

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN

78th Annual Meeting

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Report of the President

Sally McRorie

Good morning, friends and colleagues. It is such a great pleasure to once again be able to meet in person, to get to know one another better, to exchange ideas, to discuss challenges, and to move forward purposefully, together. It's been a long time!

Many things have changed since we last met in person in 2019, but it's apparent to all that your dedication to providing excellence in art and design programs is stronger than ever. The National Association of Schools of Art and Design is a collaboration built among all of you and our colleagues at home and abroad. Its collection of standards is ours—made by our members and modified by us too. That collective partnership is invaluable.

For more years than I'd like to admit, I've written and spoken about the critical importance of developing a "community of inquiry" as we educate our students and help prepare them for success in our rapidly changing and challenging world. That term, taken from the organization called Philosophy for Children (a topic for another time), is an approach to understanding how we can construct our reality, our present and our future, through thoughtful and engaged questions and collaborative answers. Our communities of inquiry in NASAD are vital for helping construct what excellence means for all our students and faculty in art and design. That excellence is often difficult to build and to maintain, especially in these times of increasing challenges in budgets, perceptions of academic and market relevance, and understanding of academic freedom and expression, which can threaten the very existence of programs. Let's use all the collective resources of our NASAD community to build and sustain the kinds of excellence we all strive to create.

A deliberate and unwavering focus on student success is one clear key to our work. Although there are many tracks and paths toward success for all of our students, please allow me to suggest a few that I have found are crucial.

- 1) Develop a success team for every student. No one is naïve enough to think that every student can be mentored by every faculty or staff member. But knowing that mentoring, help with emotional and physical adaptation issues, and attention to developing active learning in and through art and design are crucial. Learn what resources your institution provides for students from every kind of background and advocate for what's missing. Do institutional and internal advisors know the curricula and what students must do to succeed in all of your programs? Do area or department heads understand that it's

imperative not just to ask for more resources, but to understand how to measure success in terms that upper administrators get, like retention and graduation rates? Talk with your colleagues about what a success team for each of your students means where you are.

- 2) Strengthen and broaden avenues for experiential learning. The arts have offered our colleagues across the whole range of disciplines and fields the insights that active learning and portfolios offer. Everybody (almost) recognizes their importance. Do you have an approach by which students build portfolios for careers after graduation, including not just art or design products, but also experiences in the world external to the studio or classroom? Internships, both internal and external? Research with a faculty member? Collaborations with students, faculty, and staff in other areas of your institution? Opportunities to develop leadership skills as well as personal growth?
- 3) Enhance support for teaching. Some colleagues have had the great good fortune to have had educational and professional experiences that provide a great foundation for effective teaching. But many have not. New faculty may have focused so intently on finishing graduate work and getting a job that they have left the idea of teaching well as something that could be honed later. Or perhaps some experienced faculty continue to teach in ways that leave students frustrated and unmotivated. There are ways to improve how one teaches. Find out what support your institution offers, ask your most successful teachers to help mentor others, bring in successful colleagues from other communities, and look to the resources that NASAD and other organizations bring to the table.

I've been an administrator for over thirty years and I know that every situation, every colleague, and every student is both a challenge and an opportunity for success. After these recent years where everything was turned on its head, let's know that what we do matters more than ever. Please continue to work together to build excellent art and design programs and to keep building the collaborative support that is NASAD.

Thank you.