Program Review
WCU School of Music

Response to Review Standards

Significance and Scope of the Program

Standard 1. The purpose of the program reflects and supports the mission and strategic plan of Western Carolina University and the mission of its School and/or College.

The purpose of the School of Music as stated in the Mission Statement is really two-fold. First, the school provides nationally accredited curricula in music with professional and liberal arts emphases. This means that we offer quality professional degree programs in music education, commercial & electronic music, and performance, as well as quality liberal arts (B.A.) programs with an emphasis in music industry, in addition to a more general program.

Secondly, the School of Music (along with the other arts units) serves as a major source of artistic activity in Western North Carolina through its performances, clinics, festivals and other outreach activities. This is in clear alignment with the 2020 Vision Goal 1.1 (Deliver high quality academic programs…) and also Initiative 1.1.2 (Position and market WCU as the cultural heart of Western North Carolina in the creative arts)

The School of Music has an enviable reputation in the state and region as a high quality program (fully accredited by NASM) with an excellent faculty, good facilities, fine performing ensembles, and a large and growing list of alumni who are making their mark in their respective professions (teaching, performing, and various aspects of the music industry). The music education program is recognized as a leader in the state and the commercial/electronic program is unique in its approach combining high musical expectations along with mastering the technological aspects of the profession.

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: WCU Strategic Plan – 2020 Vision; School of Music Mission Statement]
Standard 2. The program engages in ongoing, systematic planning that is reflective of the University’s strategic priorities.

The last formal strategic plan for the School of Music was done in 2003-2004 and provides interesting historical perspective on the development of the School (then called the Department of Music). With the age of the Strategic Plan, it is obvious that we need to start work on a replacement and, indeed, that is scheduled to begin at the SOM Faculty Retreat on January 23, 2015.

Even without a recent, full-scale revision to the strategic plan, there has been ongoing planning and revisions of curriculum, scheduling, and other aspects of the program. The School of Music was also an active participant in the development of the College of Fine and Performing Arts’ QEP document, *Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning* which was written in 2008 and contains many elements of strategic planning.

Most of the strategic planning discussion originates in the Music Executive Committee which meets weekly during the fall and spring semesters and consists of elected representatives from various faculty areas. This group also serves as the curriculum committee so it often looks at the alignment between curricular issues and the larger goals of the school.

Recent discussions that have been brought from the committee to the faculty as a whole have included the role of the Artist in Residence program and its effect on the recruiting of specific studio areas, the possibility of establishing a string program, faculty load issues, and the need for studio recruiting in the pursuit of strategic growth. Areas of growth opportunities have been identified (e.g. piano, voice, double reeds) along with the challenges and needs accompanying such growth (e.g. all music students must take piano, so for every 15 – 16 new students we must offer an additional section of class piano).

There is a need for clarification and organization in the SOM strategic planning process. That is a priority item in the discussions we have scheduled for the remainder of this academic year.
Standard 3. The program provides and evaluates a high quality curriculum that emphasizes student learning as its primary purpose.

Curriculum
All of the programs and degree plans in the School of Music are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). This is the only national accrediting agency in music and maintains the national standards for all university music programs.

Our curriculum conforms to the NASM standards and is revised periodically to better meet the needs of our students. The music “core” is a 38 hour requirement common to all of the music degrees and concentrations. Most of the courses are sequential and, therefore, there are numerous pre-requisites in the course requirements. This “music core” is designed so that music students can switch programs in the first two years (e.g. from BM Performance to BM Music Ed) with no lost credits or time to graduation.

The remainder of the curriculum comprises the Liberal Studies requirement (42 hours), Performance Courses, Methods Courses, Required Electives, Education Courses, and other required components.

It is a crowded curriculum but that is the nature of professional music degrees everywhere. There are many one credit courses such as ensembles and methods classes that are required by NASM guidelines. This is especially true of the music education degree where the licensure area is broadly defined as K-12 music.

Students can complete the degree in 8 semesters if they are very careful and stay on track. Music students are encouraged to pursue summer session classes to lighten their fall/spring loads and many do.
Assessment

There are specific assessment components for the various instructional areas. The studio classes (individual lessons) require end of the semester juries and level exams which must be passed before moving on to the next level of instruction. There is also a senior performance requirement (public recital). Juries and recitals are evaluated by a panel of studio teachers in the performance area.

