

4-2012

## Internship Report for the New Orleans Ballet Association

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### Recommended Citation

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Internship Report for the New Orleans Ballet Association

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

University of New Orleans

In partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Arts Administration

By

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B.F.A. University of Southern Mississippi, 2004

April 2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. ABSTRACT.....	i
II. INTRODUCTION.....	1
III.ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE.....	2
IV. INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW.....	13
V. S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS.....	19
VI. BEST PRACTICES.....	26
VII. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	31
VIII.CONCLUSION.....	34
IX. WORKS CITED.....	36
X. VITA.....	37

## **ABSTRACT**

The following internship report documents my marketing internship with the New Orleans Ballet Association in the summer of 2011. Incorporated in 1969, NOBA is one of the few organizations in the Central Gulf region dedicated solely to dance. During my internship, I worked with the Marketing Coordinator and Executive Director on culminating events centered around NOBA's season of dance and education programs. My primary goals were to create and distribute marketing material concerning the upcoming season and to assist the Marketing Coordinator with event promotions. This internship report provides an overview of NOBA based on observational research and in-depth analysis concluded by me. The report examines internal and external issues, researched explanations of best practices performed by similar organizations, and recommendations for improvement within the organizations future contributions to the city of New Orleans.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The New Orleans Ballet Association (NOBA) has been helping to serve, nurture and cultivate the community through a dazzling season of dance performance and an educational youth program that offers free dance classes to Orleans Parish school-age students. I had the opportunity to work with the Marketing Coordinator to create and market an upcoming season of community events surrounding the organization's 2011-2012 dance season. Since 1992, NOBA has offered youth in Orleans Parish the opportunity to participate, perform, view and create dance throughout the community. Community partners work with the organization to ensure growth and stability for all students participating in the dance program.

At NOBA, the Marketing Coordinator is the most vital source of communication. I worked closely with local leaders and supporters of the arts to ensure that all upcoming events are made available to the public. Guaranteeing successful turnouts for each public event rests on the Marketing Coordinator's constant effort to get the community involved and keep their focus.

The following internship report gives readers an in-depth view of my four month long Marketing Internship with NOBA, strengths and weaknesses of the organizations, and an overall synopsis of improvement for the Marketing Department.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

### **NEW ORLEANS BALLET ASSOCIATION**

Being an organization known for creative approaches and solutions, NOBA serves as an organization dedicated to presenting dance. The organization's mission and purpose allows the city of New Orleans access to the highest quality dance artists, companies, and performances.

The mission developed by NOBA serves to provide the community with an awareness of the two elements of the organization.

"Incorporated in 1969, NOBA has been serving and helping advance the dance field for more than 40 years with a mission to cultivate understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of dance through performance, education, and community service. The structure of the organization divides into two programming elements:

1. Main Stage, a dynamic season of dance featuring a variety of world-class companies;
2. Education Programs, nationally recognized comprehensive dance programs that educate, train, and nurture."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Mission Statement." New Orleans Ballet Association. 10 Feb 2012<<http://www.nobadance.com/mission>>

Cultivating education within the community is one of the main goals of the organization, and the staff works together to bring strong artistic programs throughout the season.

NOBA strives to project an image as a service organization, inspiring youth throughout the Greater New Orleans area.

The Center for Dance was founded in 1992 as a community cultural partnership between the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) and NOBA. NOBA offers dance classes at eleven sites (or centers) that cater to the development of dancers in urban communities. Dance centers offer year-round after-school classes (which includes Saturday dance classes), and a three-month long summer dance intensive. Centers also provide early sequential dance education along with a special "Step-Up" program designed specifically for pre-professional students.

Less than 40% of NOBA's programming costs are covered by ticket revenue, so the organization's staff works year-round to secure donations from corporations, foundations, and government sources. Throughout the 43 years of the organization's existence, NOBA has developed a staff, board, and volunteer corps dedicated to preserving dance and education programs within the community. NOBA's board consists of a Board of Directors working tirelessly with community leaders and organizers to bring corporate sponsors and partners to NOBA's fiduciary aid. The Ballet Resource and Volunteer Organization (BRAVO) consists of a group of men and women who are committed to volunteering their time and talents to supporting the community education

programs of NOBA through year-round fundraising events.

