

# **The Work of Arts Executives in Higher Education**

**Council of Arts Accrediting Associations**

National Association of Schools of Art and Design  
National Association of Schools of Dance  
National Association of Schools of Music  
National Association of Schools of Theatre

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## General Notes

The Council of Arts Accrediting Associations is a joint, *ad hoc* effort of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the National Association of Schools of Dance, the National Association of Schools of Music, and the National Association of Schools of Theatre. The Council works with matters of general concern to the arts community in higher education, with particular focus on the issues and policies affecting instructional quality and accreditation.

From time to time, the Council issues analytical documents, each of which covers a specific issue. The objective is to distill major themes, trends, and prospects into a form that encourages and empowers individual and institutional reflection, analysis, and action. The Council particularly encourages the sharing of its analytical documents with faculty and other administrators at the institution.

Readers are encouraged to share ideas about subjects or contents for future analytical documents by contacting CAAA at the National Office for Arts Accreditation, whose address appears elsewhere in this document.

# The Work of Arts Executives in Higher Education

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# The Work of Arts Executives in Higher Education

## OVERVIEW

Arts executives share with their colleagues in other disciplines responsibility for the excellence of their units, including the many aspects of being an **Academic Administrator**. However, the very nature of the arts disciplines requires that the executive function in a number of roles not generally associated with academic administration. Among these, the following are most prominent:

**Artistic Director.** In addition to academic excellence, executives in art and design, dance, music, and theatre units must assure the *artistic* excellence of their programs. This includes both the level of teaching and of student, faculty, and departmental or institutional presentations. Because the nature of work in the arts often requires a low student/teacher ratio, and often private instruction, faculties may be large, often with sizable adjunct or visiting faculties comprised of practicing artists.

**Producer.** The concerts, productions, and exhibitions produced by these professionals and their students are important not only for their contribution to building student competencies, but also to the artistic life of the institution and the community. Normally, they require extensive planning, financial management, promotion, and oversight. They require specialized facilities, resources, and often, technical personnel.

**Facilities Manager.** Theatres, concert halls, and their attendant set and costume shops are complicated spaces. Studios, rehearsal halls, and exhibition galleries require constant attention. Sound, lighting, and recording equipment, musical instruments, presses, kilns, and other necessities require maintenance and, at times, replacement. The demand for all these spaces and equipment is great and, in many cases, conflicting. Safety and compliance with regulations are important responsibilities.

**Community Liaison.** Arts units are important elements in the cultural life of their communities. Arts executives, teachers, and students are generally active not only on the campus, but in the surrounding area. The productions and exhibitions of arts units are public as well as academic events, drawing community members into the academic realm. These connections have important artistic and cultural ramifications that impel most arts executives to be active leaders in establishing and maintaining ties between the unit and the community within and beyond the institution.

## **PURPOSE**

This document seeks to assist those in all areas of the academic community to understand the range of activities undertaken by administrators of arts programs in higher education. It outlines these many activities recognizing the commonalities and differences to be found in American higher education. Our purpose is to describe comprehensively without implying that every item of administrative concern is dealt with in the same way at every institution, or indeed, that all effective administrations have an agenda with respect to every area listed. Each institution will demonstrate a different mixture and balance. Ideally, there is a successful match between administrative priorities and approaches on the one hand, and the specific goals, objectives, and culture of the unit being administered on the other.

It should be remembered that an arts executive may work for years toward the development of a program, the cultivation of a donor, or the establishment of links with the community which may come to fruition under a successor. Efforts of this nature may go unrewarded for years, yet they are vital to long-term growth and to the furtherance of aspiration, vision, and productivity.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

For purposes of this document, the term “arts” normally refers to all of the arts and arts-related disciplines and their subdisciplines. The term “unit” is used to designate the entire program in a particular arts discipline; thus, in specific cases, “unit” refers both to free-standing institutions and to departments or schools which are part of larger institutions.

## **I. FUNDAMENTALS**

### **Common Responsibilities**

All administrators facilitate the work of others, provide leadership, engage their colleagues in planning and evaluation, and work to provide a steady stream of resources. Administration is always applied to specific enterprises, the natures of which shape both vision and technique. Thus, administering one or more arts programs in higher education is both similar to and different from administering something else. The arts dean or chair lives in a context for administrative work formed by the nature of the arts disciplines involved and by the nature of higher education.

