

University of Washington Correspondence

INTERDEPARTMENTAL

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To: David Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

From: School of Music Review Committee
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Introduction

The review committee was impressed by the enthusiasm, commitment, and resourcefulness of the faculty and staff of the UW School of Music, the vitality of many of its programs, its engaged and talented students, and the new partnerships it has forged. At the same time, and despite the many strengths and the culture of innovation, the one thing the different stakeholders we spoke with—many with profound differences between them—agreed upon is that, given the current state of funding and facilities, and tensions between various constituents of the School, the status quo is not sustainable.

The School has had to face profound, long-term cuts of funding to the point where it no longer has the resources to serve adequately as a large school of music, compared to its peers at like institutions. Over the past decade or so the school has met this challenge by building new directions successfully in some ways, but the situation of greatest concern that we saw/heard is a long-term caustic relationship between certain areas of the school to the extent that a cloud hangs over the entire body and needs to be addressed actively and openly.

Every institution has difficult politics, especially during challenging periods, yet the level of embitterment at the school as a whole (though not voiced by every person) seems profoundly destructive to the entire unit. This makes the condition of what we saw as gridlock, inflexibility, and lack of spirit of cooperation within the School of Music overall that much more perplexing. The committee saw this problem most of all in the variety of points of view as a result of *two* failed searches of the American Music position.

The committee sees opportunities for these area divisions across the School to find common ground, however tough the choices may be. No matter who is to blame for what, or how this history has played out in the past, it is the responsibility of the Director of the School to go to whatever lengths possible to mend these fences and rebuild a culture shared by all stakeholders and for all faculty to find within themselves the commitment to move forward as a unit. We offer the following comments to help guide a much-needed process of change.

General Strengths (with Some Minor Suggestions)

There are many positive attributes to this school. The University of Washington School of Music embodies a high level of musical training and scholarship and is populated with many talented, reputable, nationally and internationally recognized dedicated faculty and staff.

The UW School of Music has evolved in several areas and has a broadly articulated mission to address the current music world in many forms. Even though we found disparate areas of the music school at odds with each other, several programs within the school are engaged in cutting edge contributions to their fields and, in some instances, these directions are complementary in nature.

The more recent developments and directions of the performance areas of the school are particularly compelling. The instrumental programs are very strong, broadly articulated within, across, and beyond their titles. The jazz, classical, and contemporary music programs integrate and speak across traditional and experimental approaches, reflecting both a creative music world that is building larger audiences while also addressing traditional historical training and narratives. These areas share an interest in technology, improvisation, and collaboration that resonates with larger innovative pedagogical developments nationwide and internationally while also delivering top-level conservatory style training and pedagogy. This growing culture of interconnectedness as a *central theme* is rare in music schools of this size and scope. The embracing of *improvisation* as a larger growing multidisciplinary field across the arts and into other non-arts fields is right on the pulse of the most exciting, relevant research and applied areas of higher education in music.

There is a shared excitement, cohesion, and direction across classical and jazz performance faculty and students, particularly with the newer artists-in-residence. Contemporary music from broad perspectives is a connective thread across undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty that resonates with more recent trends in thriving institutions. The students we talked with from across the school were clearly excited, inspired, and benefitting as burgeoning artists because of these directions and the face-to-face training they receive from the performance faculty. (We believe some of this connective energy extends into the ethnomusicology and music education areas and it would be appropriate, if not imperative, for these areas to connect further.) For instance, the Ethnomusicology area also embodies developments that build bridges and create platforms for interdisciplinary research that the review committee finds compelling, including improvisation, social justice, and into music education. The curricular ties between Ethnomusicology and Music Education at the graduate level are powerful, rare for either field, and should be supported further. Music Theory and Music History appear very compelling in the expanse of interdisciplinary connections with non-arts fields. (We believe, however, that the

music theory curriculum for undergraduates might be better connected with performance areas.) Faculty in Musicology and Ethnomusicology are participating in larger conversations—and sometimes driving these conversations—about innovating curriculum at the national level. Each of these areas—from performance to ethnomusicology, composition, musicology and education—address compelling interdisciplinary or innovative directions in their own right. It is certainly within reach for the school to seek out and celebrate common ground and purpose, in this regard.