In other classes, instructors are expected to adhere to syllabus requirements as to outcomes and performance criteria. Traditional academic (lecture) classes use student evaluations and course outcomes such as grade distributions to assess effectiveness. As a new Director in the SOM, I have not yet gone through the AFE process with the faculty but I plan on using these data to facilitate discussions about course effectiveness.

An important part of assessment for performing ensembles is the quality of their performances. All ensemble classes are expected to give public performances each semester. Many give one major performance but others schedule multiple performances both on and off campus. Audio recordings (and sometimes video recordings) are made and archived of these performances. In addition, SOM faculty are encouraged to attend as many of these performances as possible. With the large number of these concerts/recitals scheduled each semester it is not feasible to expect all faculty to attend all the events.

Currently there is no formal assessment plan on file for the School of Music and the annual assessment reports for the past five years have not been completed. This will be addressed by the Music Executive Committee this spring and the requisite documents brought up to date.

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: WCU Catalog Copy; Advising Check Sheets; OIPE Reports; Music Course Rotation]
Faculty Resources, Teaching, Scholarship and Service

Standard 4. The program has sufficient faculty resources to meet its mission and goals.

The music faculty at WCU is one of the school’s greatest strengths. The 25 full-time faculty plus two “special status” faculty (Matt Henley works with the marching band but is not reviewed/evaluated by the director of SOM and Dan Gonko is EPA non-faculty although he does teach a few classes) are augmented by a number of adjuncts. Of the 25 FT Faculty, 20 hold the doctorate (Ph.D., DMA or equivalent), 4 hold the master’s degree and one has a bachelor’s degree.

The areas of specialization within the faculty reflect the emphases of the school very well. Each of the instrumental areas is covered by a specialist (flute, clarinet, bassoon, etc.) with a duplication only in the trombone/euphonium studio. This is a common “studio double” even among larger institutions. We did have a full time faculty member with specialty in oboe until this year when a physical problem prevented her from continuing to play that instrument. Since then we have employed an outstanding adjunct faculty member to teach oboe. The voice faculty covers three of the major voice types (soprano, tenor, and baritone) although studio instruction in voice does not require a match of voice type between student and teacher. The commercial and electronic faculty have outstanding professional credentials in both performance and technology-centered areas. All four have music industry credentials which gives the program additional credibility.

The large ensemble conductors and music education faculty all have many years of experience and public school teaching backgrounds.

The faculty backgrounds span a vast geographical area including 3 international faculty (Australia, Czech Republic, and Hungary) but do not include any ethnic minorities. We continue to work toward more diversity but this is a challenge given the rural, small town nature of our campus environment.
The faculty members in the SOM are all very active in their respective fields. Many have regional, national and even international reputations in their areas of specialty. Most are active performers in many different musical venues (Asheville Symphony, Asheville Lyric Opera, Smoky Mountain Brass Quintet, regional jazz venues, etc.) or are active as conductors/clinicians throughout the country.

In the area of traditional scholarship, many SOM faculty members have made substantial contributions. Dr. Christina Reitz, for example, has proven herself to be an emerging scholar in her field of music history/musicology. She has authored numerous papers in peer-reviewed journals as well as presented papers at national and international conferences. Dr. Andrew Adams and Br. Brad Martin have recently published a book *Hanon Restored: Charles-Louis Hanon’s Five-Finger Exercises Restored to His Original Design*. Drs. Armfield and Schallock just recently presented a paper at the 2015 Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities in Honolulu. Dr. Gaetano has over 40 published works for percussion and numerous articles on percussion topics in journals such as Percussive Notes, North Carolina Music Teacher, and the Instrumentalist. Dr. Bruce Frazier has numerous presentations at national conferences such as College Music Society. This is just a sampling of this type of scholarly activity among the faculty. The faculty resumes offer a more comprehensive listing of their scholarship and creative activities.

All of these activities are in addition to the numerous on-campus performances and presentations accomplished every semester as part of an active and highly-visible music program.

Faculty loads are a concern among the music faculty. Although the process of load assignments has been unchanged for many years, there is now some disagreement about the balance of teaching loads. The complexities of teaching assignments in any school of music can lead to such disagreements as we don’t follow a traditional 3 credit-hour lecture class model and most, if not all faculty, have a “hybrid” load assignment (i.e. studio, lecture, ensemble, lab). Please refer to the Faculty Load Report in the Appendices to Standard 4 for a more thorough explanation of faculty loads in the School of Music.
Faculty Load policy was one of the important agenda items discussed at the faculty retreat on January 23rd. Although no final decisions were reached at the retreat, the discussions have already led to minor revisions in load assignments and further examinations of load policy (such as requiring statements about release time activities on the Annual Faculty Evaluation).