### **Different Backgrounds**

Arts administrators in higher education come to their responsibilities in various ways. Their arts backgrounds vary. By profession, some are creators, some performers, some scholars. On occasion, arts administrators from outside academe become managers of academic enterprises. Personal experiences and views of administration also vary, created by everything from personal histories to psychological attributes to career aspirations. There is significant variation in views of how things do or should work. And there is a tremendous range of experience. Thus, the responsibilities common to all arts administrators are met by individuals as diverse as the roles they are called upon to fulfill.

### **Multiple Settings**

In the United States, the arts in higher education is a large and varied enterprise. Institutions represent a stunning variety of missions, goals, and objectives. A broad array of effort in creation and performance, scholarship, teacher preparation, research, and policy studies is reflected in a tremendous number of settings. Each of these settings is unique. Each represents a particular weighting of goals and objectives, decisions about what to pursue at what breadth and depth. There are also specifics of size and scope which combine with mission, goals, and objectives to establish an administrative framework and even specific priorities within it. The richness created by these differences is one of the glories of American culture, a productive engine that powers creativity, vitality, and significant results.

## **II. CAMPUS**

### **Wholes and Parts**

Each arts unit in higher education can be represented by an equation that shows relationships between wholes and parts. Thus, while we outline some of the parts below, we do so understanding the multiple connections and interdependencies that must exist in each situation if its own unique equation is to remain in or near balance. The major factor in the equation is the mission, goals, and objectives of the unit as these specifically relate to the education and training of students, development of artistic and scholarly product, and service to various educational, professional, and general communities.

### **Basics**

All administrators of arts programs in higher education have both stewardship and leadership responsibilities with respect to:

- mission, goals, and objectives;
- the provision and maintenance of optimum circumstances for faculty and students to carry out the teaching and learning process; and
- the maintenance of effective communication channels both inside and outside the unit.

These responsibilities are carried out in a number of areas:

### ***Educational Programs and Curricula***

- *Courses of study, including diplomas, degrees, and other academic programs*  
Designing and operating programs offered by the institution. In the arts, these responsibilities encompass a wide variety of degrees and programs. For majors in the arts disciplines, programs may be liberal arts-, practice-, or research-oriented. Many institutions also provide significant opportunities for majors in other disciplines to study the arts.
- *Requirements and policies*
  - ◆ Overseeing the awarding and transferring of credit.
  - ◆ Developing policies concerning program length.
  - ◆ Maintaining and advancing standards and aspirations specific to each major and non-major program.
- *Special programs*  
Managing study abroad, artist residencies, summer institutes, professional development workshops.

### ***Recruitment, Admission-Retention***

- *Goals, policies, programs, and procedures that produce a student body compatible with fulfillment of mission, goals, and objectives*  
Producing the appropriate number and mix of students to maintain curricular programs, balanced ensembles, advanced course work in major areas of study, and critical masses for student interaction within programs.
- *Retention policies and programs appropriate to goals and objectives*  
Defining, publishing, and applying such policies fairly and rigorously.
- *Ethics*  
Ensuring that all operations concerned with recruitment, admission, and retention meet internal and external ethical standards to which the unit and the institution are pledged.

### ***Advising***

- *Goals, policies, and procedures for each area of specialization offered for majors*
  - ◆ Ensuring that the advisement process and responsibilities are understood by advisors and advisees.
  - ◆ Providing training and resources for advisors.
- *Information and consultation with regard to career choices and possibilities*
  - ◆ Maintaining connections among curricula, course, and project activity in light of declared or potential career choices.
  - ◆ Keeping watch on preparation for advanced study.



### ***Faculty and Staff***

- *Quality*
  - ◆ Maintaining appropriate qualifications for the goals, objectives, size, and scope of the program.
  - ◆ Overseeing and participating in recruitment, appointment, evaluation, and advisement procedures.
  - ◆ Developing a climate and resources that promote faculty and staff development.
- *Correlation with programs*

Developing appropriate relationships between attributes and aspirations of the program with number and expertise distribution of faculty, teaching loads, student-faculty ratios, and class size.
- *Part-time and temporary faculty*

Creating appropriate relationships to the program and to full-time faculty for guest artists, artists-in-residence, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants.
- *Personnel issues*

Maintaining a professional environment with respect to all personnel issues in compliance with institutional and legal guidelines.