The vocal programs and ensembles are strong and robust, and, like the wind ensemble and concert bands, offer high level training for music majors and clearly demonstrate a strong, talented culture of non-music majors. These large ensemble units are led by top people in their fields with national reputations and, like most other areas of the school, on paper, should be nothing but highly competitive. (It was unclear, again, what the relationship is between the music education degrees and these large ensembles. It appears, however, that the Music Education area is as strong as it can be given its size but is under significant competition from a few other nearby institutions. As mentioned in a few instances above, it would serve the school well for the music education area to be better connected to other areas of the school and to work further towards unique and innovative directions in the field.)

The burgeoning relationship with the Seattle Symphony reflects entrepreneurial directions within certain areas of the school, as well. The creation of another, additional full student orchestra, run by conducting graduate students and supported by both the Seattle Symphony and the School of Music, demonstrates clear and unequivocal evidence that the best days of this school of music are not behind it. The scores of talented *non-majors* that populate this orchestra who keep music as a central pursuit while pursuing other majors is in itself a major achievement and a unique model for the school to build upon. The Wind Ensembles also deserve much credit in this regard as a group of ensembles that have been serving both majors and non-majors at high levels for many years. It is upon the success of such larger initiatives that the school may find new footing to attract the best music majors through building a larger culture of music activism. Such large ensembles will continue to be vital for the UW School of Music (but it would be advantageous to continue to create connections across the department and to serve a wider body of students, audience and culture).

DXARTS holds a national and international reputation as a cutting-edge music technology program that is an invaluable asset to both the University of Washington and the School of Music. The committee found the faculty and students directly involved in DXARTS and facilities to reflect this reputation. DXARTS has a national foothold as a top-level music technology-based composition program at the graduate level. There are only a few other such centers in the nation of this caliber. (However, the review committee received mixed messages across the student body concerning the role and access of DXARTS within the School of Music. Perhaps there may be a way to strengthen this connection by creating a shared relationship between composition, performance, music theory, and music technology within the School.) These areas are often becoming more integrated or shared in other music departments across the nation. This would be beneficial from several points of view: 1) to explore new course possibilities that involve music technology that might address a broader range of music student needs in the twenty-first century; 2) to update a music theory curriculum to address more recent

pedagogical demands while maintaining a strong theory core –jazz, electronic music, contemporary music; 3) to broaden the composition offerings to more students across the major tracks from performance to music education; and 4) to create a strong collaborative relationship between music theory, composition, and performance where composers can have pieces commissioned and performed in all areas and ensembles including the new symphony orchestra mentioned above.

The Harry Partch collection is a legitimate gem. The presence of this world-renowned collection of instruments fits perfectly in larger themes in the school that embody contemporary music in many forms. Certainly, many schools of music, music departments and contemporary music centers would have gone to great lengths to acquire this collection of instruments. This collection of instruments is really the icing on the cake amidst the many wonderful attributes scattered throughout the school and articulated throughout this document.

For all of these reasons and more, the UW School of Music is positioned to become a nationally and internationally recognized center for contemporary music – in performance, creation, scholarship and technology. This ethos also spans from undergraduate through graduate areas of the school –something that is not only very rare, but that many music schools and programs in the country seek to achieve as they struggle to find ways to broaden their horizons to address the “now” without giving up traditional training and historical relevance.

The development office has an impressive record of fundraising ideas and achievements. They have articulated an array of challenges and goals across several sectors of the arts at UW. New facilities will be a major challenge in every regard to get on the UW agenda. (One of the most effective fund-raising efforts would be to build endowments for significant scholarships across the various departments. Full scholarships for both undergraduate and graduate students would in itself make the difference in competing with the best music schools in the country.)

General Concerns

As the review committee listened to the various School of Music stakeholders with whom we met over the two-day visit (leadership, office administrators and staff, tenure track faculty, visiting artists, and graduate and undergraduate students), some core concerns emerged. These concerns were corroborated by our observations of School of Music materials, including mention of the same concerns in the 2004 program review report.

