

Marshall University  
Department of Music

**Yearly Report: Undergraduate Program Assessment**

Submitted to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts, October 6, 2004

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I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

**A. PROGRAM GOALS**

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Department of Music implemented a revised undergraduate Bachelor of Fine Arts curriculum. Approximately one dozen majors elected to switch to the new curriculum, largely those at the junior year or below or those in the former theory/composition major who elected to switch to the new, separate programs in theory **or** composition.

As reported in September 2003, we hoped to seek approval for a revised Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education (offered through the College of Education and Human Services) during 2003-2004. Dr. Michael Stroehrer designed a new curriculum that has been shared with COEHS administrators, who support moving forward. The new program addresses changes in public school music teaching responsibilities, areas in which we feel our students are not receiving enough training, and the need for reinforcement of certain skill areas. With the August 2004 arrival of a new full-time person in Choral Music Education, we will proceed to a final review of the curriculum and begin to draft the new courses that support it.

In November 2003, the Department of Music submitted to the COFA dean a proposal for a 128-hour B. Arts degree in music with a liberal arts emphasis. Discussion with the other department chairs resulted in a decision to design a college-wide curriculum, modeled on the B.F.A. degree, which permits majors in art, music, or theatre. Currently we are awaiting response to our design from the other two departments to proceed.

During 2004-05, faculty will examine the music history sequence, hoping to better distribute credits, clarify and standardize writing requirements and style manuals, and prevent the crunch of courses in the senior year. This need was identified through student comments, faculty assessment of student writing skills, and the review of the capstone courses, which are based in large measure upon research and writing skills introduced and reinforced in the history sequence. Furthermore, faculty assignments have caused the assignment of history/research courses to be spread among six faculty. It is imperative that we have a common set of goals and a clearly

described methodology for the sequence and the individual teachers. This was listed as a goal for last year, but was not completed.

This fall, the Department of Music 50 new music majors enrolled in the B.F.A. and B.A. programs. This is under our target of 70. In light of the Promise Scholarship Program, we find ourselves implementing a different recruiting strategy, since talented students perceive parity when their tuition is funded at any state institution. Our recruiting strategies are being revised to include

clear descriptors of the difference between Marshall University's Department of Music and those of the state colleges. Recent decisions to permit some of the state's college to use the title of "university," increase the importance and challenge of this task.

The Marching Thunder currently enrolls approximately 240 students, the largest in the history of Marshall University. The relationship between the Athletic Bands program and the Department of Music is quite smooth and successful, although it is imperative that Athletic Bands funding and staffing needs not overshadow those of the department. Off-campus auditions and visits to schools by the Marching Thunder, faculty and student ensembles, and individual faculty took place in several venues throughout the tri-state region. The first Festival Choir Weekend took place on October 17-18, 2003, and featured approximately fifty high school students alongside our own University Chorus and Chamber Choir. On November 19, 2004, we will offer our first Middle School Festival Band Day. Our guest conductor is Mr. Eric Staats, a 1999 graduate of our Music Education program who is enjoying great success as an instrumental music teacher in the Williamstown, WV school district. This continues a recent practice of celebrating successful alumni in our events. Most recently, Mr. Scott Woodard, Instrumental Music Director at Winfield High School, served as one of the guest conductors at the February 2004 Festival Band Weekend (for high school students).

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In its assessment plan, the Department of Music has articulated the following:

#### General Goals

Music graduates should possess:

1. Conceptual knowledge of musical components and processes;
2. Continually developing skills in creating, interpreting, presenting, analyzing, and evaluating music;
3. Increased awareness of various musical cultures and historical periods;
4. Capacities to integrate musical knowledge and skills; and
5. Capabilities for independent work in various dimensions of the music profession.

#### Student Achievement Goals

Students will:

1. Examine a variety of musical problems and submit work completed independently . This work will combine capabilities in performance; aural, verbal and visual analysis; composition and improvisation; and repertory and history.
2. Form and defend value judgments about music.
3. Identify and use tools and concepts that work with a comprehensive repertory, including music from various world cultures and the music of our time.
4. Acquire knowledge of the basic interrelationships and interdependencies among the various professions and activities that constitute the musical enterprise.

In discussions held during faculty meetings in March 1999, faculty endorsed the following goals, which articulate those given above as General and Student Achievement Goals in a more specific manner.

