

MISSION

[CSAW](#) - Connecting Circus Students Around the World was founded in 2018 to increase accessibility of information and funding for students of international circus schools. Through increase of knowledge, resources, community, and financial aid CSAW strives to assist future circus artists in finding the pathways best for them.

VISION

CSAW - Connecting Circus Students Around the World would like to encourage more circus students to pursue professional education in circus arts. The current barriers to this: accessibility of information, thoroughness of resources and financial obstacles keep potentially incredible artists from pursuing the next stages of career development. The vision of CSAW is to steadily remove these barriers to stimulate and encourage more inclusive and representative circus schools and by extension, the circus world.

CSAW will also offer financial aid opportunities to increase education and participation in circus to circus artists. This is the primary reason for striving to obtain non-profit status. CSAW would like to create Scholarship programs, grants and other circus specific funding which is currently lacking.

Within the next five years, in order to accurately assess specific funding needs, CSAW will also be creating and supporting research initiatives. These research initiatives will help identify where the gaps between interest and participation lie as well as the ways in which current support systems may not be enough. Once analyzed and publicized, these statistics will help encourage donors toward our mission and assure that CSAW is doing the work which is most needed by the circus community internationally.

In addition to these goals, CSAW hopes to expand its current programs in the ways specified below.

PROGRAMS

Ambassadors Committee Initiative

The CSAW Ambassador Committee appoints currently enrolled student representatives from international circus schools to answer questions for potential attendees. There are now 14 CSAW ambassadors and a translator available to help future circus generations.

The mission of this program is to make questions that potential students have about circus schools more able to be immediately answered. This enables students to also ask questions

which cannot be asked to the administration or found on websites. For example, “do you like the coaches there?” “How do you like living in the area?” “Who is the acrobatics coach?” These types of questions can be the difference between a student finding their dream school and a student applying and auditioning for schools which would not be a good fit for them. The best people to ask questions about programs to, are those with lived experience of the program.

With the acquisition of enough Ambassadors, the vision of the Ambassador Committee initiative is to hold conferences. This would bring together representatives from circus schools around the world. Panels could be held to discuss common issues of circus schools, to increase internal knowledge about programs and to make plans of action toward bettering our education systems.

Additionally, the ambassador committee hopes to one day support the opportunity for international exchange programs. This would serve to increase the knowledge and scope of learning for participants as well as set them up with contacts for future careers and collaboration. It would also serve to better connect, diffuse and diversify circus communities globally. Eventually establishing deeper ties between circus schools and fostering future collaboration and understanding.

Micro-Grants

While it awaits non-profit status, CSAW’s current Micro-Grants program is working to provide resources to United States circus artists of color in need of alternate sources of funding for their creative, educative, and personal endeavors in the world of circus.

Should the Indiegogo fundraising mission be successful, this grant program will be open for 1 year, starting in September of 2020 and ending in August of 2021, and will be offering twelve \$1000 grants. Applications will be open at the beginning of every month and closed by the 15th. Once the deadline has passed, winners will be selected by a committee of artists and professionals in the industry and notified by the 25th. This process will re-occur each month with until the end of the year-long period.

The goal of this program is to start to put money in the hands of artists who are in need of immediate funding, but also to start to assess a larger need present in circus. Applications will be diligently reviewed with hopes that the monetary deficit in the community will become clearer. This will inform our future fundraising efforts and make sure the focus of financial aid is directed toward the area(s) of greatest need.

This particular microgrant is available for projects both education and non-education related. This has been part of CSAW's response to take action against racism and help fight white supremacist structures present in circus. Beginning in the United States.

Partnerships

In acknowledgement of its limitations and the fact that the circus community succeeds best when working together, CSAW has explored and will continue to explore beneficial partnerships toward better achieving its mission.

The first of these partnerships was a year-long employment with CircusTalk. Founder Sierra Rhoades Nicholls joined the CircusTalk team as the Education Manager to improve the platform's education presence. This included: a series of news articles about circus schools, another series about circus school graduates, reaching out to circus schools asking them to make more information about their schools public, asking schools to post their application deadlines and audition dates, and other initiatives toward school visibility on the platform. You can view some of the results of this here: <https://circustalk.com/circus-education-and-training>

The employment with CircusTalk has since ended, but the partnership toward increasing awareness of CSAW and helping CircusTalk's Education platform has continued.

CSAW is also passionate about other partnership and collaboration opportunities. Organizations such as [FEDEC](#) and others which focus on circus education would be ideal to aid with research, the ambassador program and future projects.

Non-profit Status

CSAW has examined the 1023-ez and the 1023 forms to begin its journey toward declaring 501(c)(3) non-profit status recognized by the IRS.

One of the purposes of exploring this route is so that donations made toward funding CSAW and in particular toward funding the hopeful scholarship and grant programs may be tax deductible.

This is also to assure that CSAW maintains a charitable focus. That its mission, vision and future remain geared toward helping circus artists. That it remains positively influenced and properly focused.

CSAW is currently seeking members best suited for its board to create bylaws, establish organizational structure, ensure longevity and file for non-profit status.

Facebook Group

CSAW - Connecting Circus Students Around the World began as a [Facebook group](#). This was with the intention that when someone in need of answers, help, or community searched “student” on Facebook they might come across our group.

The CSAW Facebook group is maintained privately for students to be able to ask questions about programs, to share resources and for program directors to post announcements about changes to their programs as well as application deadlines and audition dates.

CSAW is also committed to creating a yearly resource entitled “Application Deadline Mastersheet.” This serves as a public resource available to make students aware of schools they might not have known of, remind them of the application deadline, and give ambassador contact information should they run into any issues or questions in the application process.

You can view the Facebook Group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCSAW/>

You can view the 2020 Deadline Mastersheet here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ooteYdF34C8kW8md0GcV6K6BcmIkCBTDR8vEwB_9_gQ/edit#gid=0

CSAW Website

As CSAW grew, the need for more than a Facebook page became apparent. This is to service a more accessible format for information as well as ensure that CSAW can be better found as a resource for circus students. Work is currently being done to improve the Search Engine Optimization and visibility for the CSAW Website.

The Website is currently divided as described below:

Home page: <https://www.csawcircus.org/>

Ambassador page: <https://www.csawcircus.org/ambassadors>

Resource page: <https://www.csawcircus.org/resources>

Article page: <https://www.csawcircus.org/articles>

Financial aid: <https://www.csawcircus.org/financial-aid>

STRUCTURE

Presently - Volunteer Based

Currently CSAW is entirely volunteer operated. Founder Sierra Rhoades Nicholls and team member Kevin Flangan currently comprise the entire administrative and management team on a volunteer basis.

The CSAW Ambassadors, Ambassador Alumni and Translator also all volunteer their time to help the cause.

Goal : Non-Profit

The structure of CSAW would like to transform to have a salaried Executive Director who is not the Founder. The Founder would stay involved and informed, but no longer oversee operations.

The expectations of the Executive Director would be: to oversee and maintain the ambassador program, to maintain social media and website presence, to communicate with the board of directors and to oversee funding initiatives.

CSAW would also like to establish Board of Directors for the following roles:

President

Treasurer

Secretary

Research Operations Head

The CSAW Ambassadors will still offer their services on a volunteer basis as they are not expected to commit more than one hour a week.