

Wendi Hassan will tell you that being Executive Director for the Cache Valley Center for the Arts (CacheARTS) is the perfect job. Because so many artists use the venues she manages and because CacheARTS is the state designated Local Arts Agency for Cache County, she gets to work with the region's cultural ecosystem and advocate for the arts in the broader community.

This can mean everything from working with the Cache Valley Economic Development Alliance on ways employers can use the arts in recruitment to sharing information about upcoming funding opportunities or testifying to the state legislature on bills that impact the creative industry.

"Cache Valley is benefitting from generations of investment in arts and culture," she says, "per capita, I'd put us up against any community in the world for the quality of our venues, the talent of our artists, the generosity of our patrons, and the loyalty of our audiences. What other community has three fully operating historic theatres in one corner of a city block?" And she would know. She worked with the Lyric and the Utah to get the area designated a Historic Theatre District. She has a ready arsenal of statistics about Logan's cultural vitality, some of them gathered in an economic impact study she spearheaded five years ago.

Wendi is a self-acknowledged data nerd. "Occupational hazard," she acknowledges. After getting a bachelor's in theatre from Utah State and a master's in Arts Policy and Administration from The Ohio State University, she pursued an MBA from USU's Huntsman School of Business. "The biggest need I was seeing in the arts was business training," she says. "I noticed that the artists that were thriving had an amazing work ethic and well-developed entrepreneurial skills. I wanted to cultivate that in myself. I wanted to speak that language." She loved working closely with classmates from many different industries, "But it did feel like a different language. I remember one of my peers told me I reeked of nonprofit," she laughs. "I said, 'Why, thank you!'"

Sometimes the data do not tell you what you want to hear. After accepting the Executive Director position at the beloved 40-year-old Alliance for the Varied Arts (AVA) in 2010, she discovered that the programs would be more stable if her own position was eliminated. "We were spending a lot of time and money and ultimately repeating tasks that were already being done by the facility – CacheARTS," she sighs. "I decided then that I would define success as investing in the stability of programs so they would ultimately thrive without me." In the process of putting the programs on firmer financial footing, she worked herself

out of a job. “It was earthshaking,” she said. “Literally. At the meeting of the two boards there was an earthquake. But ten years later, the programs are doing better than ever, and I am back, this time as Executive Director of CacheARTS.”

Back in 2010, free to pursue new adventures, Wendi landed at the Utah Division of Arts & Museums in Salt Lake where she managed the team over community arts, museums, grants, performing arts and the annual conference. “I got to work with the most amazing people at UA&M. They connected me with peers across the country. I got to teach the Change Leader Program, a statewide network of artists. I traveled the state and saw the challenges frontline cultural workers face,” she says, so when the Executive Director position opened up at the Cache Arts, she had a good idea what she was getting into, but she knew she had to apply.

Wendi Hassan is an advocate for the arts, locally, regionally, and nationally. She teaches Quantitative Methods in the Arts at Utah State and serves on boards and advisory committees for the Center for Persons with Disabilities, Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce (Legislative Affairs), Cache Valley Visitors Bureau, Logan Rotary Club (Past President), Bear River Heritage Area, Utah Presenters Network, Arts Northwest, and Logan City (Public Art). She continues to see the need for artists to build entrepreneurial skills and for business leaders to work with local artists, and she’ll tell you she has the best job in the world.

In recognition of her steadfast support of the arts as an administrator, actor, educator, and arts advocate, we are proud to recognize Wendi Hassan as the Caine College of the Arts Champion of the Arts for 2021.