

The National Collegiate Choral Organization

Minutes from the Meeting of the National Board

Thursday 14 January 2021 / 2:00–5:00p ET via Zoom

In attendance → Executive Board

Dominick DiOrio, *President*
Miguel Ángel Felipe, *President-Elect*
Elizabeth Swanson, *Vice President*

Matthew Ferrell, *Treasurer*
Mark Nabholz, *Chief Editor of Publications*

In attendance → National Board

Central Region (8 of 10)

Nicole Aldrich, Mariana Farah, Marques L.A. Garrett, Tracy Gregg-Boothby, Elise Hepworth, Andrew Morgan, Joshua Oppenheim, Brian Schmidt

Eastern Region (9 of 10)

Marguerite Brooks, Caron Daley, Rollo Dilworth, Nicolas Dosman, Jeff Douma, Daniel McDavitt, Tim Reno, Helena von Rueden, Brandon Williams

Midwestern Region (9 of 10)

Erin Colwitz, Cheryl Frazes Hill, Eduardo Garcia-Novelli, Merrin Guice Gill, Steven Hankle, Gabriela Hristova, Mike McGaghie, Lee Nelson, Eugene Rogers

Southern Region (4 of 10)

Jason Ferdinand, Gary Packwood, William Powell, Jennifer Sengin

Western Region (6 of 10)

Jeffrey Benson, Kellori Dower, Kathy FitzGibbon, Jace Saplan, Shawna Stewart, Tim Westerhaus

In attendance → Guests

Brian Gorelick, *Meeting Secretary*



Part 1 → Opening Business

Elizabeth opened today's National Board Meeting by welcoming the National Board members in attendance. She introduced the executive board who are also attending today to be of service to the National Board. Brian was welcomed to take minutes as he did on August 13. There will not be a Zoom recording of the meeting. Elizabeth summarized the August summit meeting *Building Capacity for an Anti-Racist Organization*, as well as the webinar that followed, and thanked everyone for participating.

Dominick voiced his hopes that 2021 will allow us to have gatherings soon. He expressed his excitement in having everyone together today to deliberate on NCCO's future. Members moved and seconded that we approve the minutes of August 13. After discussion, the minutes were approved.

Elizabeth shared today's agenda with everyone by demail before the meeting. The goal today is to have continued discussions about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity, and move

forward on changing our organization to reflect these guiding principles. Following reports from each member of the executive board, the National Board will move to breakout rooms by regions for discussions on DEI and other topics of importance. Each region will select a note-taker to report to the National Board when we reconvene. The executive board hopes that the National Board will talk about guiding principles, long-term objectives, the future direction of the organization, and how individual board members can contribute going forward.

Part 2 → Executive Board Reports

Elizabeth presented the Vice President's Report. She described how the National Board has provided a collective wisdom for NCCO but without roles for individual members, which could change after today's meeting. Our organization is being called to grow, especially in DEI work, and the executive board needs the members of the National Board to volunteer to contribute their gifts and experiences in a meaningful way. She emphasized how the executive board strives for honesty and open-mindedness and are here to be reached out to by National Board members.

Elizabeth presented the Secretary's Report, since Marie could not attend today. Elizabeth described how extensively Marie has moved NCCO into social media and that she next intends to expand the organization's membership.

Miguel presented the President-Elect's Report. Miguel is continuing to adapt the new website design and complete the webinar archives. He is finishing the final appendices for the Expanding Choral Pedagogy document. After the decision about the next conference, he will support the executive board as assigned.

Miguel announced a new project he is developing called RepVids. He envisions this project as a way conductors can learn about BIPOC choral repertoire and also give visibility and performance opportunities to our members and ensembles. The RepVids project would also create new national-level paths for younger conductors and show how YouTube and video can be a way to present scholarly research.

Each RepVids video would introduce a single BIPOC work through a Zoom interview with the conductor and a performance by their ensemble. Proposed videos would be submitted to a team of editors and reviewed for publication after completion, before being published on the NCCO website. The editors would determine a standard set of questions to ask each conductor for uniformity. Length and graphics would also be standardized. RepVids would be distributed on YouTube and linked to publisher and composer. Miguel is producing an initial RepVid episode and will solicit our feedback via Email. He is also calling for editors, especially conductors who identify with underrepresented groups.