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: OIPE Reports; Faculty Roster with Credentials; SOM Collegial Review Document; SOM Faculty Load Report; Faculty Resumes/CV’s in separate binder]

**Standard 5. The program attracts, retains and graduates high quality students.**

Beginning in the late 1980’s the School of Music (then the Department of Music) began a period of steady growth from fewer that 60 music majors to around 200 majors in the early 2000’s. That size seemed to be the right size for the school in terms of facilities, faculty, access to performing ensembles and class size.

In recent years, there has been some fluctuation in the numbers of music majors but, in general, it has remained around 200. This number did include the graduate program which is now discontinued, so the slight decline in the last two years does reflect that reality. There has been a slight downward trend in numbers of freshman music majors for the last five years with a steep (and inexplicable) drop last year. That number bounced back significantly this year (2014/15) to numbers more in line with expectations.

One trend that must be recognized is the decline in numbers of teacher education majors throughout North Carolina and other parts of the country. The largest program within the School of Music is the Music Education program so we are particularly affected by that trend and hope that it reverses quickly.

Recruiting is extremely important in the School of Music and every faculty member is expected to contribute to the recruiting efforts. The use of large ensemble tours, exhibition performances and festivals is an on-going effort. The high visibility of the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band has been particularly effective in promoting the SOM. Individual faculty recruiting
activities, however, are equally important and there are some inconsistencies in this effort that
must be addressed.

One of the new initiatives implemented in the last two months is the formation of a marketing
committee within the School of Music. Consisting of faculty volunteers who have interest and
enthusiasm for such efforts, this group has already begun to make recommendations for
expanding our marketing efforts and streamlining our contact procedures with prospective
students. They are currently working with WCU’s new Director of Marketing, Robin Oliver, in
this effort. Immediate plans are for new social media and web-based initiatives as well as more
professional looking print materials, implementation of online forms for audition applications,
and use of more audio and video materials on our website.

We are again lobbying for the addition of an “Arts Link” to the WCU homepage. With the re-
design of the WCU website in progress, this would be an ideal time to include this link to make it
easier for prospective students, their parents, and patrons of our events to find materials relevant
to the arts.

Retention
The School of Music has generally been above the university average in student retention.
Because students must audition into the programs, there is a more selective student population
than in many other programs. Students are immersed in music classes from their first semester
and they form a cohesive group that remains intact during their entire undergraduate experience.
It must be noted, however, that some students don’t have a realistic expectation of what it means
to be a music major and the enormous dedication and commitment it takes. Some students
discover after their first semester or two that they are not up to that commitment and so they opt
for other majors but tend to stay at WCU. Even given this fact, many of these students still
participate in musical ensembles during their entire stay at Western!

Advising
The School of Music is somewhat unique among WCU programs in that the music major’s
studio teacher is their advisor during their entire undergraduate program. Because the student
develops a close relationship with this faculty member, they usually report high satisfaction with
their advising experience. This experience typically goes well beyond just
registration/curriculum decisions and includes career guidance, advice on graduate school auditions, and employment strategies.

Student/Faculty Interaction and Student Involvement

Music Majors in the WCU School of Music have numerous opportunities to interact with faculty mentors outside of normal classroom activities. In some studios, students have the opportunity to perform alongside their teachers in professional situations (regional orchestras, musical theatre pit orchestras, church performances, etc.). In the last few years, the SOM has presented a number of concerts where these student/faculty collaborations have been featured such as the “Belcher and Friends” concert where the Wind Orchestra for Rhapsody in Blue comprised both students and faculty (performing with Chancellor David Belcher as soloist!).

There are numerous opportunities for leadership development including a significant leadership structure in the marching band, SOM fraternal organizations (Sigma Alpha Iota, Kappa Kappa Psi, Phi Mu Alpha, and the student chapter of the National Association for Music Education), and student employment positions. Outstanding music students are recognized through several methods including membership in Pi Kappa Lambda and “outstanding student” awards voted on by the music faculty.

