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DATE: May 5, 1998
TO: Yvonne Ozzello, Associate Dean of L&S
FROM: John Wm. Schaffer, Director
RE: School of Music Assessment Plan

Please find enclosed copies of both the formal School of Music Assessment document and a short abstract of that effort.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

Encl.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC ASSESSMENT PLAN ABSTRACT

The School of Music views its objectives as complementary to those of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We strive to “provide an environment in which faculty and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of the present and future generations with improvement in the quality of life.”

Most importantly, we function primarily as a professional school rather than as a department. Much of what we offer is controlled by NASM (National Association of Schools of Music), the accreditation agency charged with certifying professional degree-granting programs. We undergo an extensive accreditation review every ten years, consisting of a year-long self study followed by on-sight visitations and a series of written reports and recommendations. Any curricular/program changes must meet NASM guidelines and be approved by their board prior to our implementation. We also undertake smaller, interim internal reviews every five-years. Such a review is soon upon us and we are already in the process of implementation.

In addition, NASM annually collects extensive data from all accredited institutions (ourselves included). These HEADS (Higher Education Arts Data Services) reports supply schools with a wealth of information related to the scope and viability of our programs as they relate to other comparable institutions. *The information gleaned from this process serves as one of our primary vehicles for gauging the health of our offerings.*

There are several areas, however, that NASM accreditation processes and HEADS reports fail to address. The School of Music has in place a number of mechanisms designed to assess the progress of all our students, undergraduates and graduates alike. We employ the following assessment tools on a regular basis:

- Performance Evaluations,
- Pre/Post-Testing,
- Thesis/Dissertation Reviews,
- Employer Surveys, and
- Alumni Survey.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC ASSESSMENT PLAN

The School of Music views its goals and objectives as complementary to those of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Specifically, we strive to “provide an environment in which faculty and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of the present and future generations with improvement in the quality of life.”

Specific goals of an education in music are:

- competency in communication;
- competency in using the modes of thought characteristic of the art of music;
- awareness and perception of the musical art and its discipline;
- a knowledge of our basic cultural heritage; and
- a thorough understanding of at least one area—creative, analytical, historical, or pedagogical.

Most importantly, we function primarily as a professional school rather than as a department within a college—offering professional music degrees (BM, MM, & DMA) and training individuals for music-specific careers; and we have designed our various curriculums to equip students for careers in composing, performing, teaching from Kindergarten through College or University, music administration, the music business, or one of the many facets of promoting the arts as a community treasure. As one of the top 30 music schools in the United States (out of 600+ accredited Schools of music in the country), we take this professional role very seriously. Over 70% of our total undergraduate population are music performance majors (i.e., those intending to make a career out of their music making).

Much of the content and structure of what we offer is controlled by NASM (National Association of Schools of Music), the national accreditation agency charged with monitoring and certifying professional degree-granting music schools, and is to a large extent beyond our individual control as long as we wish to maintain our accreditation status. To this end, we do not undertake annual curricular/program reviews, as our offerings are mandatorily constrained and must be approved as part of an extensive accreditation process that takes place every ten years. This exercise consists of a year-long self study process followed by on-sight visitations and a series of written reports and recommendations. Accreditation is granted only when all of the requirements set forth in the NASM guidelines are met to their total satisfaction. Any curricular/program changes we propose must meet NASM guidelines and be approved by their board prior to our implementation.

Since ten years between reviews is still a rather significant length of time, our school also undertakes smaller, interim reviews at the five-year mid points. Since our last ten-year review took place in 1993-4, our mid-point year of 1998-9 is soon upon us; and we are already in the process of implementing this review. *Specifically, we will be revisiting the ten-year report with the idea of checking all of our programs to see if they have kept up with the current accreditation standards.*

In addition, NASM annually collects extensive data from all accredited institutions. The HEADS (Higher Education Arts Data Services) reports generated from this data aim to supply schools with a wealth of information related to the scope and viability of our programs as they relate to other comparable institutions across the country. Each year we, as an accredited institution, are required to accumulate and submit a great deal of data for these reports. *The information gleaned from this process serves as one of our primary vehicles for gauging the health of our offerings.*

There are several areas, however, that the NASM accreditation process and HEADS reports fail to address: 1) specific aspects of how our student population fares within our own programs, and 2) how successful our alumni are in their chosen professional disciplines. To these ends, the School of Music has in place a number of mechanisms designed to assess the progress of all our students, undergraduates and graduates alike.

With regard to undergraduate education, we employ the following assessment tools on a regular basis:

- *Performance Evaluations*: All applied students in the school are required to give a “juried” performance every semester. These sessions are observed by a minimum of five faculty members (usually from the major and related fields). Membership on the committee is generally consistent over several years, thus ensuring comparative assessments of each student’s semester-by-semester progress. Each committee member submits a ballot containing a grade and a written progress report.
- *Post-Testing*: All applied students in the school are required to perform two hour-long recitals (one each in their junior and senior years) in order to graduate. The recitals are graded by a faculty committee charged with examining the overall professional qualifications of each advanced student. The final graduation recital is supposed to embody a composite of each student’s musical achievements as determined by comparisons with expectations from the professional musical community outside of the University. While the recitals are adjudicated by committees of our own faculty, we expect these faculty members to be professionally aware of the expectations of the field.

All academic students are expected to write both a junior and senior thesis. These documents are examined by a faculty committee made up of members from the major and related fields. As with the applied areas, each student is assigned a committee that will serve for both documents, thus ensuring a method for observing a student’s growth over the course of their final two years.

With regard to graduate education, we employ the following assessment tools on a regular basis:

- *Performance Evaluations*: (same as with undergraduate; see listing above)
- *Post Testing*: (same as with undergraduate; see listing above)
In addition to the items addressed above, applied graduate students must undertake a series of degree recitals, including a public lecture recital. All graduate students must also undertake a compliment of comprehensive entrance interviews/auditions, preliminary exams prior to attaining dissertator status, and publicly defend a substantial research document (the scope being determined by the degree and area of specialization).
- *Thesis/Dissertation Reviews*: All dissertations (both for the academic Ph.D., and for the applied DMA) are reviewed by several committees. Dissertation proposals must be “defended” to the committee of five faculty overseeing and evaluating the student’s research work. Once successfully defended, the proposal must then be approved by the Graduate Curriculum Committee, an additional group of five appointed faculty members. Finally, all completed dissertations must be approved through a public defense.

- *Employer Surveys (Academic)*: Annually, the NAMESU (National Association of Music Executives of State Universities) organization members discuss in detail their expectations for faculty hires in music. Since this group represents music administrators from the top 50 universities (both public and private), their amalgamated wisdom offers a very clear picture of academic hiring expectations.
- *Alumni Survey*: The school is always trying to maintain some placement record of our graduates. This data is collected in several ways. First, we periodically solicit information about employment and/or professional accomplishments from our alumni through our twice-yearly *Music Accents* in an attempt to maintain an accurate and up-to-date listing for all of our graduates. While a response is not compulsory, most alumni do respond when they feel that they have information to share. Perhaps more importantly, all of our faculty in the school are asked to track the professional progress of their own students. At least once each year, the graduate office solicits such information from the faculty in an effort to maintain a comprehensive graduate placement list. The information is then used when evaluating the effectiveness of a particular program or individual faculty member.

There are many and varied vehicles for assessment. Certainly, we have only touched the surface of all the possibilities; yet, given the constraints and nature of our professional school, together with those assessment tools already in place, we believe that we are able to assess our programs in an effective and timely manner.