

PRESS RELEASE

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El Sistema USA® and Equity Arc Launch 2026 Collegiate Access Series for Young Musicians

The new “Application Accelerator Cohort” expands equity and opportunity in the collegiate music application process.

El Sistema USA® (ESUSA) and Equity Arc are proud to deepen their partnership with the launch of the Collegiate Access for Young Musicians: Application Accelerator Cohort, a national initiative breaking down barriers to higher education in music. Now in its second year, this partnership represents ESUSA and Equity Arc’s shared commitment to strengthening the pathway to higher education in music.

The Application Accelerator Cohort equips high school sophomores and juniors with the skills and resources to take their next step toward collegiate study. Through workshops led by experts and shaped by the lived experiences of musicians and families, participants will gain clear guidance on each stage of the application process, including building a personalized roadmap for their journey.

“Every talented young musician deserves the chance to pursue their dreams, regardless of the barriers they face,” said Elizabeth Moulthrop, Executive Director of El Sistema USA®. “This collaboration with Equity Arc helps ensure that pathways into collegiate music programs are accessible, transparent, and welcoming to students from all backgrounds.”

Course Overview

Launching in February 2026, the multi-part series will be led by experienced educators, admissions professionals, and musicians. Sessions will cover finding the right college fit, preparing strong applications, planning for successful auditions, and navigating financial aid. Alongside building practical skills and resources, students will connect with a supportive network of professionals and hear candid insights about the application experience. The series culminates with a virtual college fair featuring leading conservatories and colleges of music nationwide.

“The college application process is complex and personal,” said Stanford Thompson, Executive Director of Equity Arc. “By pairing expert guidance with tailored resources, this program helps level the playing field by empowering young musicians to take confident steps on their path to college.”

Eligibility & Registration

The Application Accelerator Cohort is open to high school students who intend to pursue professional musical training and who self-identify as experiencing financial, geographical, or cultural barriers to accessing a degree in music. The course is designed primarily for sophomores and juniors.

Parents of students eligible for this course may participate on behalf of their student or together with their student. Program administrators are welcome to observe, though priority will be given to students and parents.

[Registration is now open. Students and families can register here.](#)

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About El Sistema USA®

El Sistema USA® (ESUSA) works to ensure every child has access to high-quality music education that celebrates their voice and potential. Serving more than 150 member programs, 6,000 teaching artists, and 30,000 students nationwide, ESUSA provides professional development, research, advocacy, and student leadership opportunities to strengthen the field. Rooted in a commitment to equity and excellence, ESUSA advances ensemble-based programs that build community, opportunity, and personal growth for young people – regardless of income, geography, or identity.

About Equity Arc

Equity Arc is a national network advancing equity and excellence in classical music by supporting BIPOC musicians committed to professional performance careers. We believe that equity and excellence are mutually reinforcing, and that opportunity should be determined by ability. We connect students, families, mentors, and partners to ensure that talent is recognized, nurtured, and celebrated, from early training through advanced study and into the profession.

Through transformative programs, bold partnerships, and collaborative systems change, Equity Arc champions artistic excellence while dismantling barriers that limit access. Together, these efforts create pathways that empower talented musicians with the resources and opportunities to realize their full potential. We envision a future where classical music reflects the full diversity of our communities, and where BIPOC musicians have the visibility, recognition, and support to thrive.

Media Contact:

carmen@elsistemausa.org

communications@equityarc.org