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# To make a better music school

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TO MAKE A BETTER MUSIC SCHOOL

TO MAKE A BETTER MUSIC SCHOOL

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors

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University of Northern Iowa  
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TO MAKE A BETTER MUSIC SCHOOL

This Study by: Alissandra Henkle

Entitled: To Make a Better Music School

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University Honors

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## **Purpose**

This paper seeks to examine the elements that make an effective and high quality School of Music that prepares students for success beyond graduation. Through interviews with University of Northern Iowa (UNI) School of Music faculty, a deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge currently emphasized in the music core at UNI was gained. A survey of UNI School of Music alumni provided an understanding of how well the current mix of skills and knowledge align with those that are necessary in the work force. Through this research, an understanding of the skills and knowledge required to work in the music industry was more clearly gained, and changes to the School of Music's existing curriculum that will support those careers were identified. This research is significant because it makes a critical analysis of the existing program, which, if addressed, will improve the effectiveness of UNI students upon entering the workforce.

## **Literature Review**

### **General Curriculum**

While there are some studies evaluating the requirements for a degree in music, there was no published research specifically regarding UNI's School of Music. The principle resource for evaluation of undergraduate programs in music is the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). According to the NASM website:

NASM is an association of approximately 653 schools of music, primarily at the collegiate level, but also including postsecondary non-degree-granting schools of music. It is the national accrediting agency for music and music-related disciplines. The Association also provides information to the public. It produces statistical research,

provides professional development for leaders of music schools, and engages in policy analysis (2016).

As the primary source for evaluating and accrediting university music programs, NASM publishes a handbook annually to be used as a guide for music programs. NASM has also published an article, “The Assessment of Undergraduate Programs in Music,” that is intended for use of universities’ individual assessment of their own programs. Throughout this article, NASM emphasized the importance of setting goals and objectives in order to develop the capabilities of music programs, as most organizations cannot give full coverage of the entire field (NASM, 2009). It is important to set these goals and objectives in order to measure success and improvements within undergraduate programs.

Johansen (2009) also emphasized the importance of the current study in his article, “An Education Politics of the Particular: Promises and Opportunities for the Quality of Higher Music Education,” when he stated, “the fulfillment of minimum standards is the focus of the politics of educational quality, the pursuit of excellence is at the heart of higher music education” (p. 36). In order To Make a Better Music School and prepare students for the industry, the University of Northern Iowa must surpass the minimum requirements as stated by NASM and identify the core competencies that will make UNI alumni the best suited and most qualified candidates for employment upon graduation.

### **Music Business Curriculum**

In regards to specific research of the skills and knowledge required of music students upon graduation, there appears to be a gap in the literature. Claudia McCain, however, did address specifically the music business curriculum in her article, “A model music business curriculum” (2002). In her research, she aimed to “identify a model music business curriculum,

and once identified, compare it with the curriculum required of the music business major at Western Illinois University, and then make recommendations for change” (McCain, 2002, p. 14). McCain found that there were seven music business courses that were considered to be very important. These include: music business internship, introduction to music business, a two-semester general survey of the music industry, music industry seminar (current events and issues), computer application in music business, music copyright, licensing, contracts, and publishing, and manufacturing, distribution, and retailing of music products (McCain, 2002). Of these seven courses considered to be most important, only two of them align well with what UNI provides in the Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with a track in Performing Arts Management. McCain (2002) also identified four business courses that are considered very important: Principles of Marketing, Business Writing, Introduction to Computers, and Management. Only two of these align with the requirements of the UNI School of Music (Principles of Marketing and Organizational Management/Performing Arts Management). McCain (2002) also identified two music courses that are considered very important: Computer Applications in Music and Understanding the Language of Music (Music Theory), of which UNI only requires Music Theory.

In the article, “On Course for Success,” which was published in Music Week, Stassen (2014) identified some of the expectations of graduates of music business in the United Kingdom. He identified work experience as one of the primary expectations of employers, but also recognized the importance of enrolling in credible courses taught by industry specialists (Stassen, 2014). Stassen quoted Velocity Communication’s founder Andy Saunders in describing what sparks a successful music business career:

If you are serious about a career in the music business, I would wholeheartedly recommend the higher education route...However, I will qualify that by saying you have to choose the right course, one with a proven pedigree that is recognized and taken seriously by the industry (p. 15, 2014).