## HISTORY

NOBA did not start as the nationally recognized organization we know today. The organization was originally founded in 1969 as the New Orleans Ballet, which was a civic ballet company. A dual-city performance concept with the Cincinnati Ballet occurred in 1983, and the organization became known as the New Orleans City Ballet."This allowed both cities to afford a higher artistic product in the 50 professional AGMA Union dancers and an internationally renowned artistic director in Ivan Naggy."<sup>2</sup> Both the New Orleans Ballet and the Cincinnati Ballet shared repertoire but maintained separate boards and staff. Although the dual city partnership created growth artistically, financially the New Orleans City Ballet began to show signs of strain. The partnership was terminated in 1991, and the New Orleans Ballet was left to pick up the pieces of a dismal dance program and a large debt. The organization used programming models from the original concept to establish economic consistency present today.

In 1992, the organization re-emerged looking for a way to earn revenue and create change within the community. The New Orleans Ballet became the New Orleans Ballet Association, working with a new board, staff, and vision. It was during this time that the Executive Director, Jenny Thompson, created a youth program to serve the

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<sup>2</sup> "NOBA History." New Orleans Ballet Association. <<http://www.nobadance.com/history>>

Greater Orleans area. The Center for Dance program was formed in partnership with the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission to offer tuition-free, year-round, comprehensive dance programs to youth in Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Orleans parishes. Local artists from around the community were hired and trained to work with students in developing artistic skills and a life-long dedication to the arts.

Hurricane Katrina brought damaging change to the organization. Prior to the hurricane, NOBA presented a main stage season of 6 performances, mounted education programs extending throughout the Greater New Orleans region, and maintained corporate sponsors helping to keep the organization afloat financially. The damage displayed by Hurricane Katrina extended far beyond building damage. Local artists, staff, and sponsors were displaced after the storm, prompting the organization to completely start over again. In order to rebuild, NOBA had to find practical ways to raise funds to emerge from the wreckage.

NOBA's Center for Dance became the catalyst in helping the organization regain strength. Five students that were displaced after the storm danced with choreographers from New Orleans in performances across the country. The students represented the Center for Dance on tour throughout the summer of 2006, featured in performances at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, and the Kennedy Center. The program garnered awards from the National Dance Education Organization, the National Endowment of the Arts, and the White House where the organization received the

Coming Up Taller Award.

That summer, NOBA was selected as one in eight pilot programs for the highly competitive National Endowment for Arts Summer Schools in the Arts award. Due to the success of the program, the NEA presented NOBA as the model program for Summer School in the Arts on the U.S. Senate Floor. Today the Center for Dance has reached more than 6,000 students in more than five parishes in the State of Louisiana. Through master classes with international dance artists, an ongoing mentorship program, and field trips around the United States, NOBA continues to make dance accessible to the community. This year, NOBA will serve youth from 36 parishes and 28 states, reach approximately 8,000 youth through in-school and after-school programs, and conduct more than 3,000 activities for the community.

#### MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

NOBA's management is an essential force in keeping the seasonal dance performances and educational programs afloat. The staff consists of five members and two resident artists. The organization's Board of Directors is made up of 37 members.

Although NOBA's staff is small, the mission of the organization remains the same. The Executive Director reports directly to the Board of Directors before making any decisions involving the upcoming season of dance, education scholarships, and budget. The Director of Finance works closely with the Executive Director to disburse all grant,

private, public funding received. The Box Office Manager takes care of all ticket sales and season passes. Any order forms distributed through after-school programs or educational workshops must be approved by the Box Office Manager. The Development Coordinator takes care of the private donations, institutional giving, and grants being written within the organization. The Education Coordinator oversees all of the education programs provided to students participating in dance classes. The Marketing Coordinator ensures that all of the information administered from the staff is sent to the proper media outlets. The Marketing Coordinator works closely with the community to identify all radio, television, and newspaper sources to promote the organization.

### VENUES

Currently, NOBA does not have a "home" venue. With changes happening to the City of New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina, NOBA is trying to work with government officials to create a venue specifically designed to house their dance performances and educational events.

NOBA uses The Mahalia Jackson Theatre of Performing Arts as the venue for large dance companies to perform. During the month of October, NOBA opens their season of dance with a performance in the theater. From 2005-2008, the theater remained closed due to the damage sustained during landfall of Hurricane Katrina. NOBA relied on smaller venues including local colleges and theaters to continue their seasons of dance. In

January 2009, the theater re-opened its doors with enhanced lighting, a new stage floor, and a new sound system. The theater seats 2,100 people and gives the organization the opportunity to market to a larger audience. In the Mahalia Jackson Theatre of Performing Arts, NOBA has been able to bring in major dance companies to keep audiences engaged.

