

Texas Association of Music Schools Eighty-First Annual Meeting Report of Four-Year State Schools Round-Table Discussion

Friday, January 24, 2020: 19 members present

The meeting opened at 10:30 a.m. with introductions from those present. The first question asked was regarding music faculty workloads. This was in reference to a program at a Tier One university that is moving faculty to 2/2 workloads (or the equivalent) but is trying to do so without incurring additional expenses. Some R1s are going to 2/2 teaching loads in some areas (such as music history and music theory), but not in applied music. Other program heads reported that applied studio loads are typically 18 students for full-time faculty. One large university head reported that studio faculty typically teach 16 students plus their studio classes, resulting in 18 contact hours. Some faculty choose to teach more students than that, too. Other reported that “research active” faculty may teach fewer classes and, if they are applied faculty, fewer lesson students. Some programs allow 14 applied students to equal a full load, especially at schools that require 3/3 teaching loads. Multiple programs reported hiring professional-track faculty, who have little to no scholarly/creative expectations but teach a 5/5 load, so that tenure-track faculty can have reduced teaching loads. However, some chairs described issues where this created a kind of “caste system”, with governance problems and feelings of resentment. Other schools have not experienced issues with the different types of faculty classifications, though.

The next question was regarding how to categorize invited masterclasses – whether those are service or teaching or scholarly/creative in annual reports. Discussion followed, with no definite conclusion reached other than the context may determine the choice of category. Most seem to lean toward categorizing those as scholarly/creative activity if they are invited and particularly if they are academic/professional in nature.

Budgeting and lessons for non-majors was the next topic. At least one program has a “program enhancement” fee attached to courses in the major. Whether programs offer individual applied music lessons to non-majors was briefly discussed, with most programs reporting that they did not allow non-music majors to take music lessons because the cost was too high. One program has added fees for lessons taken as electives (i.e. for non-majors), which covers the cost. Some universities are charging differential tuition, with costlier programs such as Engineering, Business, and Music charging higher rates. Other campuses are considering this system, too. Chairs were encouraged to consider what revenue options might be available to them. The RCM (Responsibility Center Management) model is being considered for implementation by at least one university, and other executives had some experience with it, sharing advice.

Faculty hiring and salaries was the next topic of discussion, starting with a question regarding procedures for hiring of adjuncts. Whereas some programs reported that they could basically hire whomever they needed to cover instructional needs, others are required to seek permission from their dean or supervisor for the hiring of adjuncts. Programs with doctoral students discussed their use as undergrad teachers. While having them teach can increase grad student enrollment, they cost more to utilize than adjuncts, at least on the surface.

The next discussion centered on curricula for music minors, especially the balance of lower division vs. upper division hours. The issue is avoiding requiring too many upper level classes that dictate lower level classes as pre-requisites that are not already included in the minor. This can apply to general music minors as well as music technology minors, which were well-represented around the room.

Matters surrounding collaborative pianists in the programs were the next general topic of discussion. One question was regarding how many collaborative pianists were involved in the various programs, and whether they are full-time, part-time, and are nine- or twelve-month employees. One school reported using six different pianists who are hourly employees, paid per student per semester, resulting in some being part-time and others being closer to full-time. Only one program reported having their collaborative pianist being a twelve-month employee; the others are typically nine-month hires.

Piano proficiency requirements were next discussed. Some programs require four semesters of classes, whereas others do not have a class requirement, but require the students to pass a comprehensive piano proficiency requirement. These programs offer piano classes to help students prepare for the proficiency exam. Some programs have different levels of piano proficiency requirements or a different number of required classes, depending upon the concentration (voice vs. instrumental vs. music industry, for example). Programs generally are working to connect the curriculum across courses in theory, aural training, and piano skills. Piano labs are reported to have from 12-20 digital pianos in them. One executive remarked upon creating a digital percussion lab in a program, which could be useful not only for music education majors, but also for commercial music students.

The next discussion centered around edTPA and how programs are preparing for the probable upcoming changes in the path to teacher certification. One executive reported that their school added an education course specifically geared toward edTPA preparation. Another person with experience with edTPA recommended introducing the concepts and skills throughout education courses starting in the junior year. This gives the students broad experience with the techniques and terminology required by this system.

The final topic for the morning's session was parking policies on the various campuses, specifically how parking is handled for community patrons attending arts events on campus. One program reported that their audience members were being charged by a third-party vendor, creating severe traffic flow problems in the lots next to the performance areas. Several campuses have gone to third-party vendor parking services, including those that require payment through an app and read license plates for enforcement. Multiple executives reported that they negotiated an exemption from fees for attendees for their music events. Typically, they reported that a lot next to the performance space would be partitioned off or designated as a non-ticketed space during performance times. These chairs and deans said that, unfortunately, they must regularly re-negotiate these terms as parking staff members change. For those who initially had systems that charged everyone for parking, many reported that the donor and patron outcry over parking fees and fines on their campuses caused their administration and police departments to roll back their initial decision to charge and ticket everyone.

