

TO: AAAE Board and Membership
FROM: Katy Coy, Executive Director; Travis Newton, Task Force Co-Chair
DATE: April 21, 2017
RE: AAAE Strategic Initiatives, 2017-2020

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Arts Administration Educators has worked toward significant growth and professionalization in a relatively short period of time. Over the last four years, we've enhanced and improved financial systems, formalized many administrative and governance processes, established AAAE's first relationships with funders, and expanded staff capacity. Our conference has grown steadily and increased in scope. We are now venturing into year-round programming and new lines of business for the organization. We will enter these next three years with more organizational capacity and stability than AAAE has ever had.

As the organization enters this new chapter, a strategic perspective is essential. AAAE has one full-time staff member and a distinctive set of financial, material, intellectual, and human resources, all of which must be accounted for in any strategic undertaking. This document contains (1) a summary of activities undertaken to determine a strategic agenda for the organization, and (2) proposed items for that agenda.

HISTORY AND PROCESS

The Strategy Task Force was established in January 2016. For the past year, this team has been working to understand the will of the membership, weigh a variety of strategic directions, and engage the board of directors in charting a short-term course for the organization. Key components of this process have included:

- More than 20 interviews conducted with members, February - April, 2016.
- A field scan that included higher education institutions, member organizations (arts and non-arts), arts organizations, and more.
- A day-long, in-person Strategy Task Force working session in April 2016.
- An update on strategy initiatives delivered to the membership at the annual conference in Philadelphia in June, 2016.
- Adherence to the process articulated in David LaPiana's *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid Response World* to develop potential strategic initiatives and tools to evaluate them.

- A series of online member “town hall” meetings covering the strategy process and potential areas of focus in September 2016. These meetings were attended by more than 50 members that represented a variety of geographic locations and program levels (undergraduate and graduate).
- A two-day board retreat/meeting dedicated to evaluating and honing in on strategic initiatives in October 2016.

This memo is the result of the Strategy Task Force having spent many hours listening, discussing, evaluating, and reflecting. The AAAE Board of Directors has also been integral to the scope and direction of the work articulated below. It is important to note that at heart of the La Piana process are agility and responsiveness. AAAE is empowered to evaluate the scope of the plan on a regular basis and to adapt it as circumstances change or new opportunities come about.

AAAE intends to complete these strategic initiatives within a three-year period. Should the organization accomplish all of these items, there are several others that were identified as a result of this process and the organization may choose to take them on. While AAAE will adhere to the initiatives as articulated below, processes may be changed or re-defined as the work evolves.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE #1: Revise the AAAE Mission Statement

RATIONALE: During the October 2016 board retreat, it became clear that our existing mission statement no longer represents the totality of our membership, our organization, and all that we seek to accomplish. The language is stale, lacks specificity, and is not aspirational enough. The time has come to create and adopt a new mission statement that reflects our organization as it exists and functions today and that leaves room for our aspirations and future development.

PROCESS: An ad-hoc Mission Statement Revision Sub-committee of the Task Force will be established, comprising two board members and two representatives from the institutional membership. The committee will be tasked with developing a proposed mission statement, according to a process developed by the Strategy Task Force.

MEMBER BENEFIT: A revised mission statement that accurately captures the scope and charge of AAAE will make for a stronger organization overall and provide the direction required to continue to grow and evolve. As we strengthen our foundation, we will be able to extend that strength to member support and benefits. Additionally, the process and end product will help us more specifically focus our resources.

OUTCOME: This initiative will be successful upon the adoption of a revised mission statement.

INITIATIVE #2: Finalize an AAAE Values Statement and put before board for approval

RATIONALE: Thus far, AAAE has operated under a loose set of common values. However, to position the organization and its members as standard-bearers in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); academic integrity; best practices in employment and more, AAAE will benefit from a formal values statement. This will be a tool to communicate our values to stakeholders and the broader community, and will guide us as we consider new initiatives or areas of concern.

