What do we look for in prospective MCCL members?

Apart from all the typical traits one might expect (intelligence, collegiality, enthusiasm), here are a few other traits that are critically important when we evaluate potential new lab members.

#1 Personal effectiveness . . . shorthand for being a person who gets stuff done. Personally effective people:

- **Get work done on time**. Personally effective people work on final projects *prior* to the night before they're due, so that even if the computer crashes and grandma dies and they get the flu, the project is still in, on time. Even if they are procrastinators and start the night before and everything goes wrong, the project is STILL in on time, because they are **goal-oriented, not excuse-oriented**. It may not be to the standard they wanted, but it gets finished. They meet their responsibility. Of course, everyone needs a break once in a while. But do you ask for extensions, or come to meetings with your contribution unfinished, or send emails that you just 'won't be able to make it today' on a weekly basis? Termly basis? Yearly? Or Never? The excuse is largely irrelevant—the point of personal effectiveness is that **you work around problems, not explain why you failed to achieve**.

- **Take next steps without being asked**. Don't be satisfied with only having achieved the step you said you would by the meeting or deadline. If you finish a step early, work out (or find out) what the next step is and do it. Because most steps take longer than expected, you will fall behind if you don't make up time when you can. Looking ahead is not just about small steps—there are big picture aspects, too. If you want to join a faculty, don't just look at what your peer graduate students are doing. If you want to do a graduate degree, don't just look at what your peer undergraduates are doing. Look at what the people ahead of you in the professional world are doing. See which steps of theirs you can take. Look at the conferences your senior colleagues go to and mark the abstract submission deadlines in your own calendar. Find out whether you can attend if you finish your project well in time. Then finish it well in time. Are senior lab members attending talks by visiting scholars? Join them. Are they talking about their research with each other, or with professors informally or at the pub outside lab time? Maybe that's something to try. Look beyond both the immediate future and your comfort zone.

- **Try logical problem-solving steps BEFORE contacting a faculty researcher**. Ask around the lab to check if anyone has had this problem before. Plug the error message into Google and at least show that you've tried to figure it out yourself. You've just found out about a last-minute application deadline? Come in with a concrete plan to get it done instead of letting it pass you by.

#2 Skill and expertise

Interest in music teaching and learning, ethnomusicology, psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience or any of a number of other related areas is important. But interest must be accompanied by knowledge. We expect lab members to demonstrate a moderate and appropriate (Undergraduate? Graduate? Major?) level of skill in at least two of these disciplines and a high level of achievement in at least one. Some experience with computer programming is a significant plus for student interested in computer-based research designs or neuroimaging work.

#3 Scholarly creativity

Of course lab projects always need helping hands. But how quickly can you begin contributing your own ideas for projects, formulating your own questions? The lab is a system in which you support others…but others are also there to support you. Consider studies—even very small ones—you would like to launch and lead. Small projects turn into big projects, into presentations, into publications and even eventually into careers. Your contribution to the lab is valuable, but think about how you could make a contribution to the field.

#4 Knowledge of the literature

Make sure you've read at least one of the papers from our lab. Don't just tell us that you're interested in 'music and the brain' or 'why music has such a powerful effect on us'. We understand and appreciate the sentiment, but it suggests that you don't really know what research is going on in the lab or even in the field. If you are genuinely interested, read scientific papers on the topic (not just blogs and news articles). People that follow up their interest with scholarly action are the ones that we want as MCCL members!

#5 Applications for funding

Of course it's easier for us to take a risk on someone who is self-funded, and the award will look good on your CV and help you get future funding. BUT, what really excites us about seeing an application for external funding is the demonstration of personal effectiveness (see above). You are taking responsibility for your future, and are organized enough to take a step that requires significant advance planning. The UW offers opportunities for both undergraduates (for example, Mary Gates Research Scholarships) and graduate students (check out the Graduate Funding Information Service). Funding is not a requirement, by any means, but it's a significant plus.