

October 15, 2023

Dear Board of Trustees,

We, the students of the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), are writing this petition to express our concerns over the current state of our institution. In an intentional and overbearing consolidation of power, President Paul Hogle and Dr. Susan Rothmann have ushered us into a troubling new direction, resulting in frustration, anxiety, and distress amongst the student body. Consequently, we believe that the well-being of our community and our reputation are at risk.

Due to the apparent lack of concern for our current students' future and success, it has become evident that our community is in need of a change. The following claims detail the grounds on which we believe President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann are unfit to govern our institution:

1. President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann do not maintain transparency or honesty with the community.

- 1.1. In July 2023, CIM laid off 15% of its administrative staff. Despite this significant adjustment to integral and valued members of our community, the student body was not informed until a combative web page, titled *CIM Fact-Check*, was released on October 5th. These lay-offs were merely described as a “restructuring decision,” and neglected to include the names of those impacted, such as Dean Frederick Peterbark, Vivian Scott, and Dan Betting (CIM, n.d.). This change was attributed to the progression of CIM’s “moonshot vision,” which has become an increasingly common justification for drastic administrative decisions. Each department affected by this change faced significant setbacks in operations and efficiency, in addition to being overworked with further responsibilities that they were not trained in nor compensated for.
 - 1.1.1. Rachel Rose, CIM’s Summer Programs Manager, was directly affected by this decision. At the time of her termination, the Cleveland International Piano Institute, for which she was responsible, was already underway. With the loss of a program coordinator, adequate supervision was temporarily absent, endangering nearly 40 minors between the ages of 10 and 17 years old.
- 1.2. On September 13th, 2023, students conducted a peaceful protest concerning the issues of the CIM Orchestra program at the time. In an effort to inform the student body, student leaders took to the CIM’s Outlook email platform, a common practice for student groups. In response to this, CIM immediately disabled “All Student,” “All Faculty,” and “All Staff” communication features within Outlook. Coincidentally, President Hogle’s response was that this had been an ongoing issue that was meant to be resolved earlier, blaming Dan Betting, CIM’s then

Director of Information Technology who was terminated as part of the decisions discussed in 1.1, for its delay.

- 1.3. Details surrounding the “moonshot vision,” the objective of which is to reduce the cost of tuition and size of the student body, have been extremely vague. Despite the highly ambitious nature of this goal, President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann have been unclear as to what concrete steps will realistically move us further in that direction. In an op-ed published in 2022, President Hogle writes, “The strategic plan we approved in 2017 calls for us to raise the bar even higher while scaling down by almost 50 percent within the decade” (Crain’s Cleveland Business, September 15, 2022). A strategic plan is referenced, though there is no mention of what its contents are. As ambitious as it may be, the “moonshot vision” is deceiving to donors and misleading to prospective students. Ultimately, the “moonshot vision” fails to recognize the already prevalent excellence and success of current students and instead continues to be a justification for administrative decisions that hinder our ability to thrive and grow.
- 1.4. In the aforementioned op-ed, President Hogle wrote, “Everyone in Cleveland knows The Cleveland Orchestra. Fewer realize how closely it’s connected to the Cleveland Institute of Music. Truth is, neither would exist if it weren’t for the other” (Crain’s Cleveland Business, September 15, 2022). In reality, President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann are imprudently neglecting what little remains of the relationship between CIM and The Cleveland Orchestra (TCO). Despite many TCO members serving on faculty at CIM, it is important to note that they do this on their own accord—not on behalf of TCO as an organization. To its root, the only relationship that exists between the two organizations is the rental of Mandel Hall by CIM from the Musical Arts Association, the sole operator of TCO. In other words, CIM maintains merely the same relationship with TCO as organizations such as the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, which also often rents Mandel Hall for their performances. Otherwise, CIM rarely initiates any form of engagement with TCO’s weekly guest soloists, conductors, and Franz Welser-Möst himself. Despite these facts, President Hogle makes frequent mention of this synthetic relationship in CIM’s “moonshot vision,” embellishing its value and adding to the deception of donors and prospective students.

