

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE**  
**50th Annual Meeting**  
and  
**Retreat for Administrators of Theatre Programs in Higher Education**  
March 26 – 28, 2015

**Report of the Executive Director**

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The 2014-2015 academic year marks NAST's 50<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 to make 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 2015-2016, NAST continues to focus on specific areas of standards 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 are intended to help make the accreditation review process more clear and efficient.

An amended *Handbook* typically is released annually just after each Annual Meeting. The 2015-2016 *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. The membership reviewed and approved comprehensive standards changes in November 2014. These changes have been included in the NAST *Handbook 2014-2015* now available online. There are no proposed revisions to come before the membership for a vote during this Annual Meeting.

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 website 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 willing to work with institutions and programs to consider options and to craft NAST reviews that are thorough, 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 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 R. Terrell Finney, Jr. and Vice President Holly Logue 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 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 2013-2014 HEADS survey, the resultant Data Summaries were published in March 2014. Additional capabilities and services are added as time and financial resources permit. Minor adjustments were made to the Data Survey tool prior to the November 2014 launch. Associated changes were also made to the 2015 Data Summaries. Such modifications are intended to clarify the submission process ensuring the collection of accurate and helpful data. Comparative data in the form of Special Reports are a feature of the HEADS system and can be valuable resources for administrators. These Special Reports and their possible uses will be discussed during the Annual Meeting at a session on Saturday morning. The 2014-2015 data submission process closed on January 31, 2015. The current year's Data Summaries and access to Special Reports will be available later this spring. NAST welcomes thoughts and feedback regarding the HEADS project.

The Annual Meeting of NAST 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. The theme for the 2015 Annual Meeting, which marks the Association's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, is "Preserving Our Past; Embracing the Future." The 2015 Annual Meeting will address issues such as curriculum development; enrollment management with specific focus on recruitment and retention; issues of student health and wellness, transitioning from two- to four-year programs; the care and nurturing of minority, low-income, and first-generation students; and strategies for dealing with today's unique administrative challenges. The meeting will also provide opportunities for discussion of the topics on the program, and those of interest to attendees. Member roundtables will be held, as will several informational sessions for individuals shepherding their institutions through the accreditation/reaccreditation process, and for new visiting evaluators and those slated to conduct evaluative visits. Informative sessions addressing the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project and federal issues will also 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 have agreed to serve as moderators and recorders.

In celebration of the work accomplished by many to advance theatre, theatre programs, and theatre higher education throughout the past 50 years, members and friends of NAST will take advantage of the opportunity on Friday evening to celebrate accomplishments and enjoy good fellowship.

## Policy

The Association continues to follow and monitor carefully various federal and state initiatives and issues.

One such issue pertains to the theatre education of children and youth. The recent release of guidelines pertaining to K–12 arts education, a sequel to the National Voluntary Arts Standards project completed in 1994, requires careful review, cautious consideration, and steadfast resolve on the part of educators to ensure that arts study remains focused on the discipline and the development of competencies and skills. Without much time for reflection, this initiative will be followed by the long-awaited reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—an undertaking of formidable proportions delayed seven years, but now expected to be completed in 2015. Given the ongoing discord among policymakers, and past difficulties in reaching consensus and therefore conclusion, the road to completion may be filled with rough patches.

On the heels of the ESEA reauthorization will be the recrafting of the Higher Education Act (HEA) last reauthorized in August of 2008, and its anticipated reauthorization. Issues that have consumed our thoughts and time since 2008, such as the credit hour, gainful employment, state authorization, teacher preparation, and ratings remain front and center in this ongoing conversation. Protecting and maintaining institutional autonomy and freedoms vital to the success of our educational system, and our pursuits of creative and innovative undertakings, remains paramount. Concerted effort will be needed to ensure that neither law nor the regulation that follow enable or allow federal reach beyond established boundaries.

NAST currently publishes advisories, which describe regulations associated with the 2008 law. These may be found within the publications section of the website and are titled *NAST Advisories on Federal Issues*.

Many policy challenges exist on local, national, and international levels; many exist beyond the horizon but, in time, will come into plain view. Unceasing efforts seem to exist that work 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 methodologies, techniques, collection of copious amounts of information, 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 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 an exemplary 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—Tracy L. Maraney, Anne Curley, Kyle Dobbeck, Julia Harbo, Chira Kirkland, Jenny R. Kuhlmann, Stacy A. McMahon, Erin Moscony, Lisa A. Ostrich, Ben Thompson, and Sarah Yount. 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 accreditation 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 strongly in place 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, its member institutions, and 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 continue your work throughout the year, and in the next 50 to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen P. Moynahan  
Executive Director