The Freda Lupin Memorial Hall is located within the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), and serves as another venue for NOBA's main stage and educational concerts. NOCCA is a regional, pre-professional arts training center that offers intensive instruction in the arts. Located in the Faubourg Marigny/Bywater area of New Orleans, the hall serves as a more intimate venue for smaller dance companies to perform.

Named in honor of Dr. Brandt Van Blarcom Dixon, Dixon Hall (on Tulane University's campus), is the third venue for NOBA's performances. Although Lupin Hall and Mahalia Jackson Theater of Performing Arts serve company performances, Dixon Hall plays hosts to the organization's Center for Dance concerts. Students participating in NOBA's dance education programs are allowed to perform in Dixon Hall in the fall and spring of the dance season. Rented twice a year by the organization, Dixon Hall's proscenium stage format allows parents, faculty, and staff to work collectively on bringing performances to the community.

## FUNDING

In order for NOBA to serve the community, the organization must keep a tight grip on all funding operations. Private donations, corporate sponsors, government sources, and foundations help to keep the organization's dance program year-round and tuition free.

Ticket sales from the dance season do not cover the total cost of the educational programs provided to students. Less than 40% of the program's costs are covered by tickets, which leaves 60% for the organization to make up. The Development Coordinator works closely with BRAVO, private donors, and government grants to ensure that the financial targets are met. BRAVO works with donors in the community to have three small fund-raisers throughout the year and one large gala in the Spring. Revenue from those events provide scholarships and aid to students looking to participate in Summer dance programs.

According to Executive Director, Jenny Hamilton, NOBA's budget for the 2011-2012 season of dance is approximately \$1,350,000. In the realm of support, the organization relies heavily on corporate sponsorship and partnerships. This year's season of dance saw sponsorships from Capital One, Sheraton Hotels, and New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. In the future, NOBA hopes to increase national partnerships to provide awareness of the organization's education programs.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **OPEN TRACK DANCE CLASSES**

Registration for "Open Track" dance classes happens twice a year at eight sites. Funded through private donations and government grants, the sites offer dance classes Monday through Thursday from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. Levels for the classes range from beginner to advanced. Students and parents fill out registration forms that include information NOBA uses for grant applications. Students who show a higher level of talent may audition for the Saturday program held at McWilliams Hall on Tulane University's campus. In order to be accepted into the program, students must endure a rigorous four hour audition, the results of which are mailed home. Students gaining acceptance attend additional dance classes on Saturday and are able to perform in the fall and spring concerts. Students receive master dance classes from local and international dance artists, as well as, the opportunity to audition for summer programs throughout the United States. All open track dance classes are first-come first-served, and look to sequential training to keep students engaged and returning. The goal of the program is to begin working with students at the age of six and guide their growth until high school graduation.

### **IN-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

"NOBA offers schools 50-minute performances by world-renowned visiting

companies."<sup>3</sup> Programs for in-school participants offer an opportunity for students to attend and participate in dance performances presented by internationally known companies. Elementary, middle, and high-school students in Orleans and Jefferson parishes are bused to the Freda Lupin Memorial Hall. Three-hundred and ten teachers and students participate in an interactive performance, with study guides distributed to schools to prior to the show. Many companies allow either a pre-or post-question portion of their performance, during which students are able to comment on or question what was viewed. Students are taught to be effective viewers and individual thinkers. The In-School Education programs provide students with the opportunity to understand dance as an art form.

#### EDUCATIONAL GOAL

In the future, the organization would like to extend the Education Program beyond the rented facilities currently used. NOBA is looking to create a space to house dance classes. Although the organization receives funding to keep the current programs afloat, the goal for the organization is to receive more funding to help bring their building to life. Remaining relevant and strong within the community will serve as top priority in the future, as NOBA is now competing with the re-emergence of Broadway shows in the city.

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<sup>3</sup> "NOBA Education Programs". New Orleans Ballet Association.<<http://nobadance.com/educationprograms>>

Retaining audience members, students, parents, and the community is a continued goal of the organization.

## **INTERNSHIP OVERVIEW**

My internship in the Marketing Department allowed me to work alongside two staff members, each communicating with all departments to maximize the organization's mission.

