

Response to NASM Visitors' Report

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NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, the responses in this document are all written by the music executive, Dr. Jonathan Kulp, and any use of the pronoun "I" refers to him.

Items for Response

From Visitors' Report Section P. Standards Summary

1. It is not clear how the institution demonstrates "evidence of past and potential financial stability and long-range fiscal and financial planning" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.C.1.g.).

Our university employs a centralized budgeting system, so all financial planning takes place in the office of the VP for Finance. Our budget has proved adequate to survive for many years and there is no indication that it will be cut. There is a self-assessed student fee supporting all of the Performing Arts, and this fee is used to replenish the budgets of each of the large ensembles each semester. While this means there is some fluctuation, the long-term trend University-wide has been growth in enrollment, meaning that these accounts are not only stable but increase when enrollment does. The main way in which a larger operating budget would help us would be in funding maintenance/equipment needs and faculty travel, both of which are challenges.

2. It is not clear how the governance and administrative structure of the music unit meets the NASM standard to “assure fundamental educational, artistic, administrative, and financial continuity and stability, and show evidence of long-range planning” (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.D.1.a.(2)).

As reported in the self-study and commented upon by the visitors, the School of Music does not have a current strategic plan. The most recent one is from 2005. We are forming a School of Music Strategic Plan Committee and expect to have a new strategic plan in place by the end of this academic year, may 2019. We have a 2017 College of the Arts strategic plan to use as a guide.

3. It is not clear that facilities, equipment and technology are adequate to support teaching and learning in all curricular offerings and for all faculty and students engaged in them (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.d.).

This statement concerns primarily our lack of technology in the classrooms and the fact that we do not have a dedicated Recital Hall. The lack of a Recital Hall has been noted in every visitors’ report since the late 70s and we have no immediate prospects of getting one. Our classroom technology situation is improving somewhat by the imminent installation of a new SMART classroom in one of the most frequently used classrooms, Angelle 134. This equipment will be installed during the winter break. We were awarded another STEP Grant in Spring 2018 to upgrade all 17 computers and their software in our computer classroom Angelle 125, and this improvement has been completed.

4. It is not clear how the institution complies with the NASM standard “All instructional facilities shall be accessible, safe and secure, and meet the standards of local fire and health codes (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.g.).

The visitors were concerned that our practice rooms had windows with dark glass and that this presented a safety hazard for students who might be in distress inside the practice rooms. The possible replacement of the darkened practice room windows was presented to the Campus Safety Director and the Campus Police and they determined that the opaque glass was the safest solution for the students and faculty in the event of a campus shooting. The Safety Director further assessed that, “Regarding concern for inappropriate contact with students, it is critical that all employees complete the University’s mandatory Sexual Harassment Prevention training.”

5. It appears that the institution does not meet the NASM standard that “budget plans and provisions shall be made for adequate maintenance of the physical plant and for adequate acquisition, maintenance, and replacement of equipment and technology” (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.e.).

This is related to concern number three above. Our equipment budget is not adequate to buy much new equipment during the year, nor is it sufficient to perform the regular maintenance that our many pianos really need. We rely on a staff piano technician who is very resourceful and responsive, and keeps our pianos in decent shape despite the lack of

resources. Also, the rooms equipped with SMART technology have been largely funded through the STEP program, which means that any maintenance and upgrades are funded in perpetuity from external accounts. The band and string departments pay for new instruments and repairs out of funds generated by the self-assessed student fee supporting the Arts.

With regard to the actual facilities, our Facility Management department is very responsive when we send messages about issues with the building, and they have worked hard to solve some of the serious challenges that a building of this age poses to them. The entire building could use a renovation, especially in terms of electrical, plumbing, and climate control infrastructure, but there is no way to determine when this might happen.

6. It is not clear how the institution meets the NASM standard regarding the means employed by the institution to ensure accurate and reliable application of its credit hour policies and procedures

In the self-study, we stated that we follow the guidelines established by the UL System in terms of credit hours, and we use standard formulae to determine Equivalent Carnegie Units when looking at faculty teaching loads. The Visitors' Report found us to be in compliance with this standard (N.1.b.). Please indicate if further clarification is needed.

7. It is not clear how the institution meets the NASM standard "Students enrolled in music unit programs and faculty and staff with employment status in the music unit must be provided basic information about the maintenance of health and safety within the contexts of practice, performance, teaching, and listening" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.i.).

Shortly after our visitors left, I created a Health and Safety page on the SOM website with links to the NASM safety handouts concerning Hearing Health and Neuromusculoskeletal and Vocal Health:

<https://music.louisiana.edu/current-students/health-and-safety-musicians>

In addition, health and safety topics have been regularly discussed at the weekly student Recital Seminar (AMUS 333), with campus experts giving presentations so far this semester on Mental Health (managing stress) and Yoga exercises for musicians.

