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## Personal View: Cleveland Institute of Music's moonshot is cutting tuition

Everyone in Cleveland knows the Cleveland Orchestra. Fewer realize how closely it's connected to the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Truth is, neither would exist if weren't for the other.

CIM's graduates command the most celebrated stages in the world as soloists, chamber musicians and ensemble members. They compose award-winning music and shape the future as teachers, administrators and thought leaders.

Our relationship with the Cleveland Orchestra runs further and deeper than any other of its kind in America. Not only do 35 members of the orchestra teach at CIM; about one third of its members also graduated from the school. Since 2015, more CIM graduates have won seats in the Cleveland Orchestra than from any other school in the country.

That relationship is about to grow even deeper.

Earlier this month, just as students were returning to CIM and the orchestra was starting a European Tour, we announced a partnership through which CIM and the Cleveland Orchestra will share resources as never before.

This season, thanks to this new arrangement, our CIM Orchestra will appear at Severance Music Center – one of the greatest halls in the world – an unprecedented seven times, an incredible opportunity for our students.

Given this remarkable alignment, it makes sense that our two institutions also see the same big picture, that we both envision a similar future for classical music. Just as the orchestra is further shifting toward philanthropy as its primary revenue, CIM is looking to cut tuition altogether.

You read that right: cut tuition. We call it our “moonshot” mission. But it is no pie in the sky. At CIM, we think it's mandatory.

Research suggests that, soon, no student pursuing a highly specialized education will pay for that degree. In CIM's case, a tuition-based model intensifies the competition over a declining number of students, some of whom are not prepared for conservatory training and not likely to become professional musicians. What's inescapable is this: while CIM's history is legendary, there is no future pathway for a tuition-centric, elite-level conservatory.

In my view, and the view of our trustees, CIM's conservatory is too big – way too big. This, despite the fact that we've already begun shrinking by further raising artistic standards and decreasing net

paid tuition by 25 percent. The strategic plan we approved in 2017 calls for us to raise the bar even higher while scaling down by almost 50 percent within the decade. Those are lofty goals.

The knee-jerk response to a downsized future would be to make up the difference by raising tuition. That, though, would not sustain excellence. The CIM Standard binds us not to higher prices but to higher achievement. A century ago, our bold founders in the Fortnightly Musical Club imagined a school where “every type of student” could excel.

We see this as a clarion reminder that excellence and access are incompatible with expensive. We've been an elite training ground from day one, but we've never been – and must not accept being – an elitist institution, a place exclusive to wealthy families. We must beckon the best young musicians in the world, no matter where those musicians happen to fall on the socio-economic spectrum.

While they're here, too, we want our students focused on music. We feel strongly that to achieve at the highest level, to take their place as the future of classical music, our students can't be distracted, working extra jobs to pay off loans. Like musical Olympians, they must be free to concentrate on their education, to the exclusion of almost everything else.

This isn't just a moral imperative, either. It's an existential one. If CIM is to thrive long-term, it absolutely must remain competitive with Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, Yale Graduate School, and LA's Colburn School of Music, each tuition-free, not to mention the Juilliard School and a parade of college schools of music with virtually unlimited scholarship capabilities.

There's only one way we're going to make this “moonshot,” and that's with extraordinary philanthropic support.

I can't say enough about the trustees, governing members and countless community donors who've brought us this far and propelled our Second Century campaign so successfully. And yet, as we seek to attract the world's most talented classical music students to Cleveland over the next 100 years, we'll need to invite all of Northeast Ohio to consider playing a part.

I'm optimistic because this is a remarkable place. Judging by its orchestra and its conservatory, Cleveland knows better than most that past performance is no guarantee of future results, that the quest for greatness is relentless.

Paul W. Hogle  
President | CEO  
*The Mary Elizabeth Callahan Chair*