A student graduating with a B.F.A. degree in music performance or theory/composition, or a B.A. degree in music education should be able to:

- Communicate musical ideas and works through performance, verbal, and written media.

- Appreciate the similarities between technical requirements for all instruments and to recognize that the elements that make a good performance are similar whether one is playing jazz, commercial, or classical music.
- Demonstrate fundamental skills in audio, video, electronic and computer technology.
- Acquire, through a broadly-based general education curriculum, an appreciation for, and understanding of major developments, traditions, and influences on and from world cultures.
- Experience a positive environment that fosters continued intellectual, musical, and professional growth.
- Determine the place of the artistic medium in their lives.
- Develop a language for expressing creative impulses.
- Understand the essential melodic, rhythmic, and analytical elements of contrasting styles of music, and to be able to perform them in a convincing manner.
- Demonstrate research and analytical skills and to apply problem-solving techniques in a variety of performing and teaching situations.
- Demonstrate a commitment to advocacy on behalf of music and the arts in schools and communities.

In addition to these traits, students in the music education program should be able to:

- Understand the essential melodic, rhythmic, and analytical components of a musical score, and communicate the musical language of the score in a clear and accurate manner.
- Demonstrate familiarity with methods, philosophies, and pedagogical systems appropriate to educational situations.

The applied music levels system has been in place since 1999. The table of levels is included in the Music Student Handbook (Edition 5.1, effective fall 2003 semester). The levels system permits faculty to have an “umbrella” view of student’s progress in applied music. Individual semester grades reflect progress in a short time period, while the assignment of a level reflects how the student compares to norms established by each of the performance areas (brass, keyboard, percussion, strings, voice, woodwinds). For example, a student accepted on probation may earn an “A” for the fall semester, but continue to be assigned a level of 2, the probationary level of incoming B.Arts majors. During the spring semester, that same student may earn another “A,” be taken off probation, and be assigned level 3, the standard entry level for B.Arts majors. The semester grade indicates that successful progress is being made on a week-to-week basis, but the fact that the student entered with some background deficiency or lack of training results in the assignment of a lower level. Students are given copies of their level at the second meeting of MUS 100 (Applied Music Convocation) each semester, or after a jury performance that does not occur at the end of the semester.

The Department of Music requires a minimum of four semesters study at the lower division before attempting the Sophomore Hearing. A maximum of two attempts are permitted for the Sophomore Hearing.

Each of the applied areas had developed a list of expectations for each level and instrument. During the spring and summer 2004, the keyboard area coordinator and department chair revised the keyboard list, resulting in a very comprehensive and clear articulation of the levels system for its use (see Appendix 2). This will serve as a model for the other applied areas.

In fall 2003, the Department of Music implemented a very important two-course sequence, MUS 305 and 306 (Music Technology I and II, respectively). Student comments from those courses indicated that the team-taught approach was moderately successful, but had some major drawbacks. Chiefly, these were 1) student confusion on how grades were assigned; 2) lack of

consistency in assignments/projects/grading among the several instructors, 3) misunderstanding of the value of individual “modules” of the course; and 4) difficulty in working with so many faculty. Faculty assigned to the course met twice over the summer to re-design the syllabus. The department chair, serving as course “manager,” asked each instructor to reexamine their materials, presentations, and grading strategies. Most importantly, each instructor will conduct at least one formal assessment at the end of their module, resulting in a tangible grade that is shared immediately with the students. The department chair will monitor this practice, will collate grades accumulated by midterm, and will report these grades to all students.

### Faculty Goals

1. Continued pursuit and demonstration of excellence as creative artists, teachers, scholars, and consultants.
2. Continued implementation of new technology and pedagogical techniques.
3. Restoration of lost full-time positions in piano and guitar.
4. Extension of our community of performers and scholars to include the larger-than-ever coterie of part-time faculty.

The department’s comprehensive program for faculty evaluation provides for submission of annual files by all non-tenured faculty, scheduled and assigned mentoring of all non-tenured faculty, and for more specific application of criteria used in evaluation. As is occurring across the university, the Department of Music is adapting its system to meet the needs of the new Faculty Evaluation and Compensation program. Full-time music faculty voted to expand the membership of the Faculty Concerns Committee from 5 to 7 for the purposes of drafting the appropriate documents. The additional two members are from the probationary faculty. These new members will not participate in personnel decisions. Documents and percentages suggested by the FCC will be brought to the entire full-time faculty for discussion and approval. For 2004-2005, of twenty full-time faculty, there are eight non-tenured faculty in tenure-track positions, and one on a one-year contract.

