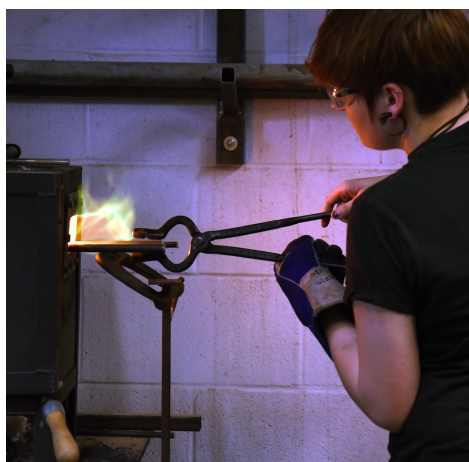# NOCCA Strategic Plan

Final Report and Recommendations

August 2017

collective invention

[Good strategy offers]
"strength against weakness,
or strength applied to the
most promising opportunity ...
A good strategy doesn't just
draw on existing strength, it
creates strength through the
coherence of its design."

Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*

Contents

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On the Cover: Row 3, left photo; row 4, left photo—Credit Jackson Hill. All remaining photos: Elizabeth McMillan.

Introduction

This report and the accompanying poster are the final articulations of the 2016/17 Strategic Planning process for The New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA). The project included deep listening through interviews and focus groups with students, parents and family members, staff, faculty, administration, alumni, and board members, culminating in a set of observations and recommendations. These were presented in a report in March 2017, and are also included in the Appendix below (page 29). That report gave suggestions for possible strategic direction, plus foundational recommendations for increasing readiness in the current state. The main body of this report captures the final results of core team, board and executive leadership deliberations and decisions regarding strategic direction and foundational work.
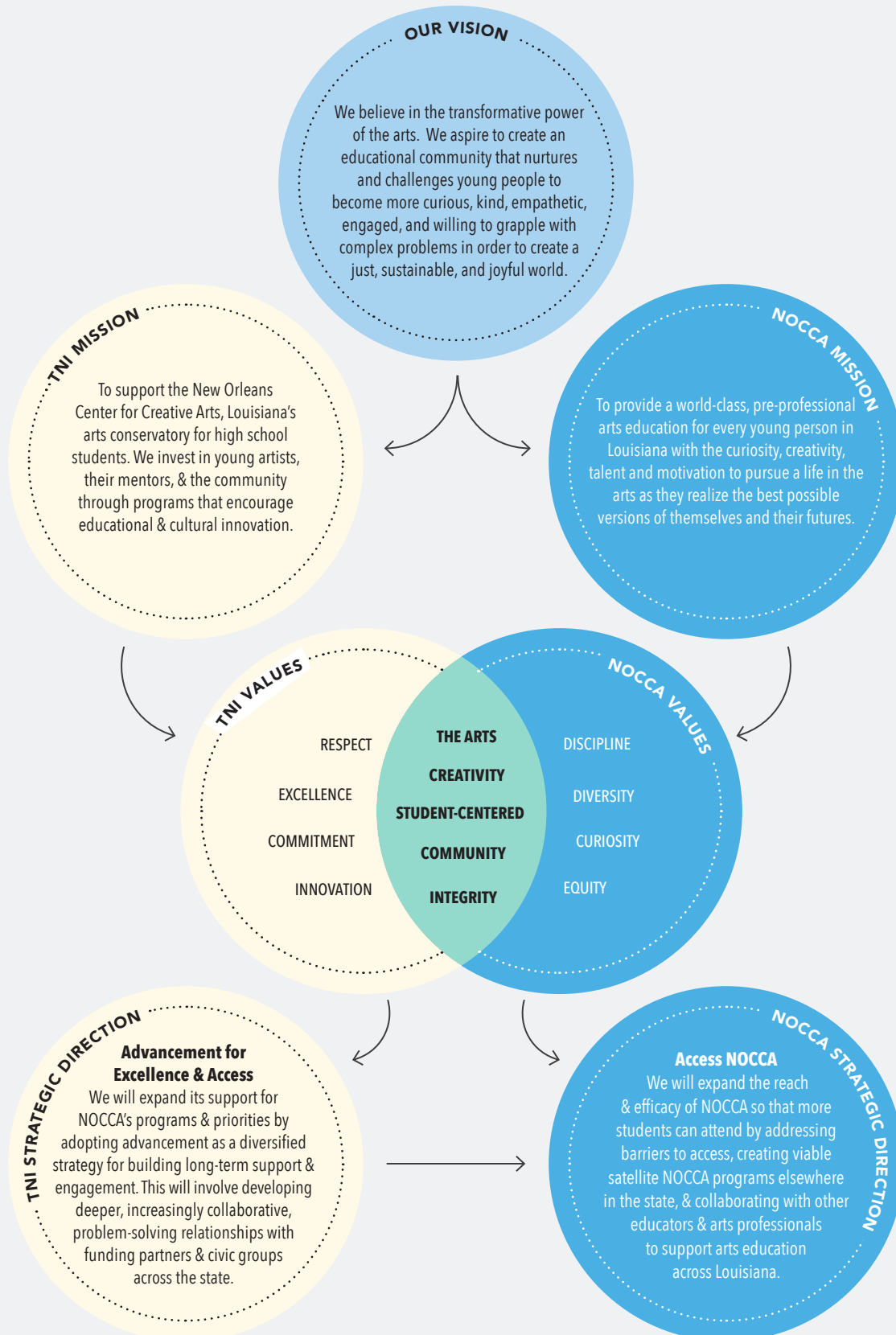
The document begins with the guiding elements of the strategic plan:

- The Vision of the world that both NOCCA and TNI wish to see;
- The Mission: The way that NOCCA will work to bring about that vision;
- The Values: The key principles that guide the ways in which the mission is carried out.

The report then describes the strategic direction chosen for the next decade, Access NOCCA, which focuses on expanding access to NOCCA for more students in three ways: by addressing current barriers to access; by creating viable satellite NOCCA programs elsewhere in the state; and by collaborating with other educators and arts professionals to support arts education in Louisiana.

For both the Strategic Direction and the Foundational Recommendations, Year One goals and initial steps have been identified in conjunction with the teams who will work on each area, along with a statement about who will benefit. We anticipate that most of the Foundational Recommendations will require two to three years of work. However details for subsequent years are not included— as we plan for something new there are significant unknowns and the process therefore needs to be iterative. In addition to quarterly reviews and updates (see Final Recommendations on page 25) an annual planning session of the combined NOCCA/TNI leadership team, to scope goals and steps for the next year should happen at the end of each school year. High-level goals for the strategic direction are given in the integrated scenario.

NOCCA and TNI: Integrated Strategic Direction

OUR VISION

We believe in the transformative power of the arts. We aspire to create an educational community that nurtures and challenges young people to become more curious, kind, empathetic, engaged, and willing to grapple with complex problems in order to create a just, sustainable, and joyful world.

TNI MISSION

To support the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Louisiana's arts conservatory for high school students. We invest in young artists, their mentors, & the community through programs that encourage educational & cultural innovation.

NOCCA MISSION

To provide a world-class, pre-professional arts education for every young person in Louisiana with the curiosity, creativity, talent and motivation to pursue a life in the arts as they realize the best possible versions of themselves and their futures.

TNI VALUES

RESPECT

EXCELLENCE

COMMITMENT

INNOVATION

THE ARTS

CREATIVITY

STUDENT-CENTERED

COMMUNITY

INTEGRITY

NOCCA VALUES

DISCIPLINE

DIVERSITY

CURIOSITY

EQUITY

TNI STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Advancement for Excellence & Access
We will expand its support for NOCCA's programs & priorities by adopting advancement as a diversified strategy for building long-term support & engagement. This will involve developing deeper, increasingly collaborative, problem-solving relationships with funding partners & civic groups across the state.

NOCCA STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Access NOCCA
We will expand the reach & efficacy of NOCCA so that more students can attend by addressing barriers to access, creating viable satellite NOCCA programs elsewhere in the state, & collaborating with other educators & arts professionals to support arts education across Louisiana.

Strategic Plan

Guiding Elements

Vision

The Vision Statement works as a horizon point for the organization to move toward collectively, but does not address what the organization will do to reach the vision. It also functions as a 'big tent' or 'rallying cry' that invites others with shared interests, such as philanthropic partners and others, to join and contribute.

We believe in the transformative power of the arts. We aspire to create an educational community that nurtures and challenges young people to become more curious, kind, empathetic, engaged, and willing to grapple with complex problems in order to create a just, sustainable, and joyful world.

Mission

Mission describes what an organization does in order reach the vision. Various organizations may share a vision, but have different ways of reaching it (their mission). Well-articulated Mission Statements are clear, concise and serve as a guide for decisions and activities (strategies) for an organization. Whereas a Vision paints a picture of a desired future, the Mission asserts what the organization does to realize that future.

NOCCA's mission is to provide a world-class, pre-professional arts education for every young person in Louisiana with the curiosity, creativity, talent and motivation to pursue a life in the arts as they realize the best possible versions of themselves and their futures.
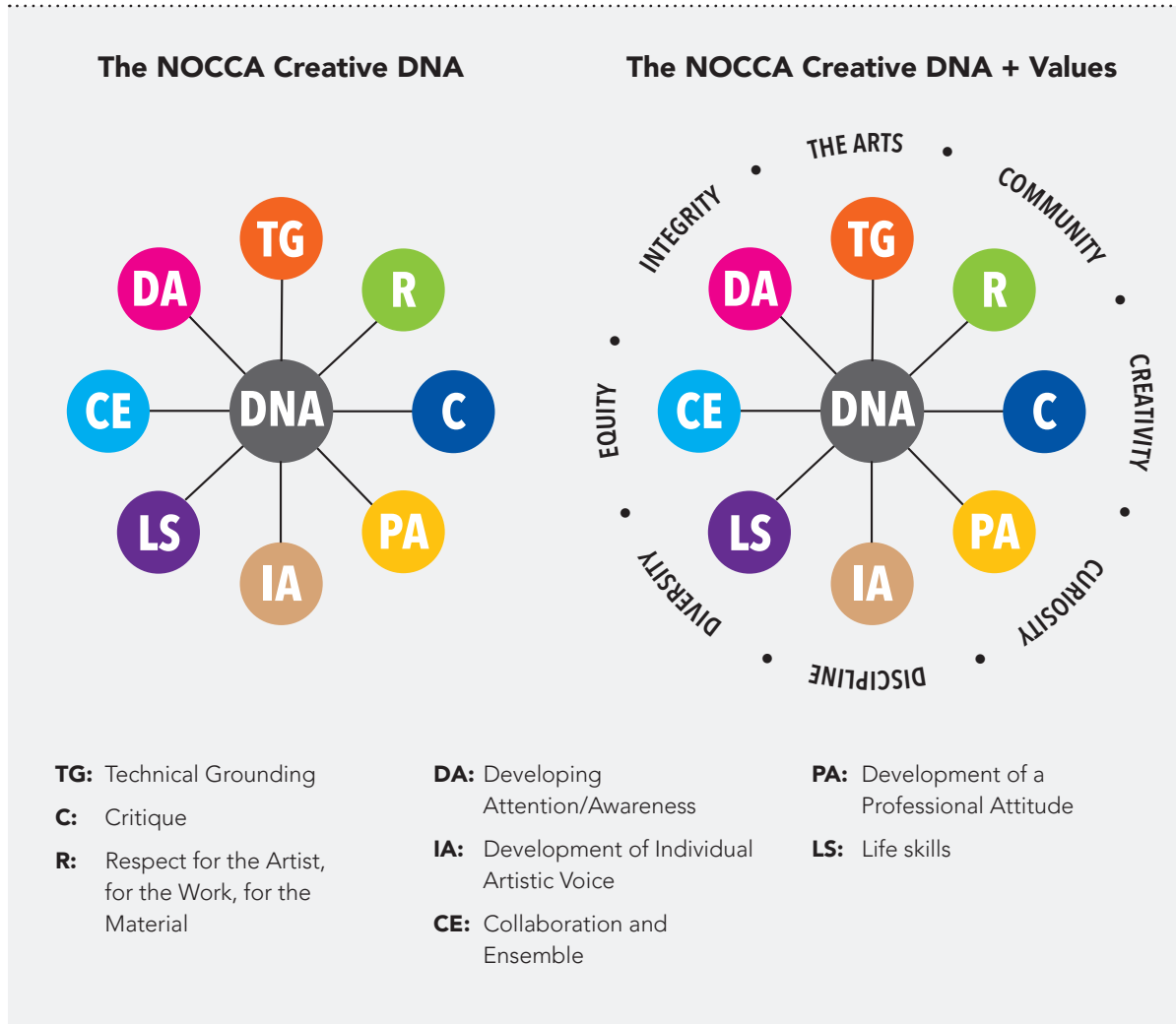
NOCCA Community Values

Values are the enduring beliefs of the organization and remain steadfast over time. Every organization has values, though they are often not made explicit. By articulating these values together as a community and making these commonly held values explicit through Values Statements, an organization articulates the principles that guide its work.

