



NDEO Works to Cultivate Leadership in Dance Arts Education

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NDEO Works to CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP *in Dance Arts Education*

During the Decade of Dance Education (2015–2025), the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) has renewed our commitment to cultivating leadership in the field of dance arts education. We recognize the need for strong, diverse leadership at the school, community, state, and national levels in all sectors of the field. At the same time, we acknowledge that a lack of opportunity in the field, as well as biases based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation, might have prevented many from pursuing leadership roles. As an organization, we are committing to providing our membership with opportunities to lead and serve within the organization, as well as the support needed to develop and refine leadership skills.

Throughout the history of the organization, providing opportunities for leadership and career advancement has been a central part of NDEO's mission. Members are given the opportunity to present their work at our conferences and publish their research in our journals. Awards and recognitions offer the chance to highlight the good work being done by members in every sector of our field. Volunteer opportunities are offered periodically; for example, each winter we post a call for adjudicators of the National Honor Society for Dance Arts Artistic Merit, Leadership, and Academic Achievement Award. State affiliates provide the chance for members to get involved and shape the field locally. Each year, NDEO calls for nominations to our Board of Directors, seeking a diverse body of educators to represent and serve the organization nationally. By taking advantage of these opportunities, our members have added to their resumes, advanced their careers, developed leadership skills, and given back to the field of dance arts education.

With this history in mind, leadership became one of the central tenets of the 2016 NDEO Priorities for Dance Education. This is a strategic planning document designed to guide the work of the organization into the future of the

field over the next several years. The document recognizes the need for leadership in the field and the role of NDEO in equipping both experienced and emerging professionals in the field with opportunities to develop and exhibit leadership skills. To do this, we have been working to identify the leadership needs within the field. Questions that have arisen related to these needs include the following:

- ◆ What qualities and skills do individuals need to lead in the dance education field of the twenty-first century?
- ◆ How can we create and expand leadership opportunities within NDEO and throughout the field, and build relationships with potential leaders?
- ◆ How can we identify and support effective dance education leadership?
- ◆ How do we recognize and celebrate diverse leadership across generations and throughout our many constituencies?
- ◆ How can we guide and empower emerging leaders to promote diversity and longevity in the field?

As a result of this process, and in conjunction with input from members, NDEO has committed to creating new leadership opportunities, preparing students and young professionals for leadership roles, and supporting those who lead the field today. Specifically, we are expanding ways we prepare future leaders and opening up new leadership opportunities within the organization. We have launched a new Mentorship Program, which will help connect young professionals with experienced educators who can offer guidance and practical support throughout the critical first years of their career. We have also opened an application process for committee members to serve alongside the Board of Directors. Committee members will gain insight into the duties of the board members and a chance to develop leadership experience. Through these efforts, combined with our ex-

isting opportunities for service on the Policy and Advisory Board of Directors, we hope to further engage our membership and inspire a diverse new generation of leadership for the field.

NDEO GOVERNANCE

One of the primary leadership opportunities offered by NDEO is the chance to serve on the NDEO Board of Directors. As NDEO is a membership-driven organization, members have a strong voice in our work and governance. In October 2015, the NDEO Board of Directors was restructured to consist of separate boards working collaboratively to serve the organization: the NDEO Policy Board of Directors and the NDEO Advisory Board of Directors. The NDEO Policy Board of Directors consists of the Executive Committee (President, Secretary, Treasurer, and either President Elect or Past President), five additional Policy Board members, and NDEO's Executive Director. The Policy Board has voting rights. The NDEO Advisory Board of Directors is made up of 15 nonvoting members who provide leadership and assume responsibilities in specific areas of expertise. Each member of the Advisory Board works within his or her area of service, such as E-Communications, Awards, Membership Engagement, Research, or State Affiliates, collaborating with NDEO staff on projects related to their area. Most of the Advisory Board members are elected by the membership, but a few positions, such as the representatives for Advocacy and National Registry of Dance Educators, are appointed based on the specific background, skills, and experience needed. The boards consist of dance education professionals who work in higher education, K–12 schools, dance companies, arts organizations, and private studios. They are a diverse group who offer unique backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints to help NDEO shape our goals and vision. The boards meet annually at the National Conference, and work with NDEO staff as necessary through conference calls and online technology. We encourage all NDEO members to consider running for a board position. This is an excellent way to further your leadership experience while bolstering your resume and giving back to NDEO and the field.