The chair consults with individual faculty to develop leadership among the “mid-career” faculty, and to change faculty assignments to reflect both departmental need and faculty interest. Most recently, this resulted in changes in Athletic Bands staffing and the assignment of faculty to MUS 121 (Aural Perceptions). Although these discussions most often occur during the meetings concerning the Annual Report and Planning Page, they continue throughout the year.

Since the spring 1999 semester, we have used five evaluation forms: applied lessons, undergraduate classroom courses, graduate classroom courses, performing ensembles, and MUS 142 (Music Appreciation). As part of our work in adapting to the new Faculty Evaluation and Compensation program, we will examine whether the new single form required by the university eliminates questions of importance to our program.

The current Faculty Evaluation Program provides the option for external peer evaluation. The Faculty Concerns Committee will consider how this may be accommodated in the new matrices that support faculty evaluation.

### Curriculum Goals

1. Continued incorporation of new elements and techniques into the curriculum.

2. Periodic reviews of structure and content, particularly of new courses and revisions.  
Specifically, ongoing attention to the capstone courses.
3. Preparation of new sequences for history courses.
4. Submission of revised B.A. – Music Education curriculum.
5. Submission of a liberal arts degree in music.
6. Submission of a A.A. degree in recording technology. (drafted, under consideration)

Merger of the formerly separate undergraduate and graduate committees has streamlined the curriculum reform effort, and has helped stimulate discussion of the relationship and effect of changes at either level. Since the Department of Music services students in the College of Fine Arts, the College of Education and Human Services, and the Graduate College, it is important that we continue to foster good communication between these colleges.

## **B. LEARNING OUTCOMES/DATA COLLECTION**

A three-part assessment process (entrance, midway, graduation) provides regular and coherent data for evaluation of student progress. Within that umbrella process, jury exams, theory/aural skills barrier exams, sophomore and recital hearings, the graduation oral examination, and team-taught courses (such as Music Technology) present unique opportunities for faculty to gather as a panel and consider the body of work by individual students. In addition, students must earn a grade of at least “C” in all music courses. Procedures used to assess each outcome differ according to the activity.

We conduct and record the methods of assessment listed in Table 1 in the following manner:

- Course assessment instruments are given and graded by faculty teaching the specific courses.
- Barrier examinations are created and administered by the faculty of the departmental area represented in the exam.
- Forms for juries, the Sophomore Hearing and the Recital Hearing are completed by the appropriate faculty committee, filed in the department, and shared with the student.
- Capstone materials are assigned and graded by a committee of three music faculty. To assist with the capstone courses, within the first two weeks of each semester, the department chair holds a meeting for all students enrolled in the capstone courses and their faculty supervisors. The two-semester calendar and all course requirements are reviewed.

The core of the music curriculum is the applied music program, through which students study and develop skills in performing music. Using a variety of measures, a faculty jury of at least three members evaluates entrance auditions, juries, sophomore and recital hearings, and recitals. The evaluative measures include course descriptions; literature/technique/musicianship requirements given in the levels descriptions; and combine experience at a variety of institutions reflecting national norms for undergraduate performance in our degree options. Ensemble conductors are responsible for evaluating student progress in performance groups. This evaluation is based upon their performance skill and overall musical and professional contributions to the ensemble.

The outcome of the jury, including the applied music level assignment, is one of several criteria considered by faculty before final course grades are issued, and before permission is granted to register for specific applied music courses in the next semester. Departmental policy counts the semester jury performance as one-third of the semester grade.

The Sophomore Hearing is an adequate measure of musical performance. Successful completion of all parts of the Sophomore Hearing permits the student to move from lower division to upper division applied study (100 level to 300 level). The levels system codifies the progress of the student through the applied music program. (see Appendix 2 for jury data from 2003-04)

Ongoing discussion and analysis of the data suggest that entrance theory placement tests, administered on the first day of classes in the fall, are moderately reliable determinants of entrance abilities. Due in part to the fundamental importance of theory and aural skills, we continue to be concerned over our ability to assist "at-risk" students, particularly in the theory sequence. Graduate teaching assistants recently and currently assigned to serve as theory instructors and tutors have been quite successful. Recent semesters have shown improvement in reducing attrition rates in the music major, due in part to earlier and more successful intervention with students showing deficient incoming skills.

