated.

Department of Education

Final Regulations Released:

Ability to Benefit (published October 31, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—With regard to students who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent, amends regulations which are meant to articulate State-defined processes which address a student’s “ability to benefit” from an educational program, including how to document and verify whether an institution offers an eligible career pathway program.

Administrative Capacity (published October 31, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Amends regulations that are associated with the administrative capability that must be achieved by institutions participating in programs under title IV programs.

Borrower Defense to Repayment (published November 1, 2022/effective date delayed)—Determines the acts or omissions of an institution of higher education a borrower may assert as a defense for repayment of a loan made under the FDL and FFEL Programs. On August 7, 2023, a federal court issued an injunction delaying the effective date of the latest regulations governing borrower defense to repayment and closed school loan discharge until at least November of 2023.

Certification Procedures (published October 31, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Reassessment of provisionally certified institutions that have significant consumer protection concerns by the end of their second year of receiving certification.

Changes in Ownership and Control (CIO) (published October 28, 2022/effective July 1, 2023)—Amends existing regulations pertaining to institution and program eligibility associated with changes in institutional ownership which result in a change in control.

Determining the Eligibility of Faith-Based Entities to Participate in Federal Student Aid Programs (published August 14, 2020/effective July 1, 2021)—Amends the current regulations regarding the eligibility of faith-based entities to participate in Federal Student Aid programs and the eligibility of students to obtain certain benefits under those programs.

Distance Education and Innovation (published September 2, 2020/amended September 3, 2020/effective July 1, 2021)—Amends the general eligibility, establishing eligibility, maintaining eligibility, and losing eligibility sections of the Institutional Eligibility regulations.

Factors of Financial Responsibility (published October 31, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Amends regulations which are meant to define the level of financial responsibility an institution must maintain in order to be eligible to participate in title IV programs.

Federal Education Assistance Funds Received by Institutions of Higher Education (90/10) (October 28, 2022/effective July 1, 2023)—Governs whether proprietary institutions meet federal regulation that

require institutions to receive at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than federal education assistance funds.

Financial Value Transparency* (published October 10, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Regulations which are meant to address transparency by providing information about financial costs and benefits to students at nearly all academic programs at postsecondary institutions that are eligible to participate in title IV of the HEA of 1965, as amended. These transparency measures apply to all programs in all sectors. Recall that under the heading of **Public Transparency for Low-Financial-Value Postsecondary Programs**, USDE released a request for feedback on how best to identify low-value postsecondary programs, how to calculate metrics that may be used to identify low-financial-value programs and inform technical considerations, and how best to publicly disseminate this information. (Comment period ended February 10, 2023.) (*Related to Gainful Employment).

Gainful Employment (published October 10, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Amends regulations which are meant to ascertain whether post-secondary educational programs prepare students for gainful employment in recognized occupations, and the conditions under which institutions and programs remain eligible for student financial assistance programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Gainful Employment regulations pertain to all programs at for-profit institutions and all non-degree programs at public and private non-profit institutions. It does not pertain to students in Puerto Rico and other American territories due to concerns regarding the reliability of available earnings data.

Income Driven Repayment (published July 10, 2023/effective July 1, 2024)—Streamlines and standardizes loan repayment regulations.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (published November 1, 2022/effective July 1, 2023)—Enables borrowers to receive loan forgiveness after ten years of qualifying payments on qualifying loans while engaging in public service.

Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, Certain Student Assistance General Provisions, and Institution Eligibility (published November 1, 2019/effective July 1, 2020/Amended October 20, 2022)—Defines the roles and responsibilities of accrediting agencies, States, and the Department in oversight of institutions participating in Federal Student Aid programs authorized under title IV of the HEA of 1965; modifies “substantive change” requirements; modifies the requirements for State authorization to clarify the responsibilities of institutions and States regarding students enrolled in distance education programs and students enrolled in programs that lead to licensure and certification.