This session concluded at 11:46 a.m. with thanks to all those present for participating.

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Saturday, January 25, 2020: 9 members present

The session began at 9:01 a.m. with discussion about courses in music that count in the general core curriculum, besides music appreciation. One program has Theory 1 included as a core class; others report courses including

Music and Film, Music and Culture (with rotating topics including Jazz, Asian Music, Latin American Music, and Rock), as well as a basic music history and literature survey class.

The next question asked was regarding policies about music majors retaking classes in the major, and if programs have such a policy, how many chances do students have to retake courses before they are forced out of the program. The majority present reported that their programs have a policy like this. Some give students two opportunities to pass required music classes; others allow three chances before requiring the students to change majors. Whether this policy is applied to select classes, such as lower-level theory and aural training courses, or all required music classes was discussed. This guideline varies by program. Retaking classes causes students to extend their graduation timelines, sometimes by years due to rotations, and can greatly increase student debt. One school found that reducing theory class size to a maximum of 18 increased their students' passing rates.

Scheduling was next discussed, because one school reported that their campus has adopted a Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday class schedule with identical time periods and no classes on Friday. This was because of a group of students in another major having trouble travelling between classes during the ten-minute breaks that formerly were used in the M/W/F schedule. With the four-day class schedule, the music program has been able to schedule some ensembles to meet on Friday, but otherwise has found it very challenging to fit in all the required classes and rehearsals given the reduction in class periods. No one else present reported a similar schedule, although everyone agreed that scheduling for music programs presents unique challenges even in the best of circumstances.

The next question was about the teaching of theory fundamentals or remedial theory. Some programs offer it in the summer, to help new students prepare for the fall semester in Theory 1, which only helps if they are caught early enough. Other programs offer it in the fall, then Theory 1 in the spring and Theory 2 in the summer, allowing freshmen who started behind to be "caught up" by the beginning of their sophomore year. At least one program does not offer a theory fundamentals course anymore, instead counseling students to study ahead to be ready for Theory 1. These students are given a quiz at the end of the second week over basics such as clefs, keys, and scales, and if they do not know these basics by then, they are warned that they are already behind, to seek assistance, and work harder. Dividing students into sections of Theory 1 where one has stronger students, whereas another section with a smaller cap has less-prepared students and offers additional tutoring assistance is another program's solution to helping students who are weaker in theory to succeed. Another school is considering offering Fundamentals and Theory 1 as two 8-week sessions back-to-back during the first semester, which would keep students on time for Theory 2 in the spring. Even taking the two courses concurrently in the fall has been considered. Programs continue to wrestle with helping all students succeed in their theory course sequence while maintaining high instructional standards.

Summer budgeting was discussed next; this is dealt with differently from school to school. Many executives said that they calculate their individual programs' summer budgets. Others have this type of budgeting handled on the college level. Determining faculty members' summer salaries is handled differently at different campuses, too. At some schools, a faculty member's summer salary is based upon a percentage of his/her nine-month salary, but other schools are moving to placing caps on faculty members' summer teaching stipends, as in a per-course payment amount that is more uniform. Summer offerings include core classes, graduate classes, and in a few cases, applied music lessons.

The next topic was about delivering online instruction. The maximum capacity for online music courses varied widely, from 35 to 100. Other disciplines in the schools even have online caps up to 200. One university has online course caps for music appreciation up to 500 students, but the course does not usually fill, the instructor receives an additional grader for every 40 students, and an extra stipend, too.

The last topic discussed at this session was the challenge of dealing with faculty who are struggling in their primary teaching area. Recommendations included documenting issues in annual evaluations and securing dean/administration support. Another question regarded suggestions for handling a situation where a faculty member is not recruiting effectively. One executive described the recruitment funnel, where you start with a larger number of students auditioning and provide that number as a target for the faculty member, since the yield (how many students ultimately attend) may be beyond the faculty member's control. To determine target numbers, work with the directors in that ensemble area to see how many are needed. Look at the percentage yield over the last few years of auditions to learn the program's average yield, which then determines how many should audition. It was mentioned that having adjuncts as applied faculty can be challenging in this regard, because they do not always recruit actively, for a variety of reasons.

The session concluded at 10:00 a.m. with thanks to everyone for sharing his or her experiences and insight.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana Sipes".

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