



## Banners Cultural Series

#7 Plan cycle - 7

Plan cycle 2023/2024

7/1/23 - 6/30/24

## Performance Objective 1 Expand corporate sponsor support of Rouge et Blanc and Banners.

### 1 Assessment and Benchmark

Assessment: Track sponsor lists to identify new sponsor members.

Benchmark: Increase financial and in-kind contributions from corporate sponsors by 10% over the previous year.

#### 1.1 Data

Fiscal Year	Financial Contributions	In-Kind Contributions	Total Contributions	% change
2017-2018	157,350	73,500	230,850	—
2018-2019	155,258	136,180	291,438	26.24%
2019-2020	148,500	78,165	226,665	-22.22%
2020-2021	0	0	0	-100%
2021-2022	120,250	73,100	193,350	100%
2022-2023	151,500	81,002	232,502	20.25%
2023-2024	150,637	103,616	254,253	9.35%

#### 1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

COVID-19 cut us off from achieving our benchmark of growth for this particular performance objective.

One loss centers around Lake Charles Toyota. They agreed to come on as a \$5,000 Cultural Season sponsor but asked for an extension on payment to March because their management personnel was changing. Our season was then prematurely cut short by COVID-19 in March and all sponsor perks stalled. No check was delivered.

Unrelated to COVID, we also lost Cal-Cam Hospital. They had been receiving inflated sponsor perks for over ten years under an agreement with our Banners Founder. They were scheduled to discuss raising support to the level of their benefits but the hospital instead cut back their general sponsorship budget and Banners was let go. Of the \$148,500 in financial contributions, \$36,000 is projected including a CVB grant which has yet to be allocated and the annual KMI contribution. We have no information to lead us to believe either of these payments are in jeopardy.

Our dip in in-kind support stems largely from the loss in corporate and individual volunteer hours. We only completed seven days of our season, so the majority of donated hours were lost when the state mandated that we had to shut down production. This also cut short a sizable portion of the in-kind lighting, sound and staging services that would normally have been provided by Deep South Productions.

Next year, we will be poised to gather information regarding value of donated product which is supplied predominantly through our Rouge et Blanc fundraiser from Glazers as well as, to a lesser degree, donated product from Southwest Beverages which is supplied for our cultural season events and receptions.

It is difficult to predict how COVID will effect our coming season. I am cautiously optimistic enough to believe that it is feasibly reasonable to keep our assessment and benchmark the same for this particular plan. If reopening phases do not allow for full participation in Rouge and our coming cultural season, and if corporate sponsors are forced to pull back on funding, we will shift this for our next annual assessment.

2020-2021:

Our annual October fundraiser did not occur as we were in process of being hit by our second hurricane the week it would have happened if not for the fact that COVID had already erased it from the calendar altogether.

This year, Rouge has been rescheduled for October 30, 2021. We are currently in-process with sponsor negotiations but so far we have been successful in retaining most major supporters and have noticed from

positive ticket sales which almost doubled on day one of pre-sales, that the timing seems right to revive this event, with a smaller occupancy and with proper safety measures in place.

We are moving the event to a new location, and are dropping attendance and product by up to 25% so that we do not lose our major distributors. After rigorous consultation with our wine suppliers, it has become clear that the change in occupancy is vital to keeping our partnerships in operation. Without these partnerships, this event would be impossible to produce.

#### 2021-2022:

With no season last year as a result of COVID, we were unable to solicit new sponsors. This year, we were able to revive the cultural season as well as one-off performances including the patriot show "Letters Home" from Chicago based theatre Griffin Productions, as well as "Josephine Baker" and "Josie and Grace" from the Orlando Fringe Circuit. Return to programming allowed us to re-approach funders.

We met our benchmark immediately with the underwriting support of Reed Mendelson Jr. of *Ameriprise* who funded the "Letters Home" production at \$11,000.

Our sponsor group also saw the addition of Landlocked Aviation who came on as a smaller \$2,500 cash supporter.

Lake Charles Little Theatre also came on as a new sponsor this year in a partnership designed to help the now itinerant company gain visibility. They provided a \$5,000 cash sponsorship and also supplied an in-kind patrons' reception for the "90 Lies an Hour" Paul Strickland one-man-show.

Our in-kind support nearly reached pre-pandemic numbers. Support from L'Auberge increased substantially. While the company only supplied water palettes in the two years previously, they supplied over \$7,500 in free boarding for visiting artists. In years past, our local casinos only provided free rooms Mondays through Wednesdays which negated most of our visiting artists who we predominantly schedule for weekends, but this year, comps were given even during their prime-booking days.