- We believe in **The Arts** as purpose, process, and product. The Arts are celebrated and manifest in everything we do at NOCCA.

- We believe in **community** so that all members of our campus feel a sense of belonging and a desire to connect, learn, and share resources with broader communities and a growing coalition of allies.

- We celebrate and nurture **creativity** in order to transcend traditional ideas by perceiving the world in new ways, finding new patterns, and making new connections to produce novel ideas, forms, and methods.

- We encourage **curiosity** in order to cultivate the pleasure in play and exploration that drives the pursuit of knowledge and the joy of lifelong learning.

- We believe success in any endeavor is achieved through purposeful application of daily **discipline**. This supports the decisions that enable long-term goals and persistence through difficult situations.

- We believe in **diversity** and creating a place of inclusion and safety that embraces each individual as unique and valuable. Celebrating and engaging our individual differences strengthens our ability to be more creative by improving our understanding of different perspectives.

- We believe in **equity** as demonstrated in access and opportunity so that every student with the curiosity, creativity, talent and motivation can become a NOCCA graduate and an alumnus.

- We hold ourselves accountable to the highest level of **integrity** by consistently, courageously and honestly acting in ways that demonstrate alignment between our stated values and our actions.

The Values and the Creative DNA

In 2007 we completed a study of the culture of NOCCA and the ways in which Arts faculty taught. That study resulted in the distillation of NOCCA's Creative DNA. Part of the purpose of that study was to provide a core or form around which to design the Academic Studio, so that it would be an organic addition to NOCCA. We felt that NOCCA offered more than a traditional educational model, and that faculty were initiating students into becoming artists. The transmission of knowledge and skills was part of that, but it was also about learning how to be in the world as an artist. The elements of the DNA are the elements of that transmission, and the culture of NOCCA supports this process.

The NOCCA Creative DNA

The NOCCA Creative DNA + Values

TG: Technical Grounding

C: Critique

R: Respect for the Artist, for the Work, for the Material

DA: Developing Attention/Awareness

IA: Development of Individual Artistic Voice

CE: Collaboration and Ensemble

PA: Development of a Professional Attitude

LS: Life skills

The institutional values of NOCCA are the principles that support the development of the DNA. While the DNA can be seen as values in themselves—we could say "We believe in ..." before each one— they are focused on the specific work of developing young artists. NOCCA as an institution also holds less granular values that encompass its work with artists, but also with its staff and faculty, its families, and the broader communities more generally. These values support the transmission of the DNA, and speak to the way the institution operates in the world.

Strategic Direction 2017 – 2027: Access NOCCA

The strategic direction asserts the particular way in which NOCCA will pursue its mission over the next 10 years in accordance with its values.

Access NOCCA

We will expand the reach and efficacy of NOCCA so that more students can attend by addressing barriers to access, creating viable satellite NOCCA programs elsewhere in the state, and collaborating with other educators and arts professionals to support arts education across Louisiana.

Growing Into the Future: Strategic Direction Phases

Successful execution of a strategic direction requires three distinct phases that are mindful of people, process and risks. It is important, especially following a collaborative planning process, that execution continue that spirit of transparency. It will take everyone in the wider community and the resources they bring to successfully reach an organization's goals.

This Strategic Direction Has Three Strands That Increase Access to NOCCA:

- Remove barriers to access

- Develop satellite programs

- Facilitate professional learning and collaboration

We Will Do This By:

1. **Remove Barriers to Access for Students Who Meet the Standards of the Institution**

   - Engage and learn from both current and prospective students and families about their most significant difficulties accessing NOCCA

   - Determine highest leverage barriers—which might include but not be limited to transportation, learning support, outreach, access to arts training pre-NOCCA—and work to address them to increase student access

2. **Develop Satellite Programs**

   - Identify two to three key potential locations in other parts of the state

   - Build relationships with community, including legislative stakeholders

   - Partner with local educational systems, organizations and arts professionals in other parts of the state to determine the best NOCCA experience that will provide additional training for excellent young artists, i.e. training that does not replace their high school, or private arts training, and that is not otherwise available to them in their location

   - Engage alumni in opportunities to build, utilize and further their professional capacity in arts education

3. **Facilitate Professional Learning and Collaboration**

   - Create opportunities to mutually share learning with other educators in other parts of the broader ecosystem of arts teaching and training in Louisiana, by organizing, hosting and engaging in "learning partnerships", residency programs, conferences, summer institutes, for example.

A careful, intentional planning process up front, followed by a prototyping process to manage and mitigate risks will increase chances of reaching goals and decreasing costs, which include time, commitment and motivation. Finally, with community good will and confidence in your plan, full-scale execution will be set up for success.

Phase I: Planning and Preparation

This phase includes internal organization of resources (people, time and budget) to accomplish some key outcomes. This phase may take around two to three years:

Remove Barriers to Access

- Development of criteria for selection of locations for NOCCA satellite programs

- Research into understanding communities and their needs in potential locations

- Building relationships with community stakeholders including legislative members, arts community leaders, and arts educators.

Team

This may be a team of teams comprising the NOCCA leadership team, collaboration with TNI, and potential input at key stages from alumni representatives and funders

Year One Goals

1. Remove Barriers to Access

- Begin research process to understand barriers to access
  - Check with families who were offered a place and didn't take it, or had to withdraw
  - Check in with the team working on equity to see if there are opportunities to collaborate on their baseline data collections
  - Identify what is currently in place and where there are gaps
- Create access goals

2. Develop Satellite Programs

- Collaboratively develop criteria
- Go to the strategic regional arts areas (Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, Lake Charles, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, New Orleans) of the state and learn from (through listening/observation tours) the local arts community—develop an understanding of gaps (access to arts training, pd, access issues, legislative support, potential links to Equity group work and admissions research)

3. Facilitate Professional Learning and Collaboration

- Use research and relationships with local and satellite communities to identify educator needs and areas of mutual interest

First Steps

- Establish NOCCA core team

- Establish distributed team work with TNI

- Establish research goals and draft questions for barriers research

- Establish research goals and draft questions for 'deep listening' with potential satellite program communities

Indicators (That We Are on the Right Track)

- A planning core team with broad representation is recruited

- Two to three key barriers to access have been identified and plans to address them are in motion

- Clear criteria for selection of satellite locations based on needs

- Two to three potential locations identified

- Initial research—such as demographic research, semi-structured interviews with potential partners—for potential locations has been conducted

- Potential alumni resources identified and engaged in planning process

- Identify a list of potential opportunities to mutually share learning with other teachers in other parts of the broader ecosystem of arts teaching and training in Louisiana such as, residency programs, conferences, and summer institutes.

Beneficiaries

- Talented youth and their families across Louisiana who may not currently have access to pre-professional arts education and training

- Regions who partner with NOCCA to bring in satellite arts programs

- Faculty at NOCCA who have an opportunity participate in knowledge exchange with other educators

- Alumni ready to transition to teaching within their arts

- Indigenous arts in broader Louisiana

- Inherent cultural and educational legacies of specific regions and Louisiana as a whole.

Phase II: Prototyping New Programs

Why Prototype?
Prototyping is part of a design thinking framework that ensures two fundamental things: management of risk and consideration of the needs of users as the central driver for design. The prototyping process is highly structured yet iterative, allowing design teams to learn their way forward when creating a new product, service or process.

"Critical friends" and potential users are involved along the way giving feedback at each incremental step from which learning can be gained. This allows organizations to manage risk by changing things before too much time and too many resources have been committed. The "usability and functionality" (Who is it for? What are they trying to do? How will this help?) of any prototype is even more important than the concept, so this type of "controlled" and "live" testing with users along the way is crucial. These steps are done to hone in on the best possible design, involving the end "users" to mitigate risks, prior to full-scale implementation.

Prototyping Design Process Steps
A design thinking process, of which prototyping is a core concept, is basically a user-centered, iterative problem solving process that is characterized by the seven steps outlined below.

1. Identify a problem and turn it into an opportunity—develop a "How Might We" question that flips a problem into an statement of opportunity.

2. Research user needs in that area—these include background research, e.g. literature and online resources, plus primary research such as interviews and observations of stakeholders to draw out both explicit and tacit needs. For example, hearing from both current and prospective students and families about their most significant difficulties in accessing NOCCA.

3. Determine user requirements (what the solution must do for users).

4. Generate as many potential solutions as possible to which others, for example, stakeholders or critical friends, can respond and give feedback.

5. Build prototypes of the solutions, begin to test and iterate: initial prototypes can be drawings or sketches to invoke imagery of your potential solutions to stakeholders.

6. Map the Systems Implications- understand what forces and systems impact the prototype and what the prototype will influence in turn.

7. Test and evaluate iteratively with different stakeholders to hone in on the most promising solution. The number of cycles of testing and evaluation will depend on the complexity of the problem and the resources available (including time!). At the end of the prototyping phase you should have clarity around the why, what, how, who, where and when of your solution that is deeply informed by stakeholder perspectives, not just your own.

Phase III: Full Scale Implementation

Following a process of iteration—create, test, learn—means that full implementation can be a relatively smooth path to scale. Preparing for full implementation involves planning that is more focused on the details of execution. However, the iterative process also allows for change which can mean that—in the case of NOCCA's strategy—different locations may evolve quite differently. As a community and as a leadership team decisions will have to be made along the way to determine how different each program can be.

If the strategy goes ahead as planned, with regular assessments of progress and checks for course corrections, preparation for a new planning cycle should begin to occur when the plan is around 75% implemented and likely around 2023/24.

Strategic Scenario: Access NOCCA

The intention of the scenario is to bring alive ONE possible version, in story form, of the future that could result from this strategic direction. It is a way to help everyone think about the details of that future, and at this stage of the process to capture some of the good ideas that came up in the core team and board discussions. It is not a blueprint but a way to make sure that certain areas are included in the planning and it acts as a bridge between high level strategy and detailed plans.

By the year 2027 NOCCA has established several additional programs throughout the state, demand for NOCCA programs has increased, and the most pressing barriers to access have been significantly addressed. More students are able to attend a NOCCA program, and representation from previously underrepresented groups has increased.

By 2020 NOCCA had addressed many of the foundational recommendations and strengthened the original program. Key barriers to access had been identified, and the most critical addressed using a prototyping process. NOCCA had also completed two years of assessment and relationship-building, to determine the best potential locations for additional NOCCA programs. The assessment process was based upon a set of criteria determined in 2017/18, and included an evaluation of increased legislative support, identification of locations that were not served by NOCCA New Orleans, specific community needs (such as the need for specific arts and the opportunity to preserve important dying arts). The criteria also included the identification of local expertise and access to alumni who had re-located to other regions in the state.

An important design principle was that NOCCA would approach a local community as a partner, and be knowledgeable about the strengths and resources in local communities. The intention was to signal that NOCCA was an advocate and supporter of the local arts ecosystem, in addition to providing high quality pre-professional training, and not an agent of disruption to the local arts community. As part of this element of the strategy NOCCA faculty created opportunities for mutual learning with colleagues around the state.

NOCCA chose one location with which to move ahead initially, based on local need, community support, and local partnership capacity. The development of the new location followed the model of the original NOCCA with rented space initially, and an after-school training model. The board determined that the process should start small. Discussions with local communities and individuals and organizations in the local arts ecosystem helped to determine the intersection of highest need with highest possibility of success for students.

To ensure that new sites maintain NOCCA's successful approach and high standards, alumni interested in pursuing arts teaching as part of their career have gone through hands-on training at the original NOCCA site. This includes two types of training opportunity, both of which extend the initiation and mentorship model in interesting ways. Some are trained to run summer courses under the guidance of NOCCA faculty—and some alumni have taken advantage of this professional opportunity while they are still at college. Other alumni spend a year-long mentorship at NOCCA New Orleans before joining a NOCCA network program. They then form the core of new program faculty, training local colleagues as appropriate. As at NOCCA New Orleans it is a requirement that arts faculty are also practicing artists, who continue to perform or show work.

There are also opportunities for students to study at different locations, which has the effect of exchanging fresh ideas and experiences between locations, and for teachers to engage in residencies at other locations. In addition NOCCA has also explored the possibility of developing or partnering with traveling arts groups, e.g. theater companies, orchestras, in the state, to expose more communities to NOCCA, to give students and alumni additional opportunities to perform and show work, and to connect with other communities and other art forms.

The development of this strategy has followed a prototyping, or iterative development model, to ensure that the NOCCA experience is not being diluted, that the expansion to other locations is creating more opportunity for students, and that 'the state' as well as individual legislators are willing and able to support these opportunities for young people in Louisiana.

