ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT
OF THE MUSIC AND DANCE
GRADUATE PROGRAMS

COMMITTEE PROCESS

This Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) Report is based on the following source material:

1. Department of Music and Dance Self-Study Report to National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), Spring 2008
2. APRC Interview with Dean Kurt Daw, Chair, Dee Spencer, and Professors Cyrus Ginwala and Richard Festinger, March 16, 2011
3. Guidelines for the Sixth Cycle of Academic Program Review.
4. The APRC customary evaluation procedures.

These sources were employed to construct an integrated view of the Department of Music and Dance’s present strengths, aspirations, and possibilities for future development, focused upon the Department’s graduate program.

Note: This report is based on information and commentary produced when the Department of Music and Dance was located within the College of Arts. In July 2011 the Department was moved into the College of Arts and Humanities. This report does not reflect that administrative move. The primary issues and recommendations identified during the review and highlighted below are still relevant and meaningful within the new administrative structure.

REPORT

Introduction

The Department of Music at San Francisco State University offers a complex array of curricula at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. At present, the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) is a 50-unit degree with emphases in Classical, Jazz/World, and Electronic Music. The Bachelor of Music (B.M.) is a 72-unit degree with emphases in Classical, Performance Composition, History & Literature, and Music Education. At the graduate level, the Department offers a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Composition, Music History & Literature, Music Education, and
Performance, and a Master of Music (M.M.) in Classical Performance, Chamber Music, and Conducting. The Department refers to itself as both a Department and a 'School' of Music and Dance and was moved along with all other programs in the College of Creative Arts into the College of Humanities on July 1, 2011.

A list of the programs offered by the School of Music and Dance simply does not do justice to the outstanding cultural and intellectual contributions that these programs make to campus life. Choral concerts and opera performances are offered regularly and gather a loyal and growing audience. In addition, the University can boast of a full orchestra, wind ensembles, jazz and world music groups. Last, but not least, SF State is the home of an internationally-respected professional group, the Alexander String Quartet. Thus, the School of Music and Dance must be understood, not only in terms of its curricula and degrees, but also in terms of the special value it adds to San Francisco State University.

The Department of Music and Dance underwent a specialized accreditation review by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) in 2008. This review covered both the graduate and the undergraduate programs in the Department, while this internal APRC program review focuses exclusively on the graduate programs in Music. Even though this review focuses on the graduate level, there was one undergraduate issue from the NASM accreditation visit that warrants comment. The final letter from the NASM stated that the Commission had voted to continue the accreditation status of San Francisco State University to be in good standing, while at the same time noting an area of concern in the final approval of the Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies. The letter further explained that examination of student transcripts indicated that students had taken more than 20% of their coursework in independent study, exceeding the limit allowed by the accrediting body. The letter asked for an explanation for this lack of alignment with the standards, and it also requested that three additional coded transcripts from recent graduates be submitted for review, all demonstrating that the coursework undertaken adhered to NASM standards. A response was requested by September 2010.

The response from the Department to NASM stated that required courses offered for the BM in Jazz Studies were mistakenly omitted from the class schedule for two consecutive semesters, and so were offered as independent studies courses instead. The letter further stated that the transcripts that were examined were from the first three students to matriculate in the programs. The department also stated that due to serious budgetary constraints, the Department was unable to offer the BM in Jazz Studies, although they continue to offer the BA degree. They
suggested that when funds increased they would restore the BM Jazz Studies degree program. Since the School currently lists the BM in Jazz Studies as one of its emphases, it should indicate that this degree is currently inactive. APRC also requests that the Department send verification to Academic Planning and Development that NASM has already approved this program.

**Program Profile**

Currently, the Department has an FTES of 16.7, FTEF of 3.9, and an SFR of 4.3 at the graduate level. (At the undergraduate level, the FTES is 215.0, FTEF 15.3, and SFR of 14.0.) The ratio of male:female student enrollment is approximately 2:1 for undergraduates and 3:2 for graduate students, while the faculty gender distribution is approximately 3:1 not including lecturers. There are 12 full and associate professors, one assistant professor and 6 lecturers.