Prior to interning with the Marketing Department at NOBA, I worked with the education division of the organization. Although education is my background, the current economy prompted me to explore other facets of a non-profit. I wanted to diversify my knowledge of non-profit management, and chose marketing as my internship. Over the past year, I have had many questions concerning NOBA's future in New Orleans. Grant opportunities are starting to fluctuate, donors are not giving large donations, and the economy drastically reduced discretionary income. For the organization to thrive, I believe that attracting new audience members to events is the necessary objective to move forward. I concluded that learning the marketing strategies of NOBA would be the key component in learning how to diversify funding, media coverage, and educational components of a non-profit organization.

## **MARKETING STAFF**

During my internship, Jessica Brown was the Marketing Coordinator at NOBA. She was responsible for the supervision of the day-to-day operations of the marketing budget, concert and touring promotions, web and print designs, educational programs,

marketing budget, and media and press coverage. She is the only staff member available for marketing inquiries in NOBA's main office. Laura Burkhart is the second member of NOBA's marketing team. She is responsible for marketing all of the touring companies that are presented by NOBA. She handles the recruitment, negotiations, press releases, promotion, marketing, development, and educational aspects of each company the organization presents. Burkhart reads and adjusts contracts, pay rates, and budgets for potential companies each season. Burkhart and the Executive Director travel to view potential companies for NOBA's upcoming season and work with the Board of Directors identify which companies are best fit to present. When Burkhart has finished negotiating all aspects of the potential season, she and Brown work together to create an annual marketing outline

### MARKETING THE SEASON OF DANCE

The marketing outline for each main stage season begins with the press release of the upcoming dance season. Issued to the media in May, the press release gives NOBA the opportunity to generate a potential buzz around upcoming concerts and project ticket sales. It also lets potential audience members research the companies, and begin deciding which shows they want to attend. Audience members who are previous ticket season holders have the opportunity to purchase upcoming season tickets in June, while single ticket purchases can be made in July. Around this time, Burkhart and Brown begin work on the season of dance that implements all of NOBA's programming components that are

part of touring companies' residencies. This may include community service, speaking engagements, master dance class opportunities, and educational avenues needed to fulfill grant requirements.

### INTERNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

My responsibilities as an intern consisted of assisting in target-marketing promotion for the 25th year of education programs, promotional designs, ticket management, and photo updating. NOBA's marketing department moves at a rapid pace daily and with all of the promotional events taking place it is easy to miss opportunities to advance the organization. With today's struggling economy, all marketing avenues must stay in place to sustain growth and prosperity within the organization. Day to day operations within NOBA rely heavily on communication, up to date marketing connections, and the presentation of marketing events.

One of the first tasks I performed was to contact former dance students from the Open Track dance classes. I created a link on NOBA's Facebook page for NOBA alumni to tell us where they are, what they have done, future endeavors, and how the organization has been beneficial in their life. Former students sent this information directly to me to pitch the upcoming education season to businesses, press and media outlets. I targeted dance studios and dance related businesses that specifically sold dance items and/or promoted arts in the community. I also researched former centers that housed NOBA's

programming prior to Hurricane Katrina. Fliers were made with a snippet of the educational programs, centers, and former students were made a displayed at all centers. This gave the organization increased visibility throughout the summer months. The Center for Dance's Spring Dance Concert had a large add placement in the main stage program book with numbers to receive further information.

Promotional designs for any event are always important endeavor. The design an organization chooses for events marketed to the public helps identify the target audience. When working on promotional designs during my internship, I had to pay careful attention to what exactly was being marketed. When Jessica Brown and I would work on the upcoming season's marketing designs, the design would cater specifically to either the main stage concert performance or educational program. During the negotiation process with companies, press photos are given to NOBA for promotional use. I took the photos given by companies participating in the upcoming season and created small informational pamphlets used to target social networking sites, weekly e-blasts of the upcoming season of dance, and education components for schools and studios. These designs would be used throughout the season for promotions and grant-writing.