Final Regulations Anticipated:

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance (USDE/OCR, anticipated October 2023/delayed to 2024)—Will address issues pertaining to the prevention of discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation and establishment of educational environments free from discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance: Sex-Related Eligibility criteria for Male and Female Athletic Teams (USDE/OCR, anticipated October 2023/delayed to 2024)—Will address issues related to a recipient’s adoption or application of sex-related criteria that would limit or deny a student’s eligibility to participate on a male or female athletic team consistent with their gender identity.

NPRM (Notice of Proposed Rulemaking):

Defining and Delimiting the Exemptions for Executive, Administrative, Professional, Outside Sales, and Computer Employees (DOL/WHD, August 30, 2023)—Proposal to update and revise the regulations issued under section 13(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act implementing the exemption from

minimum wage and overtime pay for executive, administrative, and professional employees. **“White Collar Exemptions”** (comment period expires November 7, 2023)—Proposal of a new rule that would significantly raise the minimum salary for employees to qualify for the so-called “white-collar exemptions” (administrative, executive, and professional employees, among other classifications) to the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The white-collar exemptions allow employees that meet certain duty requirements to be exempt from the overtime rules of the FLSA, which generally require employees working in the United States to be paid time-and-one-half of their regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 in a work week. This rule would raise the minimum salary threshold for the white-collar exemption from \$684 to \$1,059 per week, and from approximately \$35,568 to \$55,068 per year. In addition, the proposed rule increases the salary threshold for the so-called “highly compensated employee” exemption from \$107,432 to \$143,988.

H-1B Specialty Occupation Program (DHS/USCIS, October 20, 2023)—Intention to amend the H-1B specialty occupation worker program.

Student Loan Debt Relief (DOE, June 30, 2023)—Amend existing regulations to open a new pathway to student debt relief (see Issue Paper: Student Loan Debt Relief, USDE NPR, Session 1).

Notice of Intent to Commence Negotiated Rulemaking:

Accreditation and Related Issues (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations associated with the Secretary’s recognition of accrediting agencies and accreditation procedures as a component of institutional eligibility for participation in federal student financial aid programs.

Cash Management (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations associated with cash management to ensure that students have and maintain timely access to student aid disbursed by their institutions.

Distance Education (Fall 2023)—Amend the definition of “distance education”.

Improving Use of Deferments and Forbearances (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations associated with requirements which address the issuance of forbearances and deferments, particularly in relation to income-driven repayment.

Institutional Quality and Accountability (Anticipated)

Modification, Waiver, or Compromise of Federal Student Loans (USDE Fact Sheet, June 30, 2023) (Fall 2023)—As a result of the Supreme Court decision to rule the Debt Relief Plan unconstitutional, an intention to 1) open alternative paths to debt relief, and 2) devise a new repayment plan (SAVE).

State Authorization (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations associated with State Authorization as a component of institutional eligibility for participation in federal student financial aid programs.

Third-Party Servicers and Related Issues (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations related to existing guidance for third-party services, reporting requirements, financial or other compliance requirements, and past performance requirements as a component of ongoing institutional eligibility for participation in federal student aid programs. Regulations are not intended to apply to international programs.

Title IV (Fall 2023)—Amend existing regulations associated with the return of unearned Title IV Higher Education Act program funds, opportunities to protect students and taxpayers, and the easing of administrative burdens placed on institutions of higher education.

Guidance from the Department of Education Issued in the Form of “Dear Colleague” Letters and Other. Of Note: “Dear Colleague” letters offer guidance provided by the staff of the United States Department of Education (USDE) regarding both current Higher Education law and regulation.

- Fact Sheet: Regulations on Accountability, Transparency and Financial Value for Postsecondary Students (USDE/OPE, October 31, 2023)
- Dear Colleague Letter: U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding race in admissions (USDE/DOJ, August 14, 2023)