The department performs an extensive exit survey of graduating students, which is highly informative and commendable. Graduate seminars are heavily over-enrolled, resulting in enrollment of graduate students in undergraduate courses in order to fulfill needed program requirements. The most significant challenge facing the program is reduction in funding for lecturers, who play a key role in at least nine instrumental areas.

The university data at http://air.sfsu.edu indicates that the number of master’s degrees completed has been fairly steady since 2004, with between 2-4 MA degrees and 7-15 MM degrees awarded annually. It is notable that significantly more students apply for graduation and are regularly denied. For example, the percentage of earned/applied for the MM program each semester since 2008 is 75%, 100%, 60%, 58%, 83% and 80%. The APRC suggests that the department examine its process for allowing students to apply for graduation without sufficient preparation and examine the reasons for denial. APRC recommends mandatory advising throughout the student’s program of studies.

**University Standards**

The School of Music and Dance graduate programs meet all of the University Standards for Graduate Education except for one, the assessment requirement. The Department appears to have developed student learning outcomes. However, it does not appear that the evaluation of student learning has moved beyond the planning stage over the past several years. While the department and its faculty clearly assess learning using many methodologies over time, it does not appear to have integrated these evaluations into program level assessment. The
APRC urges the department to include the results and analysis into the graduate program assessment by December 30, 2012.

In the area of Level 1 writing, the department complies with university standards; however, their process for assessing Level 1 writing has come at a cost to the programs. The Department adopted the GRE writing exam as a means for evaluating entry level writing and requires scores ranging from 4.0-4.5 as recommended by the Graduate Council. For students who needed help with writing, the credit/non-credit CA 514 course (Preparation for Graduate Writing, 3U) offers writing support. The Department is not satisfied with the new GRE assessment tool, which they feel deters highly qualified students from seeking entry to the program. They believe that the statistical measures of student quality may have improved, but at a price. The APRC, therefore, recommends that the Department research and adopt an in-house Level 1 writing evaluation process appropriate to the discipline that does not create a barrier for applications. Examples of tools that might be used include a written response to GRE-style probe questions or an extended personal statement as an addendum to the graduate school application. APRC recommends that the Department work with the Dean of Graduate Studies in developing such an assessment instrument. This discussion should include a retrospective analysis of the efficacy of the GET instrument used formerly, compared to the currently adopted GRE.

Level 2 writing is assessed by the successful completion of a course in the Music History MUS 75x seminar series (i.e. MUS 751, 752, etc.) which is a relatively new introductory graduate course now being offered each semester, except for Spring 2010. The Department said that this course is only one to one and a half years old and that it is too early to assess its effectiveness. The APRC, however, believes that the course should be well-established after 3 offerings, and strongly suggests that the Department include an assessment of the effectiveness of this course as a part of its regular assessment.

**Student Fee for Music Instruction and the Use of Lecturers**

The lack of a student fee for music instruction has been a serious fiscal problem for the department for a number of years. Because the cost of individual instruction is significant and requires hiring qualified musicians as lecturers, the Department has been seeking approval from the Chancellor’s Office for a number of years to institute a student fee. An initial analysis of the issue (according to Professor Festiger in the APRC interview) indicated that covering the actual cost of private instruction by a lecturer in this type of one-on-one individualized course would require $150 per course for every student. Further study indicated that this amount would actually only cover about 50% of the actual cost.
The Department submitted a request for a student music fee 3 years ago, but never received a response from administration at SF State or the Chancellor’s Office. Recently, Professor Festinger wrote yet another request that is now pending. Many other CSU campuses have already been granted this fee before a fee moratorium was imposed; however, the Chancellor’s Office now seems intransigent in its position on granting more of these fees. Currently, a CSU student must receive a “material object” in order to be charged a fee. APRC wonders if a short written progress report given after each music lesson might serve as a material object as part of a student’s portfolio. APRC urges the department to continue to work with administration on securing this necessary funding.