A few sponsors requested roll-over benefits for the 2021-2022 year for support given for the 2020 season which was curtailed by COVID. Because of this, we did not reach pre-pandemic numbers in cash and in-kind support, but now that those "owed" benefits have been honored, I believe we will be able to return to pre-pandemic numbers next season.

I believe our goals/benchmarks for growth are valid moving forward as long as we aren't shut down again by pandemics or natural disasters.

#### 2022-2023:

We met our objective goals for this unit. Our total cash contributions grew from \$120,250 to \$151,500.

This is partially because private Sponsor Reed Mendelson raised his contribution this year to \$15,000 in an excellent partnership initiative which allowed for paid admission to be offered to all area first-responders, children, seniors, military, and educators to every ticketed Cultural Season event. This not only expanded cash contributions but meaningfully strengthened our outreach, accessibility and service to the community.

Stream also returned after a hiatus brought about by the pandemic and disasters and raised their level of support for the Cultural Season from \$5,000 as last given in 2019 to \$7,500 this year.

Banners additionally received the great honor of being one of the four Louisiana based arts non-profits (there are currently over 1,380 arts and humanities nonprofits in Louisiana) to be given unsolicited surplus funding from the National Endowment of the Humanities as disbursed by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

The most valuable contribution to our in-kind contributions manifested as a shift from room rate reductions from L'Auberge to fully comped rooms. Every visiting artist, lecturer, and practitioner housed by Banners this year was given complementary housing at the L'Auberge Casino and Resort.

I believe our goals/benchmarks for growth are valid moving forward.

2023-2024:

We experienced growth in both arenas but fell .65% below our goal. This is partially due to the sale of Southwest Beverages to Mockler. We maintained our in-kind donations from the company but need to re-secure the financial contribution.

The change of ownership happened abruptly at the open of our Cultural Season, so we were unable to solidify allegiance with new ownership. This is on our list of next actions moving forward.

Our plan for continuous improvement includes cultivation of fresh sponsors. This is actively in effect. We have already entered into negotiations of new supporters including KSWL and the Lemoine Company. Additionally, we are targetting unreached industry organizations.

We are also working with Grammy award-winner Sean Ardoin on a new music festival scheduled to be unveiled this year. Banners has been chosen as the charity benefactor of proceeds from this large-scale multi-genre downtown Lake Charles music event.

I believe our goals/benchmarks for growth are valid moving forward.

## **Performance Objective 2 Expand number of schools and individuals served by outreach programs.**

### **1 Assessment and Benchmark**

Assessment: Compare list of member schools and organizations and track retention and development.

Benchmark: Increase Banners Engages/Outreach participant schools/groups by two more than served the previous year.

#### **1.1 Data**

Season Year	Number of Schools Reached	Number of Home Schools Reached	Total Number of Schools Served	Growth in Number of Schools Served from Year Prior
2017-2018	14	48	62	—
2018-2019	29	51	80	18
2019-2020	21	23	44	-36
2020-2021	1	0	1	-43
2021-2022	6	97	103	102
2022-2023	12*	47	59*	-57%
2023-2024	30	228	258	+437

\*These numbers are higher than reported because Banners partnered with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury to present Movie Under the Stars on the Bulber lawn and Banners also presented a Ukelele Concert in collaboration with the Library (performing at Central Library as well as Sulphur library). In each of these ventures, no data was compiled to track number of schools or homeschoolers served.

#### **1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement**

2019-2020:

We were poised to blow our benchmark out of the water and were prepared to set a new loftier benchmark for the coming assessment. The pandemic shut-down of the season, however, caused us to fail to meet these goals.

Banners doubled outreach programming for the 2020 Cultural Season. In addition, we launched a new in-

school Banners Engages initiative which debuted with Prien Lake's Honors magnet and featured free Banners staff theatre and improv workshops. This was to be the maiden voyage of a program which would have made year-round programming available at no cost for pre-K through college aged students.

Also, we were scheduled to do "Rock and Roll Science Guy", a sponsor-serving STEAM-based science bus-in show in Bulber as well as a touring hybrid lecture/performance engages production by Brian Fox-Ellis. All of these new efforts would have brought us to growth of well over double this performance objective benchmark.