PROCESS: Designated individuals will continue work on the Values Statement that was begun at the board retreat in October, 2016. Once finalized, the Values Statement will be presented to the board for approval and adoption.

MEMBER BENEFIT: As AAAE continues to evolve, members will benefit from a consistent vision that is greater than any one person or group. This Values Statement will also be a tool to help align member benefits with the will and values of the organization and membership.

OUTCOME: This initiative will be successful upon the approval and adoption of a Values Statement.

INITIATIVE #3: Create engagement plan to address AAAE's role in research and thought leadership in the field

RATIONALE: AAAE members are experts in their disciplines and at the forefront of research, cultural policy, pedagogy, and practice. One of the organization's most significant competitive advantages is the concentration of such expertise among its membership. In recognition of both the wide expertise of our members and the intimate nature of our field, AAAE seeks to engage with potential partners in appropriate and high-impact ways while still maintaining an independent perspective that is crucial for academic integrity. Through our annual conference, emerging programming opportunities and more, AAAE seeks to find unique ways to make the most of our position straddling the arts and academic communities.

PROCESS: Staff and board will partner in creating a plan to develop collaborative opportunities with key organizations. This plan will focus on the areas of programming, research, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and other areas as determined by the board.

MEMBER BENEFIT: By strengthening our position in the field; and creating greater understanding and value of our members' work, this focus on collaboration can benefit members with new and augmented opportunities for scholarship, project-based work, and more.

OUTCOME: The short-term outcome is a documented plan for engagement, and the long-term outcome is 1-3 new collaborative and mutually-beneficial initiatives.

INITIATIVE #4: Conduct a public relations campaign to convey and reinforce the value of arts administration as a discipline and formal education as the best means to become an arts administrator.

RATIONALE: As the number of arts administration education options increases, AAAE can serve members and potential arts administration students by championing formal arts

administration education and creating awareness around the opportunities offered by the profession.

PROCESS: AAAE will engage a public relations team to construct a campaign that celebrates arts administration and its distinctive qualities; and positions formal arts administration education as an optimum way to enter and/or advance in the field.

MEMBER BENEFIT: The goals of this initiative are designed to increase interest in studying arts administration and ultimately, to increase the number of individuals who choose formal arts administration education.. This is a tangible benefit for every member.

OUTCOME: Metrics may include increased web traffic to AAAE's program directory and/or recruitment and advocacy materials, and will be developed in consultation with public relations professionals that the organization partners with to do this work.

INITIATIVE #5: Establish an Accreditation Task Force to gain a complete understanding of arts administration program accreditation and develop recommendations on AAAE's role. AAAE will not pursue becoming an accrediting body in the scope of this work.

RATIONALE: AAAE is a trusted source for guidance and information on standard practices for everything from program structure to curricula to faculty issues. As our awareness of the number of inquiries regarding exploring accreditation has increased, AAAE must consider how it can inform accrediting bodies and support members in undergoing successful accreditation processes. . The board determined that AAAE will not pursue becoming an accrediting body; however it is important to explore arts administration accreditation and how AAAE can inform the accrediting process in a collaborative role, though not as a direct participant. AAAE will focus on understanding the current accrediting bodies, their practices and areas of concern.

PROCESS: The organization will convene a task force to explore accreditation practices and processes surrounding arts administration programs. The task force will meet with accrediting bodies and make recommendations to the AAAE board of directors on possible tools or guidelines that AAAE may wish to construct for informational and support purposes.

MEMBER BENEFIT: This work will create familiarity and understanding within accrediting bodies that influence arts administration education, and will strengthen member institutions' positions as they pursue accreditation.

OUTCOME: This initiative will be determined successful when AAAE has an official set of guiding principles on accreditation. AAAE may develop guides or other tools for those involved in the accrediting process, based on the results of the task force's work.

2016-17 Strategy Task Force

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