

Report of the President

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I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Membership of NASAD for giving me this wonderful honor of serving as your President for the next three years. I have been associated with NASAD for a long time, and over that period I have seen the Association grow in numbers and sophistication. I have made many friends here and cherish each and every one of them, and have visited many of you on your home campuses as part of the accreditation process. As an association we have come a long way in the last two decades, and certainly over the past 68 years. There is one thing that stands out over these seven decades and that is continuity. This continuity grows naturally from the most fundamental purposes of work in art and design and in the various specializations of each field. Fundamentally, we are still rooted in communication, service, inspiration, understanding, and passion through things visual. It is why we love this work. But perspectives and means evolve; and as they evolve, they expand possibilities, and thus contribute to sustaining fundamental purposes that are centuries old. As we create and innovate, we are part of a continuity of creativity and innovation, and it is our responsibility, as members of this community, to advance art and design and the disciplines they contain in the time that we have.

NASAD is a nurturing and facilitating force in the preparation of artists and designers. In the United States, we are fortunate to have much diversity in higher education. This diversity is evident in art and design through the range of schools and programs, in their different missions, educational approaches, and accomplishments. NASAD has always supported this diversity. It is important to reiterate that NASAD accreditation is based on standards that serve as a framework for institutional creativity. Under this concept, standards are not intended to result in standardization. This concept is extremely important in a time when considerable forces are arrayed behind the idea that everything in higher education should be standardized, so that it can be counted and compared. As administrators, we understand that a certain amount of bureaucracy is necessary to operate institutions and organizations. But when standardization and other bureaucratic techniques are overemphasized, the kind of creativity that interests us can suffer.

NASAD's goal remains to continue to evolve the Association's work, consistent with the nature of the way art and design work. We are interested in maintaining the conditions that support creativity. We are interested in a creative space rather than a bureaucratic space, creative habits of mind rather than bureaucratic habits of mind, creative energy rather than bureaucratic energy. Like art and design, it is essential to respect and use organizational techniques in creative ways, and to pursue creative purposes in art and design teaching, scholarship, and service. We are not so interested in organization for its own sake, but organization in order to enable us to do something. (We need some order to make sense out of the chaos.) The same is

true for technology, assessment, globalization, student debt, and a host of other issues and techniques that swirl around the higher education community at the present time. Here, I think it is important for all of us to pay attention to the conversations on our home campuses. It is critical that we listen to the dialogue, that we become informed about it, that we are aware of the priorities, and that we get involved. NASAD's role here is to try and help you stay informed about issues on the national scene and to assist you with professional development and understanding in order to provide a context for those issues and where art and design fit in at your institution. Just to cite a few of these that are swirling at the moment: delivery systems (E-Learning, Coursera and MOOC—massive open online courses—perhaps you have seen the recent article published by MIT in the Technology Review about online courses, entitled the “Crisis in Higher Education”); analytics and its influence on management systems (July/August edition of Educause's publication); financial developments that are affecting all of us in different ways (the cost of higher education and student debt); and if your state is like mine, Project Degree Completion has now risen to the top of the list as a priority.

This morning we looked at current conditions and asked questions about normality. After these discussions, I think we all have new insights on the extent to which there is or is not a “new normal” and what this may mean for us in the environment in which we work.

Whatever our answer individually or in terms of our institution, it is important to be able to face new and evolving conditions with realistic understandings of what is fundamental. NASAD has developed, and continues to develop, consensus-based statements about what is fundamental. These statements constantly evolve. For example, at this meeting, we have just voted to add to our *Handbook* statements of fundamentals associated with Creative Multidisciplinary Convergence and Technologies. NASAD is the second organization to vote, as the memberships of the four arts accrediting associations take action with regard to a common proposal. NASAD is deeply grateful to the working group that authored this proposal and to Jamy Sheridan of the Maryland Institute College of Art, who is the NASAD representative to that working group. The Association is also grateful for those who took the time to comment on initial drafts of this proposal. Here is a wonderful example of how organization and creativity come together to promote and nurture creativity in our institutions for years to come.

Standards additions this year include those for a professional baccalaureate degree in animation. I want to thank the membership for their participation in last year's hearing that explored the possibility of creating animation standards. Thank you also for your feedback during the comment periods over the past few months.

We are also engaged in a multi-year review of the NASAD standards for programs in design. There were hearings last year, and there are additional hearings this year. For those who are new to NASAD, hearings and comment periods are two ways the Association develops consensus on statements that are eventually proposed for a membership vote. I encourage everyone representing a member institution to attend hearings and pay close attention to requests for comment that come from the National Office. Please share these requests with the appropriate faculty and staff at your institution. Our *Handbook* is as effective as it is because over many years experts in member institutions have participated in the development and refinement of its text.

NASAD is a growing organization. For those of you who have been attending for many years, I know that you have noticed our ranks swell and have enjoyed meeting new colleagues from

across the country. We now have over 300 institutional members, and over 50 additional institutions have submitted Notices of Intention to Apply. These institutions will be writing Self-Studies and hosting site visits over the next 3 or 4 years.

NASAD does a great deal of its work through the volunteer contributions of administrators and faculty in member institutions. With growing interest and participation, the Association needs volunteers to become trained evaluators and participate in the evaluation process at applicant institutions. Yes, NASAD evaluations require preparation and follow through. Evaluators must study and write. Time, energy, and commitment are necessary. But the work is extremely rewarding. Many evaluators have told me that they feel they gain as much or more from the experience as the institution. I know how busy everyone in this room is, but maintaining a strong peer review system is extremely important. When you are asked to be trained as a NASAD evaluator, I hope that you will accept and participate. I hope you will express any interest you have in serving NASAD to the Executive Director. I know that personally I have so enjoyed this aspect of my association with NASAD, and I have learned so much from all of you on my visits to schools across the country.

We are at the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year. Most of us are settled in to our routines and are addressing the series of challenges and opportunities that we know lie ahead. There are many things about the future that we do not know. We certainly know some of the forces impacting our decision-making in our work at home. But we do not know exactly how these forces will combine. In various portions of this meeting, and in its work throughout the year, NASAD helps us stay informed about background and contextual issues that are constantly combining to create the conditions we face. We must stay informed and work at various levels of detail. But we must also do these things in terms of maintaining conditions for the pursuit of the fundamental purposes in our fields of art and design. The context may become more difficult as the standard rhetoric about higher education now seems to consider everything in terms of reductionist vocationalism (I'm using this term, but others of you may know it as work force development, gainful employment, or, more simply, preparing students for jobs, etc.). Vocationalist views have always been present, but now they seem more and more prominent. The conditions many of us see remind us of the famous phrase about those who know the price of everything and the value of nothing. We can be frustrated or even angry about these conditions, but those emotions won't take us very far unless we can create a way forward that demonstrates an alternative view, a view that is more balanced, a view that places the pragmatic and the aspirational in a productive relationship.

Seeking such a relationship is what our member institutions do and is what NASAD has done. It is what we must continue to do. And we must continue to do it in part by supporting each other; by working together as a community; by sharing ideas, concerns, and methodologies; and by articulating what we believe.

I want to close by expressing deep appreciation for all those who have worked for the Association as volunteers over the past year, to our staff in Reston, and to all of you for being here and participating in this important Annual Meeting that is full of issues and actions of deep relevance to what we are all working to do in our institutions.

Thank you and best wishes for the coming year.