

Taylor Kelly – NYSSMA/NAfME Collegiate President 24-25 - SUNY Fredonia



Recovering and Reconnecting

Greetings everyone! As we enter October, I hope that everyone has had a smooth start getting back into the school year and into the swing of the collegiate music scene! I, for one, am thrilled to be back at Fredonia, making the most of my final semester on campus before student teaching in the spring. But, of course, being back on campus doesn't come without the stress of juggling coursework along with personal life at this point in the semester. Nearly all of us have felt overwhelmed at some point; after all, no one said this would be easy. But remember, we are in this together!

Starting out as a freshman, adjusting to college can be a difficult task. Being away from home, having to meet new people, and leaving behind family and friends, in my case, hundreds of miles away, is tough. But as someone getting her first glimpse into the field of music education, we deal with many unique challenges of our own, one being the massive credit load filled with a plethora of performing ensembles, seminar classes, and practicum field experiences for which many of us receive little to no credit.

Why music?

For those credit-bearing courses, many of us enrolled in our first courses in music theory, ear training, or class piano with any gaps filled in by general education classes in math, sciences, or foreign languages. Although crucial to develop necessary musicianship skills, these foundation courses often left me feeling uninspired, and as I progressed

further, I found myself asking, "When am I actually going to use this knowledge?" Without taking the proper steps, it's easy to lose touch with your "Why?" That is, "Why am I here?," "Why did I choose music education?," or "Why did it choose me?"

As I enter my senior year, I'm fortunate to be able to look back on these moments of doubt through a lens of gratitude for the things and the people that have gotten me through the

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and development*

trying times despite knowing there will always be more to come. In the past three years, here are the top five things I have learned about protecting myself from burnout and stress, specifically as it applies to being a preservice music teacher:

1. Prioritize yourself. Make sure to spend enough time doing things that make you happy, both inside and outside of music is the advice shared by Andrew Palmer, a senior from Fredonia, and C-NYSSMA Province 1 Representative. "Outside of music, watching movies with friends, spending time in nature, and cooking really keep me grounded," he says.

2. Don't be afraid to say "no." For many people, this is easier said than done and something I still struggle with. When everyone around you is so busy, it feels like second nature to want to help others out, but at what cost? When work is already piling up, it may be time to reevaluate. Never apologize for putting your mental health as your first priority.

3. Stop comparing and start learning. Everyone has their strengths, but often we fail to see our own. Celebrate others but don't allow their accomplishments to stand in the way of recognizing your own. No one is born an expert teacher, but to become one is to never stop learning.

4. Accept uncertainty. As my time as an undergraduate comes to a close and I look to start my career in a few short months, I often think, "What will life have in store for me?" The truth is, none of us can predict what the future will hold. Just a few short years ago, life as we now know it was once uncertain. Prepare yourself, but don't allow your fear of the future to overtake your appreciation of the present.

5. Reconnect with your "Why?" Why did you choose music education? Whatever that reason, make sure to hold it close at hand and stay true to yourself. Make your truth known to your students, colleagues, friends, and family and your passion to share music will reign infectious. Surround yourself with supporters, musicians, teachers, and friends that inspire and energize you to keep learning every day.

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Winter conference

As someone who has struggled immensely with feeling connected to the music education field as an undergrad, especially in my earlier years, it can seem impossible to know how to balance school with life to get your spark back. You may want to get involved in organizations or take on leadership roles but wonder, "Will this be too much?"

Whether you're not sure where to start, want to take the next step in developing your craft, or need help reconnecting with your "Why?", I hope you will consider joining us at this year's 2024 NYSSMA® Winter Conference, December 5-8, at the

Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center in Rochester, NY.

The winter conference is a time of learning and development for newcomers and seasoned teachers, but has also become a way to build relationships with others outside of my university, allowing me to build new connections and network with fellow collegiate students and experts in the music education field alike.

At the conference, you will have the opportunity to attend a wide array of sessions packed with fresh new ideas, enjoy a variety of performances, or take a break and shop the exhibit hall for the newest resources and gear.

With the winter conference approaching, I cannot wait to come together once again to rejoice in our shared love for teaching and music. We gather to refine our skills and connect with colleagues and friends, but I also hope this experience will uplift your spirits for all to hear! For updates on the NYSSMA® Winter Conference, please visit www.nyssma.org.


Take care of yourself and be well,
Taylor Kelly
Collegiate President




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