NDEO BOARD COMMITTEES

Many of our advisory positions work with a committee to fulfill their board responsibilities. In the past,

these committee members were selected by the board members, but this year we have begun open calls for committee members using an online application process. This effort will allow for more NDEO members to get involved in the governance of the organization. It will also provide our Advisory Board members with the support needed to implement, grow, and maintain programs within their area of service, thereby helping NDEO expand our reach in the field. Committee members will have the chance to add their voice to the national discussion on the advancement of the field, and on the services, programs, benefits, and activities of NDEO. By serving on a committee, members will get to learn more about the workings of the board, enhance their leadership skills, and perhaps even prepare to run for a board position in the future. Each committee will need volunteers with a specific skill set who will work with the Advisory Director in that area on responsibilities based on NDEO's needs and the volunteer's interests and expertise. For example, members of the E-Communications Committee will work with the Advisory Director of E-Communications on tasks such as maintaining the NDEO Forums or monitoring NDEO Facebook groups. E-Communications Committee members will need strong computer literacy skills and social media experience. We are rolling out applications for committee members in phases so keep an eye on your e-mail and the NDEO forums for more information on how to apply.

Cultivating leadership at the NDEO 2016 Annual Conference.
Photo credit: Rob Cannon.




NDEO MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Last year, a small group of members approached the NDEO staff about the need for more mentorship of young professionals in the field. This is a critical need throughout all work environments, but especially in the PK–12 setting at this time. Posts on the NDEO K–12 forum highlighted this need, and sparked the idea for the NDEO Mentorship Program. As noted by Abigail Agresta-Stratton, one of the coordinators of the program:

The first four years of K–12 teaching are critical for the development of dance educators and the K–12 field alike. During this time, new dance educators encounter an array of responsibilities and issues related to teaching, curriculum writing, performance productions, and program establishment and administration. As new teacher evaluation systems emerge in numerous states across the nation, performing these responsibilities with proficiency is paramount to securing and then maintaining a contracted position and tenure where applicable. This can cause new teachers to feel overwhelmed. Given that dance educators are often the only dance teacher in their school and/or district, they often lack the camaraderie and available mentorship from experienced dance educators that is commonly accessible to teachers in music, visual arts, literacy, or math for example.

Thanks to the diligent work of an NDEO member committee, in collaboration with the NDEO staff, a pilot of the program has been launched. The program serves as a support system for dance teachers with fewer than five years of experience in the PK–12 field of dance education, and provides PK–12 dance teachers with five or more years of experience an opportunity to reach out and assist new educators. NDEO members who applied to the pilot program were matched up in mentor–mentee pairs, and will work together during an expected two-year partner-

ship. Throughout the partnership, the mentee will receive critical support, advice, and encouragement from his or her mentor. In addition, both partners will receive support from the mentorship committee. The pilot program is expected to be expanded, with future calls for additional mentor and mentee applicants in all work environments, not just PK–12. Professional development opportunities related to mentorship are also in development. The committee will be reviewing the efficacy of the program and collaborating with NDEO staff on future expansions and revisions to ensure that our member-participants are getting the best possible experience.

The future of dance education depends on innovative, inclusive, and intrepid leadership. As the largest dance education membership organization in the country, NDEO remains committed to shaping, guiding, and leading the field, but we cannot do it alone. We are truly “of the membership, by the membership, and for the membership.” NDEO exists to support you, and it is through your involvement that we are able to thrive. We will continue to provide opportunities for you, our members, to advance your careers, contribute your voice, and take on leadership roles in the organization and in the field. We encourage you to get involved, whether through mentoring or being mentored, serving on the board or a committee, or taking advantage of our other programs and services. If you have an idea for expanding leadership opportunities within NDEO, contact us at membership@ndeo.org. Together, we can be the leadership our field needs, now more than ever. 

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Collaboration at the NDEO 2016 Annual Conference. Photo credit: Rob Cannon.