The overarching concern is that the status quo of the School of Music offerings, including the curricula, the performance program, and the degrees offered, is not sustainable, given the present and projected budgetary realities. Within this general concern are more particular observations:

1. There appears to be a trenchant siloing of areas/departments, and the faculty and students within those departments, to the extent that in some areas faculty members from one program may never see or work with those of another, apart from faculty meetings. Students, furthermore, may never meet peers in other School of Music departments/areas. The divide is especially apparent between academic and performance programs.

2. The number of degrees offered by the School of Music vis-à-vis its relatively small footprint in the larger campus is entirely too high. The committee notes that in some cases there is only one current faculty member attached to certain degrees, and the cohorts of incoming students are small enough that several degrees are rarely awarded.
3. The committee perceives an uneven support of departments and programs on the part of the leadership, namely, it appears that the performance programs have in recent years been given more instructional lines and other resources than the academic programs to such an extent that there are feelings of inequity between departments.
4. The committee perceives limited mechanisms for shared governance, that is, a lack of clarity among faculty as to how School of Music decisions are made and how one might have a voice in those decisions. Whereas the faculty meetings are run according to the rules set by the University Charter, the Executive Council has been dissolved, the School of Music's governance documents have been suspended, and there are no standing committees.

Concerns Specific to Graduate Studies

External Impressions

Browsing the UW School of Music website, one sees a very complete and broad array of graduate degrees in almost all areas of music performance and scholarship¹. This impression of the school from the website—the primary vehicle by which applicants discover programs—is that the School of Music offers a comprehensive and very active graduate music program. Like many R1 music schools and departments, graduate studies span most performance areas and nearly all scholarly disciplines. The very broad range of degree offerings is also similar to other R1 schools. In short, the message a student seeking a graduate program of study in music would get from the website is that UW has a full complement of faculty and resources to support nearly all areas of graduate study in music.

Graduate Funding

It was evident from discussions with both faculty and students that funding for graduate studies is extremely limited. It was also evident that teaching opportunities are also very limited. It is imperative that all PhD students have the opportunity to not only serve as teaching assistants but also to be engaged as instructors (usually in lower division undergrad courses) to help prepare them for employment in academia. The committee strongly urges the Graduate School and the School of Music to review the funding requirements for all graduate students but most especially those in PhD programs. Admitting PhD students without guarantees of long-term support and teaching opportunities should be discouraged.

Graduate Facilities

¹ Some programs indicate a larger concentration of faculty than others. For example, the Jazz Studies MM provides a long list of participating faculty and instructors but this could be simply due to a need to update the web information.

The physical state of the School of Music building was an ongoing topic during the site visit. Where do graduate students do research? For performers it was also evident that the building's aging practice rooms are far below R1 standards. Where do all the MMs and DMAs practice? Where do they work together? The committee did see one chamber music room that looked comfortable and that students could book for rehearsals. But compared to the list of degrees and comprehensive program offerings in the website, the actual resources to support all of these degrees struck the review committee as inadequate compared to other institutions. If a student were applying to graduate school and compared their visit to UW to that of, say, Eastman, UMKC, or North Texas, these resource issues would be immediately evident.

During our site visit we were given a tour of DXARTS. It was somewhat surprising to see this very modern facility bristling with the very best technological resources for audio/visual research in contrast to the School of Music building. We also learned that the eight DXARTS PhD students have full, four-year funding. Interestingly, this program appears to operate entirely outside of the School of Music.

Graduate Enrollment

We received from the Director a table of graduate enrollment figures that lists 42 unique graduate degree programs over the past five years. Nine of these programs show no students since 2011, the starting academic year of the table. Several show one or two students, mainly in past years. It is not clear from this table if these are students that have completed their programs or if the numbers indicate just enrollments. Either way, it is very clear that graduate enrollments are generally quite low. The exceptions, including the DMA in piano and the MA in Education, are degrees that do not require substantial physical resources beyond excellent pianos and a well-equipped research library. The PhD in Ethnomusicology (PhD) and Choral Conducting (DMA) stand out as successful programs with consistent, multi-year enrollments. The expanded orchestral program and the acquisition of various world-music resources are probably contributing factors.