8. It is not clear that the institution is in compliance with the NASM standard, "As a matter of sound educational practice, institution recruit and admit students only to programs or curricula for which they show aptitudes and prospects for success" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.H.1.b.).

The College of Education may admit into its Music Education alternate certification program some students who have not auditioned to be admitted to the School of Music or taken suitable supporting coursework in music. To my knowledge, we have never accepted a student admitted by the College of Education to pursue the alternate certification in music education without requiring that student to subsequently audition for the School of Music and pass a transcript review (this is if their undergraduate degrees were not in music) to make sure that he or she was properly prepared. There is a check in

place for this, as the School of Music Director must sign off on a form provided by the College of Education that lays out a plan for making up deficiencies in music. When I receive a form for a student who does not have a music degree and is clearly not prepared to be a music educator, I do not approve the form. Last year, we denied admission to two students because we deemed them unsuitable in this regard. It will require a conversation with the College of Education to update their policies and published materials. This problem is exceedingly rare, as most of the time the students seeking this alternate certification are graduates of our program in some other music concentration (Performance, Media, etc.), who have therefore taken the vast majority of the necessary music coursework and need mostly to catch up on the Education courses and take the Praxis exam. Even these students are relatively rare, as we generally do not have more than a few students every 5 years who seek this alternate certification in music education.

9. It is not clear how the institution meets NASM standards with regard to maintenance of student records (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.H.1.h.).

The majority of student records are maintained in the music office, but some faculty have historically kept the files for their advisees in their own offices. To satisfy this standard, we will ask these faculty to return the files to the main office, where they will henceforth reside .

10. It is not clear that the institution meets the NASM standard that "Published materials concerning the institution and the music unit shall be clear, accurate, and readily available" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation II.I.1.a.).

The following sentence from the *Visitors' Report* — "The visitors observed a discrepancy between the NASM listing and the website for the Master of Music in Conducting degrees" (p. 6) — is unclear. I compared the listing for our institution on the NASM website with our own site and I do not see the discrepancy. This could either mean that 1) we fixed it on the website, 2) there is not a discrepancy, or 3) the discrepancy is between our website and some other document besides the NASM listing. If there is indeed such a discrepancy, it would certainly not be the first time that our website has had a mistake, as maintaining full accuracy in a website of this kind can be a difficult proposition.

11. For the undergraduate professional degree programs, it is not clear how the institution meets NASM standards for History and Repertory. "Students must acquire basic knowledge of music history and repertoires through the present time, including study and experience of musical language and achievement in addition to that of the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation VIII.B.4.).

Going forward, students in all five concentrations of the Bachelor of Music degree will be required to take one more Music History / Literature course to be chosen (based on personal preference and current offerings) from the following list:

- MUS 360 - Cajun and Zydeco Music

- MUS 364 - Music Appreciation: Music of the World
- MUS 450G - Traditional Musics of North America

This course will replace what otherwise would have been a 3-credit free music elective. We will submit the paperwork to make the curriculum changes this fall, so that the 2019–2020 Catalog will reflect the new curriculum.

12. Regarding the Bachelor of Arts in Music Education (Instrumental) it is not clear how students are learning to arrange and adapt music from a variety of sources (see NASM Handbook 2016-17, Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.b.(2)) or acquiring skills in functional performance in voice (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.b.(3)).

This is a gap in our program that does not appear to have been noticed before. Upon careful examination of the self study and visitors' report for the 2008 reaccreditation. I found no mention of this issue, although the 2007 to 2008 NASM handbook contains nearly the same wording about the competencies in question (I.3.b.2–3, p. 112 of the Word document). I consulted with a couple of faculty who have been here longer than I, and they also had not heard of these requirements.

Regarding “learning to arrange and adapt music from a variety of sources,” we will immediately institute a required arranging project in all of our instrumental methods classes, as well as in the Marching Band Techniques class. Although this solution is not as satisfactory as making MUS 404 (Instrumental Arranging) a degree requirement, there is unfortunately no room for another course in the curriculum, so we must resort to incorporating this competency into the current course line-up.

Regarding “functional performance in voice,” our Director of Bands thinks it is an excellent idea for students to have functional vocal performance capabilities, but points out that there is no corollary requirement in the vocal music education program, and that requiring instrumental music education students to sing in choir, while undoubtedly beneficial, would take them away from the instrumental ensembles that are more relevant to their future careers. Is it possible that the aural skills/sight-singing component of our Music Theory sequence would satisfy the “functional performance in voice” standard? I would welcome recommendations and information as to how other schools handle this.