Ticket management is an ideal way to know about who your audience is, who attended last season's performances, and who can be targeted for next season. NOBA's audience does not only consist of members who just view dance. The audience is made up of art enthusiasts, performers, artists, teachers, and donors. My job was to research past

ticket purchasers, group them according to demographics, how they heard about the organization's performances, and how often they attended shows. Ticket purchasers can range from students to senior citizens. Ticket purchasers who buy season tickets annually are usually targeted at the beginning of the summer. My biggest marketing push was targeted to people who attended one or two shows. I had to figure out a way to get these one or two time ticket purchasers to attend more shows. When contacting past purchasers, some told me they were unaware of the date, or that the cost of tickets were too high. Immediately, I put these past purchasers on e-blasts which include constant notification, updates on discount tickets, and future promotional events offered by the organization. Given the current economy, it is beneficial for NOBA to understand who exactly is purchasing tickets. Ticket management is an important way the organization can try to keep the community involved, informed, and returning to upcoming shows.

Photos from past events at NOBA exist from the inception of the organization to the present day. My job was to take the photos of various events and organize them in the database according to year and event. The archived photos are important for promoting not only the upcoming main stage season, but the education programs for the upcoming 25th anniversary season. The photos I archived from the educational programs are being used to give the community a glimpse into NOBA's past contributions in bringing dance to the city of New Orleans. It was my responsibility to send past pictures to the organizations and companies we worked with in the past, along with a thank you note and information

concerning the 25th anniversary. My goal was to engage the dance community in other states with our upcoming endeavors.

I was also involved in other marketing tasks including working tables for patron events, developing the mailing list for the 25th anniversary of the Center for Dance, and archiving hundreds of pictures and promotional pamphlets from prior dance seasons. My responsibilities were always directed towards making sure information was pouring from our department to the community.

## **S.W.O.T ANALYSIS**

### **STRENGTH**

#### VENUES

The Mahalia Jackson Theatre of Performing Arts offers NOBA the opportunity to serve a larger audience. Dance companies who have a large following can perform in a venue that has enough space to accommodate The Freda Lupin Memorial Hall is a smaller venue frequently used by NOBA to house smaller dance companies. Lupin Hall creates an intimate setting for audience members attending a performance, offers smaller dance companies the opportunity to gain visibility in New Orleans, and cuts down on costs for the organization's dance season.

#### EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The mission of NOBA's education programs lies in the values of "educating, training, and nurturing students."<sup>4</sup> The organization provides comprehensive dance classes to all students regardless of race, background, or socioeconomic status. The training of students is offered through sequential dance programs that takes students from the age of six up until their senior year of high school. The tuition-free program provides students living in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard dance classes four nights a week. There are 25 students per class, with performance opportunities in the fall and spring

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<sup>4</sup> "NOBA Education Programs" New Orleans Ballet Association. <<http://www.nobadance.com/educationprograms>>

semester. Students in NOBA's educational program learn the fundamentals not only of the art of dance, but also the concept of making dance a lifelong endeavor. The programs offer high-quality, award-winning, nationally-recognized dance classes that have been honored by The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, Kennedy Centers Partners in Education, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The marketing staff at NOBA plays a vital role in making contact with media outlets and creating lasting partnerships within the community. The staff work routinely with other arts organizations to create effective cross-marketing partnerships geared toward gaining new audience members. NOBA thrives on past partnerships, confidence in the programs currently provided, and the ability to continue service throughout the community.

### **WEAKNESSES**

#### INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

While completing my internship, I noticed the lack of communication between the staff and the Executive Director. All materials including grant applications, education materials and media blurbs had to be approved by the Executive Director before distribution. Many times, the marketing department only had a limited time frame to get the material to press before deadline. Fast approval was needed, but was rarely given.

Due to these shortcomings, many events and performances were poorly promoted and decreased audience attendance. In fact, mistakes were made and deadlines were missed, prompting re-evaluation of the upcoming dance season mid-Summer.

### STAFF CAPACITY

The shortage of staff prevents the organization from maximizing all avenues of artistic growth. Seeing that the organization serves multiple-purposes within the community, the organization's staff works long hours to accommodate all programs offered. In order to sustain growth, the organization must be willing to hire more staff. Additional staff would generate fresh ideas and give current staff the opportunity to focus on increasing fundraising and stabilizing current programs.

### DECLINE IN CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

NOBA has seen a decrease in corporate sponsorships. "Dramatic decreases in corporate sponsorships and private and public funding, coupled with decreased ticket sales have meant that local arts organizations are struggling to raise community support."<sup>5</sup> Due to the economy and Hurricane Katrina, NOBA has seen national corporate sponsors dwindle to a select few. The organization looks to the Board of Directors and donors to increase visibility and gain local support.

