

A BOLD VISION

In 1981 I walked through the heavy, ornate doors of The Curtis Institute of Music as a wide-eyed student facing my audition at one of the greatest conservatories in the world. I was awestruck by the grandeur and history of the place—a feeling that never left me even as I gained an everyday familiarity with Curtis.

Nearly two decades later I entered through those doors again as a new member of the faculty, my enthusiasm for Curtis undiminished. Legends had taught here and studied here; their influence still seemed to emanate from the wood-paneled walls. It was an honor to follow in their footsteps.

By 2005 as I considered a deeper relationship with the school, what intrigued me most was the opportunity to lead Curtis into the twenty-first century, bringing to the task an awareness of the national and international music arenas and the breadth of performing capacities our students must develop for successful performing careers.

review. We emerged from this process satisfied that ours, unchanged for some eighty years, remains appropriate today. Our only adjustment was to add the term “educate,” to acknowledge that the learning experience offered by the school has broadened in the last twenty years.

We moved on to identify several core values that distinguish Curtis. All who know the school will recognize them:

- Curtis admits students based solely on artistic promise.
- Curtis provides highly personalized education and superior training.
- Curtis fosters “learning by doing.”
- Curtis provides a broad educational program.
- Curtis embodies quality and integrity above all.

We then articulated a bold but achievable vision: to be, quite simply, the finest music conservatory in the world. In other words,

shifts we will accomplish in the next five years in order to claim and maintain the preeminent position among the world’s finest conservatories.

Although the plan focuses on these strategic shifts, it is important to point out the current strategies that will remain firmly in place.

- Curtis will remain committed to the highest musical standards.
- Curtis will continue its policy of merit-based full-tuition scholarships for all students, and its traditional emphasis on excellence in performance will likewise continue.
- The size of the student body will remain unchanged, and the faculty-to-student ratio will remain the same as it is today.

It is equally important to point out what Curtis will not do as a result of this plan. Curtis is not planning to become like any other conservatory or music school, but seeks to remain uniquely “Curtis.” We will not compromise nor settle for less than the best faculty, students, and programs. Further, no project associated with the plan will be allowed to jeopardize the financial stability of the school.

The strategic plan was developed with input from our staff, faculty, students, trustees, and overseers; and its success will depend on the entire Curtis community coming together to embrace and support its initiatives. It is a living document that will guide us through the coming years. The plan outlines clear five-year goals and annual steps to achieve those goals. We will update it through the development of specific goals for each fiscal year, course-correcting as necessary in response to our results.

Most of the hard work of implementation lies ahead; and yet, as I write, we are already moving forward and some initial goals for the current year have been met. We serve a unique and treasured institution and are charged with the responsibility to maintain and strengthen it for the future. I am confident that, working together, we will further our mission and achieve our bold vision. ☺

Roberto Díaz, President

Mission

Curtis educates and trains exceptionally gifted young musicians for careers as performing artists on the highest professional level.

Vision

Curtis aims to be the finest music conservatory in the world.

This idea guided me throughout my first eighteen months as Curtis’s president, which coincided with the new board chairmanship of Gerry Lenfest. Our first task was to reinvigorate the Curtis board of trustees and assemble a strong senior management team. Meanwhile the school as a whole was engaged in a self-study process leading to reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. It seemed only natural to further our self-assessment and develop our long-range vision, and so a core team of management and trustees began a planning process intended to identify the strategic shifts and initiatives necessary to ensure Curtis’s preeminence and stability for generations to come.

Since Curtis’s mission must drive the ultimate plan, our first step was a mission

Curtis should be the first choice for students anywhere who are seeking careers in music performance; ultimately students will go elsewhere only because they have not been admitted to Curtis.

Some make this lofty claim for us already. But complacency regarding our impressive heritage and record of accomplishment will not help us maintain our stature in a musical and educational environment that is changing faster every day. We must evolve. Indeed, resisting all change, given today’s circumstances, would make it very difficult to fulfill our mission.

Wise and considered change will allow us to remain true to our traditions while embracing the future. And so our strategic plan carefully analyzes Curtis’s strengths and opportunities, and it suggests the strategic