

**Department/Program : MUSIC**

**Chair/Director:** Jane Bryden

**Retreat Date:** Monday May 5, 2008

**Departmental/program faculty in attendance:**

Peter Bloom  
Ryan Brandau  
Jane Bryden  
Judith Gordon  
Jonathan Hirsh  
Grant Moss  
Joel Pitchon  
Margaret Sarkissian  
Richard Sherr  
Karen Smith Emerson  
Ruth Solie  
Steve Waksman  
Donald Wheelock

**Outside guest(s)/speaker(s) in attendance:** None

**Goals for the retreat:** The agenda included the following:

- Review of the design of new Music Major
- Staffing issues (position for a composer)
- Smith Design for Learning: how the department might implement the design
- Department Website:
  - Indicate tracks through the Major on the website?
  - Indicate possible career paths in Music on the website?
- Performance issues:
  - Role of performance in the music department
  - Staffing that will allow for a “culture of performance” beyond the studio
  - Proposals for part time performance positions that offer benefits

## Outcomes:

Profile of a newly hired composer:

- She or he would teach traditional composition, theory, digital music, and, on occasion, a senior writing course. She or he would offer one composition course and one theory course each semester. Only if we hire a composer will we be able to mount the new major.
- We would seek a composer capable of teaching both traditional composition as well as electronic and computer-based composition. We would expect the new composer to oversee the electronic music studio.

Further issues discussed:

The possibility of having a Mellon post doc as an assistant in music theory, ear-training, and ensemble organization and coaching.

- Who should teach Fundamentals? Core faculty only, via a system of rotation among the new composer, Atlas, Sherr, Bloom, and Sarkissian?
- How much theory should performance students have? Should we initiate a second semester course to prepare students to take MUS 110, or require that performance students do remedial work in order to take Mus 110? Should we require performance students to take sight singing in the second semester of their first year of study?

Performance positions:

- Comparison with Skidmore, Wellesley, Williams, and Grinnell suggests that for such part-time positions no one system prevails, no one system is ideal. Should we consider other kinds of “artists in residence” positions? Should we attempt to establish four or five half-time positions with benefits for such areas as the teaching of Jazz theory and performance; the teaching of Cello and Viola; directing the Gamelan; directing of the Wind Ensemble and teaching of a wind instrument.?
- Do we want to continue and/or expand an “in house” performing group? A core of performance teachers is important if a musical “presence” is to be maintained on the campus. Adjuncts do not effectively contribute to this presence. Or do we wish more systematically to invite outside groups (see below) to enliven musical life on the campus?

- Our in house core ensemble can be better utilized: three concerts per year could be better defined; the ensemble, expanded, could be called the “Smith Chamber Music Society”; we could elect a “Director of Chamber Music” from our performance faculty.

**Plans to achieve outcomes:**

The department needs further discussion of most of these topics. It will be useful for smaller groups within the department to continue to meet this coming year (the performance faculty, the curriculum committee, the website committee) and to prepare for another half-day retreat at the end of the year.

- We have engaged the resident string quartet from New England Conservatory (Ariel) to be in residence for several concerts and teaching workshops for the next two years. This was a direct outcome of our retreat discussions. We hope that a careful engagement of outside groups, and a careful coordination between them and our own in-house offerings in performance, can lead to a rich, regular, and thoughtful calendar of on-campus performance—something that we believe is the responsibility of the music department to provide.
- We wish to ask the college for help in expanding and implementing our website.

**How do your plans advance departmental goals as outlined in mid-term or decennial reports?**

We have not done a mid-term decennial report.

**How does the departmental/program plan to integrate the list of intellectual capacities into the major? For instance, are specific capacities such as writing, speaking or quantitative skills developed in particular courses, or a series of courses?**

We have a number of courses in place that include emphasis on writing and speaking. Several FYS have been added already, and there was discussion of further courses that might be converted to FYS at some future point.

**Of the specific curricular goals identified by the faculty which would be furthered within the major? (see page 8 of the Smith catalog for further examples)**

- **Develop the ability to think critically and analytically and to convey knowledge and understanding**
- **Develop historical and comparative perspectives**
- **Become an informed global citizen**

The major work of our “retreat” was done in 07-08 by our curriculum committee. Their proposal revamped the Music Major and allowed for tracking within the major.

Members of the department feel that teaching analytical and critical thinking with historical and comparative perspective is what we have been doing all along.

**Has the department integrated the development of student research abilities in the structure of the major? For instance, is there an information literacy program in place for students who major in the department? Is there a research methods course recommended for your majors (either in your department or another one)? If so, when in the student’s career does she take this course?**

Courses in music history and culture, and special studies courses, involve research and intensive individual work with faculty. Research methods are incorporated into individual courses, most of which are not large. (Given the small number of music majors, a course in research methods would make no sense.) Performance students work with faculty on a one-to-one basis and in addition to technical study do occasional research regarding repertory and interpretation.

**Are the pathways through the major clear for prospective majors? Is the department satisfied with the level of advanced work accomplished by its majors? (It may be useful to review the transcripts of graduating majors, or to examine the course taken patterns of several recent groups of senior majors.)**

The small number of majors in music allows for individual discussion with faculty and easy advising regarding pathways through the major. Furthermore, with the new major (attached) the pathways through the Music Major are clear.

**What are the culminating or capstone experiences for students in your major?**

We have proposed a Senior Seminar and a seminar on Writing about Music (which would include creative research) as Capstone courses, but at this time, with two retirements on the horizon, it is difficult to know who will be available to teach these courses. Given the prospect of reduced faculty it may be the most dispensable of our courses.

**Please attach a summary of any proposed changes to be considered by the department and any associated timeline for changes to be submitted to CAP.**

We will apply to CAP this coming year for a composer – a replacement for Donald Wheelock when he retires in the spring of 2010.