While there was much discussion during the strategic planning process about whether to expand the NOCCA experience throughout the state, or whether to build out the original campus by adding a residence, ultimately the board decided to vote for expansion through the state. There was some doubt that the best use of resources at that time would be construction and operational costs associated with offering high school students residential services in New Orleans. However, there was also hesitancy about taking the idea of a residence off the table completely. It remains as an option that could be returned to once the foundational recommendations have been successfully put into effect as a part of the overall Access NOCCA strategy, and includes the possibility of residences at other locations.

Ultimately the satellites provide multiple significant benefits, but two that are primary to the cultural economy of Louisiana. They have become the centers of a community of practice for artists across the state, and they provide opportunities to inspire the ambition and curiosity of more young people, enabling more artistically talented Louisiana students to develop their fullest potential.

The Path to 2027: Foundational Recommendations

The appendix to this report includes a full list of foundational recommendations that focus on resolving current day challenges in order to support NOCCA's longer term strategic direction. Simultaneously working on all of them would not only overwhelm available resources (which include time and energy of staff) but may not be efficient. Some recommendations are related to others, or have dependencies with them that invite consideration of the scope, sequence and syncopation of implementation.

We've clustered the foundational recommendations in thematic groups below. We have recommended NOCCA begin with the six highlighted areas first.

Foundational Recommendations

Theme 1: Clarity and Consistency

1. Consistent Rules, Real Consequences and Accountability

2. Increasing Transparency and Informed Decision Making with the Entry and Exit Process

3. Optimizing Operations

4. A Split Campus

5. Increasing Opportunity for and Value in Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Theme 2: Collaboration Teaching and Learning

6. Access to Supports to Maximize Student Success

7. Improving Staff and Faculty Supports

8. The Unintended Consequences of an Innovative Curriculum

Theme 3: Campus Culture

9. Courageous Commitment and Explicit Work to Create a More Equitable Organization

Theme 4: NOCCA and TNI Collaborative Action

10. Strengthen the Relationship between NOCCA and TNI and Improve the Impact of Strategies
Although this was originally a foundational recommendation it has been put into a separate section below, NOCCA and TNI, and renamed Joint Work with TNI. (See page 21.) It is included there, along with an integrated scenario, because this collaborative work is about both the day-to-day, and the strategic direction.

11. Clarify NOCCA's Critical Role in the Execution of The NOCCA Institute's (TNI) Development Strategy

12. Strengthening and Building Alumni Network

Theme 5: Leadership and Board

13. Succession Planning

Improving the Current State: Foundational Recommendations

The work of each recommendation is being led by a team comprised of arts faculty, academic faculty, and staff. This composition is intentional in that each recommendation impacts all parts of the campus directly and indirectly. It also supports a long-standing desire of faculty to collaborate with colleagues across the campus.

Recommendation 1: Consistent Rules, Real Consequences and Accountability

Purpose
To establish clear, transparent, school policies, rules and consequences regarding student conduct and behavior that are consistently applied, equitably enforced and aligned to NOCCA's values.

Vision of Success
We are a high functioning campus community whose values are exemplified in the behaviors and attitudes of all stakeholders. The first step in this direction is to develop clarity regard the "what" and "why" of behavioral expectations for students.

Where This Came From (Research Phase)
This problem area was consistently voiced during our research phase by all stakeholders—faculty, staff, parents and students. The agreement about resolving this challenge area was so strong, it was voted by faculty and staff as the highest priority issue. Key concerns included a perceived lack of alignment between behavior protocols in Arts and AS; a perception of different rules for different students; and a perceived lack of consequences for any infractions, which contributes to a sense that NOCCA is 'easy'. This runs counter to the emphasis that faculty place on discipline regarding work, and can undermine efforts to develop key areas of the Creative DNA—Respect and Professional Attitude.

Year One Goals
By the end of the 2017 – 2018 school year the following will be true:

- Review existing rules and expectations for clarity

- Determine level of awareness, agreement and implementation of disciplinary rules/policies

- Assess efficacy of consequences

- Research effective models

- Make recommendations for changes in rules, policies and consequences and how they are enforced throughout the NOCCA community

- Explore the idea of a 'student success team'

First Steps

- Review and analyze existing rules and expectations

- At the beginning of the school year, communicate current rules, policies and consequences accessible to all stakeholders

- Conduct a survey of faculty and staff perceptions at beginning of year and end of year

- Send one or two team members to Restorative Justice training to assess fit

Indicators (That We Are on the Right Track)

- We will see increases in the number of people (students / faculty / staff, families) who report that the expectations about rules are clear and accessible

- Faculty/staff/students and parents will report that student behavior expectations are consistent in Arts and AS

- Faculty / staff and students families report that consequences are consistent and consistently enforced from department to department and between AS and Arts

- All faculty/staff/families feel as though they have equal leverage with all students

- Students report that rules and policies are consistently followed / enforced by faculty and staff

- Students report that consequences are meaningful (students recognize them as consequences of their actions) and effective (they act as a deterrent)

- We will see a reduction in time faculty/staff spends on upholding rules, gaining respect, dealing with push-back from students, etc.

Beneficiaries

- Students who will experience consistent consequences for infractions that are clearly communicated and mutually understood

- Families who will be able to support the school in reinforcing school policy and rules

- Faculty and staff who feel empowered to enforce rules and policies appropriately

- NOCCA community that will experience a deeper alignment to its values

Recommendation 2: Increasing Transparency and Informed Decision Making with the Entry and Exit Process

Purpose

The purpose of this team is to create clear processes for entering and exiting NOCCA, with the ultimate goal that retention is enhanced and more students who need to be at NOCCA are given access to seats and programs. This work will ensure that there is a clearly designed, communicated and consistent process for admissions, and that there is a clearly designed, communicated and consistent process for exiting a NOCCA program if needed.

Vision of Success

The traditional way of entering NOCCA, the arts audition is maintained as the gateway for admission. There is a consistent and transparent structure for both entrance and exit at various points, and additional ways for faculty to get to know students needs before classes begin. This does not affect their admission. For students who do not manage to meet the ongoing requirements at NOCCA there is a clear exit process which gives structured opportunities to address issues before the student is asked to leave.

Where This Came From (Research Phase)

Faculty would like to create a more aligned and collaborative audition/ admission process to clarify entrance requirements, and a more aligned and collaborative Arts and Academic review process to clarify the exit process, so that decision-making by both faculty and families is well-informed, and "high standards with high levels of support" can become the culture at NOCCA.

Determining 'Fit'

Each of these options helps everyone consider and determine fit ahead of time, and therefore intentionally minimize transitions down the line. It is very important that the idea of 'fit' be very clearly articulated and described publicly by NOCCA, and that it does not become code that allows certain groups of students to be excluded.

Year One Goals

- Create a culture at NOCCA that demands high standards and provides high levels of support

- Create a more aligned and collaborative audition/admission process to clarify entrance requirements and expectations

- Create post-audition assessment of entering class, including diagnostic testing of AS students for reading and math

- Create process for seamless communication between AS and Arts faculty

- Make recommendations to establish procedures for junior entry into AS for 2018/19 academic year

- Create a more aligned, structured, predictable, and collaborative exit process between Arts and AS, with early identification of struggling students to increase their support and chances of success, while holding to standards and counseling out deadlines

First Steps

- Create incoming student input form, to be used 2017/18

- Create decision tree for counseling out, to be used 2017/18

- Explore potential entry to AS at Junior year

Indicators (That We Are On The Right Track)

- Decision tree drafted and working to catch issues early

- Reduction in number of students counseled out year by year

- Reduction in the number of students being escalated through the exit process

- AS faculty can prepare for incoming students

Beneficiaries

- Students for whom AS might not be the best fit

- Students who are under-prepared, or especially high performing

- Families helped to make informed choices

- Faculty and administration who have a clear process to follow

Recommendation 3: Optimizing Operations

Purpose

To identify, develop, and implement solutions to challenges and problems that present avoidable operational challenges for NOCCA. The work will promote continuous improvement in operational areas, and draw upon staff and faculty expertise to provide clarity where there is a need; improve communication and understanding regarding internal systems, operations and support; and support a "wellness" culture that attends to the needs of our human ecosystem.

Vision of Success

A continuous improvement cycle of operational effectiveness is led by the administrative and operational support staff which leads to improved operational effectiveness and proactive problem solving.

Where This Came From (Research Phase)

During our research phase, a focus group meeting with the administrative and operational support staff yielded some insights about challenges that led to this foundational recommendation. The operations and support staff had a strong sense of efficacy, despite these ongoing challenges, and want to be empowered to develop solutions to these issues they feel would not only help their work, but contribute positively to NOCCA's mission overall. A general lack of understanding about operational work, and lack of clarity about process has led to a culture of frequent interruption that cause inefficiencies in work flow, reinforces a reactive support culture, and contributes to overwhelm. Staff also identified on-boarding as a key area for improvement.

Year One Goals

By the end of the 2017-2018 school year the following will be true:

- A clear and systematic process for both larger-group orientation at start of year and a process for new hires mid-year will be designed and implemented

- Raised awareness of wellness in NOCCA culture and identify and implement one wellness activity

- An Operations Manual online that is clear and accessible

First Steps

- Review on-boarding examples from other organizations

- Interview select staff who recently on-boarded to gain perspectives of their experiences

- Design, prototype and implement with new staff during "orientation time" at start of year

- Develop a basic outline of the operations manual and gather content from departments

- Engage faculty and staff to identify a wellness activity for the year

Indicators (That We Are On The Right Track)

- New staff report a positive and welcoming experience in being oriented to the NOCCA community

- Staff report an increased sense of community, connection and sense of well-being

- A comprehensive, accessible, online operations manual is utilized by staff and faculty who report it is informative and useful

Beneficiaries

- Administrative and support staff report an increased sense of productivity, efficiency and efficacy

- New employees will be properly oriented and welcomed into the NOCCA community

- Faculty and staff report better understanding of operational policies and procedures

Recommendation 6: Access to Supports to Maximize Student Success

Purpose
To better meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of AS students at NOCCA, we will research professional learning opportunities to specifically support student needs and make recommendations regarding creative ways to provide students with access to additional resources.

Vision of Success
Students have access to the supports they need to succeed in AS because faculty are better prepared to meet student academic needs.

Where This Came From (Research Phase)
In reflecting on the first six years that the Academic Studio has been in operation, multiple insights from staff, students and parents informed this area of work. The biggest challenge relates to meeting the wide ranging needs of students both academically and socio-emotionally. This work aims to maximize student success by increasing the capacity of AS staff through linguistic and cultural resources and training, by identifying and coordinating community resources to help faculty and administration address the diverse challenges of diverse students needs, and by improving supports for students. These will enable faculty to better meet the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of students, enabling each to reach their full-potential as artists in the global community.

Many staff and faculty also saw this as an equity issue. At the heart of equity is providing differentiated resources and supports to students based on need.

Year One Goals
By the end of the 2017 – 2018 school year the following will be true:

- Information about incoming students strengths and weaknesses are used to inform a clear plan for serving them

- Arts/AS student success team(s) are created and convened to focus on specific students' needs

- A sustainable plan to meet the socio-emotional needs of students is developed

- Conduct research on strategies to support SPED, English Language Development and learners

- Develop a year-long professional learning plan that deepens faculty knowledge and skills in supporting students with special needs

- Identify summer course offerings for summer of 2018 that students can choose (that offer personalized supports in areas they need extra support)

- Make recommendations on preparation/ on-boarding of 11th graders incoming

First Steps

- Plan and conduct learning journeys to schools who have a good track record of supporting students with similar demographics

- Review and understand the recommendations from the UNO study

- Interview teachers and school staff to learn how students with special needs and EL students are supported

- Assess collective knowledge and skills related to supporting special education and language learners

- Get clarity on legal obligation to offer special education services

Indicators (That We Are on the Right Track)

- Team has reviewed whether information about incoming 2017/18 freshmen was sufficient to help faculty prepare

- An FTE social worker is hired by end of 2017/18 and there is a plan that addresses what is needed to make this happen and to make it sustainable

- Teaching workshops have been identified for at least one in-service day in 2017/18 and/or for summer PD

- Database of summer courses for students has been created.

- Recommendations for on-boarding 11th graders

Beneficiaries

- Students who are either very high performing or under-prepared by:
  - Meeting the needs of the under-prepared students with additional supports
  - Differentiating for very high performing students
  - Be able to address / meet needs of students who need socio-emotional support

- AS teachers who will benefit from having more resources and strategies to reach students in margins

- School leaders who are less likely to be pulled away to address these issues as teachers and students needs are met

- All faculty (and campus overall) will benefit from students' increasing success

Recommendation 9:
Courageous Commitment and Explicit Work to Create a More Equitable Organization

Purpose

To ensure NOCCA aspires to and continuously works toward being a school that is equitable for all students, staff and faculty. This group will act as a vanguard to bring awareness, definition and specificity of policy and practice to this issue.

Vision of Success

There is nothing more important than getting this right. NOCCA will be a community that can directly address issues of equity and is consistent in applying policies and practices to address inequities. This understanding and these practices will be reflected in our individual and collective actions.

