

Taylor Kelly – NYSSMA®/NAfME Collegiate President 24-25 - SUNY Fredonia



Winter Conference Reflection and Growth

As collegiate students we've just wrapped up a truly remarkable event — the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference in Rochester. Reflecting on last month's conference, it's impossible not to feel inspired and optimistic about the future of music education. This year's conference was an undeniable success, with record-breaking attendance from collegiate students: an astounding 320 students representing 16 universities across the state!

The atmosphere in Rochester was exhilarating, buzzing with enthusiasm and passion for music education from teachers, their students, and collegiate students alike. For many of us, the conference provided a unique opportunity to connect with teachers currently in the field, expanding our professional networks and gaining invaluable insights.

I also hope that you found the opportunity to connect with and share your experiences and ideas with other collegiate members attending the conference. I found it invigorating to exchange ideas with other collegiate members, share stories, and gain fresh perspectives. It's in these moments, surrounded by people who share our dedication, that I'm reminded of the strength and support of our collegiate community. Together, we're part of something much larger than our individual campuses, working toward a brighter future for our profession.

Conference sessions offered something for everyone, showcasing a diverse array of topics from innovative teaching strategies to discussions on DEI and from engaging performances to reading sessions, there was a wealth of knowledge and inspiration to take home. Some of the sessions addressed the latest research and trends in education, while others focused on practical, hands-on techniques to enhance classroom instruction.

Whether it was attending a thought-provoking workshop, watching breathtaking student performances, or sharing ideas in casual hallway conversations, the experience affirmed that the future of music education is in good hands.

Opportunities ahead

As we look ahead, let's keep the momentum going! Another exciting opportunity is just around the corner: the NAfME Eastern Division Conference happening April 24-27, 2025, in Hartford, CT. This event promises to be another incredible gathering of music educators and collegiate students from across the region.

It would be wonderful to see New York collegiate students strongly represented at the conference. If you're planning to attend, be sure to stop by the session hosted by Dr. Koster, Dr. Tilley, and me, titled "Collegiate Chapter Engagement at the State Level: Here's How" This session will offer attendees strategies and resources to enhance state-level engagement through collaboration, advocacy, and professional development opportunities in conjunction with NAfME. We'd love to meet you to hear about your experiences and how we can help!

Another highlight of the winter conference was the enthusiasm expressed by many of you about getting involved in state leadership. If you're looking to make a difference at the state level, we welcome you to consider applying to be part of the Executive Board! Serving on the board is an incredible opportunity to grow as a leader, collaborate with passionate peers, and get involved with a team looking to make a meaningful impact on the future of music education on the state level.

Applications will open in April, and will be included with more details in the spring Collegiate Newsletter, which will be sent to university chapter advisors in February. We encourage everyone to consider this opportunity whether you're

an experienced leader or just beginning your leadership journey, your voice and contributions are valued.

Just the beginning

For those of us preparing to embark on student teaching this semester marks an exciting and transformative time. As an upcoming student teacher myself, I know the mix of excitement and nervousness that comes with this new endeavor. Student teaching is a chance to put theory into practice, to connect with students, and to grow as educators. Remember that this is a learning process: eagerly ask questions, proudly make mistakes, and always seek guidance from your mentors and peers. We are all in this together!

To those continuing their studies, this semester is a wonderful opportunity to deepen your knowledge and refine your skills. Whether you're tackling challenging coursework, preparing for recitals, or working on research projects, know that your hard work and dedication are paving the way for a successful future in music education, one where we never stop learning. Take advantage of the resources available to you, including your professors, mentors, and peers. Collaboration and support are key to thriving in this demanding, yet rewarding, field.

The NYSSMA® Winter Conference showed us that the strength, passion, and dedication of collegiate students in New York is alive and thriving. It demonstrated that when we come together to learn, share, and celebrate our craft, we can achieve incredible things. Let's carry that energy forward into the semester and beyond, embracing every opportunity to learn, grow, and make a difference in the field of music education. Together, we can ensure that the future of music education remains bright and full of possibilities. Here's to a semester filled with growth, connection, and success! ||