

MSU Departmental Assessment Report Spring 2009

Department: MUSIC

Department Head: Alan Leech

Assessment Coordinator: Alan Leech

Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department:

Bachelor of Arts in Music

Bachelor of Arts in Music Technology

Bachelor of Music Education

Also, a non-teaching minor is offered by the Department of Music to non-music majors.

Program Assessment

Feedback from Current Students

Music students have easy access to the music faculty. Music students are represented through the Student Advisory Committee, which meets with the Department Head at least bi-weekly to discuss issues of importance to both parties. This committee was established by Interim Department Head Alan Leech in Spring of 2008 in response to student request. Since there are representatives from each of the three degree options, all music major students in the department have quick access to the music faculty through this committee.

Due to the nature of Applied Music, many students feel very comfortable confiding in their instrumental or voice instructor about departmental issues. This allows for more immediate feedback to faculty from the students in addition to the SAC.

Moreover, each music student will meet with the Department Head as part of the sophomore review process, during which time the student may discuss program strengths and weaknesses. In response to faculty discussions, this sophomore review has been moved to take place during the first semester of the sophomore year. We found that waiting for the second semester was not as advantageous. Students who are having

obvious difficulty in the music core classes (written music theory, ear training skills, and keyboard class) will most likely not be able to advance further if they were unable to successfully meet the requirements the first time around. The department head is better able to discuss with students the likelihood that they will or will not be successful in music. It is better to help students realize that they could be more successful in another field before they invest too much time in music.

Student teachers now meet with the music education faculty during EDSD 413 Professional Issues to discuss the student teaching experience. Of particular importance is the discussion concerning the Department's curriculum and the student teacher's impression of how that curriculum met their classroom needs. These students also complete an anonymous exit survey to gather specific data about the preparation for student teaching. This data is shared with the faculty for consideration of program adjustment. Most recently we learned from a couple of our graduating seniors that they felt less well prepared in 20th Century music or in Jazz, since they did not feel as capable in answering questions in their PRAXIS exam for future Music Educators. We took action almost immediately and instituted a new course which is incorporated into the BME (and other two curriculae) to teach much more in those two areas: Mus 321, Music History III, 20th Century and Jazz.

The BA MTEC curriculum has been developed over the past four years, and courses began in the fall of 2006 for the first prospective majors. Students have been directly involved in the curriculum planning process: helping to choose equipment, providing course evaluations, and meeting individually with the Director of Music Technology for advising and to discuss their individual progress, goals, and needs. As the first two cohorts of BA MTEC majors continue through the curriculum, the Director of Music Technology maintains ongoing communication with each of them to ensure that the program meets their needs. The Department Head also meets individually with all BA MTEC students as part of the Sophomore Review process, mentioned above.

Feedback from Outside Constituencies

The Department of Music is a fully accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the agency responsible for the accreditation of music curricula in higher education. As such, the Department undergoes rigorous accreditation review every ten years, most recently in Spring 2003. Yearly reports are also submitted to maintain accreditation. Based on NASM recommendations, the Department has developed Introduction to Recording and Computer Applications (MUS 220) to be required of all BME majors. As space permits, music majors are encouraged to take Introduction to Digital Music (MUS 115); thus far BA and BME majors have excelled in this course.

Additionally, the Department curriculum has regularly passed review by both the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE).

The Department developed discipline-specific survey administered to all graduates. This

survey has not been circulated since Fall 2003 when it was used to inform the strategic planning process for the Department in Spring 2004. This survey should be again circulated in Spring 2010.

The Department regularly receives feedback regarding the curriculum from cooperating teachers and administrators who accept our student teachers. A new survey for cooperating teachers is being implemented for use in Spring 2010. This along with the student teacher survey data will be shared with faculty at the end of the semester for consideration with regard to the BME music curriculum. Moreover, the needs and expectations of professional organizations, such as the Montana Music Educators' Association, influence our curriculum as well.

Particularly for the students in Music Education and in the Bachelor of Arts in Music, we had discussions in several faculty meetings that indicated we were less happy with the abilities of our students to rehearse and conduct large ensembles (orchestras, bands, choruses). We decided to attempt to create more possibilities for the students to have "podium time". The Curriculum Revision Committee devised two courses that would work in tandem with our more advanced Conducting classes: a Conducting Practicum for the conducting students and a set of lab ensembles (one choral and one instrumental). The music students have wanted courses to help them with conducting skills and willingly sign up for the lab ensembles, often playing instruments that are not their major for practice, and the conductors have podium time rehearsing and conducting these ensembles for experience. Guidance by faculty make the situations very desirable ones. We are currently assessing the success of this new addition.

NASM recommendations have been implemented in the BA MTEC curriculum. Specifically, the standards for admission past the gate were clarified with respect to music performance, and the balance of music, music technology, and general electives were adjusted to ensure that the BA MTEC degree meets NASM standards for a major in music technology within a liberal arts degree. In future years, the BA MTEC curriculum will phase in a senior internship program, which will be designed cooperatively with the local music and audio industries. We intend to give students the best possible contacts and professional experience, and to maintain ongoing communication with local industry to ensure that the MTEC curriculum provides the highest- quality preparation for this experience.

Evaluation of Teaching

All faculty members are required to distribute student evaluation forms in all classes at the end of the semester. The summary data is returned to the faculty member and reported as part of the annual review process. This information is discussed with faculty during the annual review meeting. Guidelines for an In-Depth Assessment of Teaching for promotion and tenure review have been approved by the Department of Music.

Curriculum Review and Assessment Application

Curricular review is an ongoing process in the Department. The Curriculum Committee meets regularly to discuss the Department's curriculum, and brings suggestions for

curricular revision to the faculty for consideration and adoption. Our faculty meeting minutes demonstrate regular discussions of assessments and outcomes. We have instituted a Curriculum Revision Committee as necessary to facilitate larger changes in our curriculum, as we did over the last two years to work on specific identified problems. We are pleased with the comprehensive curriculum review that has just been completed Spring 2009 and resulted in several improvements to the BME program.

Curriculum development and review of Music Technology-specific changes within the departmental curriculum are accomplished jointly by the Department Head, Director of Music Technology, and head of the Curriculum Committee.

All assessment activities are used by the Department to improve the curriculum and to ensure that the curriculum provides BME graduates with the skills necessary for success in public school music teaching. Particularly the changes to the newly revised BME curriculum referred to above have resulted in the past year.

Assessment activities related to the BA MTEC curriculum ensure that Music Technology classes address the changing environment of the music industry, providing students with the range of skills and experience they need to forge their own pathways in this constantly changing field. All students must be able to manage to cope with any and all new equipment and musical approaches that they encounter in the future. Constant change in the field necessitates constant redesigning of our BA MTEC courses to help students develop their problem solving skills.