It is also worth noting that nearly 50% of enrollment in the School of Music consists of graduate students (total for 2015-16 = 188), most of whom need funding of some sort. The general trend in music schools today is to increase undergraduate enrollment and to decrease overall graduate enrollment. The reasoning is simple: Undergrads, especially at a state school, do not really need funding. If the programs are attractive and robust, undergraduate enrollments could grow exponentially over time. The increased teacher to student ratios in the undergrad programs should lead to additional institutional funding thus ultimately providing more support for proportionally fewer grads.

Graduate Faculty

Funding to support the Artist-in-Residence program and the generous contributions by Ludovic Morlot, conductor of the Seattle Symphony, are clearly having an impact on graduate instruction in performance areas and conducting. Expansion of the campus orchestra program gives graduate conducting students many new opportunities and experiences. Expansion of the jazz and

improvised music program also offers new opportunities for a sub-set of students in performance and, as we learned, some grads in ethnomusicology. The efforts to increase the total number of faculty and instructors in these areas appears to be having a positive impact on the graduate program.

But it is equally evident from our discussions with the graduate faculty, graduate students, and others that the total number of associate and full professors in some of the mainstream graduate areas—musicology, theory, music education—has declined over time. An effort to create an American Music Studies program was not entirely successful and ultimately did not fill a much-needed new tenure-track position. The reduction in PhD level tenure-track faculty has been both contentious and demoralizing.

Overall we found that there was a distinct disagreement among the faculty and the administration about the future direction of the school. Given the very limited financial resources of the school, it seems highly unlikely that new hires at the level conducive to graduate instruction and research will be forthcoming. How then does the school manage this conflict? Where should funding be focused? At the graduate performance or scholarly research? Should some PhD degrees be consolidated, cancelled and/or updated? These are questions that must be addressed collectively.

Without a critical mass of internationally recognized scholars in each and every area of study it may be impossible to sustain the current breadth of degree offerings. But funding for faculty, expanded graduate student scholarships and teaching positions and, equally important, a refurbished facility to support PhD level research in all these areas, is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Imperative

Our assessment of the very real and deep strengths of the School of Music at UW, combined with our concerns, leads us to provide, not a recommendation, but an *imperative* for the future of the School of Music. The current form of the School of Music was largely created years ago when it was a much larger entity. As such, it follows the model of other schools of music that have a much larger faculty and more robust infrastructure, but it does so with fewer resources, creating some diffuseness and strain and making it difficult to sustain over time or to attract the level of funding desired and needed. At the same time, the School of Music has been creative, nimble, and resourceful for finding new ways to continue to be a dynamic unit, and this is to be applauded and deepened. We believe it is imperative for the faculty as a whole **to create a new model or identity for itself**, one that capitalizes on many of its laudable new endeavors (e.g., ties to the Seattle Symphony, innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to music creation, collaborative strengths, etc.). The school needs to work hard, and with good will across the faculty body to **define itself by its key areas of strength** that show clear promise for the future of the music field (solidify a few areas or concentrations that are already definable in the unit and put all efforts into those rather than splintering into many disparate parts). Rather than what you are not, what ARE you, uniquely? How can you set yourself apart and excite students and donors? What does it mean to look forward and be a leader of music scholarship, performance, and education in the twenty-first century?

To work toward creating this bold, new vision and identity the faculty must come together for a **series of moderated retreats** that allow the full School of Music faculty to co-create a clear, measured (in that it states what the School of Music provides specifically and uniquely), forward-looking, and exciting idea of the UW School of Music. We understand that such processes can be fraught, but we urge the whole faculty to make the choice to engage with it fully in order to sustain the unit and build its future and legacy.

We also believe **it is an imperative to work together during this process to create a new model of shared governance** that is not as particularized as the present one but makes sure that voices across the faculty are included in all primary decision-making. We urge the faculty, once they have a new vision/identity, to change the core curriculum at the graduate and undergraduate level in ways that provide both general learning and focus on the areas. At the undergraduate level at least, we suggest building a “music industry” component into the core, where students get a chance to learn more about what it means to work in the world of music in the twenty-first century. This could involve arts leadership, professional development, commercial music, music libraries, music copying, and entrepreneurship. Having a staff member who helps with career planning and placement would be useful as well. We also urge the faculty to use the results of a re-envisioning process **to create a strategic hiring plan** that is based on what will promote and solidify this new vision rather than only argue for one’s own area or discipline.