When all schools shut down, so did all of these efforts. We are closely monitoring the governor and the parish mandates related to school operations so that we may plan accordingly. We are also looking at meaningful ways to transfer outreach efforts to digital platforms if necessary.

Whether we must turn to streaming or are able to return to normal operations, I remain guardedly in favor of keeping the assessment/benchmark as is.

2020-2021:

We not only failed to reach our goal to increase outreach programming/schools reached, we regressed to almost zero production. This was not due to lack of programming design.

Because of the continuing restrictions of global pandemic, access to schools and in-person programming remained largely impossible. We retained our planned outreach production, *Jeff Boyer's Big Bubble Science Show*, we have postponed this show and plan to present it in our upcoming spring season.

We also contractually retained our found-object percussion family show, *JuNnk*, but live productions were rendered impossible because the state of Louisiana did not allow for indoor entertainment, we have postponed this show and plan to present it in our upcoming spring season.

We researched options for the production of virtual outreach arts and humanities programming but the market was saturated with world-class free programming and we ultimately felt that it was financially irresponsible to pay for programming that would be presented free of charge, while Banners and the region was suffering from pandemic and natural disaster damages and we suffered a total loss of our income-generating season and events.

As schools opened back up slowly in August of 2020, we did a complete redesign of our outreach operations in the hopes of staying visible and serving our area students. As we could not bus students in to campus shows, and as we could not bring large shows into schools, we created free theatre-game workshops which could be produced in-house at no additional cost to Banners. We were able to bring programming for three days to one of our Sponsor PIE schools in Sulphur. All other schools we had scheduled dropped out as they were advised not to bring in any outside programming. We will resume this programming in the fall if such programming is allowed.

As PIE outreach is valued highly among our large corporate sponsors, we will continue to track PIEs for each of our supporting sponsors, and will target these schools first with an eye to continuous expansion beyond the PIE schools. Our "Banners Gives" program also focuses outreach efforts so that our elder community, educators, and first responders are likewise served.

2021-2022:

While we were only able to access one school last year, we were able to raise that number to six this season. Schools we touched included Moss Bluff Elementary, Barbe High School, Dolby Elementary, Iowa Elementary, and Nelson Elementary. We also added an outreach Master Class component specifically for McNeese and SOWELA students.

Lingering COVID restrictions and State Testing conflicts kept us from reaching higher numbers within the independent school tier, but we more than made up for this with our home-school engagement.

For our daytime School production of *Jeff Boyer's Big Bubble Bonanza*, we had 390 home-school

individuals in attendance. We estimate that the average group contained about four students and educators each, bringing us to 97.5 groups. We rounded down to 97 for the data table.

Data shows us that since COVID, many more families appear to be home-schooling than in pre-pandemic years.

Within our Cultural Season we also were able to create a Master Class geared towards our McNeese /SOWELA music majors which was led by world-renowned Bari Saxophonist Leo P. This class was attended by over 20 of our area college students. The following performance by Leo P included performances by alum, students, and McNeese professors and resulted in the highest student attendance at a Banners event in the last five years.

Although we met our benchmark, the bar to achieve this was extremely low because COVID prevented us from reaching more than one school in the previous year. It must be acknowledged that growth in this area moving forward will be more challenging than ever because budget cuts have resulted in the loss of our outreach coordinator position. However, I feel confident that we can reach at least two more schools in 2022-2023. My non-official goal is to go above and beyond this to reach our 2019-2020 numbers.

2022-2023:

Though the numbers show a failure to reach this objective, two key partnerships (One with our Movie Night with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury and the other with a two-performance showing of a Ukelele concert in partnership with Calcasieu Libraries) happened without trackable data on number of schools and homeschoolers served. With that data, I predict that our goal would be satisfied.

Trackable data includes a free outreach production of NY City's Vital Theatre of the Wizard of Oz which was opened for bus-in and home-schoolers.

An inspiring free workshop was presented to Barbe High and SJ Welsh Middle students by internationally lauded violinist duo Sons of Mystro. All 50 students from the workshop were given free admission to the SOM concert that evening and were invited to perform the show's finale number on stage.

Outside the Season, we facilitated an outreach partnership with the Library featuring shataqua-style educational historian/performer Brian Fox Ellis who visited three area middle schools with a one man show about Edgar Allen Poe.

McNeese Students as well as LaGrange, Barbe Iowa, and SJ Welsh students from the Calcasieu Theatre Alliance were also provided a free Master Class by Steinway pianist Robin Spielberg who taught an interactive workshop on overcoming performance anxiety. This was attended by a combination of music, theatre, and musical-theatre students.