### ***Performances, Productions, and Exhibitions***

- *Student work*

Determining and administering the scope of productions necessary for support of the mission, goals, and objectives of the unit as a whole and with reference to specific curricular programs. Normally, this involves efforts on both large and small scales, and at various levels of complexity.
- *Faculty work*

Ensuring the best possible framework for the presentation and reception of artistic and scholarly work by faculty, thus promoting public performance, scholarly exchange, and professional development.
- *Guest artist/scholar programs*

Developing, administering, and often funding presentations either singly or on series.

### ***Facilities, Equipment, Safety***

- *Classroom, studio, rehearsal and practice, performance, exhibition, technical, and administrative space*

Developing, maintaining, and scheduling the complex of spaces needed for study and presentation of the arts, all consistent with the goals, objectives, size, scope, and curricular programs of the institution.
- *Equipment*

Acquiring, maintaining, and replacing equipment necessary to achieving the goals and objectives of the unit, normally including sophisticated equipment for the production of student and faculty work.

- *Safety and security*  
Developing and implementing policies and procedures to address security and safety issues, including compliance with regulations, precautions against hazards, and procedures inherent in the use of materials and equipment appropriate to the specific arts discipline.

### ***Library and Information Services***

- *Connections to study and performance*  
Pursuing an evolving congruence between collections, equipment, and facilities on the one hand, and the artistic, intellectual, and teaching needs and aspirations of the program on the other.
- *Operations*  
Maintaining relationships to governance systems, keeping personnel, services, and access consistent with the needs of the program, and maintaining funding necessary for collection maintenance.

### ***Record-Keeping***

- *Systems*
  - ◆ Developing accurate and efficient means for monitoring and recording each student's educational progress, courses taken, grades and/or credits earned, and the results of other appropriate evaluations.
  - ◆ Providing for the maintenance of scripts, performance tapes, portfolios, theses, dissertations, slides, electronic storage, and other means of documenting important student work.
- *Accessibility and utilization*  
Developing and monitoring policies concerning access to records and formulating means for utilizing evaluations and records of achievement in assessing all or part of the unit's total program.

### ***Publications***

- *Internal*
  - ◆ Developing, disseminating, and maintaining the currency of statements that present foundational concepts such as mission, goals, and objectives, and/or detailed areas such as the bases for educational and artistic decisions.
  - ◆ Producing planning documents for initiatives such as the development of new curricula, innovative activities, expansion or reduction of programs and enrollments.
  - ◆ Publishing details of operational decisions, including admission practices, selection of faculty and staff, allocation of resources, evaluation, and administrative policies.
  - ◆ Producing faculty and student handbooks and advising materials.
- *External*  
Overseeing or producing and disseminating materials such as catalogues, brochures, promotional and fundraising materials, and analytical or scholarly work associated with performances and exhibitions.

### ***Evaluation, Planning, and Projections***

- *Management*
  - ◆ Leading processes for determining the scope, breadth, and degree of formal systematic attention to evaluation, planning, projections, and their interrelationships.
  - ◆ Allocating time, money, and other resources.
  - ◆ Using evaluation, planning, and projections to inform realistic short- and long-term decisions and to support a productive relationship between priorities and resource allocations.
- *Specific evaluation systems*

Developing standards and procedures for critiques and juries, course-specific and comprehensive examinations, faculty evaluations, student and alumni evaluations.
- *Overall assessment*
  - ◆ Leading participation in accreditation, internal reviews, visiting committees, system reviews, etc.
  - ◆ Integrating specific evaluations into overall assessments.

### ***Funding***

- *Program*
  - ◆ Correlating financial resources of the unit in terms of mission, goals, objectives, size, and scope.
  - ◆ Participating in overall budget allocation procedures and long-range financial planning.
  - ◆ Making a case for resources.
- *Events*

Assuming responsibility for the financial aspects of performances, exhibitions, and special occasions.
- *Fundraising*
  - ◆ Managing and participating in development activities.
  - ◆ Coordinating fundraising activities with institutional development office.
  - ◆ Participating in grant-writing.
- *Accountability*

Overseeing accounting procedures.