The private instructional fee issue has yet another dimension because of the university’s hiring restrictions. Music departments are typically organized to use lecturers to teach in certain areas where a full-time tenured faculty member is not warranted (e.g., rare skills such as playing the oboe), and historically, it has been easy to secure highly qualified lecturers. However, all departments are currently restricted from hiring lecturers by the central administration. Even if that restriction were lifted the CFA contract does not allow for long-term, part-time associations. This places a significant strain on a department that teaches 15 to 20 individual instruments and seven areas of concentration, yet employs only two faculty in two of those areas and one faculty member in each of the remaining areas. In such an environment, any sabbaticals or resignations have a severe impact on the department’s ability to deliver its programs.

**Enrollments and Progress to Degree**

According to department representatives present at the APRC interview, there remains a healthy rotation of graduate courses, and students are still able to graduate without difficulty largely due to the flexibility of the offerings. While graduate and undergraduate students are often mixed in courses such as ensemble and orchestra, the graduate students are given more responsibility, greater challenges and can assume leadership roles. For example, graduate students perform as principal soloists. Yet, graduate enrollment has dropped in recent years, and the Department believes the decrease is related to the problems in individualized musicianship instruction as described above. The Department is eager to maintain a healthy enrollment in order to support the university orchestra, wind ensemble, and jazz ensemble. Currently, some positions in the orchestra and ensemble are filled by students who are not in the Music Department and musicians outside the university.
Faculty

The programs in the School of Creative Arts are one of only two disciplines that have a 4-course teaching load at San Francisco State. The decision to remain at the 4-course level was made a number of years ago because of the necessity to teach small classes. Indeed, the 4.3 SFR at the graduate level is one of the lowest in the university. According to faculty representatives, most music faculty maintain a 12 WTU teaching assignment. However, private lessons carry only 1 unit and involve 1 student, while an ensemble course of 1 unit may have 40 singers. The Department believes that it must maintain the 4-course load with small classes in order to deliver the graduate degrees in performance that it offers. At the same time, APRC wonders if faculty members are able to dedicate the time necessary to develop their scholarly and creative work with this intense workload. Moreover, an examination of the APDB faculty workload report that is sent to the Chancellors Office reflects extraordinary variation across faculty with regard to work load. APRC encourages the Department to examine faculty workload assignments with an eye to creating a work load distribution that allows for faculty research and scholarship.

Leadership

Over the past several years, the Department has experienced changes in leadership due to conflicts within the faculty and between the former department chair and the former college dean. Within the past year, a new faculty member has taken over as chair and the Department has been moved to the College of Humanities. These changes could represent a point of departure for the Department and a new era in faculty relations. APRC urges the Department to organize a departmental retreat that would focus on rebuilding relations and planning for the future.

Facilities

The current infrastructure of the Creative Arts Building represents a major threat to the quality of the Music Department’s programs as well as to all the programs housed in this facility. The auditoriums are in disrepair and the building does not allow for WIFI, which prevents faculty from having access to the large database of electronic holdings housed in the SF State library. In addition, the Department is unable to develop the use of ePortfolios for assessment because they do not have the capability to produce quality recordings or to store the ePortfolios. Moreover, the proposed Creative Arts Building is at least 10 years from completion, not having actually begun construction as of this date. It is unclear what might be done to ameliorate the significant facilities problems that the
Department is now experiencing, but attention needs to be paid to this situation.

**Conclusion**

The School of Music and Dance is an invaluable asset to San Francisco State University. It is the center of the University's cultural life and needs to be supported in ways that will sustain its program. This responsibility is financially significant and all the more difficult in an era of continuing budget reductions. The student fee issue, departmental leadership, declining enrollments, and facilities appear to be the most serious challenges for the department. APRC urges the Department to prioritize these issues and to begin with the one that is free, departmental leadership. We believe that if the faculty as a group can unite and work with the chair on its challenges, that it may find solutions for the student fee and the declining enrollments. The facilities issue is more of a challenge and will require that the Department work with its new dean and central administration for temporary solutions to those issues.

With dedicated attention to the issues identified in the self-study, external reviewers report, and this report, APRC believes that the program will be poised for future success.