

## Think-Tank Summit Preview “Pillar 2: Creativity”

*It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.*

— Albert Einstein

The upcoming [2026 CMS Think-Tank Summit](#) on the future of music in higher education focuses on four pillars of Belonging, Creativity, Technology and AI, and Advocacy. We have intentionally positioned creativity as the second of four pillars at our CMS Think-Tank Summit. We believe that to truly emphasize the importance of creativity to our students, we must first cultivate cultures of belonging. In these environments, students feel safe to develop independence and build confidence; empowering them to embrace and express their unique stories and identities. This foundation is essential for nurturing students into bold, original, and powerful artists.

As Suzanne Hall from Temple University and the chair of the Creativity Pillar programming committee reflects:

*This pillar invites us to celebrate the current positioning of creativity within schools and to envision how it can propel the music profession forward. Creativity is not just a skill; it is the vehicle through which we explore both the known and unknown dimensions of music; its roles, purposes, effects, and impact.*

As one of the original pillars of the [CMS manifesto](#) from 2014, creativity and an emphasis on the creative practice will always remain a cornerstone of what it means to study as an artist. As we continue to position creativity at the center, it is essential to continue to ask ourselves what that means to the young musicians of today and to continually examine how we prepare the artists of the next generation.

What would it look like for us to position the concepts of creativity at the center of everything we do? What does it mean to value creativity in the preparation of our young musicians?

Again from Suzanne Hall:

*Valuing creativity from a musical standpoint often means appreciating the final product, an archival work, a performance, or a composition. But valuing creativity from a human standpoint shifts the focus to the person behind the expression, their process, identity, and lived experience, and the way in which we introduce, discuss, and describe creativity. I believe this distinction matters. The former can lead to preservation and admiration of works; the latter invites empathy, connection, and a deeper understanding of the creative act as a form of human expression.*

To think of creativity beyond the artistic process and into the human experience changes the perspective from which we design our lessons, our classes, our rehearsals, and our curricula. Creativity now becomes a vehicle for cultivating individuality, collaboration, and engagement with our communities. Mostly, as Albert Einstein points out in the quote above, creativity reminds us that our work is rooted in joy. The joy of discovery, of process, of partnership, and fulfilling vision.

What does this *actually* look like in practice? We invite you to bring your boldest ideas to life at the upcoming Summit.

Join us in January!

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