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<sup>5</sup> "Arts and Culture." Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. 16 Feb 2012 <<http://www.aaacf.org/community>>

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

From the Musician's Village to state of the arts theaters, New Orleans accommodates all types of performing arts. NOBA is in a unique position to increase audience attendance and visibility by creating strong partnerships. NOBA's mission and purpose lies in the cultivation of education and dance performance, and creating community partnerships only generates more funding and growth.

### AUDIENCE

NOBA relies on their target audience to create more funding and donations to keep education programs afloat. Target audiences that continue to support NOBA also support the organization including gala events, volunteer hours, and constant donations.

### SOCIAL NETWORKING

The web is a fundamental aspect of keeping the community informed. NOBA thrives in Facebook, YouTube, the current website to provide pictures of educational events, videos of upcoming dance performances, and opportunities to register students for dance classes. All of these web-based marketing promotions provide free publicity for the organization and allow viewers from all over the world to view upcoming events. The marketing staff relies on weekly e-blasts to remind viewers ticket discounts and

biographical information on visiting artists.

With social media being a catalyst for media consumption, the organization is still trying to find an appropriate voice. Meetings with the staff have taken place to determine how effective social media is to audiences. Although the organization is recognized for its dynamic season of dance and educational programs, there seems to be a lack of communication when sharing news on the internet. The organization serves a wide variety of audiences, including everyone from college students to the elderly. The database used by the organization highlights audience members demographically, yet fails to report feedback based on online usage. While the organization does maintain its core target members for each show, there is a lack of viral campaigns needed to stimulate new members.

As a comparison, consider KIDsmART, an art based program in New Orleans that utilizes the web to showcase their program. "The organization's focus is arts integration-linking the arts with existing curriculum."<sup>6</sup> The organization's website offers viewers the opportunity to listen to detailed accounts given by participants, faculty, staff, and partners, allowing visitors access into the classroom. The impact the organization has within the community is a click away and completely up-to-date. Donations can be made online, partnerships are accepted via website, and upcoming events are promptly listed on

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<sup>6</sup> "Arts Education" KIDsmart 24 March 2012 <<http://www.kidsmart.org/artsandeducation>>

the home page. Teachers are encouraged to blog about their personal experiences, while students are keeping news feeds active with Twitter buzz. Because of their extensive web presence, KIDsmART has become an integral part of art education within the city of New Orleans.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diversifying NOBA's Board of Directors brings cultural awareness, innovation in decision making, and stronger visibility. Adding members who have different backgrounds and potential networks creates opportunities of connections, which enhances programming resources. Broader perspectives result in creative risks pertinent to keeping the organization's season of dance and education programs innovative and fresh.

### **THREATS**

#### FUTURE FUNDING

Due to a decrease in audience attendance, grants and institutional giving for performing arts organizations have been cut leading NOBA to cut back on spending. Funding for the organization's after-school dance sites have been reduced by the local government which has cut the number of internal staff, cost of dance supplies, and studio rental fees. At the time of my internship, the Executive Director was establishing private donors to invest in Orleans and Jefferson parish after-school dance centers.

## STAFF TURNOVER

It has become increasingly difficult for NOBA to maintain consistent staff. As of the summer of 2011, the organization was beginning to decrease salary of staff. Like all organizations, NOBA must remain consistent and vigilant in offering competitive salaries and benefits. NOBA's staff relies on grants and funding to have funding for programs, salaries and most important staff members.

## COMPETITION

Although NOBA remains vigilant in cultivating the performing arts and education, the organization is facing competition from arts programs throughout the city. Offering the same premiere standards in arts education, many arts organizations have begun using NOBA's blueprint to create visibility, funding, and longevity for their programs. NOBA continues to work diligently throughout the community to stay relevant. However, competitors understand the importance of offering more than dance to attract students. Due to budget constraints, NOBA is unable to provide education programs in areas like New Orleans East. Competitors have taken advantage of this disadvantage and created after-school programs. Nevertheless, NOBA must rely on their marketing staff to continue to remain visible and eager in acquiring new students.

## BEST PRACTICES

"While a few have maintained or even slightly increased their giving compared to last year, most arts funders have reduced current grants budget by at least 10 percent and some by as much as 80 percent."<sup>7</sup> The best practices presented for this internship report will highlight effective methods of fundraising for performing arts organizations facing the recession.