Specific Recommendations

Our view of the breadth and depth in the School of Music suggests at least one way in which it can categorize itself, taking advantage of what is already represented in natural collaborations in the faculty:

Three primary areas:

- Ethnomusicology (continuing to build new connections such as social justice and music education)
- Music Technology (partnering with DXARTS to build new areas within the school; this includes technology in creation and performance, audio engineering, and multimedia connection)
- Historical and Contemporary Performance, Improvisation, and Composition (including conducting)

We recommend core areas and programs be developed or remolded within these frames:

- All students graduate with core skills and competencies in music technology
- Curriculum should be developed or integrated into classes that address music business and entrepreneurship
- Music Theory and Music History can be developed with both general courses required by all students and specialized courses within areas
- Music Education continues as a vital program in the school and should continue to develop innovative approaches across and within these areas

- Graduate degrees, particularly PhDs, should be limited in number, revised, consolidated, or developed across areas that are collaborating and moving forward together

We also believe that the faculty should consider the following as part of the retreat/discussion/re-envisioning process:

1. Identify the primary goals of the School of Music. We see, for example, building the strengths, size, and continued excellence of the School (including more majors, finding large donors, clarity of and joint commitment to a hiring strategy, attracting, retaining, and rewarding faculty); a sense of equitable community within the School; and creating, attracting, and igniting the music community (through life-long music appreciation and involvement, non-majors, and community partners/support).

2. Create a new administrative structure. For instance, the school might perhaps reconstitute an Executive Committee comprising the three areas, with clear responsibilities, which would include two members from each area. Conversely the Executive Committee could include two academic and two performance faculty members. We also suggest disbanding the current many-chair structure and replacing it with something more streamlined (again, perhaps, using the area structure and having elected chairs or representatives from each area).

3. Reduce the number of degrees offered. Look to key areas of lowest enrollment and funding probabilities and cut or consolidate degrees where possible (or at least do not specify the sub-areas within each of the degrees, or use the new areas as sub-degrees). At the graduate level, in particular, having fewer areas as well as a centralized admission and funding process can help in terms of equity and depth, so that students have larger cohorts that take classes together, find opportunities to work together, etc. (A consolidated PhD seems important.) Work to close the gap between the number of graduate degrees offered and adequate financial and TA support that would compete nationally. The faculty should consider as well what the optimal number of graduate students should be. At present, the ratio of undergrad majors to graduate students is unusual.

4. Find more ways to engage with the community. Consider involving more alumni, foment more professional involvement for students, and establish ties to music professionals and organizations in Seattle.

Music Facilities

The clear, unmistakable international reputation of Seattle as a center of innovation in music in the twentieth century—at a world-wide scale—should be a natural well of energy and initiative to renovate, update, and create new academic music facilities. Framed in this light, the School of Music and the University of Washington should embark collaboratively on creating, eventually, one of the finest music buildings, facilities, and halls in the country, if not the world.

Many of the issues we encountered cannot be untangled from a facility aging, outdated, and inadequate in almost every respect. The committee learned about many investments in facilities and structure at the University of Washington both inside and outside of the arts. We firmly

believe it is time for the University to have a serious discussion and create a plan to update these vital academic music facilities to the campus, city and community. Perhaps a new wing could be added, significantly enhancing its practice spaces, a greater incorporation of technology, and adding a 600-seat performance hall and office spaces, among other offerings.

Advancement should be given a clear mission and initiative, along with faculty and the Friends of the School of Music, by contacting donors and sharing their stories, enhancing alumni ties through the creation of an Alumni Hall of Fame, collaborating with Meany and the other arts programs on collaborative fundraising, naming rights for rooms, building, and the School.

Conclusion

The review committee recommends the continuation of the undergraduate and graduate programs but that, within two years, the School of Music report back to the Graduate School, particularly with regard to the facilitated series of working retreats listed in the imperative above. We also recommend the School of Music submit a five-year interim report to the Graduate School Council.