Where This Came From

There is a clear aspiration at NOCCA to have a school that is equitable, a school that creates access to opportunity for all young artists who come with different levels of preparation, experience and backgrounds. Diversity is highly valued at NOCCA and there is a strong desire to demonstrate that despite inherent inequities in our nation and communities, NOCCA can provide positive disruption and change the life course of students through opportunity in the Arts.

Stating this goal and putting it into practice is often a process that requires openness to courageous conversations, reflections about practices that counter this aspiration, and a commitment to change policies and practice where needed.

One Year Goals

At the end of the 2017 – 2018 school year, NOCCA will:

- Embrace a collective definition of equity/inequity that is different from equality and diversity

- Collect baseline data that will enable us to have a clear understanding of our issues and patterns related to equity across the organization

- Identify the three highest priority challenge areas where patterns and practices of inequity exist at NOCCA and develop strategies to eliminate the most urgent one within one year

- Identify and engage in one deep and focused professional development initiative related to equity for the year

- Signal that this is an ongoing process of making ourselves better educators everyday

First Steps

- Develop a draft definition to bring to the first cross-team leads meeting

- Host open meetings to discuss working definitions

- The team will have a definition ready for the campus to vet by December

- Design the baseline data capture

- Plan for professional development initiative

Indicators (That We Are on the Right Track)

- Develop a deep practice of ongoing dialogue related to issues of equity

- Build access to resources in the following areas:
  - Examples of schools to support students with diverse backgrounds
  - Pedagogy centered around equitable practices
  - Issues of communication and discipline
  - Those that have a high stakes selection process

- Those that work with students in our age group, demographics, background and in our types of community
- Will have at least one partnership in one of the following areas:
- Help to support courageous conversation facilitator
- Advisory group

Beneficiaries

- All NOCCA students, staff and faculty who will develop a deeper awareness of equity and will have the tools to support it in any situation

Succession Planning

Although most organizations do not address succession planning in any systematic way, especially if they are facing other high priority challenges, thinking about the next generation of leadership is valuable for many reasons. Some of the greatest gains from succession planning include high ownership by the leader and high degrees of engagement among the leadership team. By providing critical development experiences to those with the desire and potential to assume greater responsibility in the organization the leader is ensuring both the readiness and growth of individuals and ensuring the continuation of important long-term strategies that require ongoing leadership support. In addition, succession planning that includes intentional support in development of staff often improves commitment and retention.

Although no-one anticipates a leadership change anytime soon, there is recognition that NOCCA is a unique institutions and that the CEO has considerable knowledge and experience in this regard. Given that this is a five to 10 year plan, we recommend commitment of at least two years toward thoughtful and explicit planning around this—when the time comes.

NOCCA and TNI

At the request of leadership, throughout the Strategic Planning process we have worked with both NOCCA and TNI teams separately. During this time we have acted as cross-pollinators, sharing updates and drafts along the way to inform the leadership and core teams of each organization about progress, and guiding alignment of the respective strategic directions.

It is now time for both NOCCA and TNI to take on this part of the work, and for their respective boards to support them in doing so. This section begins with a foundational recommendation about joint work via a distributed leadership team, and then describes an integrated scenario of the future.

Scenarios help us to think through possible details of things that have not yet been created, and actions that have not yet been taken. They are a creative tool to help us to explore the future. But each scenario presents just one possible future, not a set of definite and literal steps. They are intended to prompt thinking and dialog, leading to action that fits the emerging context. This integrated hybrid scenario is a futuristic story that describes one way that NOCCA and TNI's strategic work might operate collaboratively and leverage the strengths of each organization toward the shared goal of providing excellent arts education to promising young people.

Joint Work with TNI

Purpose
As organizations with shared goals and complementary missions NOCCA and TNI fail or succeed together. With new strategic directions for both organizations, that rely on good communication, shared understanding and mutual support, a high functioning collaborative team comprised of members of both organizations is essential to success. This also works towards the succession planning for both organizations as critical strategic partnership work is shared by a leadership team.

Vision of Success
NOCCA and TNI do not interfere in the details of each other's work but share information, act as thought partners for the emerging ideas each organization has for actions that will meet shared goals, and act as a collaborative design group for shared actions.

Where This Came From
We heard from multiple stakeholders in both organizations that the working relationship and level of trust between NOCCA and TNI is improving but can be improved further. This is seen as a desired and critical piece of work that is fundamental to the overall success of both organizations. Supports for this improvement include a distributed leadership team, dedicated meeting time, shared goals and agreements about how to work together and coaching for all members of the new team.

Year One Goals

- NOCCA and TNI have forged a good collaborative relationship with a distributed leadership team
- A set of criteria to help identify new locations has been developed
- There have been two to three short-term wins for collaborative work
- There is a shared understanding of how institutional advancement works
- Clarify role of NOCCA personnel in fundraising, development and advancement work

First Steps

- Schedule monthly meetings
- Develop a working charter
- Share DiSC results and discuss implications
- Identify one area for a short-term win, e.g. collaborative work on alumni network

Indicators (That We Are on the Right Track)

- Leadership teams from both organizations have been identified to create the distributed leadership team
- Meetings have been scheduled (and rotating facilitation scheduled—suggested)
- Draft working charter has been drawn up
- 100% attendance at meetings

Beneficiaries

- The whole NOCCA/TNI community

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Integrated Scenario

It is the year 2027. NOCCA has spent the last decade increasing access to its experiences by removing barriers to access, creating a state-wide network of satellite programs, and collaborating with arts professionals and educators. NOCCA has become a regional player, championing the arts and the cultural economy statewide, and acting as an inspiration to arts training organizations in other regions. In addition to bringing pre-professional arts training to talented students around the state, NOCCA has also facilitated the preservation of traditional, but dying, art forms, supporting tradition bearers to pass their knowledge and skills onto younger generations.

NOCCA's Work

NOCCA has achieved its goals in three ways:

1. By setting greater access as a strategic goal;

2. By collaborating with multiple communities including its advancement partner, The NOCCA Institute (TNI);

3. By improving programs and operations to create a model that serves a diverse array of artistically gifted students; that actively addresses barriers to access; and that supports the adults—whether faculty, administration, operations staff, TNI—to do their best work.

**In the 10 Year Period, 2017 – 2027,
the Work of Increasing Access Was Sequenced as Follows:**

- In the first few years, NOCCA focused on identifying ways to improve the original program and address issues of access by creating cross-disciplinary teams of faculty and administrators to work on five key areas:

  - Creating consistency in the rules and protocols for student behavior across all departments in order to create a more transparent and equitable culture of expectations and accountability;

  - Redesigning the entrance and exit process to create greater transparency for students and families, a more equitable process overall and to enable both academic and arts faculty to collaborate on identifying support needs for students;

  - Launching an operations improvement team that began a process of continuous improvement focused upon developing greater pro-activity and smoother functioning of the operations that support all of NOCCA's programs;

  - Strengthening supports for students and the faculty who teach them in order to address each student's needs in a more personalized way;

  - Developing a campus-wide point of view, shared understanding of, and commitment to equity.

The first two areas were resolved within the first three years, and the others evolved into ongoing processes of continuous improvement.

TNI's Work

In the meantime TNI focused on refining and communicating its advancement model. In order to build awareness of, and commitment to NOCCA, this involved developing deeper, collaborative, problem-solving relationships with funding partners and civic groups across the state who had strategic goals similar to those of NOCCA and TNI. By 2020, not only were relationships forged around common interests for the arts and youth development, TNI had also invested in dedication to a sense of community for NOCCA's long-term sustainability in New Orleans and around the state. This was achieved by inviting prospective supporters to the planning table where they actively collaborated with each other in creating solutions for NOCCA's needs, and in doing so became partners in advancing NOCCA's mission.

TNI Targeted Its Collaborative Action and Gifts in Two Ways:

1. Advancement for excellence and access—supporting NOCCA's work to expand to other locations in the state; and supporting NOCCA's work to improve the overall program by addressing barriers to access in New Orleans initially, and then in other locations as need arose. These included e.g. social emotional supports for students, transportation, to name but two.

2. Development of additional revenue streams, using a prototyping methodology, in order to increase financial sustainability and to create more unrestricted funding. This process took the learning from the early ventures and applied it to new approaches and new programs in New Orleans and other locations.

TNI continued to deepen the ways in which they collaborated with business and civic groups, as well as traditional funders (both regional and national) to innovate new forms of funding. Through these efforts by 2027, a different genre of NOCCA supporters has emerged that aligns with the values of funders and provides NOCCA with resources that are both financial and strategic in nature:

- Philanthropic foundations became engaged in problem solving to help TNI and NOCCA generate funds needed to reach their mission.

- Business leaders were engaged in the planning of business ventures, paving the way for sustained support driven by their desire to be a part of a success story they helped create.

- Alumni and volunteer networks were organized through the efforts of an Alumni Association offering critical support and advocacy resources.

Shared Work of NOCCA and TNI

NOCCA and TNI also collaborated to support the strategic work of both organizations. They created a distributed leadership team consisting of four people from each organization who systematically worked together to thought-partner, share resources and serve as "critical friends" to one another to ensure the collective success of both organizations.

Monthly meetings began in the summer of 2017 at which the combined team began to plan for the Access NOCCA strategy. They partnered to develop an approach to the assessment of potential locations, using the criteria developed in the planning work, and to the relationship-building process. They also tracked progress together. NOCCA led the development of arts relationships, supported by TNI staff as appropriate (for example, leveraging TNI staff background as artists and arts education network members) to identify people, broker introductions, and develop conversations. TNI led the development of business and civic relationships, supported by NOCCA staff and faculty as appropriate to identify people, broker introductions, and develop conversations. In reaching out to legislators TNI, NOCCA leadership and both boards shared information, brokered conversations, and assessed results.

In addition NOCCA and TNI took steps to begin the development of an alumni association. In the spirit of advancement the relationship-building with the alumni network was based on opportunities for community—such as a LinkedIn group, a Facebook group, and alumni teaching opportunities—that led to other time, talent and treasure contributions.

Final Recommendations

During the course of this work we have had ongoing conversations in which various recommendations have been shared. Many of these have already been put into practice so the recommendations in this section are confined to those additional recommendations we believe will help you to be successful with this new evolution and strategic direction.

Roles and Leadership For Strategic Direction

We recommend NOCCA President/CEO work closely with a small and nimble internal team to organize and lead the planning and implementation efforts of NOCCA's strategic direction. This organizational work should begin with formation of two additional teams: an advisory team and a research team.

An advisory team consisting of key stakeholders (including external partners with relevant expertise) who can offer important insights and feedback to the success of both planning and implementation. Important viewpoints that can provide useful feedback include members of the Strategic Planning Core Team from this past year as well as TNI leadership, alumni representatives as well as potential advancement partners. TNI leadership collaboration will be critical to the success of NOCCA's strategic direction as their work on engaging potential advancement partner/ funder interests will hinge on collaboration early in the planning phase.

In addition to an advisory team, a research team who will conduct some of the needed outreach and research should be formed with a diverse group of internal and strategic partners such as TNI and alumni. In addition to organizing and leading these teams, ongoing communication and engagement of staff and board on the progress of the work related to the strategic direction will be important.

Board Role

The board will play an important role as an oversight and accountability partner for NOCCA as progress is made on both the foundational recommendations and the strategic direction. We recommend three updates to the board each year on the progress that is outcome and data-driven. Each foundational recommendation action team has articulated initial outcomes, goals and measurable indicators of progress. Though these will likely go through refinements as the year progresses, they can be used as a basis for both tracking progress by teams and reporting to the board. A recommended process for ongoing monitoring of progress is outlined below.

Accountability for Results: Quarterly, Data- Driven Review Sessions

Results oriented cycle of inquiry—a systematic way of planning, doing and measuring progress—will be important to be highly intentional, track progress and be accountable for results. In the foundational recommendations work, we suggest a cycle that begins with each team conducting their own internal assessment first—revisit goals, project plans, data related to indicators—in order to assess their successes, areas of improvement, lessons learned. A template could support this process, especially in helping to properly prepare for good reflective conversations and promoting consistency among all the team reviews.

We also highly recommend someone outside of each team facilitate these sessions to ensure consistent quality of the process and to allow all team members to participate. From this reflection, each team can make some "course corrections" for the following period. After each team has had an opportunity to reflect on progress, the team leads can be brought together to share the result of their review, to make connections among all the teams' work, and offer thought partnership to one another. In addition to the value of collaboration, these meetings of team leads will also facilitate communicating the progress of all the foundational recommendations across teams. Finally, as a last step to round out the review cycles, each team should have an opportunity to report their progress to the board.

Etc.

Lastly, a few thoughts and recommendations for some conditions that we feel contribute to overall success:

Coaching

New direction and new roles, like all new behaviors can be difficult to maintain. Colleagues can act as supports for one another, reinforcing and rewarding new behaviors, calling one another out when old habits return. In addition, having a coach can be a very useful way to evolve into a new way of being quickly and more consistently. A coach is incentivized to support the new shift, and also has no preconceived notions from prior knowledge. Although this may seem like a luxury, some sequenced coaching support for every member of the distributed team—and/or team coaching—would expedite the work.

