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Letter from the Editor

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Regional considerations extend beyond the arts, arts administration, or academia. All of our organizations and institutions work in communities nestled in regions. Institutions of higher education strategically navigate those regions, the climates, social expectations, and norms that are sometimes unique to their geographic space. Specifically in the space of arts administration, regional priorities, concerns, and cultures become significant. These intricacies affect the art made, produced, and embraced. Ignoring our regions or communities, is then prohibitive for impactful arts administration educators, practitioners, scholars, and students.

A national or international professional association might be less equipped to support the unique challenges that are regionally common among its members. With this awareness, the Association of Arts Leadership Educators came to be, with its first manifestation of the Southeastern Arts Leadership Educators.

“Southeastern Arts Leadership Educators (SALE) supports the definition, teaching, theory, and practice of transformative arts administration in the southeastern United States.”ⁱ In April of 2018, the first gathering of SALE took place in Atlanta, Georgia. There, educators representing colleges and universities across the Southeastern United States discussed the need for a gathering of arts leadership educators who are specifically confronting the unique issues – particularly related to social and creative justice - that working in their region brings. Those educators agreed upon one word to define their approach to arts leadership in the Southeast, “transformative.”

“The profound feeling in the room from arts leadership educators was that the status quo did not and would not work to meet the needs of the diverse population of arts administration students in the Southeast. Likewise, in order to responsibly prepare those students for future success, the arts could not just “be.” The arts, like most other aspects of life in the South, had to be strategic. They have to be transformative” (Kieffer, 2022, p. 211).

Two years later, at the SALE conference at the College of Charleston (South Carolina), membership again decided to retain their geographic focus, rather than expanding the network beyond the Southeast. There was broad agreement that only with geographic focus on the Southeastern United States could the specific issues of arts leadership in the Southeast be confronted.

With this awareness of the value of regionally focused professional networks, the Association of Arts Leadership Educators (AALE) “works to unite those in arts leadership to best create community discussions and impact through the arts.” With the particular focus being on community discussions.

One way that AALE seeks to pursue these conversations is through expanding regional conferences of arts leaders and arts leadership educators beyond the Southeast while still focusing on specific regions. Another avenue for furthering the conversation of regional issues is through region-focused issues of this journal, the *International Journal of Regional Issues in the Arts (IJRIA)*.

This marks the inaugural issue of IJRIA, which will serve as an academic arm of AALE. Through conferences, research, and this journal, AALE strives to serve local and regional arts organizations and affiliations that are working to influence and impact communities through the arts. Research featured in IJRIA expands the discussion on the nature of communities and how they affect and are affected by the arts.

As a conference-focused inaugural issue, this volume focuses on the Southeastern United States. Included in this volume are conference proceedings and a spotlight of scholarship from the conference.

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ⁱ “Mission Statement.” Southeastern Arts Leadership Educators, 2018.
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