

Christopher McAfee – NYSSMA/NAfME Collegiate President, Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam



The Fall's Priority #1 – Building Our Communities

Hello, friends and colleagues!

It is my great honor to begin serving you as Collegiate President in a time so filled with hope and regeneration. I would like to stress that this year's Collegiate NYSSMA® Executive Board is committed to ensuring a safe and inclusive music community, and we will do everything in our power now and throughout our time as music educators to work toward that goal.

With that goal in mind, we believe Step One is providing a wide-open door for community involvement with Collegiate NYSSMA®. Whether you plan to join us at the winter conference in Rochester, at the biennial collegiate summit in Syracuse, online or in person at one of our many opportunities planned throughout the school year, we hope you take the chance to interact with us and find out what you can do to serve the music education community.

That being said, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the wonderful group of people who will be joining me on the Collegiate Executive Board this coming year. My fellow officers will include:

President-Elect - Emma Uruburu, SUNY Potsdam.
Web Editor - Madison Yung, Nazareth College.
Secretary-Treasurer - Elira Mavraj, SUNY Potsdam.

Province Representatives will include:
Province 1 - Katie Dessert, SUNY Fredonia.
Province 2 - Paige Lee, Nazareth College.
Province 3 - Halie Carden, SUNY Potsdam.
Province 4/5 - Matthew Grosso, SUNY Potsdam.
Province 6 - Angela Burtulato, New York University.
Province 7 - Madison Garraffo, Hofstra University.

Please feel free to reach out to any one of us at any time. Our contact information is included on NYSSMA®.org under the Collegiate-NYSSMA section. As part of our open door, I would also like to stress that any insight, information, or discussion that you may have can be sent to me at collpres@nyssma.org. If you have any topics that you would like publicized, included in future columns, or presented in an official meeting, send them my way.

What keeps us together

A recent conversation with a friend put something into perspective. The thing about music that has made us fall in love is not repetition, not the competition, not practicing in our own isolated environment for hours on end. It is the community that we experience. And it is this community experience that we have sorely missed over the past year and a half. So, I task my fellow collegiate members and fellow music educators everywhere — take this time to build and grow your music community.

Inside of our institutions, we have students who are

starving for a chance to be together again. Take every opportunity that is presented to provide these spaces. Low impact, joy bringing activities are exactly what we need in a time like this. Spend that time covering topics that you always wish you could have and address the issues within your space that have fallen silent for too long.

Covering topics on musicians' wellness, for example, will allow for longevity to build in our young and growing musicians. Discussing personal and cultural implications of music will allow our communities to build a personal stake in the music they are making. Allowing space to just have some fun together will build personal relationships that may last a lifetime and will have an invaluable impact when music is made together.

Most of all, take every chance there is to make music together again. Collegiate members, build new ensembles. Take time to play together on secondaries, sing songs together you may never otherwise sing, make that musical TikTok trend you have been thinking about doing for months on end.

Teachers, I beg that you say "yes" to any musical idea your students have. Allow their creativity to shine like never before and be willing to take chances on things that may scare you a bit. Maybe you do not know the most about digital music or guitar riffs, but we all know a whole lot about musicianship. This new generation is full of surprises, and I, for one, am very excited to see what is in store.

Outside of our institutions, we have vibrant communities that have sorely missed us while we were away. Take the chance to rekindle old friendships and build many connections anew. What we bring to the table as artists and community builders will go a very long way for many people, whether it is in a literal sense with fundraisers and philanthropy or a spiritual sense with the joy we put into those who listen with us.

Find the community centers that need a sense of hope, find the youth who are looking up to us, find those who have and always will support us. In the end, the music we make is out of our own joy and for the joy of the world around us. So, please, take this time to share what you have got, no matter how great, with those who surround you.

Every one of us is a leader in our own capacity. I hope you can take time to lead with the passion and love we share for music. ||

Peace and love,
Christopher McAfee
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