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: OIPE Reports; List of Graduates for the last five years]

**Standard 6. The program has an administrative structure that facilitates achievement of program goals and objectives.**

The administration of the School of Music is led by its Director, Dr. John T. West. The director is assisted in the leadership of the program by the SOM Executive Committee comprised of 6 faculty members either elected by the full faculty or included by their status as program leaders (e.g. Music Ed, Commercial/Electronic). The Executive Committee meets weekly and acts as both an advisory body and a decision making body. Committee votes are taken on certain budgetary matters such as faculty travel support. The Executive Committee also acts as the curriculum committee for the SOM.
The School of Music Collegial Review Committee (CRC) is a separate group also elected by the faculty according to the guidelines specified in the School of Music Collegial Review Document. This group is charged with the various aspects of Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment.

There are a number of other elected and appointed committees within the school which deal with issues such as scholarships, marketing, and “area specific issues” (voice area, instrumental area, commercial/electronic area, theory/history, etc.). There is a student advisory committee as well but it has been inactive for the last two years. It is my (JTW) intention to reactivate this committee starting in Spring Semester 2015 with regular meetings to provide greater student input into SOM policies and procedures.

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: SOM Administrative Chart, Committee Descriptions]

**Standard 7. The program has adequate resources to meet its goals and objectives.**

The School of Music, in general, has adequate resources to function as a highly effective program at WCU. There are some exceptions which will be noted in the ensuing discussion. We are extremely fortunate to have the new program fee allocations which have already begun to pay dividends for the music majors. This money is being used to directly benefit the students through such things as new pianos for the practice rooms, replacement and modernization of equipment for methods classes, new technology for the Music Recital Hall and many other things.

Another recent budgetary highlight is the “ongoing” allocation of money for the Artist in Residence series. This unique program allows our music students to perform with professional string players in orchestral settings. As we do not have a string program in the SOM, it is a tremendous opportunity for our students (both instrumental and vocal) to get this type of experience which would otherwise be lacking entirely. Being able to count on this money from year to year allows us to make better programming decisions further into the future than we could before.
Challenges

Our facilities are at maximum capacity and there is need for expansion. The Coulter Building is now approaching 40 years old and is in need of either major renovation or replacement with a larger facility. The recently completed campus master plan calls for a new facility to be built near the Bardo Arts Center. While this would be a welcome development, there is no clear idea of when this would come about so our current facilities must be maintained and, hopefully, modernized. One example is the HVAC system in Coulter. In the current system (original to the building) there is no way to control humidity. Drastic humidity swings have been recorded in the building which affect health and damage wooden instruments – both university owned and faculty owned.

Another example is the lack of acoustic isolation in the building. We cannot have a rehearsal in our main rehearsal hall (CO 173) at the same time as a performance in our Recital Hall as there is significant sound “bleed-through” between the two facilities.

One additional facility/equipment challenge which must be noted is the request for a thorough modernization of the Center for Applied Technology (CAT). This is a joint request from the College of Fine and Performing Arts and the College of Arts and Sciences. The facility has both an audio recording studio used by the School of Music and a video recording studio used by the Department of Communications. The infrastructure of the building is shared by both facilities so a joint upgrade is necessary. The programs using the facility prepare our students to enter a rapidly changing job market and the equipment must be kept up to date if that preparation is to be effective. The estimate for upgrading the facility is around one million dollars and a detailed request has been prepared by the SOM and Communications.

Our major staffing issue right now is the need for the upgrading of our half-time administrative support position (Whitney McCall) to a full time position in music. She currently divides her time with the English Department. This is our number one budget priority for this year (as it was last year) and we hope it can be realized. There is ample justification for such a position given the complexities of the School, the anticipated growth and the number of budgets maintained by the full time staff position in the office.
One faculty need has emerged just recently. With Dr. West’s move to the position of Director of the School of Music, there is a need for a new Director of Bands. Dr. West has served in that capacity since 1985 but it is not practical to expect him to serve in both capacities on a long-term basis. If the School of Music is to grow and expand its current programs, this is a critical need!

One last challenge must be addressed and it is a major one. The School of Music does not have adequate scholarship resources to compete for high quality music students. This has been documented many times and was noted as a critical need in our last NASM visitation. A minimum amount needed (in addition to what we already offer) is $100,000 available on an ongoing basis. This would still be less than our competitors have to offer but it would be a good start. The university is planning on a new capital campaign in the near future and that would be a great opportunity to build our scholarship base. We simply must do this if we are to become a leader among the music schools in North Carolina.

[Supporting Documents in the Appendices: Library Resources, Major Equipment List, Facilities List, Budgets for the last three years]