



Banners Cultural Series

#8 Plan cycle - 8
Plan cycle 2024/2025
7/1/24 - 6/30/25

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
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%
2024-2025	148,500	125,816.44	274,316.44	7.8%

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

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 targeting 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.

2024-2025:

From FY 2023–24 to FY 2024–25, overall contributions increased by nearly 8%, with the largest growth coming from in-kind support. This reflects stronger community partnerships and the generosity of donors who continue to step forward for Banners.

The most significant challenge we are contending with is that ticket sales for *Rouge et Blanc* have been cut nearly in half. This decline is not due to waning patron interest in Banners, but rather the introduction of the Louisiana Food and Wine Festival by Visit Lake Charles, scheduled just three weeks prior to *Rouge et Blanc*. Quite simply, there is only so much discretionary income available for alcohol-centered events, and this new competition has "watered down the gumbo."

At the same time, we have seen reductions in corporate sponsorships, largely driven by a growing preference for investments in STEM initiatives. To counter this, Banners is actively advocating for STEAM—ensuring that the arts are recognized as essential to innovation, education, and community life. We are contributing to upcoming arts advocacy publications and working closely with new local leadership to advance this message.

Looking forward, we are committed to expanding our base of corporate and individual sponsors. By bringing fresh partners to the table, we will secure the resources needed to sustain and grow our programming while ensuring that the arts remain a vital part of Southwest Louisiana's identity and future.

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	Growth in number of schools reached	Number of Home Schoolers Reached	Growth in numbers of homeschoolers reached	Total Number of Schools Served	Growth in Number of Schools Served from Year Prior
2020-2021	1		0		1	-43
2021-2022	6		97		103	102
2022-2023	12*		47		59*	-57%
2023-2024	30		228		258	+437
2024-2025	40	10	140	-38%	—	—

Data hasn't been collected accurately since Covid. There have been changes 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 In each of these ventures, no data was compiled to track number of schools or homeschoolers served. In addition, we have restructured how we collect data. Note that Numbers of Homeschoolers (instead of homeschools since they are smaller entities) and give percentage of each instead of a whole

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

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 Mistro. 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.

2024-2025:

Data since COVID has not always been collected consistently, and the spreadsheet reflects a restructured process. Beginning this year, we are tracking numbers of individual homeschoolers (rather than homeschools, since they are smaller entities) and reporting percentages separately. It's also important to note that the actual numbers served are higher than reported, since several collaborative programs—such as *Movies Under the Stars* with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury on the Bulber lawn—did not compile school or homeschool counts.

Fall 2024: Banners began its sponsorship with Christian Youth Theater's *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*. Students from across the five-parish region experienced a magical production that blended music and storytelling with cultural literacy. The program highlighted how the Cinderella story has been adapted across cultures and generations, linking English Language Arts standards to live performance in their own community.

January 2025: Our partnership with CYT continued with *Finding Nemo*, which emphasized themes of difference and disability. Schools received companion literature to extend classroom learning, and students saw firsthand how characters with differences can also be heroes. Actor Damien Thibodeaux, who lives with hearing loss, spoke with cast members about ASL and representation. Around the same time, Banners co-hosted a Halloween movie night with SLIC, where adults with special needs watched *The Goonies*—again spotlighting a hero with disabilities.

Spring 2025:

- Seven-time Grammy-nominated percussionist Bobby Sanabria led a workshop on campus, exposing students to Afro-Caribbean traditions and jazz history.
- A touring ballet company presented two outreach programs. Local dancers trained in workshops and several were invited to perform on stage, while composer Stephen Gaboury collaborated with South Beauregard’s band program under director Jeremy Boudreaux. Their joint performance was a highlight of the season.
- Banners again sponsored the Barbe String Orchestra, bringing together students from multiple schools to perform classical works.

Alex Kor’s Visit: Dr. Kor presented his book *A Blessing, Not a Burden* and shared his family’s Holocaust story. He spoke at two local high schools where students lined up for books and conversations. Teachers responded with powerful feedback, attesting to the impact on their students’ empathy and historical understanding.

May 2025: CYT’s *SpongeBob the Musical* took the Bulber stage. Technically ambitious, the production featured blacklight effects, moving set pieces, complex harmonies, and tap choreography—giving students exposure to a professional-level performance environment.

Summary: The season’s outreach demonstrates that while reported numbers are in transition due to restructured data collection, the breadth of school and homeschool engagement remains deep and impactful. Across all partnerships, students were not only entertained but challenged to connect performance with history, literature, identity, and resilience.

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
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%
2024-2025	100	-5%	75	-42%	27	-18%

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

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 expendible funds for wine events within less that 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 th 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.