- Questions and Answers Regarding the Supreme Court’s Decision in *Students for Fair Admission, Inc. v. Harvard College and University of North Carolina* (USDE/DOJ, August 14, 2023)
- Guidance for Ensuring Complaint Procedures for Accrediting Agencies are Fair, Timely, and Equitable (USDE/OPE, August 7, 2023)
- (GEN-23-10) **Implementation and Policy Guidance of Pre-Dispute Arbitration Agreement Provisions** (July 3, 2023)
- (GEN-23-09) **Accreditation and Eligibility Requirements for Distance Education** (May 18, 2023)
- (GEN-23-08) **Update to Third-Party Servicer Guidance in GEN-23-03** (February 28, 2023)
- (GEN-23-03) **Requirements and Responsibilities for Third-Party Servicers and Institutions** (February 15, 2023; Updated February 16, 2023; Updated May 16, 2023)
- (GEN-23-02) **2023-2024 Federal Pell Grant Payment and Disbursement Schedules** (January 28, 2023)
- (GEN-22-70) **Updated Guidance and Procedures for Change in Ownership** (September 15, 2022)
- (GEN-22-13) **Federal Student Aid Eligibility for Borrowers with Defaulted Loans** (August 17, 2022)
- Memorandum: Changes of Ownership (USDE/OPE, February 2, 2023)
- (GEN-22-11) **Procedures for Institutions Seeking Approval of a Request to Change or Add Accrediting Agencies** (July 19, 2022; Updated September 26, 2022)
- (GEN-22-10) **Guidance for Institutions Seeking to Change or Add Accrediting Agencies** (July 19, 2022)

Other Initiatives:

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching/American Council on Education (ACE)

Changes to the Long-Standing Carnegie Classifications (anticipated 2025)

Department of Homeland Security

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)—On September 13, 2023, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas issued a decision finding the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Final Rule* unlawful and expanding the original July 16, 2021 injunction and order of vacatur to cover the Final Rule. On August 24, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the availability of the final rule pertaining to DACA. In general, the final rule codifies existing policies and includes limited amendments intended to preserve and fortify DACA. The final rule was to be effective October 31, 2022. However, on October 5, 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a decision on the DACA policy, partially affirming the District Court’s July 2021 decision declaring the 2012 DACA policy unlawful. The Court of Appeals preserved the partial stay issued by the District Court in July 2021 and remanded the case back to the District Court for further consideration of the new DHS DACA regulation published on August 30, 2022.

NACIQI (Advisory Body to the Secretary of Education)

Areas Recommended for USDE Review, Consideration, Re-regulation (Winter 2023)—Speaks to issues such as institution and accreditor complaint policies; outcomes/student achievement standards; public input into the recognition process; changes to the recruitment of public members.

States

Florida—Senate Bill 7044 (passed May 2022) requires all public educational institutions in the state to change their postsecondary institutional accreditor (Federal gatekeeper) during each review cycle.

North Carolina—HB 8 (passed October 2023) requires all public educational institutions in the state to change their postsecondary institutional accreditor (Federal gatekeeper) during each review cycle.

Supreme Court

Debt Relief Plan—On August 24, 2022, the White House announced its Debt Relief Plan. Subsequently, on November 10, 2022, a federal district court judge in the state of Texas ruled the Debt Relief Plan unlawful. Oral arguments as they pertain to two lawsuits were heard beginning February 28, 2023. On June 30, 2023 the Supreme Court ruled the Debt Relief Plan unconstitutional.

Race in Admissions—With regard to its consideration of two cases pertaining to race in admissions, on June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court ruled the practice of race-conscious admissions to be unconstitutional.

The White House

The SAVE Plan (June 2023)—An income-driven repayment (IDR) plan that calculates payments based on a borrower’s income and family size – not their loan balance – and forgives remaining balances after a certain number of years.

NASM will continue to monitor these conversations, providing salient information to its members as it may become available.

There is no doubt that the federal landscape associated with higher education has changed dramatically during these last years and will continue to change. Members and colleagues should remain abreast of unfolding activities, study federal writings, and offer feedback pertaining to federal requests and proposed regulation applicable to issues which may affect collegiate study and the education and training of students enrolled in music programs as deemed appropriate by the institution. Concerted effort is needed to ensure that neither law nor the regulation that follows restricts postsecondary institutions from designing and implementing effective programs of study. Protecting and maintaining institutional autonomy and freedoms vital to the success of our educational system, as well as our pursuit of creative and innovative undertakings, remains paramount.