If the economic atmosphere remains stagnant, what fundraising opportunities lie for arts organizations? "At the start of the current economic downturn, arts organizations wanted to believe that the recession would be short-lived. However, given the very slow recovery and the continued volatility of the stock market, funders do not believe it will improve before 2013."<sup>8</sup> While change comes slowly to the funding sector and the shift may be subtle, most organizations are trying to address larger trends. Those changes include reconsideration of the capital structure of nonprofit arts organizations; more expansive and inclusive definitions of culture, creativity, creators, and audiences; recognition of shifting demographics, community expectation, and audience behaviors; and integration of social media interconnectivity into the creation and presentation of

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<sup>7</sup> Sidford, Holly. "In the Face of Recession, What Are Arts Funders Doing?" *GIA Reader, Vol 20, No 2 (Summer 2011)*  
<<http://www.giarts.org/funding>>

<sup>8</sup> Sidford, Holly. "In the Face of Recession, What Are Arts Funders Doing?" *GIA Reader, Vol 20, No 2 (Summer 2011)*  
<<http://www.giarts.org/funding>>

culture and all aspects of organizational development.

### DECREASING CONSUMPTION

How can performing arts organizations change their fundraising practices during a severe recession? Decreasing consumption is one strategy for maintaining stability for organizations facing financial shrinkage. Thus, understanding budgets, charitable giving, and donations can help cut down costs and expenditures. "Despite generally strong attendance at many nonprofit museums and theatres in recent months, many arts programs around the country are laying off workers or adopting hiring freezes and cutting other expenses in response to a falloff in donations from companies, individuals, and governments."<sup>9</sup> In recent months, decrease in education programs occurred due to the downturn in the economy. Currently, organizations are taking a much more conservative approach to programming. Reducing performances during the season, staff reductions, and a decrease in entertainment are all examples of organizations saving funds. An article published in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* highlights the decline of charitable donations. Paul G. Schervish, director of Boston College's Center on Wealth and Philanthropy, agrees that scholars have not yet fully assessed the real impact of the downturn on giving. "Clearly this recession has reduced giving far more than earlier recessions," he said. "We

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<sup>9</sup> Hoye, Sue. "Recession Hits Arts Groups Especially Hard." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* 2 January 2009.  
<<http://www.philanthropy.com/articles>>

can no longer believe that individual giving is very resilient, decreasing only minimally, or holding steady in times of crisis as severe as this recession."<sup>10</sup>

Organizations looking to decreasing consumption should look to methods of working smarter to maintain stability. Working smarter depends on clearly assigned accountability, well-managed budgets, and on-going coaching. While the majority of organizations would like flexibility with creative works, productivity would improve by understanding what vision best fits with the needs and culture of the audience.

Executive Director Jenny Hamilton continues to work with the Board of Directors to maintain financial stability. The annual scholarship gala, education programs, and performance after parties are events promoted to increase fundraising. However, the organization still needs to cut back intermission parties and small fundraising events to effectively decrease consumption. In order to work smarter, NOBA should take a conservative approach to main stage parties by cutting back on the glitz and glamour performances parties can bring.

### DIVERSIFYING CREATIVE WORKS

In the Southeastern region, NOBA serves as a flagship for presenting dance. The organization is recognized as one of the few in the country dedicated solely to dance. The

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<sup>10</sup> Schervish, Paul. "America Gave a Lot Less in the Recession Than Experts Expected." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (April 2011) <<http://philanthropy.com/articles>>

merit of dance performances the organization provides extends from diversity, creativity, and innovation. With all of these great accomplishments, the organization's challenge is to continue to bring diverse dance companies to the city while maintaining a strict budget.

Cutting down cost does not have to affect the merit of work being presented. Michael Kaiser, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, tells arts organizations to keep audiences engaged in their programs. In a 2011 article published in *Time Magazine*, Kaiser encourages diversity by stating, "When times are bad, it's crucial to make yourself interesting and vital to let everyone know your there. Organizations that are cutting performances and marketing are going to be the losers."<sup>11</sup> Although maintaining a balanced budget is essential, programming offered must keep audiences engaged. Often times arts organizations reaching for familiar programs may find bleak ticket sales. Presented works should be creative and adventurous in order to keep audiences' attention.