Communication Plan

The strategic planning process began with engagement of many stakeholders within the NOCCA community: faculty, staff, students, parents and other supporters of NOCCA. Keeping everyone, not just the board, apprised of NOCCA's progress will be important if you want to include them in your journey to the future. Communication should not be left to happenstance. We recommend you spend some time being intentional about who you keep informed, how you keep stakeholders engaged and at what points in time and strategic opportunities you want to take advantage of to build interest and excitement about your future.

Team Chartering

We have chartered each foundational recommendation action team so that they begin with and maintain clarity about their purpose, goals, action plans, resource planning and articulation of indicators of success. We recommend you continue this practice with all teams who are brought together to solve a problem or to accomplish a goal. This simple yet highly effective practice will heighten chances of success.

Meeting and Collaboration Hygiene

Simple yet effective tools for meetings are often overlooked in day-to-day practice. While there are many to choose from, we think two are particularly important in meetings or a series of meetings that will lead to a decision: meeting norms and a decision-making protocol.

Meeting norms should be established by participants at the beginning of any meeting series and revisited, especially by a "norms monitor" or facilitator whenever a norm seems to be violated. This is important to keep everyone engaged and feeling safe throughout the meeting.

Agreements about how a decision will be made at the start of a meeting is also important so everyone is clear. No one wants to be in a meeting assuming consensus is the protocol yet after running out of time, a single person decides at the end without input. The types of decision-making protocols include:

• Leader-driven: The leader makes the call but circles back to the group to explain how s/he arrived at the decision;

• Advisory Process: The leader solicits input from an advisor or group of advisors before making the call, then circles back to the group to explain how s/he arrived at the decision;

• Consensus Process: the group sets a time limit for achieving consensus; if consensus has not been reached in the time allotted, the fall back is that the pre-identified leader makes the call (in effect this becomes an advisory process);

• Majority Vote: This is self-explanatory and is often used as a quick way to get the pulse of the group (adding to the "shared pool of meaning" even if it is not to be used as a final decision process.) Majority can be simple—largest number, or 51%, or complex, e.g. requiring a specific proportion

Understanding Work Styles

Successful collaboration always results in a better outcome than working in isolation. Intractable problems have been resolved when a group of committed individuals join to put their collective brilliance together. This is because groups who figure out how to harness their diverse thinking and working styles find a way to understand and appreciate these dimensions of difference and make use of varied perspectives and knowledge. There are some tools that can help a team, especially those working on complex issues together over a long period of time. A simple one that we use is called exploring "dimensions of difference" which we will share with you when we conduct our final debrief with leadership. The DiSC is also a commercially available tool for teams that we highly recommend.

Changing Roles

With the new strategic direction the organization will now benefit from regular strategic level thought and action, facilitating prioritization and high value action. One way for those in leadership roles to think of this is to see this as a shift from being a Production Artist to becoming an Art Director. In this role, as you guide and mentor others, it will be helpful to bear a few things in mind:

• Give clear direction and growth-oriented feedback;

• Hold your nerve through the 'growing pains', for example when things are not done exactly the way you would do them;

• Track how much time is being spent (roughly) on strategic level or 'production' level work— and ask for thought partnership and coaching from your colleagues to adjust if needed;

• Take time to set and regularly review your strategic level goals

Joint Work with TNI

As you begin to do this work it will be helpful to remember that while history won't be erased it is always receding, and does not have to shape current interactions. All members of the distributed leadership team have power and responsibility to make this work. To support this being a successful, long-term, collaboration it will be helpful to assume good intent, remember shared goals, and understand differences (such as pace or work style) as bringing important diversity that may sometimes be challenging but often forces new, innovative solutions.

Recommended Reading

• Twlya Tharp, *The Collaborative Habit, Life Lessons for Working Together*

Appendix

This section contains excerpts from our interim report provided to NOCCA and the NOCCA board.
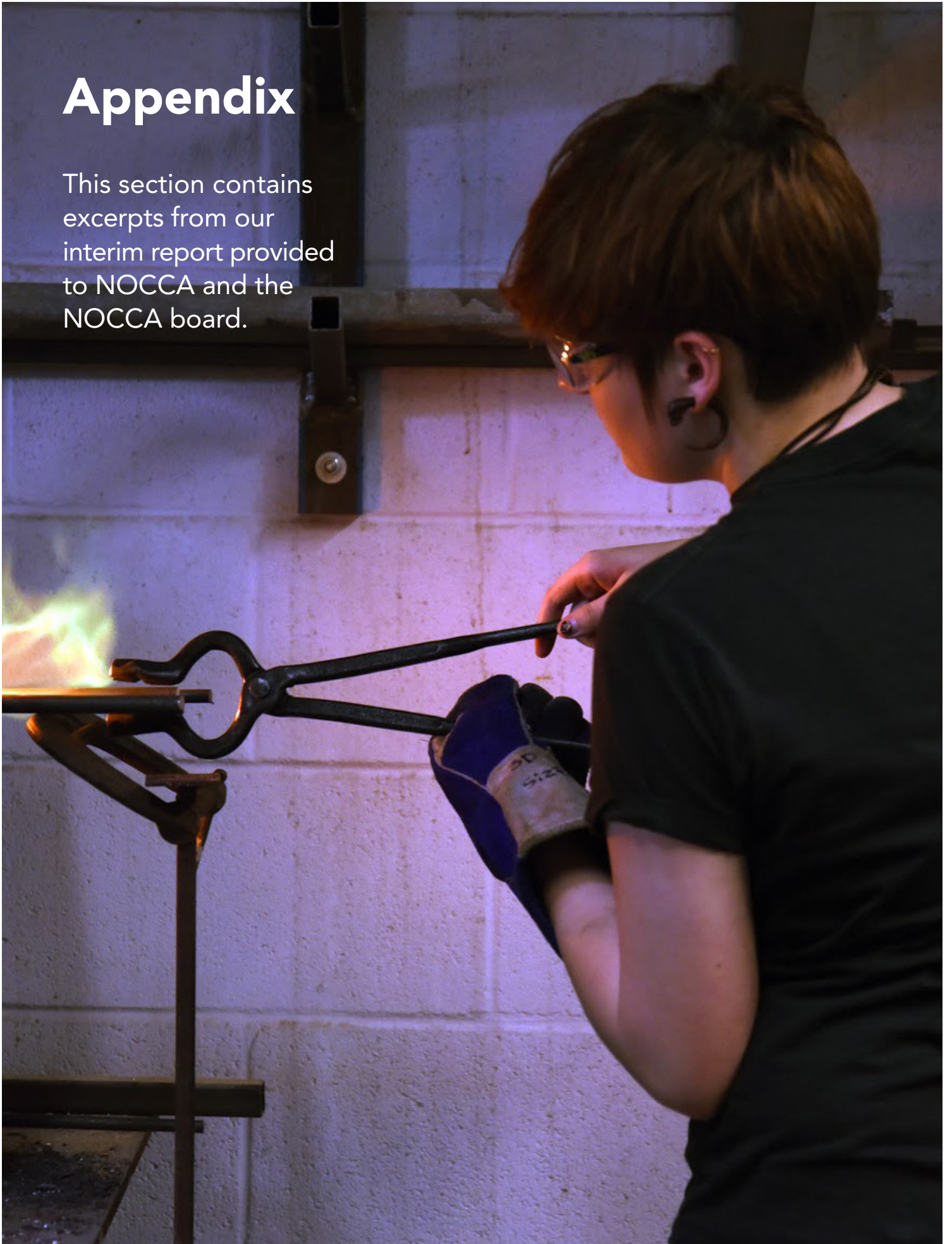
What We Heard: Themes from the Research

The information that this synthesis is based upon came from interviews with each department, with administration, board members, student focus groups, parent and family focus groups, alumni, a higher education representative, and observations of teaching and learning.

Areas of Strength and Success

These are the areas that the new strategic direction can draw upon, or amplify, and that should not be compromised by the new plan.

NOCCA Has a Great Overarching Mission

Students, family members, board members, faculty and administration all believe in NOCCA's mission to provide high-quality, pre-professional training for young artists.

High Quality Training

NOCCA students, families and alumni recognize the high-quality of the training students receive. New graduates feel very prepared for their arts classes at college, and some feel that NOCCA training is more advanced than their freshman work.

Talented Students

Seeing the talent of students, and watching it grow and develop during their time at NOCCA is something that many cite as a success.

An Engaged Board

The current board is very engaged, having substantive discussions at board meetings, and attending NOCCA events in addition to board meetings.

A Creative and Exciting Academic Curriculum

Many people are happy about the innovative curriculum at Academic Studio (AS), even while there are concerns about the restrictions on students transitioning in and out of the AS.

Collaboration within Departments

Although many faculty state they would like to have greater opportunities to collaborate across disciplines, most feel that they do have good collaboration within their own departments.

Funding Improvements

2016 / 17 is the first year without state funding cuts since 2008. One reason given for this was that the CEO was able to have more time before the state committee to describe what NOCCA is, and to paint a fuller picture for them of the role the school serves.

Areas of Threat and Opportunity

These are the areas identified as issues by the community. They should be addressed by the new strategic direction and plan. We give suggestions in the Foundational Recommendations section for addressing each one.

Need for Action

There is considerable discussion fatigue amongst staff and faculty about these issues. People are ready to see productive resolution of long-standing issues and ready to take action themselves, and will become cynical if action isn't taken as part of this planning process.

Supports for All Learners

AS faculty do not yet have the supports needed to meet the diverse academic needs of all students.

'Split' Campus

There is a sense that the campus is 'split'. This is partly due to that fact that AS and Arts occur, for the most part, on different campuses (which reinforces the sense of difference between half day and full day students), and that Chartres Street divides the two campuses. But it is also partly due to a sense of difference in the approach to work, to behavioral protocols, and to schedule.

Unintended Consequences of Curriculum

Academic Studio's innovative curriculum is popular with most families and students. Although it does not impose technical restrictions, it can create significant transition challenges (from an 'user experience' point of view) for some students who need to transition in and out of both AS and local schools. (This point has been slightly changed from the original interim report, to reflect further discussion.)

Entrance and Exit Process

The need to transition several seniors out of NOCCA this year, questions about students' motivations and real reasons for coming to NOCCA, and confusion about the status of students in AS led faculty to identify redesigning the Entrance and Exit processes as high priorities at the December in-service.

Equity

NOCCA needs a clearer definition of equity, a collective statement about its commitment to equity, and clear actions to support that statement. (This issue also shows up as one of the Creative Tensions).

Improving Faculty Supports

Learning: Faculty need targeted professional learning in pedagogy, especially in differentiated instruction and to support students who are behind academically or have learning disabilities. In addition, we heard from several faculty members that it is increasingly difficult to "stay on top of their game" as supports to deepen their own practice are lacking.

Faculty's Sense of Job Security: Annual agreements that are not fully committed to until the summer create a sense of precariousness for faculty.

Collaboration and Empowerment

Although there is now some fatigue about this particular topic—due to much discussion, but no action— faculty and staff still identify the lack of opportunity to do cross-disciplinary collaboration as a concern, and still cite a desire to rework space and schedule to enable this to happen. Administrative support staff in particular are keen to have the opportunity to problem solve and optimize 'back of house' processes.

Collaboration Between NOCCA and TNI

NOCCA and TNI have highly complementary functions yet there is tension between the two organization linked to role, responsibilities, pacing and flexibility. NOCCA has to operate according to the stringent, and often bureaucratic pacing, of State rules, while TNI has the ability to make and act upon decisions more rapidly and nimbly. These differences require a high level of shared transparency and awareness in order to support collaboration. Increased opportunities to work with and understand each other among the leadership of both organizations can improve collaboration and deepen impact of their individual and joint activities.

Areas of Interest and Excitement

These are the areas that keep people engaged with NOCCA, or that provide avenues of possibility that people are excited to pursue.

Expanding NOCCA

Geographically, virtually, or by changing the use of time, many people are interested in growing the program so that more students can access NOCCA's training.

Raising Awareness of NOCCA

People feel NOCCA is known in the New Orleans area, although sometimes just by name. But there is interest in raising that awareness State and nationwide to attract traditional talented students and to increase the range of funding options.

Alumni Support

Drawing upon alumni as resources to support mentorships, internships and funding, for example. Alumni were also seen as an untapped resource and there was interest in the value that an alumni network would provide as an ongoing artistic community.

Access to Technology

Strategic leveraging of current and future technology to extend access and services while maintaining a culture and philosophy of hands-on, human interaction (both/and).

Untapped Resources That Can Support the Organization

These are the areas of potential support for NOCCA that combine the strength of NOCCA's unique artistic community with the classic non-profit volunteer triumvirate of 'time, talent and treasure'.