## **III. COMMUNITY**

### **Wholes and Parts**

While arts units in higher education are in one sense wholes unto themselves, in another sense, they are part of the artistic life of their surrounding community. This fact and its meaning for cultural development produce regular and often deep community involvement for arts executives. When regarded from a community-wide perspective, the wholes and parts relationship that includes higher education arts units shows as much variation as academic programs themselves. Many factors contribute to these differences—the relative size of the institution and/or arts unit and the community, the comparative weight of the scope and depth of arts presentations on campus in comparison with those in the community, the priorities of the institution with regard to its presence in the community, and the extent to which the setting is rural or urban, for example. These and other factors, such as tradition, personalities, corporate cultures, and demographics produce a unique equation for every community.

## Basics

Arts programs in higher education serve the same functions for the arts disciplines as discipline-centered programs in other fields. But normally, a by-product of this function is the preparation of work in the arts disciplines that is presented to the public. In short, the arts have a public as well as an academic clientele. This public attribute of arts activity produces a natural connection to the community, and thus many occasions for beneficial reciprocities. The community may be variously defined, and may include other parts of the institution, the city or town, county, state, or region. But whatever the definition, collegiate exhibition and performance spaces regularly welcome the public as well as those living the life of academe. Artistic connections with the community are often fundamental to town-gown relationships. Presentations in the arts are visible and immediate symbols of the high-level work that is being undertaken by the institution as a whole. These connections demonstrate why most arts executives in higher education are deeply involved with their communities.

In many settings, the arts executive is often an artist or producer. Concerts, dance concerts, dramatic presentations, gallery exhibitions, operas, and other such events typically require extensive planning, financing, facilities, and personnel. Whether the arts executive's role is direct supervision or administrative oversight, there is almost always substantial responsibility in this area.

Arts executives are also regularly engaged in behind-the-scenes efforts. In any community, the arts effort involves creation and presentation, education, and support. These separate functions and their operational relationships also represent a wholes-parts interdependency that is connected to the efforts of the arts units.

## The Artistic Community

- *Artistic leadership*
  - ◆ Serving as artistic directors or members of governing bodies.
  - ◆ Serving as arts critics, lecturers, or commentators.
  - ◆ Appearing as hosts or guests on arts-related radio and/or television programs.
  - ◆ Participating in policy and funding decisions of local and state arts councils.
- *Diplomacy*
  - ◆ Facilitating cooperation and collaboration among local arts entities.
  - ◆ Assisting or leading community arts projects such as arts fairs and festivals.
  - ◆ Arranging joint appointments between the institution and community-based arts organizations.
- *Facilities*
  - ◆ Insofar as possible, meeting needs of local arts organizations for competitions, exhibitions, festivals, performances, and rehearsals.
  - ◆ Developing cooperative arrangements for community presentation venues.
  - ◆ Providing resources for radio and television efforts in the arts.
- *Work of faculty and students*
  - ◆ Playing developmental, management, or trustee roles with organizations or projects that involve institutional personnel, for example, summer stock companies, regional orchestras, cooperative galleries, and dance organizations.
  - ◆ Developing and presenting programs in educational settings.
- *Special artistic communities*
  - ◆ Leading or participating in the artistic life of religious groups.
  - ◆ Maintaining connections between the institution and popular/commercial enterprises in the arts.
  - ◆ Assisting local and state-wide arts therapy efforts.

## The Education Community

- *Community Education*
  - ◆ Administering programs of lessons, classes, performances, workshops, and exhibitions developed by the institution to serve children, youth, and adults in the community.
  - ◆ Developing liaisons and support mechanisms such as enrichment programs for community-based arts instruction by private teachers, independent community-based institutions, and presenting organizations.
  - ◆ Developing and managing internships for teachers and therapists in training.
  - ◆ Correlating teacher professional development and the work of the arts unit.
  - ◆ Serving on juries.
- *K–12 Education*
  - ◆ Developing relationships between teacher preparation programs in the arts unit and arts education in the local schools, including internships for student teachers.
  - ◆ Providing opportunities for teacher professional development—workshops, in-service programs, advanced degrees, continuing education, etc.
  - ◆ Facilitating correlations between research findings and policy decisions in the K–12 arena.
  - ◆ Hosting local and state-wide festivals and exhibitions.
- *Governance*

