



NAfME - COLLEGIATE CORNER

NYSSMA® Membership Means Learning for Life

Ignoring the risk of sounding altogether too sentimental, I found this final column exceedingly hard to write. In the music education world, we are far too invested in our work to use a hired ghostwriter. What we do comes from the heart, as well as from how we talk about it. Keeping this in mind, I hope to share some wisdom and insight from my eye-opening year as collegiate president.

May 1, 2018, was the day Collegiate Past-President Shoko Nagami handed me the reins of the collegiate e-board. As president, I knew I needed an agenda. Dr. Koster, my advisor, continued to tell me that it would come to me naturally through my work. However, I continued to worry — what would be my legacy?

The journey begins

The summer of 2018 presented me with three separate trips: one to West Point, NY, for an Executive Council meeting, one to Washington, D.C, for the Collegiate Hill Day Summit, and one to Albany, NY, for a combination Executive Council meeting and summer conference.

My first Executive Council meeting was a whirlwind. In my mind for a year (and I do apologize) I had pictured such meetings in stark white rooms filled with business chatter and words like “synergy” and “standards” thrown around like confetti by people wearing monochromatic suits. To be honest, I’m not really sure where my brain came up with that scene, perhaps one episode too many of *Mad Men* or the fact that the phrase “executive council” makes me think something along the lines of the Senate of the Galactic Empire from *Star Wars*.

I want to tell my readers that this is absolutely not the case. The Executive Council is one of the most amazing, passionate, dedicated, open-minded, and creative groups of people that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. These individuals have dedicated their “free time” (in this profession, I’m sure you understand the quotations I used there) to protecting, growing, and fine-tuning music education and educators in New York State.

One council member making waves for collegiate members is Curriculum Committee Chair Fred Weingarten.

The best teacher learns for life.

I first met Chairman Weingarten at a lecture for my secondary methods class, and I was taken aback by the drive he had for perfecting the state standards, intertwining them with curriculum concepts and organizing them into well-thought-out categories, levels and learning contexts.

He has been a crucial component in my understanding of the standards rollout, as well as communicating this knowledge to the collegiate chapters across the state. As I stated before, he came out to speak to young educators-to-be about adapting curricula to the standards, and has offered conference sessions on the very same topic.

Team work rules

Hazy summer afternoons turned into crisp fall evenings, and I was launched into my student teaching semester. In this already crazy time, I was also preparing for the big kahuna: the NYSSMA® Winter Conference in Rochester, NY. This conference was my debut for non-council NYSSMA® members, both collegiate and professional. I wanted to make sure that everything was just as smooth and spectacular as last year — and then some.

Of course, the winter conference would have been nothing without my rock, the collegiate e-board. I cannot even begin to describe the work that they put into everything we do. Our e-board put together the most well-attended collegiate dinner meeting to date. We had esteemed guest speakers NAfME President Kathy Sanz, NYSSMA® President Michael Salzman, and NYSSMA® Government Relations Chair Alan Orloff. Their messages highlighted important ideas for every collegiate member in attendance, and I also believe these speeches inspired a new spark for renewing membership and increasing collegiate involvement.

As I write this, I am on a train bound for Albany, NY. There I will attend my next Executive Council meeting where we will discuss Music In Our Schools Month, diversity in music education, Joe Sugar Advocacy Day, and the upcoming festival season. I also plan to discuss collegiate presence at the upcoming 2019 NAfME Eastern Division Conference in Pittsburgh. Collegiate attendance at these events is of significant, as it combines collegiate members from 13 states, the largest number of any NAfME division.

If you are like me and are finishing up your final semester, you may also be in disbelief. These past four years have been foundational to who I have become as an adult, and they have given me some of the most wild experiences — conferences, an array of job opportunities, and most important, unbreakable friendships.

To all those entering the professional world, I wish you the best of luck and congratulate you on your graduation. Your hard work is all coming to fruition! I hope you never lose sight of why you chose this profession, and I hope your work continues to inspire you daily. What I have chosen as my legacy as president is a drive to educate others about the importance of professional membership.

Professional memberships are key

Membership in NYSSMA® and NAFME is access to a world of innovation, ideas, adaptable curricula, events, and conferences. It connects you to the other driven members of your profession and allows you to feel the positive impacts of others while providing a medium to make an impact of your own.

The people I have met, the experiences I have had, and the learning platforms (e.g. Amplify, NAFME Academy PD Webinars, *School Music NEWS* publications, and NAFME backpack) have given me a toolbox to take to retirement. Once given the tools, however, I cannot (and don't want to) walk away. Membership in NAFME/NYSSMA® is something that should be kept for life. The world is constantly changing and with it the tools we use

to teach. The best teacher learns for life; membership is our enrollment to school.

Before I sign off one last time, I would like to take a moment to introduce your Collegiate President-Elect, Derek Schmelter. A student at the Aaron Copland School of Music at CUNY Queens, Schmelter has absolutely blown me away with the work he has already put in as President-Elect. He is full of spectacular ideas, and is one of the easiest people to talk to. I could not be prouder to leave behind my seat to him, and I know the council will be inspired by him in the same way I have been. Derek, I wish you the best of luck.

My time may be coming to an end as Collegiate President, but I hope to continue to travel, attend conferences, and use what NYSSMA/NAFME has to offer me as a growing educator. ||

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