

HEARTLAND PERFORMING ARTS, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

**Heartland Performing Arts, INC. Launches The Collegiate Arts Bridge at MAX
A Dynamic New Workforce Pathway for Emerging Arts Professionals**

Heartland Performing Arts is proud to announce the launch of The Collegiate Arts Bridge at the Midwest Arts XPO, an innovative 16-week professional experience designed to strengthen workforce development and expand educational access in the performing arts industry for undergraduate and graduate students.

The Collegiate Arts Bridge connects academic study and real-world arts careers by providing students with hands-on experience in arts administration, presenting, artist representation, and touring management. This immersive program fills a longstanding gap in traditional arts education by pairing students with industry mentors, practical professional development opportunities, and active engagement at the Midwest Arts XPO conference.

“The Collegiate Arts Bridge empowers students with hands on learning and real industry exposure, ensuring the future strength of the performing arts through education, networking, and mentorship,” said Tianna Conway, Program Coordinator of the Collegiate Arts Bridge and Heartland Performing Arts Board Member. “Students benefit most when they step outside the classroom and engage directly with arts professionals. I am excited to launch this inaugural year and to work alongside an outstanding committee with deep experience, a shared commitment to developing the next generation of arts leaders, and two graduate students for peer-to-peer mentoring.”

The program launches in the summer of 2026 and offers a comprehensive professional development experience that includes guided workshops on arts management, industry best practices, and conference navigation. Participants receive mentorship and advising through engagement with seasoned professionals across the presenting, booking, and management sectors. The program also provides structured opportunities for conference engagement, supporting real time learning, networking, and hands on roles during the annual conference. In addition, participants gain practical experience assisting with expo hall engagement, professional development facilitation, and other arts industry functions as part of a hands-on educational experience.

The Collegiate Arts Bridge is open to Midwest undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in pursuing careers in the performing arts. Through this initiative, Heartland Performing Arts reaffirms its commitment to fostering inclusive, career focused growth within the arts community.

“Heartland Performing Arts is committed to building a stronger and more connected arts ecosystem,” said Eric Olmscherid, President of the Heartland Performing Arts Board of Directors. “The Collegiate Arts Bridge is designed to meet students where they are and prepare them for where the field is going.”

Applications open in March 2026 and include the opportunity to earn a two-credit independent study through the student’s college or university.

About Midwest Arts XPO

Midwest Arts XPO is an arts industry conference produced by Heartland Performing Arts, Inc. that brings together presenters, agents, artists, managers, and arts professionals for networking, professional development, and performing arts showcases. Now held annually, MAX continues to grow its impact by uplifting professionals and supporting arts advocacy throughout the Midwest.

For more information about The Collegiate Arts Bridge at MAX or to apply, visit midwestartsexpo.org/collegiateartsbridge