

## Case 98

### Talented Students in the Arts Initiative

*Surdna Foundation and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, 2000*

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*Background.* The Arts Programs of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) and the Surdna Foundation have different, if overlapping, missions. The Duke Foundation aims “to support performing artists with the creation and public performance of their work.”<sup>1364</sup> Surdna, on the other hand, seeks to “contribute to the ability of young people to explore their own identity and their relationship to the world through high-impact, long-term experiences creating art with accomplished professional artists,” and to “deepen the ability of artists and arts organizations to contribute to the artistic expression of young people.”<sup>1365</sup> So it is not surprising that the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has extensive relationships with arts professionals, or that Surdna has a history of collaboration with arts educators. In 2000, however, the two foundations combined their respective expertise to support high-quality arts institutions engaged in “the training of young people with demonstrated talent in the performing arts.” The Talented Students in the Arts Initiative came at a critical time for many such institutions, as public support for the arts—at both the local and national levels—was being cut around the nation.<sup>1366</sup>

*Strategy.* Having resolved to collaborate on an arts initiative of mutual interest, the two foundations began in 2000 by conducting field research to inform the program’s design. By 2001, they had decided to focus on offering promising teenagers the opportunity to work with established artists. The Talented Students in the Arts Initiative was, therefore, to be a three-year project offering grants both to performing arts high schools and to national arts institutions working with professionals and young people. Pledging a combined total of \$16 million, the foundations then issued a request for proposal to leading institutions around the country. Invited applicants were required to demonstrate the excellence of their program, its commitment to developing young artists, and an ability to raise additional funds.

The Surdna Foundation provided three-to-five-year program support grants “to fund scholarships, internships, artistic programs, and faculty resources during the grant period.” DDCF, meanwhile, would pledge endowment support to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives undertaken by grantee organizations, which were required to raise matching endowment funds at a 1:1 ratio. The project had three phases. In the first round, announced in April 2001, four training institutions and five performing arts high schools received between \$975,000 and \$1.6 million. A year later, four more professional training institutions were given a total of more than \$3.5 million, and in late 2002, another two training institutions were chosen to receive similar grants. All told, DDCF gave out \$11.75 million over the grant period, while Surdna added a further \$4.5 million.

*Outcomes and Impact.* With government support of the arts in a state of seemingly perpetual decline, the Surdna and Duke Foundations created the Talented Students in the Arts Initiative to serve as a bulwark of support for those institutions fostering the arts in their communities, and, especially, among the most promising artists of the next generation. The program strengthened institutions, such as the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival—the oldest in the United States. Jacob’s Pillow, which in 2003 was certified as a National Landmark, receives support for its three-month festival from a number of foundations and other funders. Yet the actual organization relied heavily of the funding it receives under TSAI.<sup>1367</sup> The Initiative also offered hundreds of young performers the opportunity to pursue their interests alongside established professionals. The Cleveland School for the Arts, for example, used its grant “to send about twenty more school of the arts students to summer enrichment camps and internships” each year.<sup>1368</sup>

As Edward Skloot, executive director of the Surdna Foundation, said in 2002, the Talented Students in the Arts Initiative enabled both foundations “to leverage [their] program and financial heft . . . [And] virtually [guarantee] that the programs we nurture today will continue.”

## Notes

1364. Available from <http://www.ddcf.org>.

1365. Available from <http://www.surdna.org>.

1366. The director and dean of the Eastman School at the University of Rochester, a TSAI grantee, lauded the program for going against the local and national trend. See <http://www.rochester.edu/Eastman/news/print.php?id=32>.

1367. “Jacob’s Pillow Named a National Historic Landmark,” Press Release, 6/6/2003, available from <http://williamstown.iberkshires.com/community/story10945.html>.

1368. Julie E. Washington, “\$1.1 Million in Grants for School of the Arts,” *Plain Dealer*, 4/4/2001.