2024-2025:

Rouge et Blanc

Until Visit Lake Charles launched its three-day Louisiana Food and Wine Festival—scheduled just three weeks before *Rouge et Blanc*—we were on a clear, data-driven growth trajectory. The numbers were consistent, steady, and climbing. Since that competing festival’s arrival, however, our growth has stalled, plateaued, and now declined sharply. What was once our most reliable revenue stream has been directly undercut, creating what feels like a death spiral for this event. While *Rouge et Blanc* remains beloved, it is no longer the singular destination it once was. To adapt, we are cutting production costs and restructuring the event to ensure its sustainability in an increasingly crowded food-and-wine market.

Banners Cultural Season

The decline in Cultural Season memberships is not caused by oversaturation of shows in our region. Rather, the membership model itself has become obsolete. Once, it was a strong litmus for community engagement—much like newspapers were once the primary source of information. But just as the internet reshaped access to news, the rise of instant, global entertainment access has eroded traditional membership structures everywhere, not just in Louisiana. Cultural memberships are declining nationally and globally, and the model no longer reflects how audiences engage.

Recognizing this, Banners is implementing a full restructuring. The 2025–2026 season will mark our final year presenting the Cultural Season in its current eight-week, March–April format. Going forward, we will focus on fewer, larger-scale events featuring higher-profile artists and scholars, spread across the calendar year. Alongside these anchor events, we will expand our outreach directly into schools, where the need is greatest. With Louisiana’s new accountability model placing 75% of school ratings on standardized testing, arts courses have been stripped of their value and reduced to “enrichment.” As a result, students are losing meaningful exposure to dance, music, and theater.

Banners intends to fill these gaps with masterclasses, artist residencies, and sustained humanities programming designed to support educators, inspire students, and strengthen cultural identity. Membership counts will no longer be our measure of success. Instead, our success will be defined by impact: the number of students we reach, the artists we bring into classrooms, the master teachers who mentor youth, and the community pride that results from world-class experiences shared locally.

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
2024-2025	15	50	10	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 30th *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.

Vioelectric-

As the world's only string rock band of its kind, Grammy-affiliated Vioelectric 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.

2024-2025:

The 2024–2025 season marked one of Banners' most integrated years with McNeese State University faculty, students, and alumni, while also elevating Bulber Auditorium as a central hub of campus and community life. Together, these efforts underscore Banners' role as both cultural presenter and incubator of applied humanities practice.

Faculty Collaboration

Banners engaged directly with faculty across multiple disciplines. Retired professor, Charles McNeely, launched his new DevDoc Theatre project at our season kickoff, working with students to capture and edit oral histories. History professor, Dr. Philippe Girard, presented *A Day in Colonial Haiti*, linking his research with theatre student performances of archival material. In music, Dr. Lonnie Benoit collaborated with Banners to bring Grammy-nominated percussionist Bobby Sanabria for workshops and a concert, and Professor Garrett Echols advanced plans for a new music production degree that will partner with Banners to create a real-time professional lab for sound engineering. Faculty also played a central role in the McLeod Lecture Series, which brought former Governor John Bel Edwards and NCAA President Charlie Baker to campus, engaging directly with McNeese athletics coaches and students.

Student Engagement

Student participation was both broad and deep. Five music interns worked directly with Banners, training in load-ins, sound checks, and artist interaction. Theatre students gained resume-building experience performing in *A Day in Colonial Haiti*. At least 12 music students joined Sanabria's master class, while 25 student-athletes were directly engaged during the McLeod Lecture. Dancers from local studios performed with Ballets with a Twist, and the McNeese Band played at Rouge et Blanc, spotlighting student musicians in one of the region's largest cultural gatherings. Across the season, students weren't just audience members—they were apprentices, performers, and collaborators.

Bulber Auditorium as a Hub

Bulber Auditorium is now in use on a large-scale at least three times a month, fueled by both university growth and community demand. With McNeese welcoming its largest incoming class in two decades, Bulber has become essential for high-capacity gatherings. It hosted honor band week, Sanabria's percussion workshop, Cowboy Commitment Day, Cowboy Camp, Hazing Prevention Week, Greek Life Pageants, Nursing Pinning Ceremonies, faculty presentations, and the Investiture of McNeese's new president. Banners' role in supporting, hosting, and producing these events has reinforced Bulber's status as a cultural lifeline for students young and old.

Alumni Engagement

Alumni also participated meaningfully, particularly through support of the McLeod Lecture Series and public season events. Engagement is conservatively estimated at 10 this year, showing a steady appetite for lifelong humanities connection.

Together, these collaborations reveal that Banners is not only a presenter of cultural events but a builder of cultural infrastructure. Faculty bring the scholarship, students gain direct professional experience, alumni stay connected, and Bulber itself has become the beating heart of this ecosystem.