

How will you reinvent your music school this fall?

During the demands of the semester, it is easy for many of us to put our heads down and focus on “doing the work.” As an associate dean for faculty and student affairs charged with the care of 120+ faculty colleagues and 1,200+ students, I assure you “doing the work” consumes much of my time and mindspace. But these early days of August, when campus is still relatively quiet and colleagues are just beginning to return from summers balanced with scholarly and creative productivity, playful adventures, and hard-earned relaxation, a moment to imagine the best version of our music schools is a good investment.

But imagination is a scaffolded activity. And CMS, through its most recent publication on *Leading Change*, offers one worth considering: an edited collection authored by music leaders from within-and-without of the academy.

[A More Promising Musical Future: Leading Transformational Change in Music Higher Education](#) (Stepniak, Michael, et al. Routledge, 2022) guides readers on a personal journey for fostering more authentic and inclusive cultures within their departments and schools. Invigorated by the human potential of our music communities and the future of the music marketplace, this co-authored monograph offers insights into change management and lays out practical pathways towards innovation and progress.

In Chapter One (*Changing the Game for Music in Higher Education*), David Cutler argues that music in higher education must evolve in order to remain relevant and sustainable amidst “a world marked by exponential change and disruptive technology.” And poses five critical questions all music programs must ask themselves if they are to remain relevant.

1. What do students need?
2. How are we different?
3. Who do we serve?
4. Might we lead the University?
5. How can we remain sustainable?

In Chapter Two (*Transforming Community and Ourselves through Heart and Mind Work: A Pathway for Embracing Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Belonging, and Justice*), Jasmine D. Parker - an interdisciplinary social science researcher by training - offers a conceptual framework from the perspective of a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging leader-scholar-practitioner. Parker details the need to create cultures of care, support, empathy, and love. She says, “Too often, as individuals and as institutions, we fail to ask the critical questions about how lived experiences, perspectives, values, and ideals shape organizational culture. Yet, these perspectives must be purposefully considered if we are to develop inclusive learning communities. Indeed, inclusive classrooms and learning dynamics can only be realized when individuals, leaders, communities, and organizations ask these critical questions.”

Brian Pertl, in Chapter Three (*Embracing The 21st Century Superpowers of Creativity, Collaboration, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, and Playfulness*) draws upon his expertise gleaned while a leader at Microsoft and takes us on a rockhop of some of the technological and

societal changes that have taken place since the beginning of the 21st century. He then examines how those changes have impacted musicians. Pertl suggests that the very attributes needed to thrive as a musician today - creativity, collaboration, entrepreneurship, adaptability, and playfulness - mirror those needed to create cultures equipped to adapt to the contemporary challenges facing music schools.

Drawing upon interviews with industry experts, data from research about professional musicians, and her own experience in the music industry, outside-the-academy arts leader Kendra Whitlock Ingram argues in Chapter Four (*Readying Our Classical Music Performers – An Employer’s View*) that if employability is a key outcome of 21st century music schools, faculty and administrators must evolve music school curricula to include programmatic and pre-professional experiences that embrace the non-performance skills required to prepare musicians to thrive in the contemporary musical landscape. These include creativity, networking, marketing, and a host of skills that have nothing to do with playing a musical instrument.

All acts of creativity begin by defining the boundaries within which our imaginations play: a sculptor's uncut marble, the blank canvas of the painter, twelve bars of changes and the rich history of the Blues. Thinking about your school as your space to collaboratively create something one-of-a-kind is worthy of these fleeting days of summer. And everyday.

The Committee on Academic Citizenship is hosting an upcoming virtual Listening Session (Tuesday, August 9, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT) to discuss the formation of a [CMS Student Bill of Rights](#). This conversation (facilitated by committee members Jenn LaRue – *PhD Candidate, The University of Georgia*, Kate Hamori – *MA/MLS Candidate, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music*, and Cody Arington – *Student Representative, CMS Board of Directors*, with support provided by Monique Van Willingham – *Director of Cultural Equity and Belonging, New England*, and Hannah Pearson, *Director of Operations, CMS*) will examine the unique needs of music students in higher education, with a particular focus on the interpersonal relationships between students, their peers, and their professors. The facilitators of this Listening Session aim to create a brave and open space for music students to voice their experiences, observations, and concerns about their needs within higher education. Please encourage your students to [register](#) (membership is not required) and help lead change across our profession.

As president, I value the diverse perspectives voiced across our society. Indeed, this is among our strengths as an organization dedicated to leading meaningful change. I want to offer support to our CMS members who may feel particularly disenfranchised in the wake of recent actions taken by the U.S. Supreme Court. Even (and perhaps especially) when perspectives clash, empathy and kindness can connect us across difference.

Thanks for joining the conversation,

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