I believe this objective is core to our mission and purpose and should remain. We have contracted a part-time outreach specialist, Brittany Menard, to help us widen our net, deepen our impact, and expand our reach.

2023-2024:

Our largest success this year lies in our massive expansion of outreach for schools and home schoolers which was achieved by expanding upon our efforts from last year. Specifically, we were able to partner meaningfully with the Christian Youth Theatre on two main stage productions. Banners co-produced the musical "Matilda" and our staff directed and co-produced "The Sound of Music" which marked the first full-scale theatre run housed in Bulber auditorium since before the natural disasters and COVID.

Sound of Music broke box office records for the local CYT branch and Matilda went on to break the records set by Sound of Music.

We also kicked off our Cultural Season uniquely by working with Calcasieu Theatrics Association to create a second "Prom" event for our local high-schoolers from across the region in conjunction with our "Broadway's Next Hit Musical" show. CTA and CYT were invited to attend a free improvisation workshop

the day of the show and then return in formals for the red carpet show. We were also able to engage Chris Gunter's magnet performance strings group to perform pre-show in our orchestra pit.

Lightwire was our main-season family event which we held at the Rosa Hart. We provided a bus-in show as well as an evening performance.

Finally, students from area high schools as well as our own McNeese music department were treated to a songwriting master class with Trout Fishing in America. This was also attended by school-kids as well as homeschoolers.

With the combination of our two CYT co-productions, the two free classes/workshops, the performance opportunities, and the bus-in family show, we expanded growth profoundly.

### Performance Objective 3 Increase Banners membership.

#### 1 Assessment and Benchmark

Assessment: Track number of overall cultural season memberships purchased, including student, single Pass Holder, Friend, Patron, Flex-Two, Flex-Four, and Flex-Six memberships. Also assess number of Imbiber and Imperial Imbiber Rouge et Blanc Members.

Benchmark: Grow cultural season memberships and Rouge Imbiber/Imperial Imbiber patron groups by 5% annually, collectively.

##### 1.1 Data

SeasonYear	Cultural Season Members		Imbibers		Imperial Imbibers	
	#	% change	#	% change	#	% change
2017-2018	190	—	292	—	78	—
2018-2019	214	12.63%	142	-51.36%	48	-38.46%
2019-2020	191	-10.74%	132	-7.04%	56	16.66%
2020-2021	191	0%	132	0%	56	0%
2021-2022	171	-10.47%	137	+3.78%	40	-28.57%
2022-2023	131	-23.39%	126	-8.03%	36	-10.00%
2023-2024	105	19.85%	131	+3.9%	33	-9.17%

##### 1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

We did not meet the benchmark of growing our Rouge and Cultural Season membership by a collective 5%. We went down collectively by 1.12%.

While this is a loss, it is not as dramatic as it could have been given the fact that we historically gain cultural season memberships with momentum from our first month season events as a catalyst. Our season was terminated just seven days after our opening show due to the pandemic, so the memberships we usually earn as a result of our productions went immediately to zero.

##### Rouge et Blanc

Rouge was held downtown this year which offered a smaller footprint for the physical layout, resultant in a smaller number of tickets to sell. Even though, our Imperial Imbiber membership grew by 16.66% which indicates that our efforts to bring in new and exciting higher-end wine was a success. This number of patrons purchasing a minimum of \$500 in product jumped.

We intend to expand on this growth in the coming year by partnering with wine suppliers to bolster efforts to keep variety and quality at the core of our wine-list build. We are also looking at recreating our Saveur du Lac VIP pre-tasting as a tour of downtown businesses who hosted food/wine pairings. This fresh approach seems to have also contributed to the hike in Imperial Imbibers. Because Rouge will be on campus this

year, we will move Saveur to the evening prior to Rouge so that it can still follow the downtown model. Feedback from Imbibers has shown that this move will also be beneficial in that Saveur patrons will not exhaust their desire to taste prior to opening of the main tasting.

Though we toiled to meet our goal this year of mindfully cultivating a strong presence of satellite wine dinners, restaurants were not cooperative in creating such events. The consistent message we got from various establishments was that Lake Charles was struggling in terms of having enough restaurant staff to staff normal operations much less to also cover additional events. We intend to try again this coming year to create pre-events and are considering the creation of a Banners sub-committee to take this on and provide additional manpower.

