

Chapter 9

To What End: A Consideration of the Student's Role in Arts Funding

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the increased participation of undergraduate students in arts funding conversations, believing them to be valuable resources and voices in securing better arts education for future generations. The author primarily explores the success of Arts Leadership and Administration students in considering solutions to arts funding challenges and applauds student dedication to improving arts appreciation. Analyzing the current cultural trend of hiring creatives, the author considers why such a trend should encourage students to pursue Arts Leadership and Administration and what opportunities it presents for the right brained artist. Viewing funding as a means but not an end, this chapter calls for a resurgence of motivation in the arts funding movement.

INTRODUCTION

A mentor once shared a favorite mantra of his: passion always communicates better than knowledge. This should provoke reflection for those embedded in the fight to fund the arts. Is everyone communicating effectively – is each advocate still passionate? Champions of the arts are certainly united under a common purpose. They engage in fundraising initiatives and public discourse on the benefits of arts education, simultaneously promoting the development of creative thinkers in all spheres of

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life. However, could their drive to secure financial backing have overshadowed their passion for the arts themselves? Might the gleaming sheen of dollar signs have started to prove more valuable than a firmly rooted appreciation for and recognition of the arts as a vehicle for social change? Advocates cannot afford any ambiguity surrounding their mission as proponents of an arts inclusive world. They are united under a common purpose, yes, but that purpose is not to curate hallowed piles of dollar bills. Funding is always going to be essential, but funding is only a means. If success for educators, policy makers, and artists merely resembles money, then the fight for the arts seems rather futile. It would be better to enter the lottery. An advocate's purpose is to make art accessible, primarily in arenas that will nurture an understanding of art's legitimacy.

The end that advocates pursue dwells within those who may not have financial resources but do possess intellectual curiosity and a hunger for innovation and progress. Simply put, the end will be achieved by young people of today. There needs to be a case made for the potential in college students, the next generation of movers and shakers – creatives who can, when motivated and encouraged, implement many of the infrastructural facelifts suggested by this book. This chapter seeks the benefits of welcoming students into arts funding conversations, using the growing Arts Leadership and Administration (ALA) program at Queens University of Charlotte as a case study, and then reviewing broader student programs with a global reach. Through outlining fruitful instances of student involvement in arts leadership, the chapter will argue for enlisting students as passionate soldiers for arts advancement.

Who Is the Student?

For the purposes of this discussion, the student is any person enrolled in undergraduate studies because these formative years of education cultivate the kind of mind and personality most needed by the arts. In a recent interview, Charlotte Observer critic Larry Toppman shared five behaviors exhibited by successful artists (L. Toppman, personal communication, November 13, 2013), but one wonders if they aren't demonstrated more prevalently by art students. The behaviors are as follows: choosing curiosity over knowledge, honing critical thinking skills, possessing a willingness to look longest at that which is displeasing, hearing everyone, and taking one's jobs too seriously but not one's self. Students seek new philosophies of life and changed worlds, and they aren't afraid to grapple with concepts deemed controversial or aesthetically rough. Says artist Pamela Wineguard, "Art promotes free thinking and that is why it terrifies us...Education and art are first on the chopping block because free thinkers force us to face questions whose answers we're afraid of" (P. Wineguard, personal communication, October 31, 2014). Who thinks more freely than a student of painting, entrepreneurship, writing, and/or design?

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