

Executive Summary

On March 16, we hosted an interactive Design Thinking workshop for about 12 Curtis alumni, around the topic of creating ongoing engagement and value for alumni in the years following graduation.

There were two primary objectives in this work.

- Provide a value-add workshop experience for alumni to gain feedback from participants about how type of programming may help them in their career & pursuits
- Understand what types of programming and strategies might benefit alumni (looking separately at recent graduates and more established alumni); where possible, we also wanted to understand if a (micro) granting program would naturally surface as an idea for creating value for alumni.

The workshop ran smoothly, with all participants actively contributing to the overall discussion and the breakout groups. The group chose to focus on two specific personae throughout the workshop:

1. A recent graduate seeking marketing and branding support for a solo and chamber music portfolio of engagements
2. An established alumnus seeking to start a new venture (for-profit or not-for-profit)

A third person was highly voted, but not ultimately used during this workshop. That description was:

3. Established graduate seeking professional development in an area outside of music

A number of unique ideas were surfaces in both the workstreams, aligned to the personae above. Some of the most interesting ideas that naturally came up included:

- Partnering with Curtis as a co-producer for content
- Building or expanding an alumni mentorship network / program
- Creating a clearinghouse to share information
- Offering post-graduate courses (e.g. via a platform like Coursera) to alumni specifically to focus on expanding their skills
 - One part of the discussion on this topic was about offering the course for free to alumni but potentially offering it up to others, based on a fee structure

- Creating a matching granting program that incentivizes other organizations to support alumni, alongside a Curtis-led core granting program (expansion on the original idea)

What follows is a summary of all of the opportunity statements developed and the ideas surfaced through to rounds of collaboration and brainstorming in breakout groups.

Insights

Problem Reframing - Generating How Might We Opportunity Statements

The following summarizes all the “how might we” statements developed by the two groups. The bolded statements are the ones that were chosen by the groups for further ideation.

- How might we help alumni pursue historical performance practice
- How might we offer "thought partners" for advice and mentoring in a safe space
- **How might we connect her to other performers and collaborators**
- How might we connect her to concert organizers and digital performance venues?
- How might we help alumni apply for a Fullbright or similar?
- How might we redefine what we consider success?
- How might we help Samantha find agents/management?
- **How might we support alumni in learning about entrepreneurship/starting a business?**
- **How might Curtis help her engage with these communities?**
- **How might she tap into orchestra and colleagues as a starting point?**
- How might we eliminate the need to take unfulfilling work?
- How might we eliminate financial barriers?
- **How might we help Samantha build an audience?**
- How might we help her find her niche
- How might we provide her with market research/information about the community she wants to serve?
- How might we find other kinds of mentorship can we connect her with? (especially outside of music)
- How might we adapt to the specific needs of a community?
- How might we connect her with previously unidentified resources that would be helpful?
- How might we create demand for this?
- How might we be sure these communities want this?
- How can Curtis foster a network or community for people like Esther?
- How might we elevate existing programs?
- How might we generate awareness/publicity?

- How might we generate other organizations' enthusiasm to get involved?
- How might we amplify the impact?
- How might we get her funding?
- How might we connect her with fellow alums in the area?
- How might we connect her with non-musicians who know how to start a non-profit?

Coming out of the reframing exercise, the groups began to focus on specific ideas that would create value for both alumni and Curtis. The list that follows summarizes all of the ideas. In bold are the ideas that were surfaced by participants as “stand out” or worth additional discussion during the recap after the breakout session.

- build audience - define audiences you really want to reach, your contribution as an artist
- create a career resource center
- build an audience - broadening the audiences Samantha can reach
- build an audience - curtis marketing/promoting alumni performances
- **connect to thought partners who can help Samantha connect to different markets and audiences**
- Develop relationships with other institutions (and industries? like schools)
- **Curtis as co-producer**
- create a network of amplifiers
- help samantha promote upcoming performances
- clearinghouse/connection for alumni to present to audiences/managers
- archival footage - on a streaming platform (audiences and "fans" /enthusiasts can see/hear
- use predictive/suggestions of audience preferences to recommend alumni performance (if you enjoyed X then you would enjoy y)
- build an audience - create a digital performance venue for alumni
- Alumni open mic nights
- **connecting alumni for mentorship**
- **offer a course/seminar on the subject (build on existing offerings/make alumni aware of existing offerings) (i.e., coursera)**
- offer grants for participation in external courses on the subject
- **connecting alumni to non-alumni/business contacts with expertise**
- raise awareness of available resources
- **create matching grant to incentivize organizations to engage in the opportunity**
- Curtis support for brand awareness, amplify the message of what they are doing/additional PR
- **create a clearinghouse to share information**

- provide training and mentorship
- assist in gathering information about similar efforts of other orchestras/orgs
- Curtis sponsorship of performances to support the organization

Coming out of the ideation breakouts, the workshop was wrapped up with a discussion on how the Design Thinking process would move forward, with respect to both subjective and objective prioritization methods that could be employed.

Participant Resources

Some resources that workshop participants may want to consider reviewing:

- Creative Confidence - create high level introduction to Design Thinking - <https://creativeconfidence.com>
- Gamestorming - interesting methods for ideation and other creative exercises - <https://gamestorming.com>
- Mural.co - interactive whiteboard tool; free licensing for educational purposes - <http://mural.co>
- Article on design thinking (attached via email)
- Ideo DesignKit - free online Design Thinking course and resource kit - <https://www.designkit.org>

Recommendations and Next Steps

Coming out of this session, there are a number of next steps that can be considered.

- Create a survey to further validate the idea around an alumni granting program; suggest to keep it to about 3 minutes and about 5 questions
 - Consider asking the participants from this first workshop to each send it to 3-5 alumni connections, rather than blasting it to an email database at this stage
- Consider a tiered granting program that may offer grants ranging from \$500 - \$10k, depending on the scope (this might be in the form of 10 x \$500, 5 x \$1000 and 1 x \$5000 for a total spend of about \$20k, being distributed across 16 alumni, as an example of a tiering strategy)
 - Give applicants clear guidelines on what the scope of the different categories should be
- Think about pairing the grants with some non-monetary support for alumni. This could take the form of a mentorship or matching program to help the grant recipients make the most of their funding, and create some accountability or oversight.

- Would recommend that a post-workshop survey be conducted with participants to better understand if and how these types of programs might continue to add value for the broader Curtis community