The overall patron and vendor feedback from Rouge was extremely positive. Patrons loved the fresh venue, they acknowledged the improvement in variety and quality of wines and they celebrated the new Saveur model. We anticipate another sell-out event.

### **Banners Cultural Season**

Only the first seven days of our nine week cultural season happened before the global pandemic shut us down. The first week happened in the shadow of the looming outbreak.

It is impossible to predict what the outcome of our efforts would have been had COVID-19 not been the deciding factor in our survival.

Moving forward we are strictly following all state and federal guidelines for event planning and are aligned with all university policies in totality.

We are considering plans for a "Bring Banners Back" member and funding push which we would like to plan in tandem with a rescheduled performance by our defunct season's headliner, blues legend Taj Mahal. This cannot be implemented until we are given green-light to host large-scale events.

In the interim, we are taking cues from the Louisiana Partnership for the Arts, the Southwest Presenters Association, McNeese State University, the City of Lake Charles and the LDOA.

As COVID-19 has temporarily stalled our event production entirely, and as our state has not yet entered a reopening Phase that would allow us to host our annual Rouge fundraiser, I feel it would be irresponsible to expect a collective 5% growth in Rouge and Cultural Season memberships for the coming year. The benchmark, however, will remain the same for 2020-2021.

2020-2021:

We did not meet the benchmark of growing our Rouge and Cultural Season membership by a collective 5%. Due to state and federal COVID restrictions, it was not possible to hold our annual cultural season or our annual food and wine fundraiser.

We are thrilled to announce that our cultural season for 2022 is currently being fleshed out and our plan is to resume operations as normal, the same is the case for Rouge et Blanc which is scheduled for October 30th. We have already entered into pre-sales for Rouge and can report an increase in day one sales of over 70%. We are monitoring Imbiber and Imperial imbiber sales and have scheduled person to person reminder calls for all who have not purchased by the last day in July.

We have created social media, billboard, traditional press and promo-video initiatives to help grow our Rouge and season memberships. Memberships from our defunct year will be honored in 2022 for the cultural season, as these patrons have already paid for services not rendered.

A mail-out campaign will help grow these numbers. We also have re-implemented "Banners Presents" which are a series of one-off productions to be presented outside of the usual season. We will use these to help promote membership through direct address during our pre-show speeches. These productions include a remount of "Josephine Baker" which was a sell-out show pre-COVID, and a Veterans Day free production of "Letters Home" which Mayor Hunter and his Armed Forces Committee are helping to



promote. We feel that attendance of these shows will be healthy and will provide another opportunity to promote Banners Memberships.

We have migrated to a new patron management system which allows us to monitor membership growth in real-time.

2021-2022:

### **Banners Cultural Season**

Pre-pandemic global trends show data indicating that audience houses for live arts events came in at about 70% capacity in the year leading up to the outbreak of COVID. Post-pandemic, those numbers plummeted to just over 30% within the last year. Banners was able to operate at a much higher capacity than this with member attendance in that we dropped just over 10% for season and all-access members.

While this marks a failure in terms of reaching this unit's goals which were set before we had to contend with pandemic and loss of all but one of our performance venues, it is a momentous success given those unforeseen hurdles and far surpasses national and global averages for patron buy-in.

One way we plan to boost season membership this year is to contract-in our approximately 20 season events months earlier than we have been able to in the past years. This year we will unveil the season prior to the holidays and will create a holiday gift membership promo which we will be augmented by our partnership with the O'Carroll Group. We are well on track for achieving our contract goals but we recently had to put them on freeze while we wait to find out if Bulber will be viable in the wake of learning that the building cannot support the electrics needed to make the space function.

### **Rouge et Blanc**

Our data on Rouge et Blanc Imperial Imbibers is similarly deceptive. We dropped from 56 Imperial Imbibers to 40 this year. However, we also dropped the number of participants from 1,700 to 1,400 because our distributors could not support a larger number. Rouge nearly had to be cancelled after the loss of local wine supplies from New Orleans after the hurricane there. To save the event, we pulled back on the product strain by limiting tickets. Analysis of the number of Imbibers in relation to the number of participants again shows that while the exact benchmark was not met, we actually did extremely well given the loss of 300 attendees.

We did grow by 3.78% in the Imbiber tier. Again, though the number did not hit our 5% goal, the fact that the pool of patrons was much smaller makes that growth percentage carry more impact.

This year we plan to raise the number of attendees by 100 and are negotiating a return of our pioneer wine distributor, Republic. Republic has a much more diverse and higher-end portfolio of wines. Our strategy of growing the consumer base and infusing the product offerings will make reaching our goal for Rouge 2022 a viable possibility.

