



President's Message

Reflecting on 12 Months of Accomplishments and Pivots

This June issue of our newsletter highlights several key stories that correspond to the momentous accomplishments our Executive Board and Secretariat team have been engaged in for the past twelve months and that we have reported on to our members during the recent General Assembly on June 10, in the context of the Cumulus Roma Design Culture (s) conference at Sapienza University.

I had the great good fortune to travel to Rome to attend Cumulus Roma in person and support the organizing conference team. It was a privilege to witness first-hand the immense ingenuity and creativity that fueled the delivery of the conference—one which had to evolve its format as we know over several unexpected iterations that had the team planning this conference repeated times: from an original on-site modality when they first proposed it to our association several years ago, to a planned hybrid mode early this year as the enduring reality of the pandemic continued to impact us all globally, and finally to the full virtual model that was executed as public health constraints about large group gatherings continued to dominate so many countries, including Italy. I want to congratulate conference co-chairs Loredana DiLucchio and Lorenzo Imbesi and their team for their repeated pivots: many sudden changes of direction they mastered with generosity and care. They have modeled not only hard work, but also tenacity against adverse circumstances. They are to be commended for their vision in striving to deliver an immersive and multi-layered cultural experience for all participants. On the ground in Rome, it was inspiring to watch them work in a constant “liquid” state, iterating on the fly and as needed as they embraced the live production demands of the conference, juggling multiple camera angles of live proceedings as well as various locations; and choreographing with care technology and logistics to translate physical, cultural experiences to the virtual conference platform so as to engage remote delegates who were received these sessions via live streaming worldwide. I know that the proceedings of the conference are now being assembled. All of us are looking forward to learning from the Cumulus Roma experience and are inspired to collect lessons for future iterations of Cumulus conferences. A priority of ours is to continue working on new inclusive models of access and more sustainable ways to gather within our association's global network, the potential for innovation that hybrid components of conferences represent is one we are keenly interested in continuing to explore and champion as we go forward in the post-pandemic world order.

We also held our General Assembly (GA) during Cumulus Roma. Our key governance occasion is always an opportunity for our Secretariat to report on its key activities and for our Executive Board to share milestones reached. The GA is also a forum for celebration about major accomplishments. In a year of incredible challenges to global mobility for the academic enterprise, we are particularly proud of our work in sustaining a robust membership worldwide and welcoming a new set of inspiring and diverse institutions and partners to the Cumulus family. On this front, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to SG Eija Salmi and the full Secretariat team, whose tireless efforts have made this happen. In terms of the work we are doing as a stewardship team with the Executive Board, it has been “all-hands-on-deck” for us as a leadership team as we have continued to hold board meetings virtually and align our work together and in our sub-committees to advance the seven strategic objectives of our Strategic Plan. As we mark two-thirds of our service on our progress, please read the Implementation Progress Report. The document attempts to quantify our work and gives an honest account of our efforts to date. It has been incredibly gratifying to witness how much we are accomplishing as a distributed global team.

On a personal level, I do believe the future of Cumulus was in full view this GA not only via the vision and work of my colleagues in our Board who are a phenomenal team that I consider myself fortunate to work alongside, but via the voices and perspectives of many members in our community who participated in the Cumulus 30 Years Anniversary Film that we rolled out during the GA. The diverse and inclusive sentiments that are expressed in this piece represent a true “North Star” for me as I contemplate the last year of our work in this board serving you all, our members. If you missed this poetic film directed by New Zealand filmmaker Niamh Peren, do watch it here.

We have lots to look forward to ahead. I am wishing those of you in the Global North along with the team at the Secretariat, the rejuvenation that comes from lazy summer days and a bit of a pause. For those of us working on different rhythms and hemispheres, may these be productive times. We will be in touch early August with a new newsletter and updates for a momentous last quarter of 2021 which will see the launch of the Cumulus Green 2022 student competition focused on SDG 2, the unveiling of our new website, and the kick-off August 19 of a new initiative and global conversation under the recent Cumulus New Bauhaus Partnership. Stay tuned for more on all of these fronts!

With gratitude,

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