Matt presented the Treasurer's Report. NCCO's finances are as strong as ever at this point in a two-year cycle. At present, the organization has 131K. Cash is held in accounts with Chase and PayPal and investments are in a Vanguard account. Our expenses in 2020 of 16-18K have added significant value to NCCO. We made payments to the Washington Consulting Group for the August 13 anti-racism summit, to Ridge Ten Creative

and Matt Libera for the website redesign, and to create the Maggie Brooks Commissioning Fund and cover new Choral Scholar expenses. Our two-year membership fee has been raised to \$100 for regular members and \$50 for student members. NCCO's Vanguard investments of 44K have grown to 55K as of today, and the mutual funds we are invested in have extremely low management costs.

Mark presented the Chief Editor's Report. He reported that The Choral Scholar & American Choral Review has become our primary publication's new name. We adopted the American Choral Review and the Research Memorandum Series from Chorus America early in 2020. Mark is working to make the entire catalog of the American Choral Review accessible online, with the assistance of Cheryl Frazes Hill. Mark would like to continue publishing two issues a year and needs more submissions to do this. He encouraged conductors with DMA programs to ask their students to submit articles. Mark informed the board that the format and look of the publication has been updated. The Research Memorandum Series is going to be transformed into a yearly collection of abstracts of doctoral theses from the entire nation. Mark needs volunteers to assist in doing this by region and asked board members to contact him personally by Email.

Dominick presented the President's Report and the Member Survey and Report. He began by projecting his screen to show the NCCO Constitution and Bylaws, which clearly state that the National Board is the source of the organization's goals, guidelines, missions, and activities with the executive board carrying out the work of the National Board. He announced that the executive board is considering creating regular standing committees of the National Bboard to join the task forces already in progress and the biennial meetings at our conferences.

Dominick projected the summary pages of the Member Survey and Report document which he personally prepared. He read the ten key takeaways which can be found on pages 4–5 of the document. The survey made clear that NCCO has much DEI work still to do and the membership envisions NCCO as an open and inclusive community. Also, the best way to offer our national conference does not have a clear direction at present. The survey will be distributed to the entire organization soon in a more attractive format.

Part 3 → Discussions about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion *with Breakout Rooms by Region*

Dominick asked the National Board members, executive board members, and meeting secretary to move into breakout rooms by region. Each region selected a note-taker to prepare a report to give to the reconvened board after the breakouts. The breakouts began with brief intros by each member on their DEI efforts with their choral programs. Suggested questions to prompt these intros were suggested by Elizabeth in the agenda. Then, each region discussed how NCCO should move forward on DEI goals from the survey responses received from the membership. Other NCCO topics were discussed to close the breakout sessions. The executive board members and the meeting secretary served as agenda monitors in the breakout rooms.

Part 4 → Region Reports and Executive Board Direction

Elizabeth welcomed the members back to the full group meeting following the break-out rooms. Dominick invited each region to present their report to the National Board. He also announced that the Zoom chat is available for comments and will be reviewed by the executive board and incorporated into the minutes.

The **CENTRAL REGION REPORT** was given by **Nicole Aldrich**. Their group discussion led to the following recommendations for NCCO:

- Membership diversity should be increased through an organized, focused recruitment effort. Personal invitations to join are most valuable.
- NBMs should reach out to people in their regions to join NCCO.
- New members need to know that NCCO has members from schools “just like yours.”
- NCCO should develop a way to target conductors who teach in liberal arts settings for specific feedback on issues.
- The cost of membership all at once is prohibitive to some potential members.
- Conference locations should be chosen for accessibility.
- NCCO needs to consider how to help conductors who do not receive travel funds unless presenting.
- NCCO should consider increasing opportunities to present, although our one-track conference is valued.
- Virtual conferences have value in creating more opportunities to present and perform without the expenses of travel.
- NCCO should adapt the performing groups selection adjudication process to be more representative of our entire membership.
- The organization needs to find a way to be more inclusive in selecting performing groups without quotas and possibly eliminating blind auditions.
- NCCO should develop an expanded understanding of the term “excellence.”
- NCCO should curate the contents of the conferences with more input from the National Board, including locations, featured groups, areas of the country represented, and topics of sessions.
- All aspects of DEI should be included in the organization’s work.
- BIPOC efforts must not fall on BIPOC faculty only.