In creative approaches, NOBA has tried to bring cutting edge dance companies to New Orleans. However, the idea that modern dance could sell-out the Mahalia Jackson Theater of Performing Arts is not a risk Jenny Hamilton wants to take. The Board of

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<sup>11</sup> Lacago, Richard. "Culture Crunch: The Recession and the Arts." *Time Magazine* June 2009.  
<<http://www.times.com/arts>>

Directors looks to ballet as a source of comfort, limiting the organization's reach into more unique forms of dance. Companies like Alvin Ailey and Complexions do bring the organization a packed house however the community is changing. Younger audiences want to see dance by up and coming choreographers who are packing theaters in St. Louis and New York. It is crucial for NOBA to find the right balance to blend old-school companies with new-school dance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

NOBA's commitment to remaining relevant throughout the Gulf-Coast region is evident through their partnerships with arts organizations, connection to the community, corporate sponsors, and government officials. Executive Director Jenny Hamilton works with the Board of Directors to insure stability within the budget, while creating a surplus to continue programming the following fiscal year. The organization strives to build financial reserves to meet the short and long term operating expenses associated with maintaining their programs. Although NOBA's finances are intact, there are areas of the organization that needs improvement.

### **STAFFING**

The organization must continue to expand internally and within the community. With the staff count currently at five, it is highly recommended that the Executive Director hire more people. Increasing staff will help current staff focus on daily program operations and pay for itself in increasing marketing. New employees joining the organization will help elevate the image of programs, increase job satisfaction, and decrease staff turn-around.

### **INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

NOBA may want to increase internal communication to maintain a cohesive workspace. Grants, marketing materials, and educational events should be organized on a

staff calendar according to deadline. The organization can take advantage of calendars offered by companies like Google that can be shared through a link. Main stage performances and education events can be marketed thoroughly if there is time specifically outlined. The venues utilized by the organization can house pamphlets and marketing material for upcoming events. This keeps audiences constantly informed of future dates.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NOBA needs to continue venturing out into communities that do not offer after-school arts programs. The organization can benefit from venturing into New Orleans East, Kenner, and Metairie to recruit students and parents. Opening after-school programs in these areas, not only boost the number of students served, but offer the organization an opportunity to partner with new communities. Evaluations submitted to the organization by parents emphasized the importance of branching out to new centers. More classes and dance centers increases placement levels, student involvement, and parent participation.

### PARTNERSHIPS

NOBA needs to rely on partnerships within the community to support dance centers in Jefferson and Orleans parishes. The organization needs to continue their presence in public schools and funnel those students into the after-school programs. A program, known for efficiently connecting in and after-school components while

maintaining a season of dance, is Ballet Hispanico. Founded in 1970, Ballet Hispanico is an arts organization that has a mission dedicated to a main stage season of dance and an education component. "The mission unfolds in the work of the professional Company, the School of Dance, and the Education & Outreach programs."<sup>12</sup> These components work cohesively to build cultural diversity and dialogue to students in all five Boroughs of New York City. Pre-professional dancers bridge the gap between the school and the Ballet Hispanico dance company. Students who begin working with the organization through the public school system have the opportunity to dance in the after school. Ballet Hispanico has a tight-knit relationship with the community, expanding its programming options each season. Offering the community to view the expanding repertory through free performances, the organization remains vigilant in offering dance to all levels of students.

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<sup>12</sup> "Mission and Purpose" Ballet Hispanico <<http://www.ballethispanico.org/missionandpurpose>>

## **CONCLUSION**

This analysis of the New Orleans Ballet Association explored its mission and history, examination of strength and weaknesses, best practices, and recommendation for the organization. Through these components, it is clear that the merits attributed to the organization are well deserved.

My time at NOBA taught me a great deal about non-profit management, creativity, and administrative support. The short-term effect of my internship stems from my ability to understand a marketing time line, create a publicity blurb, and send a press release to the media. I contributed many ideas to the marketing director, all while discovering effective ways to handle the tasks of daily operations. Long-term effects of the internship will carry with me as I venture out into the next chapter of my work experience. I learned the importance of time management, effective writing skills, and the ability to handle administrative tasks in an ever-changing environment. Sometimes working 65-70 hours per week taught me how to effectively persevere through any challenge. I witnessed the Executive Director not only work on her tasks, but serve as an outlet to all departments when called upon.

As an administrative support to the marketing staff, I provided outreach and visibility to programs executed through the Summer and Fall of 2012. I am proud of the market research and promotional plans I created and hope that I have the opportunity to

continue working with an organization dedicated to the arts in the future.

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## VITA

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