I have faith that we will hit our mark this year within the cultural season and within our Rouge et Blanc fundraiser and do not see any reason to alter our benchmark or assessments.

2022-2023:

We did not meet the benchmark of growing our Rouge and Cultural Season membership by a collective 5%.

### **Cultural Season**

The global shift away from membership subscriptions has continued to gain momentum and our drop in membership appears to be mirroring these global trends.

We have shifted our promotion and marketing efforts out of a sponsorship support model (previously supplied in-kind by Bayou Tech, O'Carroll, and Killer Photography) into a focused sponsor/buy-in hybrid with Bayou Tech.

A good portion of our membership and patron growth efforts fell short because efforts were splintered and

as they were gratis, it was more difficult to control commitment and output. We now have control of commitment and output. Bayou Tech manages these efforts. We have an established buy-in for services.

We will expedite a holiday membership push and focus a senior push since the elder generation is the last to have historically supported member structures in the arts and entertainment.

Studies show that the newer generations simply purchase event access as-desired which means that though we need to accommodate the senior member model, we should also consider shifting our assessments and benchmarks for success for newer generations by monitoring attendance instead of subscriptions.

We are considering abandonment of the member system in place of a "Legacy Supporter" system modeled off of similar shift-initiatives with peer members of the Southwest Performing Artists Presenters (SWPAP).

We are in the research stage of this proposed change.

### **Rouge et Blanc**

While wine sales dropped in 2022 along with the number of total Rouge participants, we have already made bold structural shifts to recoup losses and invigorate the Imbiber and Imperial Imbiber membership pool.

Specifically, we radically altered the structure of our four hour fundraiser and are for the first time in history shifting the timeline so that the first hour of access on the main tasting footprint will be reserved solely for Imbibers and Gold Ticket Holders.

To support this shift, we combined the Imbiber lists for our last two Rouges and though we are just a few days into red ticket sales, we have already surpassed our 2022 net income due to a raise in Imbiber ticket prices from \$125 to \$150. (There has not been a raising of ticket prices in at least seven years)

I believe that the added value to Imbiber status will cause our number of Imbibers to grow significantly this year for the first time since 2017 because until this shift, Imbiber perks were not overtly enticing.

I believe we have made the requisite changes to keep the assessment and benchmark goals appropriate in regards to Imbiber membership.

If we fail to meet goals again this year, I believe we should reconsider.

2023-2024:

### **Rouge et Blanc**

We raised our number of Imbibers by just 4% and dropped Imperial Imbibers by three members.

Rouge is struggling as a result of the new Louisiana Food and Wine Festival hosted by Visit Lake Charles which has been placed within weeks of our event. There has been confusion in the community from patrons believing we changed our name and the VLC's three day event upstages us and waters the gumbo for those with limited expendable funds for wine events within less than a one-month span.

Sales are currently at 60% of last year in terms of red and gold tickets. We are not capped yet and hope to see this number grow. We have met with the CVP urging them to move their event to the spring but they are only entering into year two of a three year contract with AdFish.

### **Banners Cultural Season**

As part of producer networks and affiliated advocacy groups nationwide and across the globe, we are aware that membership structures are atrophying worldwide.

Our personal drop in memberships mirrors the percentages of loss outside our region. We have not decided to do away with the membership structure altogether as we still have over 100 loyal patrons, but we have shifted away from hard copy ticketing and moved to digital platforms wherever possible to ensure that

our member program does not cost us more than it brings in.

We have been very successful in cutting costs, but we are keeping an eye on continued downward trends and are prepared to drop the membership program if it becomes cost-prohibitive.

Performance Objective 4 Increase support events for University faculty and students.

1 Assessment and Benchmark

Assessment: Track spotlighting and program support events for University faculty, alumni, and students within the year, including programming outside of the spring cultural season.

Benchmark: To preserve a minimum of 10 event slots per year and to increase by one event annually, as program expansion allows.

1.1 Data

Fiscal Year	# of Presentation Events			Targeted University Educational Opportunities
	Faculty	Students	Alumni	
2021-2022	4	2	2	3
2022-2023	5	16	8	6
2023-2024	10	16	9	10

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2021-2022:  
Though the inherited foundational mission of Banners at McNeese is to showcase diverse world-class arts and humanities programming which would not normally be found elsewhere in this region, it is also extremely important to this organization to continuously expand its educational opportunities for McNeese students, and to spotlight the talents and skills of the University's faculty, students, and alumni.