Students

The majority of students interviewed commented on a desire to socially connect with other students at NOCCA, especially those outside of their discipline. They are acutely aware of missing these opportunities at their sending schools because they spend their after school hours at NOCCA and would love structured ways to connect and ultimately support one another at the NOCCA campus.

Alumni

Many people mentioned the potential of a robust alumni network for volunteer work, potential teaching (see scenarios), for fund-raising, mentorship and as a way to build an ongoing community for artistic support.

Families

At the family and parent focus groups participants expressed gratitude for being invited to share their views. They noted that this was a rare occasion and expressed a desire for more opportunities to share their opinions, support one another, and to contribute to the school in some volunteer function. Family members who are around the campus during arts instruction could be a great resource for the school and for one another.

Community

Community resources for extended student support, especially around equity. This idea was mentioned by staff and faculty in interviews. Examples could include organizations offering mentorship for African-American boys; organizations that offer social-emotional/mental health resources for schools; and volunteer organizations.

Values of the Organization

Values are the enduring beliefs of the organization and remain steadfast over time. Every organization has values, though they are often not made explicit. By making these commonly-held values explicit through Value Statements, an organization articulates the ethical principles that guide its work.

We began with an open process, inviting students, staff, faculty and families to contribute to white boards in the breezeway, in response to a prompt asking about what NOCCA valued. This generated a long list of values, which were clustered by CI and reviewed by the Core Team. The list that came out of this process was then reviewed by staff and faculty and a prioritized list of values was shared with the NOCCA board for further input. The final list representing the core values of NOCCA includes: The Arts, community, creativity, curiosity, discipline, diversity, equity, accountability.

Initial Foundational Recommendations

These are issues that have to be addressed regardless of which strategic future path is chosen. The section of additional recommendations were added after a round of all staff and faculty feedback.

NOCCA administration, staff and faculty also want to ensure that they are serving all students well as the foundation for serving more students. Hence the foundational recommendations, which as the name suggests, are intended to create a strong base from which to develop further. The suggestions here then are a plan for growth that emphasizes the foundational recommendations early on, while setting the longer-term goals in motion, allowing them to develop at an organic pace. The two are intended to work in concert and not distract from one another, but we start with the end in mind so that we can be proactive about change, and more tightly connect short-term needs with long-term desires.

These are 'pain points' that need to be addressed early on, whichever future path NOCCA takes. They were drawn initially from stakeholder interviews and then explored further at the December in-service with all staff and faculty. At that session, staff and faculty identified which of these areas they would be interested in working on and brainstormed some initial solutions to consider. The work that began at that session will be brought back into this process as we craft action plans.

The Foundational Recommendations here have been further reviewed by staff and faculty, and we have organized them in this report according to the number of groups that identified them as one of their top three important issues. The choice here is not which to pursue, but the sequence in which to pursue them. The following diagram illustrates a recommended sequence and syncopation of implementing the Foundational Recommendations based on critical dependencies that drive the sequence of action.

	Foundational Recommendations	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10
1	Consistent Rules, Real Consequences and Accountability	●	●								
2	Access to Supports to Maximize Student Success	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3	A Split Campus		●								
4	Improving Staff and Faculty Supports		●								
5	The Unintended Consequences of an Innovative Curriculum			●							
6	Increasing Transparency and Informed Decision Making with the Entry and Exit Process	●	●	●							
7	Courageous Commitment and Explicit Work to Create a More Equitable Organization	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
8	Increasing Opportunity for and Value in Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9	Strengthen the Relationship Between NOCCA and TNI and Improve the Impact of Strategies	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10	Clarify NOCCA's Critical Role in the Execution of The NOCCA Institute's (TNI) Advancement Strategy	●	●	●							
11	Strengthening and Building Alumni Network		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12	Succession Planning			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
13	Strategic Use of Technology			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
14	Optimizing Operations	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

1. Consistent Rules, Real Consequences and Accountability

Seven groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

- There is a general need to clarify the behavior protocols within and between AS and Arts. Policies must be aligned as much as possible—such as dress code—to give students clarity and allow all of the adults on campus to be allies.

- Where policies have to be different, administration needs to be very clear with students and families at the beginning of each year about those differences and the consequences for breaking protocols.

- Faculty and students report the (perceived) lack of consequences for any infractions, which contributes to a sense that NOCCA is 'easy'. This runs counter to the emphasis that faculty place on discipline regarding work, and can undermine efforts to develop key areas of the Creative DNA—Respect and Professional Attitude.

- Faculty should not have to police students, and high schoolers will push boundaries on protocols, however, clarity and agreements amongst the adults will minimize the scope that students have to test limits.

- Consistency of consequences, and transparency and consistency of follow-through for student behavior infractions can help alleviate a perception of "different rules for different students", cited by both faculty and students.

- Some staff and faculty saw connections between this issue and the question of redesigning the Entrance and Exit processes. The logic here is that if the 'right' students are admitted in the first place, and if there are clear consequences and pathways to exit students who don't turn out to be a good fit, then some of these issues will be moot. Although there is definitely a connection between redesigning the Entrance and Exit processes and consistency and accountability—being explicit with students and families about expectations for example—we would caution against what can become the fantasy of 'the right student'. A focus on consistency and accountability will help across the board, and will help students to develop the qualities in the creative DNA, in spite of other learned behavior.

- Many staff and faculty also saw this as an equity issue. Clear and consistent guidelines will help support equity for students and also for staff and faculty.

2. Access to Supports to Maximize Student Success

Six groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

In reflecting on the first six years that the Academic Studio has been in operation, multiple insights from staff, students and parents inform our recommendations for next steps. The biggest challenge relates to meeting the needs of students both academically (they come in with a wide range of needs and abilities) and socio-emotionally. These recommendations maximize student success by increasing the capacity of AS staff and by improving supports for students. These will enable faculty to better meet the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of students, enabling each to reach their full-potential as artists in the global community.

- Provide specific professional learning opportunities, including ongoing instructional coaching, to deepen the instructional and pedagogical knowledge and skills of AS faculty. These should include strategies to differentiate and scaffold instruction for students. The breadth of needs we observe at NOCCA include students who are behind in math and reading skills, as well as those who are far advanced. Faculty have also cited a need to support students who are learning English as a second language.

- Increase access to personalized math and reading skill support for students outside of the classroom, potentially in an online, 24-7 environment.

- Provide access to Special Education expertise for students with cognitive, physical and learning disabilities, and for the teachers who support them.

- Provide access to English Language Learner and cultural expertise so teachers can integrate culturally and linguistically responsive strategies and content in their classrooms.

- In addition to professional learning related to instruction, support staff to understand and have courageous conversations related to equity and the social issues that students face in our communities which can create challenges to learning.

- Prepare the AS staff to better support incoming students through active involvement in the admissions process. This may include participating in student/family interviews. Increase access to the backgrounds of incoming students (academic performance, discipline, special education services, attendance, etc.) not in order to filter students out, but to support personalization.

- Identify and coordinate community resources to help faculty and administration address the diverse challenges of diverse students needs.

- Strengthen coordination among administration, arts and AS faculty so every student is known by the school as a whole and supports are coordinated. Create a formal joint AS/Arts faculty "Student Success Team" process that identifies potential student issues through "early warning indicators" and works together with families to address them.

- Many staff and faculty also saw this as an equity issue. At the heart of equity is providing differentiated resources and supports to students based on need. AS staff are anxious to provide the supports their

students need and deserve to be successful, including professional learning for themselves to be better prepared to serve them in their classrooms and ongoing access to other expertise that can support them.

3. A Split Campus

Five groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

There are three main ways in which the campus feels split to staff, faculty and students— schedule; different pedagogical approaches; and physical space.

Schedule

• The current schedule with AS in the morning and Arts in the afternoon, creates a natural barrier between AS and Arts faculty by creating a "shift schedule" environment. Faculty need time to coordinate and collaborate, and freeing up faculty to enable this may contribute to a stronger, single campus, culture. Several suggestions have been put forward for schedule changes, including some Arts classes being taught in the morning. Although staff and faculty also acknowledge that such schedule changes could be hard on families. Faculty have also suggested more substitute teachers, and better use of In-service days to facilitate coordination and collaboration.

• Identify a small cohort of students with which to prototype schedule changes (note this doesn't necessarily involve changing their schedule initially, but designing and simulating first). This could also be an opportunity to explore a resource like Florida Virtual School, whose motto is, "any time, any place, any path, any pace"

• Encourage Arts faculty to informally visit AS classrooms once a month between 11:15a.m. and 12:00p.m., and encourage AS faculty to do return visits in the afternoon in order to foster collegial relationships and support knowledge sharing.

Different Pedagogical Approaches

• Different 'philosophical' approaches to pedagogy— AS faculty are using a 'growth mindset' approach where learning is the constant and time the variable, as compared to traditional school where time is the constant and learning is the variable. (Although it should be noted one comment from the staff and faculty in-service in February suggested that this is not AS policy.) This means that students will work, and rework, a piece, or retake a test until they have demonstrated that they have understood the concepts.

  - Arts faculty have been surprised when AS students ask them when the retest will be in their Arts discipline, and there is a sense that this may be seen as a sign of a lack of rigor in AS. However, if that is true, it is a misunderstanding of the approach the AS is using—and that Arts faculty likely use in perhaps a more implicit form as well.

- Growth Mindset training for all faculty, more of a focus on pedagogy at in-service days, and any other opportunities for faculty to share their approaches, and teaching strategies with one another would be very helpful in addressing such misunderstandings.

- It is also true that all students have some demonstrated talent for their arts, which means that different strategies may be appropriate in Arts and AS. However, again this should be clear to everyone.

• Differences in the implementation of student behavior protocols and discipline (as discussed above in Consistent Rules, Real Consequences and Accountability) adds to a "split campus" perception as students experience different expectations (and different follow-through of consequences) from their AS and Arts teachers.

Physical Space

• The campus is divided by a road, and currently houses AS, Culinary, and Creative Writing on one side and the other nine Arts disciplines on the other. Although some of the ways in which the campus feels split can be addressed without changing the physical plant, the separation of activities and the road running through the campus create a significant sense of physical barrier. Identifying ways to remove that barrier would support a campus that feels more integrated.

- One option is to gain permission to temporarily close the road at Chartres Street and Saint Ferdinand Street and Chartres Street and the railway line between the hours of 7:30a.m. and 6:30p.m. Families and buses would then come in from Royal Street and follow the usual route. This may also encourage parents and family members to congregate at Press Street Station for a little while at drop-off and pick-up—especially if this was encouraged by a formal or informal school-family group.

- Other options that allow unrestricted access to both campuses might include a bridge, paid crossing guards, or other creative solutions. Even though the bridge was originally rejected as cost-prohibitive, and there are legal concerns, more due diligence on a variety of options will help to ascertain which option is most promising.

• We do not see this particular element of solving the Split Campus issue as of the highest priority, and would recommend work begin on the other areas first. However, the imbalance of space availability usage—mainly on 'one side' in the morning, and 'the other' in the afternoon—could be an interesting design challenge for staff, faculty and/or students to work on.

4. Improving Staff and Faculty Supports

Four groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

The recommendations here cover professional learning for staff and faculty (some of which echoes the specific recommendation Maximize Student Success) and a note on Letters of Employment.

There is some urgency around giving AS faculty the supports they need to reach a wide diversity of learners. However, across campus faculty and staff have also indicated interest in learning more about equity, and particularly about practical strategies to support students. In-service days are precious, but all staff training on equity, for example, would enable everyone to share concepts and vocabulary, and again support consistency across campus.

In addition all faculty should be supported in pursuing self-chosen opportunities to enhance their areas of expertise.

Professional Learning for Staff and Faculty

• Strategies for differentiated instruction, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and supporting English Language Learners.

• Strategies to support students who are far behind their peers

• Understanding Equity

• Understanding institutional racist practices embedded within our educational systems and what equity- minded people can do to change them

• Raising expectations and support for underachieving students (and supports for faculty to help them)

• Support for ongoing professional practice/performance for all staff and faculty to "stay on top of their game" (potentially supporting professional growth sabbaticals, or master teacher opportunities elsewhere)

Letters of Employment

• Explore supplementary funding options through the scenarios, in addition to ongoing Letters of Employment discussions, with the aim of creating a situation in which faculty do not have to wait until the State budget is finalized in July before they know they have a job for the next school year. Having said this, there are many school districts where this is a norm. However, we think this adds to a sense of precarity and see other NOCCA-based teaching options for faculty as one way to alleviate this.

Leadership Support

• NOCCA has expanded rapidly in the last 10 years, and cuts in the State budget have meant that administrators are often juggling multiple roles.

- A more stable budget this year, a new CAO, and this Strategic Planning process, provide the opportunity to pause and revisit roles and responsibilities.

- Clarity of roles, and opportunities to delegate, should be identified.

