

University of Washington Correspondence

## INTERDEPARTMENTAL

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March 15, 2004

TO: Elizabeth Feetham, Acting Dean, Graduate School

FROM: School of Music Review Committee  
Professor Charles Hirschman, Sociology  
Professor Marianne Stecher-Hansen, Scandinavian Studies  
Professor James Scott (University of North Texas)  
Professor John Schaffer (University of Wisconsin)  
Professor Barry Witham, Drama, Committee Chair

RE: School of Music 10-Year Review

In spite of ongoing concerns about space and financial support, the School of Music continues to offer excellent degree programs, supports a first rate faculty and contributes extremely valuable public service to the academy and the community. Both its distinguished history and its continuing excellence speak volumes to the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of its faculty and staff. The overwhelming majority of the faculty members are active scholars, teachers, and performers who have contributed to the distinction of the University. Overall, the Music School faculty has made (and continues to make) an impressive range of significant contributions, ranging from well-regarded books and articles in professional journals to the production of, and participation in, musical performances (locally, nationally, and internationally) and prestigious recordings.

The review committee was impressed with the dedication of the faculty members to building high quality programs and serving students. The School would not have attained its current reputation and stature without the major sacrifices of many faculty members who routinely work evenings and weekends on their research, teaching, and service. The School of Music and the University can take considerable pride in the accomplishments of their very talented and hardworking faculty.

A review of the School must proceed, by necessity, from a clear understanding of the generalized mission of a comprehensive school of music within a research university. Such programs are a particularly American creation, combining the functions of European conservatories and university-based music programs (based on musicology and composition) and American normal schools, into entities that over the greater part of the last century have demonstrated themselves to be more than the sum of their parts. The evolution of the field of music has in fact validated the interactions of scholars, composers, teachers, and practitioners. Musical versatility and breadth of education are extremely important for musicians endeavoring to find their place in the profession today. While some will actively pursue multiple career skills, all are well served by a

rich and diverse learning environment.

This model contains the potential, of course, for disharmony: of tensions between the Academics@ and the performers, between the conservatory and the university. Our sense, however, is that these tensions are not unduly divisive and are generally reflective of similar circumstances in most peer institutions. Neither of the outside consultants who aided in this project perceived the University of Washington to be radically different in this regard from numerous other programs they have visited. In fact, we were impressed by the genuine collegiality and sense of common mission that we experienced in meeting with the faculty and staff

There are, nonetheless, important issues that do need to be addressed because maintaining a comprehensive program in the face of continually eroding financial resources raises questions and creates tensions which do have the potential for significant disruption. With 13 divisions and 38 degrees, some faculty feel significant gaps in communication. Others seem so entrenched or isolated within their divisions that they are not always able to see the bigger picture and perceive common problems as unique to their unit. It is, of course, the Music faculty which is most qualified to organize a divisional restructuring. Nevertheless, there seemed to be some interest in a reorganization which might reduce the current thirteen units to eight. (It is noteworthy that the previous review in 1993 suggested attention to this same issue.) The following groupings are not a recommendation for implementation but rather a starting point for further discussion in the School.

1. Music History, Music Theory, Ethnomusicology (American Music?)
2. Music Education
3. Instrumental (Brass, Winds, String, Percussion)
4. Voice and Opera
5. Keyboard (Overlap with core curriculum)
6. Composition (with Digital Arts)
7. Conducting (Choral and Instrumental)
8. Jazz Studies (American Music?)

A discussion about divisional restructuring might also facilitate consideration of two other issues which were raised in our conversations with the faculty. First, many in the School feel an obligation to preserve the traditional Acanon@ of music with regard to repertoire, instruments, orchestras, choral groups, etc. But as musical tastes change and both technology and contemporary notions of aesthetics problematize the traditional, substantial differences arise. We heard a great deal of testimony about future faculty lines competing between Aoboes and guitars or bassoons and drums.@ And there are very real needs in other programs. It is not surprising then that the phrase, Ashe keeps the peace@ was used as both a critique and a compliment about the current Director.



Second, the tension over faculty hires is also symptomatic of what seems to be a deeper generation gap in the School. Many younger members of the faculty sense a disparity in issues like student recruitment, teaching loads, access to scholarship resources and general university service. Again, generational differences are a way of life in academia, but some highly productive younger faculty perceive that they are carrying very large loads while some senior faculty are not monitored. This, too, goes back to the notion of a comprehensive program because symphony orchestras require lots of players, and opera requires a substantial number of voices. We were struck by the reoccurrence of attitudes which seemed to divide along the lines of aggressive recruitment of students versus a sit back and they will come.

In sorting out how some of these tensions might be constructively addressed, it is especially important to realize that the current enrollment of students pursuing music degrees is rather small -- especially at the undergraduate level -- for an institution offering a large array of programs from the bachelor's level through the doctorate. In any large public university, financial accounting is inevitably based on a reasonable balance of resources relative to students served. This is not the only criterion, but it is an important one that every department and school must reckon with. In addition to self-interest, there is an important responsibility and opportunity to share, as broadly as possible, the educational mission of university treasures, like the School of Music. There are many successful examples of such initiatives already undertaken such as the large classes in World Music and Jazz Studies. But we heard quite a few faculty members report that many of their most talented undergraduate musicians did not have time to pursue the BM degree and many were not even music majors. Could there be creative programs that would allow undergraduates to pursue both their interests in music and other fields of inquiry and thus show a modest net gain in enrollment? Or might a carefully detailed enrollment model be devised, specifying ideal student numbers by performing medium, curriculum being pursued, and balance among levels (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral) of degree programs? Such a model would take into account faculty resources, available space for each of the many required functions, existing ensemble needs, critical masses for graduate student cohorts, etc. It is axiomatic that the precision of the model must be larger for a program with a relatively small total enrollment.