This year has seen much growth and development in these aims. Specifically, two visiting performers were enlisted to collaborate with and spotlight a collective of faculty, students, and alumni. *Josephine Baker: Burlesque Cabaret Dream Play* and the *Leo P, Bari Saxophonist Show* each featured performances by alum Jay Ecker and faculty member Bill Rose, recent recipient of President Burckel's Faculty Member of the Year Award. *Josephine* also featured students Ty Ellender and *Leo* featured current guitar student Mark Portier.

Our other two events featuring faculty performances/presentations included a lecture by Bob Cooper entitled *Poems and Stories from a Traveler*, and the inclusion of current faculty, past Banners staff, and current McNeese staff as contributors to the 30<sup>th</sup> *Year Banners Retrospective* that closed our 2022 cultural season.

In the case of *Josephine*, our McNeese faculty and students were afforded the opportunity to play alongside Canadian and North American Fringe Critics Choice Award Winners, Audience Choice Award Winners, Outstanding Performer Award Winners, and Best of Fest Trophy holders for over twelve Fringe Festivals on the North-American circuit as well as International Fests.

In the case of the *Leo P.* show, our McNeese faculty and students were afforded the opportunity to play alongside Leo Pellegrino born from musical royalty who is famous for creating a new genre of bari sax performance and for having gone from playing in the subway stations of New York City to being a featured performer of the Royal Albert Hall.

The aforementioned *Leo P.* was also central to our targeted McNeese educational opportunities as Banners partnered with Dr. Ben Cold and Professor Jacquelyn Lankford to create back-to-back masterclass opportunities for our students with lauded Banners season talent. For the first, *Leo P.* led a performance clinic for our McNeese jazz ensemble who performed for him and received personal direction and rehearsal time with him. For the second, the horns section was audience to a masterclass spotlighting *Leo's* unique approach to horn instrumentalism that defies any previous traditional conventions. The

synergy was so strong that the visiting artist as well as the students overstayed the allotted class time as long as physically possible before having to turn over the performance space, and the double-venture was so inspiring that it resulted in the largest attendance by students to a Banners event in recent memory. It also resulted in our performing students and alum being able to add to their resumes a professional public performance alongside an internationally known performer.

Finally, Banners staff and Dean Lonny Benoit collaborated on a new educational partnership in the form of an intensive internship which was offered to six of the music department's active students. The venture was extremely successful as our students were able to work with and learn from world-class performers of diverse backgrounds and genres including each of the following:

#### The Queens Cartoonists-

The Queen's Cartoonists play music from classic cartoons and contemporary animation. The performances are synchronized to video projections of the original films, and the band leads the audience through a world of virtuosic musicianship, multi-instrumental mayhem, and comedy. Behind the project is a single question: is it possible to create jazz and classical music in the 21st century that appeals to everyone? Even people who normally wouldn't go to concerts? The Queen's Cartoonists present a concert for everybody - regardless of age, gender, or familiarity with the concert hall. Reception to follow.

#### Cha Wa-

This band is "gumbo of singing, chanting, intoxicating rhythms, and def funk grooves that are simply impossible to resist" as stated by Popmatters. Grammy-nominated New Orleans brass band – meets – Mardi Gras Indian outfit, Cha Wa, radiates the energy of the city's street culture.

#### Leon Chavis and the Zydeco Flames-

Down home talent and zydeco influenced in its purest form. This talented performer and band are a unique spawn from the heritage and roots of south Louisiana. Experience the blended methods of years past and the evolving styles of new artists. Genuine Louisiana music to be enjoyed by all and preserved for future generations. Enjoy open-air entertainment in the oaks!

#### The Flying Balalaika Brothers-

The Flying Balalaika Brothers feature a unique blend of Gypsy folk, electric rock n' roll, and eye-catching, interactive performances featuring instruments like the behemoth contra-bass balalaika, a triangle-shaped stringed instrument from Russia.

#### Violectric-

As the world's only string rock band of its kind, Grammy-affiliated Violectric illuminates the stage and the audience's senses through the use of cutting-edge technology and interactive experiences. Their repertoire spans rock 'n' roll history, and every song is played LIVE without backing tracks. From The Beatles to Ozzy Osbourne, Maroon 5 to SIA, our performances consist of proprietary arrangements you won't hear anywhere else.