It is of note that, in addition to regular communications, NASM publishes advisories that describe regulations associated with the 2008 reauthorization of the HEA. These *Advisories on Federal Issues* may be found within the “Publications” section of the NASM website and are intended to provide helpful summary information. Review is recommended.

In addition to policy areas mentioned above, the Association remains concerned about implications of tax policy, intellectual property rights, the preponderance of data collection absent useful purpose and associated issues of privacy and confidentiality, copyright and public domain, the disparity in educational opportunity at the K-12 level, and the pace of cultural changes enabled by technological advances and their impact. Many contextual issues that affect NASM institutions grow out of large social forces that can be understood, but not influenced significantly. Economic cycles and downturns have a profound effect, but no single person or entity controls them. NASM continues to monitor policy discussions regarding deductions for charitable contributions on federal income tax returns. Increasing personal philanthropy is a critically important element in future support for education and the arts, particularly in fluctuating economic times. As well, NASM keeps a watchful eye on proposals that would bring increased federal involvement in the activities of and control over non-profit organizations and philanthropies.

NASM will continue to monitor ongoing events, actively engage in the conversations that address such issues, assist to provide detailed and thorough information, and keep the membership informed as issues and initiatives progress.

National Office

The NASM National Office is located in Reston, a Virginia suburb of Washington, D.C., and a stop on Metro's Silver Line. The office is about eight miles east of Dulles International Airport, and approximately 20 miles from downtown Washington. As a result of the pandemic, the NASM National Office staff has been working both in-person and remotely since March 17, 2020. Should your travels bring you to the area, please feel free to schedule an appointment with a staff member, or merely stop by for a visit.

The primary purpose of the National Office is to operate the Association under rules and policies established by the membership, the Board of Directors, the Commission on Accreditation, and Commission on Community College Accreditation. Its strength rests in its peer governance operations and its peer review efforts. The work of the Association is carried out by many volunteers—elected officials, evaluators, and meeting participants—all willing to donate their valuable time and expertise, all holding and exhibiting unwavering commitment to the field. Although the availability of each member's time becomes ever more precious, NASM continues to seek volunteers and enlist their assistance in the work of the Association. Such acts of support and volunteerism in NASM are a testament to the extraordinary spirit and dedication of its members. The work of our visiting evaluators and members of the Commissions is an exemplary expression of our collective commitment to our field and faith in its future.

This outstanding corps of volunteers is joined by a dedicated and capable National Office staff: Stephen Cannistraci, Jane Creagan, Angie K Elkins, Nora R. Hamme, Jenny Rebecca G. Kuhlmann, Tracy L. Maraney, Stacy A. McMahon, Justin Medlen, Lisa A. Ostrich, and Ann B. Stutes. To support the work of accredited institutional members, the work of the staff and the services provided to accredited institutional members have grown over the years. Staff is focused on carrying out the daily work of the Association, developing new practices, creating new and refining established systems, assisting institutions seeking accreditation for the first time, and consulting with institutions seeking renewal of Membership. The staff is diligent in its efforts to assist and serve institutions, and to carry out the responsibilities of NASM effectively.

As a staff, we are able to see on a daily basis the great foundational strength of NASM. Fundamental to this foundation is wisdom about the need to remain informed, communicate, and work together to continue to build music in higher education as a whole, as well as in each member and applicant institution. NASM has realized great success in maintaining its focus on issues of importance to institutions and the field, and in working to address these issues. It promotes collegial connections and centers its work on concepts, conditions, and resources necessary for competence and creativity. This foundation, now strongly in place, will serve NASM well as it faces changing and challenging times ahead.

The staff joins me in expressing appreciation for the support, cooperation, assistance, and kindness extended by the NASM membership. It is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to serve NASM, its member institutions, and its constituencies. We hope you will always feel free to contact the staff whenever you think we may provide assistance. We look forward to continuing our efforts together.

Please accept our heartfelt appreciation and best wishes as you advance the work of music in higher education.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen P. Moynahan
Executive Director