Serving on local school boards, K–12 advisory committees, trustees of private K–12 institutions, arts magnet schools, and community-based arts education efforts.
- *Policy*
  - ◆ Maintaining policy directions that support the development of knowledge and skills in arts content.
  - ◆ Serving as special consultants or regular participants in temporary or permanent policy development projects.
- *Diplomacy*
  - ◆ Facilitating mutually supportive efforts among local institutions of higher education, including transfer agreements.
  - ◆ Facilitating mutually supportive efforts among other institutions and organizations concerned with general arts education.
  - ◆ Encouraging common understanding of the local wholes-and-parts relationship with regard to the role of arts education in cultural development.

## The Political Community

- *Promotion*

Advancing arts-related policies in legislative, regulatory, and appropriations contexts.
- *Advice*

Serving as advisors to individual politicians and to state and local governments.
- *Analysis*

Providing research rationales and forecasts regarding conditions, policies, and funding patterns.

## The General Community

- *Presence*
  - ◆ Maintaining an appropriate profile for the work of the arts unit in the community.
  - ◆ Explaining the work of the arts unit or the arts more generally to individuals and groups.
  - ◆ Using various media to present work and explain positions.
- *Audience development*

Creating attendee interest in arts events sponsored by the institution and in the community as a whole.
- *Common effort*
  - ◆ Joining with others concerned with the life of the mind to develop programs and events for the community such as theme or period festivals, studies of artistic and intellectual movements, educational programs for special populations, and introductory experiences with artistic and intellectual subject matter.
  - ◆ Serving on community-wide boards.
  - ◆ Participating in planning for community cultural facilities.

## National and International Communities

Many arts executives in higher education are engaged in work at national and international levels. This work addresses all of the issues presented above in institutional and community contexts. At various points in their careers, many arts executives devote extensive time to national organizations concerned with professional development, institutional research, policy analysis, accreditation and evaluation, international exchange, public and private funding, arts management, K–12 arts education, and the actions of governments. These activities develop perspectives and expertise that are reinvested back into the institution and into the local community. They represent both service to the field and professional development for the individual executive.

## IV. ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

### Time

Time wields tremendous force in shaping the particular activities and the weight given to each in the work of any specific arts executive in higher education. In large programs, the chief executive for a discipline or a group of disciplines will oversee the work of other administrators who are responsible for various portions of the total effort. In smaller institutions, arts executives must choose between narrowing their program of work or undertaking broader responsibilities with little assistance. Whatever the conditions, arts executives have a tremendous responsibility for apportioning their own time and that of others. Many of the responsibilities that naturally flow to arts executives are time-consuming, especially when done well. The hours of administrative time behind a successful event remain invisible to those with little understanding of how the various arts disciplines function. The arts are fields where tasks drive time, rather than the reverse. While this condition is often a requisite for outstanding work in all disciplines, the public nature of presenting work in the arts often increases the time commitments needed to succeed.

The arts are also fields where close, frequent contact among students, faculty, and administrators is essential and time-consuming. Recruitment activities and admissions decisions are generally the responsibility of the arts unit, not of a central office. Students and faculty expect administrators to be present at student and faculty performances and exhibitions. Mentoring and other forms of continuous guidance for the individuals in the unit are essential for artistic development.

## **Balancing Responsibilities**

The combination of time pressures and the large number of responsibilities undertaken by arts executives calls for understanding specific wholes and parts relationships. Each executive must develop these relationships based on talents and aptitudes; the purposes, size, and scope of the institution and the arts unit; the realities and potentials for community involvement; and individual aspirations for artistic and intellectual development. Choices must be made about priorities in light of resources. Careful calculations are needed regarding investments of time and energy.

