



Chair and Council Member Peer Session

September 16, 2016

Notes

Approximately 40 state arts agency chairs and council members attended the peer session ([roster](#)). It was facilitated by Missouri Arts Council Chair Nola Ruth, Tennessee Arts Commission Council Member Stephanie Conner, Alaska State Council on the Arts Chair Ben Brown, and Arkansas Arts Council Former Chair Garbo Hearne. NASAA Chief Advancement Officer Laura Smith staffed the session.

Welcome and Thanks

The session was called to order by Nola and Stephanie, who acknowledged other NASAA board members in the room; conference hosts from the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs; and Bruce Richardson, former chair of the Wyoming Arts Council and this year's winner of NASAA's Distinguished Public Service award.

Federal Advocacy Update and Q&A

NASAA Legislative Counsel Isaac Brown provided an update on the latest happenings in Congress, the presidential campaign and federal arts advocacy.

Jane Chu, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts

NEA Chairman Jane Chu reported on [Creativity Connects](#), an initiative that shows how the arts contribute to the nation's ecosystem, examines how support systems for artists are changing and explores how the arts can connect with other sectors. Participants asked questions and Chairman Chu showed slides of drawings she's made of various community cultural landmarks throughout her travels to the states.

The Changing Face of Councils?

Our country's demographics are changing, and so too are our councils (though perhaps not as quickly as we'd like). What are our roles as appointed leaders in helping our councils reflect these changes? How can we affect the diversity of appointments made to our councils? Are there other kinds of policies we have adopted to promote inclusion on our councils? Garbo facilitated this dynamic segment, which included:

- Discussion of how our councils are different today than 10 years ago, and how they're still the same

- Panelist case studies by Oregon Arts Commission Immediate Past Chair Julie Vigeland and Carla DuPree, councillor and former vice chair of the Maryland State Arts Council and chair of Maryland's Diversity Committee
 - [Oregon's Story](#), by Julie Vigeland
 - [Diversity Strategies](#), by Carla DuPree

- Breakout table discussions that addressed these questions:
 - **Why is diversity important?**
 - It shapes perspectives of our boards and councils
 - It's the future of our states
 - Important to create informed boards that reflect our constituents

 - **What are the barriers to inclusion and what can we do?**
 - Need more money to support diversity/inclusion efforts, e.g., travel to more meetings, travel to get to know more people, etc.
 - We're not always sure where to begin

 - **What are two actions we can take to guarantee more diverse appointments?**
 - Actively do listening sessions around different parts of state and invite public comment—this helps build relationships to get others to help spread the word to constituent groups
 - Be direct in taking action—meet with governor and legislative staff and ask them to start nominating more diverse people

 - **Does embracing diversity have an economic impact for our agencies?**
 - Yes, it broadens our base, which broadens economic impact
 - Helps us expand into subgroups of local groups, which gives us avenue for conversation with other elected officials at local level

 - **If our governor doesn't know about our council's diversity issues, or doesn't think diversity is important, what actions can we take to help him/her see otherwise?**
 - One example is how Michigan put the creative placemaking umbrella over certain communities, e.g., Detroit, that included very diverse activities under one large initiative
 - Infuse new businesses with arts to create more diverse climate—then go tell your governor about it

 - **How do we focus on quality vs. quantity of appointments?**
 - Focus on skill sets as the avenue to bring people in
 - Be more deliberate in board training and orientation
 - Help people understand and be successful about public board service

For more information, see NASAA's recent brief, [State Policies & Programs Addressing Diversity](#).