Interaction with each of these events afforded our students the chance to work within an eclectic collection of music styles, to engage in both outdoor and indoor performance space configurations, to witness large and small-scale tech rider management, and to network with artists and music practitioners from around the globe.

Banners was honored to furnish our deserving students, alum, and faculty the chance to collaborate with and learn from artists that operate within some of the largest spheres of professionalism including Grammy award winners.

NOTE: The above assessment is of a newly implemented performance objective. Our previous objective became obsolete when our patron management system was bought out by AudienceView.

2022-2023:

We experienced profound growth within this Objective.

McNeese faculty were spotlighted as performers and presenters throughout the Cultural Season and throughout our Banners year-round outreach efforts.

Examples include musical performances at Rouge et Blanc, theatrical performances and design /choreography positions supporting the production of August: Osage County, Visual Arts work presented through the annual Works on Paper exhibit, an all-campus invitation for faculty to participate in our Post-Mort and planning session, as well as service collaboration in direction for Jacqueline Lankford's Jazz ensemble performance.

Our largest area of growth in this objective involved number of events spotlighting/serving students.

We grew from two events to 16. Examples include an internship program between Banners and our Music Majors which involved them in production assistance on 10 Season events and also included: one-on-one access discussions with Steinway pianist Robin Spielberg, Producer and Agent Larry Kosson, Performer and educator Chase Padgett, and DSP Lead Lighting tech Rich Barrett.

Other examples include main-stage performances by students within the summer production cast of August: Osage County, One Act Director Finals feedback sessions led by Randy Partin and Brook Hanemann, ACTing Course monologue coaching by Randy Partin, Audition coaching by Brook Hanemann, and student acting coaching for the Jazz Ensemble gala performers.

Events spotlighting/serving alumni tripled this year.

Examples include alumni inclusion of Nic Hunter, Paul Hart Miller, and Anne Knapp in the planning and design of the McLeod Lecture Series, spotlight of Chaplain and filmmaker alum Juston Roberts, and performance spotlights by multiple alumni throughout the Season and Outreach lineup including the Flamethrowers concert, Moonlight Princess, August: Osage County, Stories on Four Strings, and Light up The Lake Christmas Concert.

Finally, we were able to bring in McNeese alum and visual artist, Jeremy Price, to transform our Bulber under-stage greenroom area with an expansive Louisiana-themed wall mural which was made possible in part by a grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

2023-2024:

We were able this year to increase support events with our faculty, staff, alum, and students.

Our faculty spotlight events doubled. We spotlighted our McNeese faculty in two cultural season events including a new published works reading by Dr. Kendal Lejuene and a poetry reading by Dr. Bob Cooper. Faculty and staff contributed to performances for Rouge et Blanc musical entertainment as well as our season show "Anything Goes". We partnered again this year with the Visual Arts Program to promote Works on Paper and helped provide the exhibit's kickoff reception for the visiting adjudicator. Banners staff was appointed emcee duties for the Community Band presentation performance in Tritico Theatre. Banners also helped to facilitate an overhaul of the theatre's stage, wings, prop loft, scenic shop, and costume shop. We assisted in the build and strike of the department's main stage production of Kimberly Akimbo. We also provided an open forum for future season programming inviting all staff and faculty to participate in a season preview for 2025.

McNeese students performed as part of our Rouge et Blanc fundraiser as we highlighted a student musical performer and two rodeo cowboys from the McNeese Ag center who were also featured in a pre-event safety video encouraging responsible imbibing. Our intern program featured artist interaction and interviews, opportunities to work as set strike/stagers, sound check attendance, backstage access, and masterclass/workshops. Involved productions included Trout Fishing in America, the Accordion Kings, Broadway's Next Hit Musical, the Jimmy Carpenter Blues Band, the Beatles Experience, and QWANQWA.

A songwriting workshop was offered by Trout Singing in America musicians and a Broadway-based improvisation class was opened up for students. Both of these served McNeese students and area high school recruitment prospects. Staff also partnered with Dr. Garret of the music department to help

adjudicate a semester final pitch project which resulted in a funding award for top project.

Alum project spotlights included the McLeod Lecture Series (which also served an endowed professor and student research assistant), and musical performances for Rouge et Blanc, the Cultural Season Kickoff, and Anything Goes. Alum-focused project partnerships included: consultant work for the renovation of the old Millers building into a flex entertainment space, director work for the pioneer classics album music series which utilizes alum and student performers, and work on the development of LAVA, a Live Arts Venue Alliance.