

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE**  
**49th Annual Meeting**  
and  
**Retreat for Administrators of Theatre Programs in Higher Education**  
**March 20 – 22, 2014**

**Report of the Executive Director**

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The 2013-2014 academic year marks NAST's 49<sup>th</sup> season of service to its members and to the field. Efforts to support and advance the theatre profession in the United States remain at the core of the Association's projects. Its work in various areas, including accreditation, professional development, research, and monitoring and analyzing policy surrounding higher education and the arts, is continually being reviewed, discussed, improved, and enhanced. As NAST 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 are presented below.

**Accreditation Standards and Procedures**

Much of the yearly work of NAST involves accreditation. This includes preparation for meetings of the Commission on Accreditation; scheduling accreditation visits; arranging consultations for member and potential member institutions; communicating with institutions preparing accreditation materials; receiving and reviewing accreditation materials; 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, NAST Commissioners, visiting evaluators, consultants, presenters, and staff members—work toward making this service a valuable component in the advancement of theatre programs for institutions in higher education.

With the next comprehensive standards review set to begin in 2015, NAST is now focusing on specific areas of standards review. This year, NAST is considering minor changes to its appeals guidelines. This process of specific focus will continue until the next comprehensive review. Institutional representatives should feel free to contact the office of the Executive Director at any time if they have views on the Standards for Accreditation that they feel would assist in improving the work of NAST.

All NAST Self-Studies and submissions to the Commission should be based on the most recent editions of the September 2008 *Membership Procedures*. Brief additions or amendments are added from time to time. Improvements made to these documents throughout the revision process should help to make the accreditation review process more clear and efficient.

An amended *Handbook* typically is released annually just after each Annual Meeting. The 2014-2015 *Handbook* is expected later this spring. Handbooks released just after Annual Meetings include any standards changes approved by the membership during the most recent meeting, as well as any amendments approved between Annual Meetings. All applicants beginning the accreditation or reaccreditation process should use the current edition of the *Handbook*. Release dates and the dates of any subsequent revisions to any particular edition are noted on the inside cover of each document.

All current accreditation-related documents, templates, standards, and procedures are available for download from the Association's Web site at [nast.arts-accredit.org](http://nast.arts-accredit.org). Institutions are reminded that the NAST framework does allow for flexibility in approach. To discuss available flexibilities that can assist to address local conditions and realities, and for assistance in using the *Membership Procedures* and *Handbook*, please contact the NAST National Office staff.

The Association continues to encourage consideration of the use of the NAST review process or materials in other review contexts. Consolidating reviews may assist institutions to conserve resources and realize economies of scale.

Many institutions are finding efficiencies by combining the NAST review with internal and/or other external reviews. The Association is gladly willing to work with institutions and programs to consider options and to craft NAST reviews that are thorough, efficient, and suitably connected 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 Commission on Accreditation. NAST is deeply grateful for these efforts and congratulates the institutions for the many accomplishments and successes resulting from their work.

## Projects

NAST participates in the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations with NASAD (art and design), NASD (dance), and NASM (music). The Council is concerned with issues that affect all four disciplines and their accreditation efforts. NAST President Dan Carter and Vice President R. Terrell Finney, Jr. are the theatre Trustees of the Council. 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 sixteen institutions accredited by ACCPAS. This undertaking is valuable in that it assists to connect K–12 and higher education efforts. Bruce R. Halverson is the theatre appointee to ACCPAS.

The CAAA Commission on Creative Multidisciplinary Convergence (formerly the Commission on Multidisciplinary Multimedia) continues its work on behalf of the four arts accrediting associations. In addition to consulting Appendix I.F. of the NAST *Handbook*, institutions wishing to learn more about the topic of Creative Multidisciplinary Convergence and Technologies (CMCT) may access the CMCT Tool Kit of advisory documents through the Web site of the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA). Members of the commission include George Brown from Western Michigan University (NAST), Daniel Lewis from the Limón Institute (NASD), Peter Raad from Southern Methodist University (at-large), and Jamy Sheridan from Maryland Institute College of Art (NASAD). The late Douglas Lowry, our dear colleague from the Eastman School of Music, was serving as chair and music representative to the commission at the time of his passing in October 2013. Individuals interested in this topic, particularly those representing institutions that offer multidisciplinary or multimedia studies, are encouraged to share thoughts and ideas by contacting the office of the Executive Director.

The Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project continues to be refined and improved. Participation by member and non-member institutions remains strong. Following the close of the 2012-2013 HEADS Survey, the resultant Data Summaries were published in March 2013. Additional capabilities and services will be added as time and financial resources permit. Comparative data in the form of Special Reports are a feature of the HEADS systems. These Reports and their possible uses will be discussed during the Annual Meeting at the second HEADS session. The 2013-2014 data submission process closed on January 31, 2014. The current year's Data Summaries and Special Reports will be available this spring. NAST welcomes thoughts and feedback regarding the HEADS project.