The **EASTERN REGION REPORT** was given by **Maggie Brooks**. Their group discussion led to the following recommendations for NCCO:

- BIPOC work should be done by more than one individual in each state.
- The overwhelming number of white members in our organization is a concern.
- NCCO needs to commit to the long game and make DEI work “foundational not transactional” just to check off boxes.
- NCCO should make use of the larger membership through polling and have National Board subcommittees, either standing or ad hoc, to complete the work needed.
- NCCO needs a mission statement or statement of purpose immediately.
- The organization should seek “from the ground up” foundational statements to inform how we proceed in the future.
- The executive board should turn to the National Board when needing help.
- NCCO should identify our core values to have as a road map for our strategic plan.
- NCCO needs to recognize that not everyone is full time or tenure tracked.
- The term “excellence” should be unpacked, widened, and given a new definition that will be foundational.

The **MIDWESTERN REGION REPORT** was given by **Mike McGaghie**. Their group discussion led to the following recommendations for NCCO:

- Members identifying as white need to go beyond their comfort zones in our DEI work.
- Mentorship is important in recruiting and sustaining a connection to our BIPOC students.
- NCCO should decenter whiteness as the normalizing agent by “adding tables to the exhibit fair” in a foundational way.
- The organization needs to carry the idea of decentering whiteness into all we do.
- DEI objectives can become an automatic part of NCCO by making deliberate changes first.
- The executive board should share conference production with the National Board by creating a standing committee.
- NCCO should consider shifting conference dates.
- The organization needs to have regional activity on a more regular basis.
- The executive board should be encouraged to bring appropriately challenging resources for real world choirs to our conference experiences.
- NCCO should put more financial support toward constructing repertoire resources such as databases, archives, and recordings.
- The RepVids project is an excellent first step in this direction.
- NCCO should recruit new members by emphasizing support available only through our organization.
- NCCO needs to consider reducing membership fees so colleagues who cannot use institutional funds for memberships will be able to join more easily.

The **SOUTHERN REGION REPORT** was given by **Mark Nabholz**. Their group discussion led to the following recommendations for NCCO:

- NCCO should expand membership considerably, especially in the Southern region.
- The organization should engage as many people as possible.
- Interested non-professionals could be a new membership category.
- Each National Board member could be tasked to personally and persistently contact two colleagues to join.
- NCCO should differentiate our distinctive elements when promoting membership.
- NCCO must increase our social media presence by hiring a consultant and creating a social media task force.
- Our virtual offerings should be expanded, including webinars on how to prepare for graduate school and how to ask for a recommendation letter.
- NCCO could be positioned as a resource to help with the transition into graduate studies.
- NCCO needs to offer virtual conducting masterclasses so travel is not needed.
- Virtual offerings specific to college choirs could clearly set us apart from ACDA.
- NCCO could alternate conference years with webinar years with the National Board selecting the topics.
- DMA students should be allowed to present virtually throughout the year and also at conferences.
- The organization should focus funding to help smaller schools and HBCUs bring their choirs to NCCO conferences to perform.

The **WESTERN REGION REPORT** was given by **Kathy FitzGibbon**. Their group discussion led to the following recommendations for NCCO:

- NCCO must assist the membership in incorporating BIPOC issues and subjects in choirs so as to fulfill our role as educators in society.
- The organization must provide advocacy for BIPOC work so our colleagues leading the effort are not overtaxed by doing all the work for NCCO, ACDA, and Chorus America.
- NCCO should strive to create a more equitable and inclusive music profession and decolonize the pedagogy.

NCCO should adopt DEI principles as non-negotiable for colleagues who come to choral music from a BIPOC perspective.

The organization needs to use subgroup discussions rather than full National Board meetings, allowing small groups to listen to marginalized communities and repair relationships first, followed by action to move DEI work forward.

Small affinity groups can create an accountability statement to charge NCCO with responsibilities. The full National Board can brainstorm concrete steps to take after receiving charges from affinity groups and move the organization out of the planning phase into action.

Affinity groups can also become excellent mentorship groups.

NCCO must publicly account for the steps the organization commits to taking.

NCCO should seek out connections to non-music organizations doing DEI work.

Sharing resources in between conferences and a regular exchange of ideas would be valuable to counteract the isolated nature of our profession.

NCCO should share financial resources because of budget constraints at many schools.

