

Dear NDEO community,

I write to you all to share some of the work happening behind-the-scenes among the board, staff, committees, and members. Through this dedication of our community, I notice how the networks of support flourish and the empowerment for change ignites our discussions and considerations for the future of NDEO and the field of dance education.

- In April, NDEO shared a call for members for the [Action and Accountability Committee](#). This is an outgrowth of the Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JDEI) initiative. The committee members will develop a multi-year action and accountability plan that addresses the big ideas outlined in [Seasons of Opportunity and Growth Maryland Nonprofits Equity Program Audit Report](#) to the National Dance Education Organization January 2022 and eventually aligns with the upcoming strategic plan.
- After a review of proposals from strategic planning consultants, NDEO selected Maryland Nonprofits to guide a comprehensive strategic planning process with emphasis on alignment with the priorities from the JDEI audit report. The Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF) includes the Policy Board of Directors with representatives from the staff, the Advisory Board of Directors, and the Action and Accountability Committee. Thank you to our members who completed the strategic planning survey and participated in focus groups. The next steps in the process include SPTF retreats with discussions based on survey and focus group data, and the timeline aims to share the strategic plan with our members at the end of October.
- The Awards Committee under the leadership of Advisory Director of Awards, Yauri Dalencour, expanded the awards categories and updated the process for nominations. Through this process, the awards nominations increased 300% for a total of [9 award categories](#). Be on the lookout for the announcement of awards in early September!
- To align with the needs of an in-person conference and the accessibility of virtual options, NDEO will offer the [in-person conference in Atlanta](#), and NDEO has implemented [virtual professional development days](#) throughout the year. This decision reflects input from member feedback during and after our virtual conference in 2022, adhering to the technical capacity of the conference host hotel in Atlanta, and our commitment to continue and provide access to programs and services to our members. NDEO will consider feedback from our most recent virtual professional development day in July 2022 as we plan the January 21, 2023 virtual professional development day.

I look forward to seeing and connecting with you all at both the virtual professional development days and the in-person conference in Atlanta. I am especially excited to moderate the interactive plenary session at this year's conference, *Connecting to NDEO through Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JDEI)*, to explore the ways that dancers and educators support each other with an emphasis on a more just, diverse, equitable, and inclusive future in NDEO. As I enter the last months of my Presidency for NDEO, I invite you to connect to me and your [Board of Directors](#) through email or an in-person or virtual meeting.

Keep dancing!

Kelly Lester, NDEO President, 2021-2022