Each NAST Annual Meeting provides various opportunities for the discussion and dissemination of current information surrounding theatre study, higher education, administration, and other related fields. A large number of individuals participate in the Annual Meeting program each year, producing sessions that provide helpful and thought-provoking ideas. In 2013, our theme was "Creating Our Way Forward." In 2014, we extend the conversation and consider ways to now chart our course by considering opportunities, options, and paths. The 2014 Annual Meeting will offer sessions related to this topic, specifically cultivating connections, engaging with and in the community, creating opportunities, and transitioning to the next event or activity. NAST will also provide opportunities for discussion of the topics on the NAST program, and those of interest to attendees. An open forum focusing on the role of theatre in filmmaking and video production will be held, as will several informational sessions for individuals shepherding their institutions through the accreditation/reaccreditation process and for visiting evaluators conducting evaluative visits. Informative sessions addressing the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) Survey, Data Summaries and Special Reports; federal issues for theatre administrators; and NAST accreditation documentation and associated use will be offered.

Concurrent with the Annual Meeting, NAST is offering once again a Retreat for Administrators of Theatre Programs in Higher Education. The retreat is designed to address issues that directly affect theatre administrators such as

working with faculty and administration, financial and time management, and leadership issues. There are also sessions regarding NAST annual reporting requirements and administrative support resources. There will be ample opportunity to discuss these topics and interact freely with other retreat attendees.

The Association is grateful to all those who developed specific agenda material for the Annual Meeting and Retreat for Administrators, as well as those who serve as moderators and recorders.

## **Policy**

The Association continues to be concerned about the theatre education of children and youth. Challenges are appearing on the horizon as issues continue to develop regarding K–12 arts education. In the next years, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act will be reauthorized—a major project for all concerned. At the same time, new technologies, social conditions, and the evolving public sentiment will create new opportunities and challenges for theatre that are being met with the usual creativity and expertise. A national P–12 arts education standards project is in process, a sequel to the National Voluntary Arts Standards project completed in 1994.

Following the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), negotiated rulemaking on the law began in the spring of 2009. HEA rulemaking is the process by which regulations are created that dictate how the Department of Education must carry out provisions of the Act. Various parties within the higher education communities, including leaders of accrediting groups, work diligently to develop and/or respond to regulations. The NAST Executive Director has participated in the rulemaking process, offering guidance and support to those involved in rulemaking negotiations, and will continue to participate in policy analysis efforts and responses to federal regulatory proposals.

The primary sets of federal program integrity and gainful employment regulations were released in 2010 and 2011. Institutions and accreditors are continuing to take steps to ensure compliance. A set of NAST advisories highlighting certain components of the program integrity and gainful employment regulations is available through the Publications section of the NAST Web site.

The current 2008 version of the Higher Education Act expired on December 31, 2013 but remains in force until reauthorization is completed. It is expected that Congress will begin the reauthorization process in 2014 or 2015. The staff of the National Office plans to monitor legislative developments and proposals and will provide updates to the membership from time to time.

Many policy challenges exist on local, national, and international levels; many approaching the horizon are yet to be in plain view. Efforts often exist that purport to replace current systems which are based on trust of expert knowledge and experience, and independence of institutions regarding academic matters, with centralized systems focused predominantly on assessment techniques, data collection, and counting. NAST will continue to monitor ongoing events, actively participate in the conversations that address such issues, assist to provide detailed and thorough information, and keep the membership informed as issues and projects progress.

In addition to accreditation policy mentioned above, the Association remains concerned about tax policy, intellectual property, the preponderance of data collection and associated issues of privacy and confidentiality, a growing disparity in educational opportunity at the K–12 level, and the pace of cultural climate changes enabled by technological advances and their impact. Many contextual issues that affect NAST schools 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. NAST continues to join with others in addressing policy approaches 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 these fluctuating economic times. NAST continues to monitor with concern proposals that would bring increased federal involvement in the activities of and control over nonprofit organizations and philanthropies.

## National Office

The NAST National Office is located in Reston, one of the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., and the current terminus of Metro's new Silver Line. The office is about eight miles east of Dulles International Airport, and a little over twenty miles from downtown Washington. We are always delighted to welcome visitors to the National Office. 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, and the Commission on 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, meeting participants—all willing to donate their valuable time and expertise; all holding and exhibiting unwavering commitment to the field. Although the availability of time for each member has become ever more precious, the volunteerism in NAST continues to grow—a testament to the extraordinary spirit and dedication of its members. The work of our visiting evaluators and Commissioners is a wonderful expression of commitment to the field and of faith in the future.

This outstanding corps of volunteers is joined by a dedicated and capable National Office staff—Mark Marion, Tracy L. Maraney, Derek Bowden, Willa J. Shaffer, Chira Kirkland, Jenny Kuhlmann, Lisa A. Ostrich, Sarah Yount, Anne Curley, Erin Moscony, Teresa Kabo, and Stacy A. McMahon. As the number of accredited institutional members has grown, so has the work of the staff and the services to NAST over the years. Staff is focused on carrying out the daily work of the Association, developing new and refining old systems, assisting the burgeoning number of institutions seeking Membership for the first time, and consulting with those seeking renewal of Membership. The staff is diligent in its efforts to assist and serve the institutions, and to carry out the responsibilities of NAST effectively.

As a staff, we are able to see on a daily basis the great foundational strength of NAST. Fundamental to this foundation is wisdom about the need to remain informed, communicate, and work together to build theatre in higher education as a whole, as well as in each member and applicant institution. NAST 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 in place is paramount and will serve NAST 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 NAST membership. It is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to serve NAST and its member institutions. 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 continue your work throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen P. Moynahan  
Executive Director