

Hello Colleagues,

As announced earlier this year, The College Music Society will host a generative innovation summit focusing on the future of music in higher education this coming January 16-18, 2026. Last week, a group of thought leaders across CMS and beyond gathered in Houston for a weekend of brainstorming, dreaming, and planning for the 2026 CMS Think-Tank Summit.

We began our conversation with a discussion of the past work in music school growth since World War I, as clearly described in the first chapter of Robert Cutietta's new book, *What Music Schools Learned from the Pandemic: The 2020 Revision*. The group collectively noted that CMS represents a significant role in music and higher education and is well-positioned to advocate for the diversity of institutions and unique approaches within the 1000+ music schools in the US. We are actively positioning ourselves to prepare musicians for the generations to come.

We identified four pillars that will frame our conversation:

BELONGING

- How does creating a sense of belonging impact and reflect our values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and restorative justice?
- How do we build cultures of belonging regardless of upbringing and background?
- How do we evolve and hone our pedagogies to serve the 'whole' human musician?

CREATIVITY

- How do we infuse creativity into all that we do?
- How can we create space for "play" in our curriculum and schedules?
- How do we encourage student-generated, original music?

TECHNOLOGY

- What is the role of AI in the creative process?
- How can we prepare our students for the coming era of AI?
- What lessons from the pandemic ought we better integrate moving forward?

ADVOCACY

- How can we collectively advocate for the value of music in society?
- What does it mean to empower and encourage our students and community to engage in citizen artistry and socially inspired art?
- How can we make the case for music in higher education to the government and society?

Each of these four pillars will have leadership think-tank groups led by an organized set of facilitators. I would like to invite you to the 2026 CMS Think-Tank Summit and to join one or more of these Think-Tank Groups to contribute to the conversation, participate in the round tables, and bring your voice and energy to determine where we are going in the future of music in higher education.

Through the 2026 CMS Summit, we aim to define:

- *How* can we make each of our unique schools musically impactful now and into the future?
- *How* can we create a more transformative experience for our students and a deeper connection with the communities we serve?
- *What* do we need to be doing that we are not already?

We aspire to design our future and provide resources to spur our conversations to guide this work forward for the decades to come.

We invite you to participate.

Join the 2026 Think-Tank Summit

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'B', 'k', 'C', and 'i' written in a cursive, connected style.

Brian Kai Chin
President, College Music Society