NCCO needs to avoid the term “excellent” as we engage in meaningful DEI work.

NCCO should differentiate ourselves from other choral organizations.

The organization needs to collaborate with other professional groups to serve society as a whole.

Dominick led the National Board in determining the next direction for the executive board to take. He spoke about being sensitive to moving ahead by not duplicating this DEI effort. He believes this meeting is a step forward from the summer summit meeting and does not want our BIPOC members to do this work over and over.

Dominick asked everyone to enter into the chat their idea of the “one step forward” NCCO should take right now. The responses from the board members were as follows:

- Develop a mission statement with DEI central to our efforts(12)
- Grow the membership maintaining the importance of DEI (4)
- Increase organizational accessibility and accessibility of resources (3)
- Provide resources about great repertoire by BIPOC composers (2)
- Provide mentorship for women and BIPOC to pursue music careers (2)
- Redefine excellence and good singing (2)
- Adopt accountability statements (2)
- Support inclusivity in all instructor ranks
- Find ways for DEIA to be core value throughout NCCO’s priorities
- Develop affinity groups to learn from marginalized members
- Engage constituencies in DEI discussions outside the National Board
- Increase NCCO’s regional work
- Diversify NCCO’s workloads

A quick review of the replies during the meeting showed that having a mission statement and finalizing our guiding principles are in the majority. Dominick spoke of needing a future National Board meeting to amend the constitution in order to move forward effectively.

Part 5 → Fall 2021 National Conference

Dominick asked the members to enter in the chat their decision to attend an in-person conference in November 2021. The responses from the board members were as follows:

Yes (11)
Yes if safe/vaccinated (11)
Yes if hybrid (8)
Need to consider budget restraints. (2)
No (1)

He then asked if choral performance should be part of the conference and requested another reply. The responses from the board members were as follows:

No (14)
Possibly if safe (9)
Recorded performances (4)
Rehearsal-focused concerts. (3)
Regional meetings (1)
Pedagogical conference. (1)
Difficult to plan ahead (1)

Dominick asked if we were to have a fully virtual conference in Fall 2021 if board members would attend. The responses from the board members were as follows:

Yes (29)
Yes but Zoomed out (3)
Probably (1)

He then asked if a conference in Spring 2022 would be preferable to a Fall 2021 conference. The responses from the board members were as follows:

No (13)
Yes (8)
Prefer Fall 2022 (6)
Virtual regional, Fall 2021 (3)
+ Face-to-Face National, 2022
Prefer Summer 2022 (1)
If choirs can attend (1)
Depends on funding. (1)
Not sure (1)

Dominick reported that his quick review of the replies showed a strong preference for a Fall 2021 conference of some kind, either in-person or virtual. He then asked individual members who would be interested in serving on a planning committee for a Fall 2021 conference to reply in the chat. He will review the chat after the meeting and contact the members who volunteered.

Dominick solicited theme ideas for a possible November 2021 conference. The responses from the board members were as follows:

What Have We Learned/Where Do We Go Now?
Restoration
Y'all Come...CHOIR!
Hallelujah!
More Seats at the Table
Pedagogy
Chor-Vid. (Sorry)
Community/Unity
Build a Bigger Table
Tearing Down Walls
Reunion

Dominick solicited final thoughts and comments from the National Board. Merrin Guice Gill suggested we do more National Board meetings all together or in subgroups, so as to share ideas with each other to create a stronger community. Mariana Farah expressed how helpful it is to hear ideas from other conductors and then bring them back to their institution, especially guidance about workspace issues. Dominick reminded us of our continued need for anti-racist education, especially our larger membership.

Dominick would like to meet the National Board again in May. He will ask the executive board to draft a mission statement, with help from individual board members, and to create a plan for the Fall 2021 conference. Both of these topics will be on the May meeting's agenda. The executive board will solicit a date for the May meeting from the National Board soon.

Dominick asked everyone who would like to be an officer in 2022–2023 to express their interest to any executive board member, so the election of new officers in conjunction with the Fall 2021 conference can go smoothly. The positions of Vice President, Treasurer, and President-Elect will be open for nominations and election.

Elizabeth closed the meeting by complimenting the board on their spirit of optimism and their commitment to NCCO, the greater choral community, and humanity.

—Written and submitted by Brian Gorelick, Meeting Secretary