If an enrollment model were determined, the University should invest in it wholeheartedly. The School of Music has developed a strong reputation over a period of decades and currently exhibits a number of facets of excellence. Investments should be planned to ensure the strength of the entire, interdependent comprehensive model. Areas within the School are not like departments in a college which can be selectively nurtured or de-emphasized in a strategic manner without damage to the whole.

Although the development of such a model will require extensive analysis and reflection, there are some tentative recommendations we might make, with the caveat that significant amounts of

data upon which we built opinions turned out to be incorrect.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, we will list some items for consideration. Again, the solutions to the very real and pressing needs of the School of Music will have to come from the creativity and ingenuity of its faculty, and these specific suggestions may have serious flaws that did not occur to us or they may be inappropriate for other reasons. Many faculty in the Music School expressed the hope that the College will provide additional resources in order to add new faculty positions to cover holes in important performance areas and to develop areas of increasing student demand on the academic side. These hopes are based on valid perceptions that many faculty members are stretched too thin and must be evaluated in the broader context of the budgetary problems facing the College and higher education in general. We offer these suggestions as ways of strengthening the quality of the School and as leverage in seeking additional support.

1. Consider a significantly larger undergraduate Music Education program which would help fill out the School's ensembles and provide needed public school music teachers trained in an environment of intellectual and artistic excellence. If our figures are correct, Music Ed accounts for only 9% of the enrollment as opposed to 25% at, say, Eastman. The current faculty in Music Education have been very successful in developing ties to K-12 schools that provide major means of recruitment of talented undergraduates and also have enhanced the reputation of the School in the broader community.
2. Consider the feasibility of a Direct Admission or Enrollment model to attract the very top students and performers directly into the majors. The School of Music should avail itself of an option that is currently in practice in other colleges at the university.
3. Consider allowing students worthy of the B. Mus degree to pursue only that degree if they wish, rather than taking the combination BA/BM double degree as the required default program. This latter five-year program creates a disincentive relative to other schools, particularly in times of rising tuition. The University of Washington seems particularly well-suited to encouraging double-major and double-degree programs, but they should be serving the students' interests, rather than creating an unwelcome burden.
4. Pursue a Program in American Music perhaps in conjunction with developing the current Jazz Studies option.
5. Persuade the College to invest in additional graduate assistantships essential to supporting the enrollment model. These might target performance students whose duties could include studio

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the data in the Self Study was very confusing and many faculty bios were not included. Eventually we believe that we got reliable information and enrollment figures, but we were puzzled by some of the discrepancies. A special thanks to Jackie Duggins for ferrying to us all those updated reports.

teaching, performing in Aextra@ ensembles --- especially a new-music ensemble --- or teaching aural skills.

6. Review departmental policy for awardees. Scholarships and assistantships should be awarded for the expected period of a student=s enrollment, subject to meeting clearly articulated standards for renewal eligibility and to available funding. Otherwise, awards will not be competitive with those of other institution. While additional resources are clearly needed, even the current situation would be improved by accepting the risks of making such commitments to outstanding students.

7. Explore the maximum student size for the very excellent program in graduate choral conducting. We received a variety of input regarding opportunities for Apodium time@ and recommend that the School examine this issue.

8. Tie the Theory Certificate to Theory Pedagogy and include internship teaching. This would provide an important service to students at the same time it would justify assistantships for students in the applied areas.

9. Strengthen the vocal component of the opera program. The University of Washington=s Opera Production degree has a significant history and important function, but the wisdom of having such a degree is dependent upon the strength of the vocal program that the opera should be serving. An important aspect of the enrollment model should be the inclusion of an appropriate cadre of mature, high-quality singers to be cast in the main-stage roles. While an occasional guest can provide a positive enhancement to a particular production, a strong opera program will not be dependent upon external casting.

10. Clarify as soon as possible the status of the Aon-leave@ faculty member in Music History. And continue to support the Ph.D. programs in all the academic areas where they have flourished.

We would also like to comment on the current leadership in the School. With so many competing programs and demands for financial support, there is almost no way that a Director can avoid criticism. It is our estimation that Robin is doing a very good job in a difficult environment. She is perceived as steady, fair minded, hard working and gracious. She mediates and massages, among and in, a variety of camps and has raised the visibility and reputation of the School considerably. In addition to being an accomplished artist, she also wears a variety of other hats. Her administrative talents have been recognized by her recent appointment as Acting Associate Dean, and her record as a fund raiser and ambassador for the School of Music is superb. The cavils that do arise have essentially to do with transparency and with the need perhaps to decentralize more information about budgeting, staff support and scholarship monies. More than one program Head related that in important financial matters they are simply Atold@

what their resources are instead of being a part of a departmental process.

Finally, reports of this kind frequently focus on lack or shortcomings, and we would like to conclude by stressing how impressed we were with the overall quality of the School, especially in the Graduate programs. Across a wide variety of interests and talents, we heard students praise their programs and their professors. We hope that this report encourages further critical discussions and, by extension, continued excellence.

We recommend continuation of all degree programs but strongly urge further discussion about restructuring the School and the implementation of an enrollment model.