2. **President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann have diminished the prestige and reputation of the institution.**

- 2.1. Over the last few months, several news sources around the world, such as *The Violin Channel*, *VAN Magazine*, *Operawire*, and *Slippedisc*, have taken notice of the administrative turmoil unfolding at our institution. The media have criticized President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann for their “disgraceful cowardice” in dealing with the situation (Slippedisc, October 1, 2023). Unfortunately, the public

humiliation of our institution does not stop there. Each article, news report, and social media post referencing CIM contains comment sections full of professionals and alumni in the field who are horrified at what is happening and at the little that is being done to address it. One alumnus posted, “I can no longer in good faith recommend my students attend a school that so blatantly acts against the best interest of its students” (Facebook, October 8, 2023). A current TCO member posted, “No sense of accountability from the admin for anything” (Facebook, October 6, 2023). In response to the resignation of Michael Sachs, another alumnus commented, “This is an incalculable loss for CIM and the current and future generations of students there. Shame on the administration and board” (Facebook, October 7, 2023). With numerous comments pervasive throughout the classical music community, it has become almost impossible for outsiders to look at our institution in anything but a negative light.

- 2.2. As noted in 1.4, CIM’s relationship with TCO is not as prolific as it could be. However, it has become evident that even members of the orchestra who are not affiliated with CIM have expressed their discontent for President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann. In a letter written to CIM’s Board of Trustees, Cleveland Orchestra bassist Henry Peyrebrune wrote that he believes “deep unhappiness and frustration at CIM’s direction is widespread,” referring to the institute as “broken” and “going in the wrong direction” (Peyrebrune, October 9, 2023). If this direction continues, we risk the resignation of yet more orchestra members from CIM’s faculty, such as the circumstance later discussed in 3.3. At that point, we will lose one of our last remaining links to what is internationally regarded as the finest orchestra in the world.
 - 2.2.1. Rather than actively seeking to strengthen this previously well-established connection, CIM’s administration has instead elected to pursue relationships with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, looking at opportunities for students to play mock auditions for its members. By neglecting an incredibly unique connection to such a venerable organization as TCO, CIM further distances itself from the elite musicians and mentors which our students respect and admire.
- 2.3. In light of the events unfolding at our institution, many students are seriously contemplating the difficult decision of whether or not to transfer out of CIM. Unfortunately, it has become a commonly held sentiment that students are no longer getting as high quality of an education as other high-level institutions, such as Juilliard, Curtis, and Rice. Currently, 5 out of the 6 trumpet players enrolled at CIM have inquired about withdrawal from the institution; this was a direct result of the resignation of Michael Sachs discussed later in 3.3. It is inevitable that our peers from other high-level institutions will ask us how we got to this point, and we would be doing them a disservice by not telling them the truth.

3. **President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann address the community in a manner that is threatening, oppressive, and patronizing.**

- 3.1. In a recent statement addressed to the Faculty Senate, Dr. Rothmann accused current faculty members of acting maliciously. "A public campaign designed to damage CIM is being waged by a small group of people who oppose the evolution of the institute. Reasons for this vary, but center on a desire to impose their agenda, one that serves their personal agenda, onto the organization. We are disappointed in the actions of the few faculty senate members who comprise this small group" (Rothmann, October 5, 2023). The statement by Dr. Rothmann is a direct attack on the character and morality of our faculty, many of whom have been here for much longer than President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann. Unfortunately, as noted by Henry Peyrebrune, "The remaining faculty have learned that participation is welcomed only to the extent that it involves agreement and have become disaffected or merely compliant" (Peyrebrune, October 9, 2023). In other words, President Hogle and Dr. Rothmann have fabricated an institutional environment where all opposing opinions are forced to remain silent; otherwise, they will be threatened.
- 3.2. During the listening session that took place on September 26, 2023, President Hogle was asked why students should continue to trust him in the future. His response was, "All I can tell you is I gave you 90 minutes of time tonight." Unfortunately, those 90 minutes were largely spent ignoring questions and deferring blame to faculty, staff, and students, as opposed to genuinely trying to understand student perspectives. President Hogle's lack of accountability and unwillingness to apologize demonstrate his disregard for student concerns, despite his famous claim that his "door is always open."
- 3.3. Following his resignation from CIM, Michael Sachs posted on Facebook saying, "This incident was not the first baseless attack by members of CIM's administration on my character, reputation, and integrity. Because I will not tolerate such further attacks, I made the decision to resign from all positions that I held with the Cleveland Institute of Music, effective immediately" (Facebook, October 7, 2023). The statement demonstrates the negligent manner in which CIM regularly interacts with our faculty, even one who has served the institution so diligently for 35 years. Ultimately, if our faculty are treated this way, it is only inevitable that students will be treated even worse.

With regards to the presented reasonings, this petition is requesting **the resignation of Dr. Susan Rothmann as the Chair of the Board of Trustees and Paul Hogle as President and CEO.**

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Students of The Cleveland Institute of Music