The redesign of the theory sequence, implemented in fall 2003, permits students to register independently for theory (MUS 111, 112, 211, 212) and aural skills (MUS 113, 114, 213, 214). Faculty decided that students may not get more than one semester apart; i.e., they make take theory 2 and aural skills 1 concurrently, but cannot take aural skills 4 while taking theory 2. Students may not register for the junior level analysis courses (MUS 301/302) until both theory 4 and aural skills 4 have been passed with at least a grade of C.

Barrier exams in general musicianship and music history/literature are reliable and valid indicators of probable success in graduation progress.

As noted in previous years, we have had good success at identifying incoming students with deficient musical preparation, but must do more (and sooner) to correct this deficiency if we are to reduce the attrition percentage. Our relationship with the University College is very good. The need for more complete and accurate records on transfer students continues. Securing such information will improve our ability to correct assignment of credits from previous music experience.

Records are kept in student files in the department office. Beginning in December 2003, the Department of Music now receives grade labels for all B.F.A. majors. We still are unable to receive labels for B.A. – Music Education majors, and are forced each May to order a set of transcripts for these majors from Computing Support. Grade labels and transcripts are placed in each student's file. Advising checklists are included in the Student Handbook.

## C. RESULTS

Recent results in both formal assessments and barrier exams indicate that the quality of our incoming students is improving, despite the ongoing difficulty that secondary institutions are having training students in the breadth of musical language and skills. Our retention level is rising as well, indicating that students are entering our program at a higher level, are experiencing fewer difficulties in progressing through the major, and are receiving better advising.

Of particular importance is the fact that the number of students failing the freshman aural skills barrier has dropped from an average of 6 to 10 students to a current level of 3 to 5 students each spring. Students not able to pass the entrance theory proficiency exam are placed in a developmental theory course (MUS 101) and a developmental section of class piano (MUS 102). Continuing recent practice, we offer an "off" section of MUS 111 and MUS 113 (Theory 1 and Aural Skills 1, respectively) in the spring semester. Pending funding and enrollment, we offer MUS 112 and MUS 114 (Theory 2 and Aural Skills 2, respectively) in summer session C. Successful completion of the summer MUS 112/114 section puts students back on track for the fall semester.

## II. BOT INITIATIVE 3 COMPLIANCE

To our knowledge, there is no single state or national testing program that will serve as a benchmark. There are national norms in particular areas of study, and faculty apply such norms in constructing placement and barrier examinations. We receive data from COEHS on music education students' success at passing Praxis II exams.

### III. PLANS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

- Revision of the levels system descriptors for each studio – using the Keyboard Area model.

We continue to review the levels system and to reconcile discrepancies in the standards as they are applied by individual studios. Although an explanation of the levels system and the table of levels is given in the Student Handbook, it is apparent that students do not fully understand the system or its impact upon their academic progress in the applied music program. In class meetings

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of MUS 100 (the applied music laboratory), the department chair continues to distribute information about the level system.

- Curriculum Reform

We plan to submit to the appropriate curriculum committees:

- New course proposals for a revised history sequence
- New course proposals for applied music course numbers for composition and Contemporary Music Ensemble
- Revised program for B.A. – Music Education
- New program proposal for A.A. – Recording Technology

- Syllabus construction and dissemination

While the form and content of our syllabi continue to improve, it is evident that not all instructors are distributing syllabi in a timely manner. This is particularly important in applied music, which carries with it several co-curricular requirements. As time permits, we hope to have all instructors post syllabi and pertinent course information on the web.

- We must construct an entrance barrier for the Masters program.

This barrier will assess the theory, history, and literature background of all incoming graduate students, and will provide us with needed data from which to plan remedial courses.

### IV. ASSISTANCE NEEDED

We would like to work with UAC members to construct instruments to survey our graduates and their employers with regard to the suitability of our degrees for various careers and jobs. This is especially important as we redesign the curriculum. We also should schedule meetings with currently active professionals to survey their opinions on what training should provide.

### V. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Data from the barrier exams confirms our anecdotal impression that we may accurately predict the probable exit level as an extrapolation from the entrance level. Students have difficulty understanding the difference between current work (semester grade) and the overarching concept of achievement (level). Our advising process has improved, especially since the implementation of a two-step group advising schedule each semester. We must encourage all faculty to attend advising sessions hosted by the University College and Academic Affairs, and must educate them to changes in the entire curriculum.