13. Regarding the Bachelor of Arts in Music Education (Vocal) it is not clear how students are learning to arrange and adapt music from a variety of sources (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation IX.O.3.b.(2)).

As with item 12 just previous, this is a gap in our program that does not appear to have been noticed before. In order to address this standard, we will immediately institute a required arranging project in appropriate courses in the Vocal Music Education curriculum, as yet to be determined — most likely MUS 333 and 334 (Methods of Teaching Vocal Music in the Elementary and Secondary Schools) and MUS 471 (Choral Literature). Our choral director, Dr. Plummer, remarks that he once required a project in MUS 471 Choral Literature where students had to adapt early music for performance by

modern choirs, sometimes in non-standard configurations, an exercise in adapting repertoire to the ensembles at hand. He would be happy to reinstitute this project and perhaps that would be enough to satisfy this standard.

14. It is unclear how the institution meets the following NASM the standard. "Choral conducting majors must be proficient in vocal pedagogy and in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin diction. They must have general phonetic knowledge and skills that can be related to other languages. They should have language competencies sufficient to understand texts in repertory" (see NASM Handbook 2017-18, Standards for Accreditation XIV.B.3.c.).

I quote a response from Choral Director Dr. William Plummer:

1. I require all choral conducting MM candidates who have not had a diction course prior to coming to UL Lafayette to take diction at the undergraduate level here as an elective. Students coming from vocal performance degrees are NOT required to take such a course, as they already have likely taken more diction courses at their previous institution than we currently offer here. I also strongly recommend that they take voice lessons. Our current graduate student will be in Shawn Roy's studio this upcoming semester for vocal study. Loganne Fellenstein, a previous graduate, was also in Mr. Roy's studio. Hasmig did not pursue vocal study here, as she was coming from a vocal performance degree from a major institution in Texas.

2. MM students (and our undergraduates!) gain experience in diction and vocal pedagogy performing choral repertoire in a large variety of languages — not only the "standard" languages listed in the NASM handbook, but also many others. Since I started at UL Lafayette, we have performed numerous pieces in English, French, German, Italian, and Latin, as well as Spanish, Michoacán, Latvian, Portuguese, Chinese, Hungarian, Russian, Swedish, Khoekhoe, Samoan, and Danish. This semester alone we are performing pieces in English, French, German, Italian, Latvian, Swedish, and Danish. I have done charts in International Phonetic Alphabet for these texts and I project these during class and we learn IPA symbols for the vowel and consonant sounds for the phonology of each language and text studied.

3. MM students study diverse music from different time periods in the choral literature series of courses, and we discuss texts and their translations in order to study and analyze the repertoire for the classes. They are expected to read the translations and to know the meaning of each word in every piece that they conduct.

4. The degree recital requirements and guidelines stipulate that MM students are expected to conduct pieces from each stylistic period, and to incorporate pieces in multiple languages besides English.

2. Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement

The music unit must begin a long-range planning process.

I agree completely. See response to item 2 above.

Smart boards should be installed in teaching rooms.

One more classroom will be upgraded this fall, and we are hopeful that another one will be installed in an upstairs classroom sometime within the next year.

The institution should aggressively pursue funding for a recital hall.

Agreed, and I want to thank the visitors for emphasizing this point so strongly in their reports. This is an enormous help when we make the same point to the Administration.

The resources for faculty scholarly and creative activities should increase.

This is unlikely to happen without any kind of increase in operating budget, but we have received one additional Endowed Professorship this year thanks to a very generous donor, and this means that one more faculty member will have a decent travel budget going forward.

The institution should increase space for practice or consider reclaiming practice rooms for practicing.

If the renovation of Angelle Hall takes place, there are wonderful additions planned in practice rooms as well as flex rehearsal spaces for small ensembles. In the meantime, we intend to reclaim two of the practice rooms from the student organizations Phi Mu Alpha and Sigma Alpha Iota, and to provide them with large lockers to keep their materials.

3. Primary Futures Issues

Long-range planning will address the size, scope, and curricular offerings of the music unit.

4. Suggestions for Long-Term Development

The visitors experienced many excellent attributes of the music program. There is positive momentum and a fine spirit. At all levels in the institution, it appears that the leadership demonstrates understanding, wisdom, and support for the music unit. The quality of music making is impressive and the institution's deep connection to the region is notable. In considering the high quality and number of recitals and public performances, the lack of a dedicated recital hall is a serious shortcoming. ULL administration is well aware of this disadvantage and seems hopeful that a long-term solution will be achieved in the future.

I would like to thank Dr. Edward Kocher and Dr. Ronda Mains for being so professional and courteous during their visit here in Lafayette. Their enthusiasm for our students' performances, especially in the traditional music area, was very gratifying, and they helped to make a very stressful time much less so. Thank you!

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