## **When Administrators Teach**

In many institutions, arts executives have professorial responsibilities. Such decisions may result from institutional policy, individual choice, or curricular necessity. The involvement of administrators as teachers provides many benefits. It maintains connections between administration and subject matter, provides students with opportunity to study with individuals who have an administrative as well as disciplinary perspective, produces both symbol and substance of subject matter focus, keeps the administrator/teacher engaged with students, and so forth. However, these benefits can come at a high price to the health of the arts unit and the professional productivity of the executive if proper balances are not established that consider the scope of administrative attention needed for various aspects of the program, both within the institution and in the surrounding community. Few arts programs in higher education can afford to neglect connections between community involvement and student recruitment. No institution with major degree programs focused on work in art can afford to avoid presentations of student and faculty work that are heavily loaded with administrative tasks and responsibilities. Increasingly, many arts executives are expected to participate extensively in fund-raising activities. While vital, these activities are time-, energy-, and resource-intensive. A long list of such examples could be created, all emphasizing the point that when executives teach, extra care is needed to ensure that the relationship of their teaching load to the load required by administrative responsibilities is appropriate and reasonable.

## **Professional Development**

Although certain individuals have natural administrative ability, administrators, like faculty, need opportunities for professional development. Many state and national organizations provide executive development opportunities. A wide range of workshops and summer sessions address the gamut of administrative responsibilities in higher education. While these institutionalized offerings are an important resource, especially for new executives, some of the most effective professional development is self-directed. This fact leads us back to the issue of time. A factor in the development of executive competence and optimum fulfillment of executive responsibilities involves time to think and work things through.

Arts executives are almost always artists or scholars. Their work in creating art, performing, or scholarship does not necessarily end when they assume administrative posts. Often it is the continuation of this work which enables them to maintain their personal and professional balance, to retain the respect of their faculties and colleagues, and to serve as models to their students. This work is time-consuming, and it benefits from the same kinds of professional development activities which are pursued by practicing artists and scholars who have no administrative responsibilities.

## **Independent Arts Institutions**

Executives in independent arts institutions have additional responsibilities which are often assumed by the central administrations of multi-purpose colleges and universities. These include a wide range of governance issues, especially the development of and coordination with a board of trustees. Financial responsibilities are likely to be greater in independent institutions, and decisions about balances among mission, resources, vision, and risk more centered on the chief executive.

## **Artistic and Intellectual Climate**

While the artistic and intellectual climate of any institution or any community is produced by the aggregate values and work of many individuals, arts executives have a special responsibility for pursuing initiatives and maintaining conditions that support a productive atmosphere. This effort is central to the substantive dimension of the wholes and parts relationship within the institution and beyond it. Every decision in every area mentioned above contributes to the artistic and intellectual climate. This climate is a critical factor in maintaining the context for work of the highest quality. The climate has a major effect on the nature and intensity of aspirations for excellence. It influences what will be pursued with depth and what will not. It impacts the general sense of what is possible, and thus helps define the practical limits of inspiration. Serious work with the artistic and intellectual climate is difficult within institutions of higher education, but it is even more difficult in society as a whole where conflicting agendas, broad use of political and public relations technique as divisive weapons, and cultural reductionism abound. These conditions place the arts executive in a vortex of both real and contrived misunderstandings about the multiple purposes the arts serve. Walking away from these conditions often means creating a vacuum; getting involved represents political risk and another claim on precious time. Decisions along these lines must be made uniquely for each situation; however, it is vitally important to calculate risks against opportunities, commitments against resources, and goals against probabilities. Historically, arts executives have played important roles in shaping principles that define how the arts are created, studied, and used. Actions, presentations, funding patterns, and public dialogue all contribute.

## **Futures**

No matter how intelligent or percipient, no one can predict the future accurately all the time. However, those in executive positions administer parts and wholes relationships that enable the development of a comprehensive view. In turn, such a view enables considerations of what possible future events will do to change current parts and wholes relationships. There is a difference in predicting the future and being ready to face the several most probable futures. There is also a difference in predicting the future and predicting the future consequences of present decisions and actions. Since the future almost never moves on any individual's or organization's timetable, leadership often involves patience as well as action, stewardship as well as seeking to triumph, and readiness to move rather than movement itself. Dealing seriously with such issues and decisions takes time that often must be carved away from daily action in the institution and the community. In each individual and institutional situation, decisions are made by design or default regarding the future. Determining the calculus necessary to these efforts and making the calibrations within that calculus as conditions evolve represent perhaps the highest level of challenge in executive life. It is here that the work of the arts executive in higher education manifests itself as an artistic enterprise where ends and conditions drive means.



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