- Clarity of decision-making—identifying and sharing decision-making processes and identifying who the decision-maker is for different administrative tasks will help to support delegation and follow through.

- Coaching and other professional learning opportunities should be identified to enable leadership to lead NOCCA forwards into its next phase.

5. The Unintended Consequences of an Innovative Curriculum

Four groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term. *Note: Some of the commentary originally in this recommendation has been moved to the Entrance and Exit Process, which is the next recommendation.*

The AS innovative curriculum is popular with most families and students, however it does create challenges on students transitioning in and out of both AS and local schools. How can curriculum adjustments be made to both keep the strengths of the curriculum yet give a structure that allows for alignment to the public school model?

Possible solutions can be focused upon determining 'fit' ahead of time (see the suggestions under Entrance and Exit process); or by creating some flexibility in the schedule:

Flexibility: Additional 'On-ramp' at Junior Year

- If the curriculum stays as is, the possibility to opt in at Junior year would offer several benefits:

  - Half day students would have another option to enter the AS.

    Students would be able to enter NOCCA full-day when they had attained a greater level of maturity, which can be especially important for some Arts disciplines.

  - Such an option would require an intensive summer program for orientation with more stringent academic requirements than the regular entrance, given the nature of catch up that would have to happen

- Faculty also suggested that there be an 'off-ramp' in Junior year as well. This runs into the same issue of the overall challenge since it can be a difficult transition for students exiting both in terms of adapting to a very different way of working, and due to the difficulties of finding a new school.

  However, one of the benefits of this is that it would signal a clear go/no go line for students and families.

From freshman year students would know that continuing on to Junior and Senior year would be a privilege based on growth.

Flexibility: 9th Grade

- 9th grade could be separated out as a preparatory year, focused on a variety of learning readiness options. Then the curriculum proper would start in sophomore year, so students, families, and AS have a year to decide if there's a fit.

- The easiest option here is to change the curriculum to fit the public school model. However, this would lose a significant piece of the appeal of AS to students, to families, to faculty and to funders. A group of AS faculty, under the leadership of the new CAO, and ideally with a couple of 'critical friends' from the Arts faculty, should initially assess the feasibility of a Junior year on-ramp, and leave the 'off-ramp' process to the work on the Exit and Entrance process.

6. Increasing Transparency and Informed Decision Making with the Entry and Exit Process

Three groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

Faculty would like to create a more aligned and collaborative audition/ admission process to clarify entrance requirements, and a more aligned and collaborative Arts and Academic review process to clarify the exit process, so that decision-making by both faculty and families is well-informed, and "high standards with high levels of support" can become the culture at NOCCA.

Determining 'fit': Each of these options helps everyone consider and determine fit ahead of time, and would therefore, hopefully, minimize transitions down the line. It is very important that the idea of 'fit' be very clearly articulated and described publicly by NOCCA, and that it does not become code that allows certain groups of students to be excluded.

- Shadowing: Many high schools invite prospective students and family members to visit the school while they are making their decisions. Students can 'shadow' for a day or half a day to get a sense of the what the high school is like.

- A report from middle school, focused on areas that are relevant to NOCCA: This might mean NOCCA faculty designing a form which captures the kinds of information that would be helpful to NOCCA and coordinating with middle school counselors for a briefing to learn about incoming students.

- Summer academic orientation program to strengthen an incoming student's organizational and academic skills in preparation for AS.

- Audition combined with academic interview process

(The Arts audition will always be the gate for entry, but some form of academic interview would give AS faculty a sense of student needs so that they could prepare.)

- Develop a clear and transparent process, including specific deadlines for notifying students and families, to identify students who are at risk of not succeeding in AS and/or Arts programs, with a clear and well documented process of support prior to exit. If a student is "counseled out" of NOCCA, it should not be a surprise to either the student or family and only done after multiple strategies to support the student to get back on track have been tried. In addition, staff have suggested a need to create avenues for students whose interests have changed to "opt out" without having to fail out. This may initially come in the form of early identification by faculty whose relationship allows for counseling as part of their mentorship with students.

7. Courageous Commitment and Explicit Work to Create a More Equitable Organization

Three groups placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

There is a clear aspiration at NOCCA to have a school that is equitable, a school that creates access to opportunity for all young artists who come with different levels of preparation, experience and backgrounds. Diversity is highly valued at NOCCA and there is a strong desire to demonstrate that despite inherent inequities in our nation and communities, NOCCA can provide positive disruption and change the life course of students through opportunity in the Arts.

Stating this goal and putting this in practice is often a process that requires openness to courageous conversations, reflections about practices that counter this aspiration and a commitment to change policies and practice where needed. We see several actions that can begin to strengthen the equity commitment at NOCCA:

- A clear definition of equity, clearly differentiated from equality and diversity, to clarify NOCCA's commitment and to rally all stakeholders toward a common goal.
- Professional learning for all staff on foundational knowledge related to equity with a deeper exploration of research into supporting African American boys.
- Deep, reflective and courageous exploration of inequities within NOCCA's practices and policies and how they are inadvertently perpetuated by the adults who are committed to serve students equitably.
- Consistent, equitable, transparent student behavior and consequence expectations and practices.

- Consistent, equitable, transparent processes for entry and exit to NOCCA programs.
- Deepening awareness, improving access to resources and strengthening pedagogical skills of staff to better meet the needs of students.
- Addressing the transportation issue—in the absence of additional funding for transportation, NOCCA could address this issue with the help of families by identifying needs, and helping / coordinating with families to connect with one another to ride share, or contribute to transportation costs.
- Design an explicit culture change process that engages students to collaboratively work with faculty to problem solve behavior and conduct issues in ways that work for teens, and that is different from a rules-based culture that (may) work for adults. For example, a joint faculty—student—parent task force that utilizes design thinking methodologies on issues related to students could meet the needs of all stakeholders in a more profound way.

8. Increasing Opportunity for and Value in Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

No group placed this in their "Top three areas to address" in the short term.

Faculty remain interested in having the opportunity to do cross-disciplinary collaboration. This includes having the time to discuss shared students, to compare teaching strategies, and to do collaborative art projects. If regular work does not foster cross-disciplinary collaboration (as it does for Theater Tech for example) schedule changes should be explored, and regular time allocated at in-service days to work in mixed collaborative groups.

Additional Foundational Recommendations

The following additional Foundational Recommendations have been added after the NOCCA staff and faculty had an opportunity to provide feedback midterm. These were based on continuing discussion and discovery by the CI team from January through April of 2017:

9. Strengthen the Relationship Between NOCCA and TNI and Improve the Impact of Strategies

We heard from multiple stakeholders from both organizations, as well as the leaders, that the working relationship and level of trust between NOCCA and TNI can be improved, is desired, and is needed to enable the organizations to move forward. Some recommendations for concrete action in this area include:

- Invest in executive coaching for TNI and NOCCA leadership (not just ED and CEO) to repair working relationships and commit to explicit work to learn about and appreciate one another's leadership and problem solving styles. (And example of a tool that can help here is the DiSC profile).

- Develop an aspirational charter between the two organizations that outlines the ideal collaborative relationship, roles, and responsibilities that will best serve the students of NOCCA. Work to ensure both the "what" and the "how" of actions going forward support these aspirations (this would be different from the Cooperative Agreement).

- Involve the leadership teams of both organizations to identify goals and execute plans for two to three short term "wins" to begin rebuilding relationships based on success.

- Clarify where each organization will be individually responsible for decision-making regarding strategy (the what and how) and where they need to share and collaborate in decision-making and implementation.

- Commit to ongoing, cyclical and structured Quarterly Strategic Plan Reviews involving both leadership teams and boards. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, reflect on progress made and make adjustments to improve outcomes and success in an ongoing way.

- Conduct monthly joint leadership team meetings driven by clear outcomes to identify risks and challenges to implementation of plans, to collaboratively and creatively problem solve, and to hold each other accountable for follow-through on actions.

- Commit to ongoing, unstructured quarterly gatherings with the focus of increasing channels of communication and exchange of information and building community.

10. Clarify NOCCA's Critical Role in the Execution of The NOCCA Institute's (TNI) Advancement Strategy

In organizations that include development as part of their organizational structure, the implementation of development strategy is an integral part of the organization's operations and has cross functional responsibility. Because TNI is a separate non- profit support agency, there is a structural separation between development strategy and related implementation activities from the day-to-day operations of NOCCA. This has some advantages—the day- to-day operations of the school should be able to run without a strong focus on the details of fund-raising, for example— however, it can also lead to misunderstandings regarding expectations about NOCCA's critical role in successful implementation of some development activities.

Initial Future Scenarios

These five possible futures for NOCCA outlined elements intended to inform the overall strategic direction chosen by the board. In different ways each of the scenarios responds to two recurrent themes—a desire to expand NOCCA's reach to more students, and a desire to increase awareness of NOCCA. Each scenario was also intentionally written as exaggerated version of a particular strategic pathway. In the end, the NOCCA board, with collaborative discussions and advisement by the NOCCA core team, selected a hybrid scenario outlined at the beginning of this document. The five initial scenarios are included below as a reference.

While addressing current challenges and building a stronger foundation for the future, it's important to design and implement solutions with a future in mind. Otherwise, when the organization is ready to shift attention to a possible future, it may find itself having to re-engineer solutions to fit a shifting reality.

A common thread we've heard from stakeholders about the longer-term future for NOCCA touches on some element of expansion:

To raise awareness of NOCCA in a broader pool of talented young artists and to serve more students.

The year is 2027... students who were kindergarteners and 1st graders in 2017 are now in late middle school and entering high school...

Scenario 1:
The NOCCA Network

Mission
To raise awareness and expand the reach of NOCCA arts education opportunities throughout Louisiana so that more students can access high quality pre-professional training and mentorship. In addition faculty have access to additional arts exemplars in their field, and NOCCA's geographic funding opportunities expand to currently untapped regions.

Overview
As a state funded school, the NOCCA board committed in 2017 to provide increased access to NOCCA programming by stepping outside of the greater New Orleans footprint and expanding across Louisiana. While the in-residence and academic studio options are available at "NOCCA Headquarters" in New Orleans, afternoon/early evening arts programs similar to NOCCA early on exist in other locations. NOCCA initially expanded within the state to open a 'satellite campus' in Shreveport, partnering with ArtSpace in order to provide more opportunities to students in North Louisiana while also focusing on outreach within disadvantaged communities.

Details
As the Shreveport partnership was developing, and NOCCA leadership were assessing the benefit of adding full day programs, they also began to identify other potential partners in other areas.

The network locations are smaller and some focus on specialized arts education programs that take advantage of resources in those specific regions. Even smaller "satellite partnerships" are also in the works, bringing together locally rich resources in a focused talent development environment throughout the state

of Louisiana. The presence in these additional geographic locations have brought new opportunities for NOCCA that were previously limited:

- New, long-term, funder relationships and potential funding/partnership opportunities.

- Access to alumni who have relocated to these regions and who can be recruited to play a more active role in increasing the awareness of NOCCA and in supporting students through mentorships.

- Students from all network schools have access to the arts curriculum offered in all regions through special "semesters away" or summer programs.

- Faculty have the opportunity to guest teach or perform in other regions while anchored to a primary location.

- The school can tap into the potential faculty talent in different areas to expand master teacher access to students throughout the network, to increase opportunities for collaboration among faculty in similar disciplines across the network, and to provide a pool of diverse faculty talent for hiring, advisory work, and networking.

- As a potential emergency / disaster plan, students and faculty can potentially temporarily relocate to other network facilities should a natural disaster impede a school's ability to continue instruction.

Implications
For faculty, leadership, students, parents, etc.

- NOCCA will need to design specific orientation activities for staff in other regions and/or deploy NOCCA staff or alumni familiar with "NOCCA ways of being" to lead the opening of new network schools.

- There are opportunities to collaborate with alumni in this endeavor.

- Additional faculty (and funding) will be needed.

- Local expertise, as well as national influencers, familiar with the culture and arts resources of a geographic area and the national stage, will be needed.

Staff and Faculty Feedback

Areas That Resonate
Excitement about NOCCA reaching more students by being available outside of New Orleans and about opportunity to bring arts back into high school programs. Also recognition that state and national expansion could lead to new funding opportunities.

Areas of Concern
Significant staff concerns on need to work on short term challenges first ("focus on making what we have work first"). These current pain points seem to be so urgent that there is a deep reluctance to think about longer-term strategy. Two most common objections were around national expansion and fear of diluting NOCCA's integrity, resources, identity and impact through any expansion at all, including outside of New Orleans.

Elements That Would Improve This Scenario
High interest to refocus this scenario to expand more locally first and stay within Louisiana and/or to focus expansion into disadvantaged communities with student of color, Hispanic, and disabled students.

Scenario 2: NOCCA In-Residence

Mission
NOCCA provides pre-professional arts training to all eligible Louisiana youth by offering the opportunity to board at NOCCA for any students who are not local to New Orleans, or whose home circumstances are such that boarding would significantly improve their chances of success.

Overview
By the year 2027 NOCCA has a thriving set of residences that permit eligible young people from across Louisiana to stay in New Orleans and study at NOCCA. NOCCA has kept its name, but is now affectionately referred to as LA NOCCA. All students—half day, full day, and boarding—experience a gradual process of earned freedoms across their four years, taking them from closed campus (all at 9th and 10th grade) and weekend curfews (for the 9th and 10th grade boarders) to open campus (11th and 12th graders) and a late weekend curfew for 12th graders. These freedoms are earned by all students by keeping a 2.5 GPA and showing satisfactory progress and commitment in their arts disciplines.

Details
- Picking up the NOCCA village idea from earlier work, 'house parents' are local college students looking for housing and a part-time job, alumni who are beginning their internship as teachers, or retired senior artists as 'house grandparents'.
- Part of the costs of the residential option are underwritten by renting out the residences when students aren't in session, for example, during the summer and at Mardi Gras.
- In order to test this idea out in the beginning, NOCCA partnered with a local college to use their dorms during the summer for students in the restored summer programs. And experimented with the use of host families from the NOCCA community.
- Although some were concerned that families would be unwilling to let their 9th graders particularly live in New Orleans away from family, most families did not feel this way. They understood that their student was aiming for a career in the arts and that NOCCA provided the best possible grounding. NOCCA also created a buddy program for 9th graders so that they would have a New Orleans-based friend and family to spend time with at the weekends if they were not going home.

Implications
For faculty, leadership, AS, students, parents, etc.
- Initial capital campaign
- Part of ongoing operating costs to be raised, so that the residence option is free for Louisiana students
- New administrative position to oversee residential life with support from house parents and volunteers
- In order to prevent further divisions occurring with three students groups—half day, full day and boarder —NOCCA faculty and administration will need to design intentional experiences to keep students mixing.
- Residential students will necessarily have first choice of AS

Staff and Faculty Feedback

Areas That Resonate
- It would help to increase diversity.
- It would give access to students from more remote parts of the state—rural areas particularly.
- It is seen as the next 'logical' step.
- It would enrich the local culture.

Areas of Concern
- There was significant concern about drawing from beyond Louisiana. Staff and faculty felt that it would prevent local students from attending, or reduce the resources available to them
- The logistics of managing dorms felt too difficult— liability issues, and the difficulties of managing students' behavior already were cited

- Full-day students are already seen as more favored than half-day. Several felt that adding dorms would add another layer of favoritism

Elements That Would Improve This Scenario
"If we can find funding for a dorm, can we find funding for buses to help with the transportation issue generally?"

Scenario 3:
The NOCCA Consultancy

Mission
NOCCA's mission is to share NOCCA's expertise in training young artists (in arts and academics) so that more students can be exposed to arts training, educators can develop usable skills in integrating arts and academics within regular school systems, and NOCCA can create additional revenue

Overview
By 2027 NOCCA is running a series of highly successful summer institutes, paid for from school district's PD budgets.

Details

- Faculty master classes (including summer sessions and virtual sessions for teachers) teach NOCCA's DNA, and expertise in Arts pedagogy to Arts teachers across the country—and internationally.

- In another summer masterclass faculty take teams of HS teachers and teach them how to integrate ELA and Humanities, and Science and Math.

- Capitalizing on the popularity of STEAM from 2017 onwards NOCCA has created a niche in the 'A' part of STEAM, and in showing how it integrates with Science and Technology.

- Alumni are also trained to run summer courses, under the guidance of NOCCA faculty. This has extended the initiation and mentor model in interesting ways as alumni learn to become teachers as well as artists.

- Since NOCCA now has summer institutes it is hiring alumni still in college who are looking for summer work.

- It has also started a pre-baccalaureate program for those students who need a little more time to get ready for college—whether they graduated from NOCCA or from another arts high school. The pre-bac summer program at NOCCA has become particularly popular with out-of-state and international students wanting to put an additional high quality experience on their resume.

- All of these courses and related materials are helping to raise awareness of NOCCA across the state, the country, and globally.

Implications
For faculty, leadership, AS, students, parents, etc.

- NOCCA will need to give faculty paid, non-teaching, time to identify what could be shared in toolkits, for example, and to design master classes

- Alumni will need to be provided with payment for interning and then running classes (although they may also then be more likely to contribute financially to NOCCA in the future)

- Careful pricing of institutes, classes and toolkits in order to cover faculty time, materials costs and to generate some revenue (back in 2015 the famous Mirage Report indicated that average teacher professional development per year (full cost) was $18,000 per year)

Staff and Faculty Feedback

Areas That Resonate

- A high number of positive comments

- Excitement about sharing NOCCA's 'magic'

- Providing advocacy for the Arts in education

- Helping to reach other communities

- If working with local MS teachers this could improve the quality of students coming for audition

- Beneficial for NOCCA faculty's professional growth

Areas of Concern

- Concern that packaging teaching, and using terms like IP is a 'commodification' of NOCCA and as such is contrary to the ethos of NOCCA

- Prefer to see the focus of this as about sharing knowledge and not about generating revenue

- This would take focus away from teaching high schoolers

- One commentator liked the idea, but raised the question: "But do we really know what we do well enough to share it?"

Elements That Would Improve This Scenario

- This could also be a recruitment tool for NOCCA.

Scenario 4:
A Pioneering, Technology-Enhanced NOCCA

Mission
NOCCA integrates technology in multiple ways to increase access to high quality academic and arts education for more students and improve collaboration among staff.

Overview
As NOCCA strategically pioneered technology enhancements, the school's philosophy regarding

integration of technology has had two drivers: apply enhancements where it can help us solve problems or do something better, and hold dearly to our belief that the in-person, hands-on approach is an essential element to arts education and apply technology enhancements with caution in this regard.

As part of a strategy to increase access of students to audition for NOCCA, holographic and video-conferencing technology has been used to expand the audition process, enabling students who live further away, or lack resources to attend in-person, to audition in real-time and interactively with Arts faculty. In addition, video conferencing enabled these students and their families to participate in the interview process with Arts and AS faculty. This same holographic technology has been piloted to bring holographic and virtual reality performances to distant venues bringing NOCCA and arts education to public schools throughout the state, increasing inquiry and interest in their programs.

Investigation into benchmark virtual academic schools, such as the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), led to a partnership with FLVS, and NOCCA began to provide high school academic course options to students within their full-day programs where an alternative "time, place, path or pace" option was desired.

Half-day students at NOCCA who were already completing high school through virtual classes also jumped on board and took advantage of this option giving NOCCA students three options (sending school, Academic Studio and Florida Virtual School) to complete their high school education. Since the virtual school model offers flexibility around time, place and pace, it also enabled NOCCA to offer some limited arts classes in the morning and gave students flexibility to engage in broader activities related to their art throughout the day. These virtual course offerings are highly interactive, collaborative and engaging for students as they enable synchronous and asynchronous learning, engagement with peers, access to teachers for one-one support throughout the day, and unlimited access to content (video, instruction, film, exemplars, etc.) and the platform 24-7. Students report feeling more in control of their learning, adjusting time, place, and pace according to their learning style and needs.

As an added feature, the virtual school has given NOCCA faculty access to high quality online professional development and expertise available virtually, such as instructional coaches and specialists in math and reading support, language acquisition, and special education.

NOCCA also prototyped a blended learning model on a very small scale with their media arts program, bringing high quality arts education to a distant area in Louisiana where a NOCCA alum and producer has

planted roots. With a combination of immersive holographic and virtual reality tools, along with monthly weekend-long "live" institutes, promising media arts students who not have been able to access NOCCA's arts education now have the chance to develop the skills and knowledge that will support their dreams. TNI, NOCCA's fundraising partner, found alumni investors willing to donate technology that enabled a simple prototype to take place. Learnings from this experience are being analyzed to see how a blended, technology-enabled, arts education can bring NOCCA and aspiring artists together in pioneering ways that were previously not possible throughout the state.

Technology is also being used extensively by faculty to collaborate, plan and communicate—both within their departments, collaboratively across disciplines and with other professionals outside of campus. Faculty are also using digital tools to document and access highly individualized student data profiles that enable them to collaborate across disciplines and to plan individualized student support.

Implications
For faculty, leadership, AS, students, parents, etc.

• A long-term technology plan and technology leadership will be needed to form and implement a strategy.

• Ongoing technology investment will be needed to maintain state-of-the-art resources.

• NOCCA will pioneer blended learning in the arts and bring arts education to other regions.

• Faculty will need to learn how to use new technology and tools, and be supported in a process of continual learning as the technology continues to evolve.

• More academic options for students will be available that are tailored to unique and desired time, path, place or pace needs.

• The "Learning environment" expands beyond the brick and mortar facility of the school and expands to 24-7 capability.

Staff and Faculty Feedback

Areas That Resonate
Some faculty feel this is a great supplement to what is being offered, and that this idea can reach students of need more effectively in a cost-effective manner. Also, this idea is a promising approach to reaching students who cannot physically travel to NOCCA, to help with access/entrance into NOCCA, and for teachers to be able to work from remote locations.

Areas of Concern
Some faculty feel strongly that arts can only be taught "hands-on" and the apprenticeship model can only be done in person, especially in some arts areas. They caution replacing face-to-face and hands-on with

virtual. The early online learning experience at NOCCA in foreign language was not a successful program and has created antipathy towards the broader idea.

Elements That Would Improve This Scenario
Limiting the use of virtual learning to some arts and using technology to access academic expertise not available at NOCCA.

Scenario 5:
The NOCCA Social Change Agent Arts Academy

Mission
To add elements to the NOCCA education that include social change skills so those who choose can develop into "artists with a social purpose."

Overview
A few years ago, as NOCCA pondered it's next move into the future, it analyzed its past successes and emerging opportunities amidst a historic and divisive political and social context. Influenced by this, the faculty and board made a dramatic decision to add a lens to the school's mission as a pre-professional arts school. Art has historically both documented and influenced social change, and NOCCA faculty wanted to become more intentional in the way they prepared their students to become leaders who use their art for social change if they chose to do so.

They began to integrate curriculum that trained students in the leadership, problem solving, change management, and communication skills needed to enable them to critically engage as global change agents. As one faculty member put it during the strategic planning process of 2017,

The arts can and should have an important place in this, and we should become a leader in imagining what this means. The arts are probably not professionalized in this future in the ways they are currently, so preparing conservatory artists will be less important than critical thinkers who can see things with an academic and artistic eye, and use their art for social change.

Implications
Staff and Faculty Feedback For faculty, leadership, AS, students, parents, etc.

• Integration of leadership, social change concepts and approaches and communication skills into all curriculum

• Potential partnerships with local activist organizations

Areas That Resonate
Some faculty felt this is already currently happening within the arts and fits well with the current program.

Areas of Concern
Some faculty felt this idea does not fit and would be more appropriate outside of NOCCA (either after school or post high school). One comment in particular voiced a concern that this addition to NOCCA's mission would exclude talented artists who are not interested in social activism.

Elements That Would Improve This Scenario
No additional ideas were generated by staff.

Creative Tensions

The following "creative tensions" are dilemmas that we observed regarding possible future scenarios and the current realities, beliefs, philosophy, and culture of NOCCA. "Creative tensions" are two seemingly opposing ideas which are often thought of as dichotomous—we think that we must choose one or the other, but both are important. However, by exploring the tension creative solutions can be found in the "both/ and" space. It is important to have explicit and intentional conversation about such tensions, otherwise they can act as "undertow", holding people in the tension, and inhibiting decision-making and action.

During the NOCCA Board of Directors' meeting, we will be inviting board members to engage in discussion about the following four creative tensions we observed while conducting our research at NOCCA:

Tension 1

How might NOCCA demonstrate a deep commitment to equity, assess where practices, policies or assumptions are unconsciously inequitable, and design equitable supports that also maintain rigor and high standards?

One way institutional inequities surface is when the presence of some characteristics of disadvantage (lack of early preparation, lack of family support and resources, distractions related to scarcity and trauma) are misunderstood and misinterpreted as disinterest or lack of commitment or motivation.

Tension 2

In what ways can technology be used to both increase access to arts training while maintaining the deeply human, 'high touch' aspect of becoming an artist?

Often, technology is seen as "dehumanizing" and isolating. There are many historical examples of disbelief that technology could enhance human interaction yet history has proven otherwise, for example, the telephone. A "flipped classroom" is an example of one way technology has been leveraged to humanize the learning experience by "flipping"the teacher's role from the "input" portion of learning (lecture replaced by digitized reading materials and videos) to the application or practice portion of learning (real-time support in applying concepts) which is often done alone as "homework" in a traditional school setting.

Tension 3

How do we creatively resource the many needs at NOCCA while attending to the deep discomfort in NOCCA's culture to earned income?

High reliance on the State budget is understood as a point of vulnerability, however, the explicit agreement to charge for services is also seen as inimical to the role and purpose of arts training and education.