This emphasized the importance of the current study, which will help to identify what makes a successful school of music in regards to preparing students for the industry.

### **Music Education Curriculum**

Charles P. Schmidt (1989) explored requirements for music education in his article “An Investigation of Undergraduate Music Education Curriculum Content,” however, it was published in 1989, and as such is likely outdated. Schmidt (1989) stated that, “Despite the limitations in the research in music teacher training, one common finding that seems to emerge is the large degree of variability in curricula” (p. 43). This seems to remain a true statement to an extent, but he did find that there is some consistency in the core topics required of all music education students between universities (Schmidt, 1989). This is likely a result of NASM having been established since 1924.

### **Research Questions to Be Answered**

The goal of the interviews conducted during this study was to answer the following three questions:

- What skills and knowledge do faculty believe the entertainment/music industry requires?
- What curricular changes and emphases would make graduates of the UNI School of Music more successful at meeting their career goals?
- What skills and knowledge do faculty think will be the most important in the next ten years?

A gap analysis survey was also developed and distributed to 140 UNI School of Music alumni who graduated between 2006 and 2011 via Qualtrics, an online survey software. This survey asked participants to identify competencies that are considered most important in their current positions, and to identify which of those same skills are taught most effectively at UNI.

## **Methodology**

### **Interviews**

Seven professors were directly recruited via email to participate in interviews. The criteria for selection sought professors that: are on junior and senior levels of the tenure track, from different departments within the School of Music (vocal, instrumental, administrative, and musicology), and who have varying seniority. All of the faculty, regardless of tenure status, are considered faculty leaders within the School of Music. Interviews with professors were held on campus in their offices on three separate occasions, and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes each. These interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. This process was certified by UNI's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and all participants gave their written informed consent.

### **Survey**

A quantitative questionnaire was also developed and distributed via email to 140 UNI alumni. Thirty-seven individuals participated, resulting in a 26.4% response rate. All participants remained anonymous and participation was voluntary. The email was distributed through University Relations. This process was also IRB certified through the University, and all participants acknowledged their informed consent within the survey.

All respondents finished their undergraduate studies at the UNI School of Music during the years 2006-2011. Their current jobs included: band director; college ministry staff, freelance



musician and music educator; student and professional musician; association services specialist; self-employed musician; personal assistant and security for Brian Setzer; Music teacher; middle school vocal director; band instrument repair technician and army musician (reserves); musician, songwriter/arranger, producer, music director, promoter, and teacher; lower school music; woodwind instructor and doctoral student; music director; associate director of vocal music; speech-language pathologist; church planter; mechanical engineer; systems reliability technician; member consultant; K-5 elementary music specialist; high school orchestra director; data migration manager (arts technology company); music therapist and mental health therapist; content specialist; worship leader; PhD music and human learning student; attorney; K-12 band director; and private piano and voice instructor. Twenty-two respondents identified as female and fifteen identified as male.

The first research question was, “Please rate the importance of the following knowledge areas and skill-sets in your current job?” Respondents were then asked to answer using a Likert scale that ranged from 1: extremely important, to 5: not at all important. The second question was similar, but asked, “How effective was your time in the School of Music at preparing you in these knowledge areas and skill-sets?” Respondents were again asked to answer using a Likert scale that ranged from 1: extremely effective, to 5: not effective at all.

### **Analysis**

Upon completing the interviews and closing the survey, all interviews were transcribed and the data was organized and analyzed. In doing so, themes and trends were identified in the responses in order to gain a fuller understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the UNI School of Music. Upon identifying these, suggestions for improvement were made and strengths in the program were acknowledged. In order to maintain their anonymity, each interviewee was

assigned a number, which will be used refer to them as the findings are discussed throughout this paper. Through this research an understanding of the skills and knowledge required to work in the entertainment/music industry was gained, and changes to the School of Music's existing curriculum that will support those careers were identified.

### **Results**

There were five primary themes identified in the interviews of the UNI faculty. These included: networking, collaborating, and being easy to work with; core knowledge and musical and performance knowledge and ability; communication; mentors, internships, and applied learning; and self-discipline and hard work.

#### **Networking, Collaborating, and Being Easy to Work With**

All seven members of the faculty interviewed made some mention of networking, collaborating, and being easy to work with as a necessity in the workplace. A few even labeled this as the most important experience of their undergraduate studies. Professor One, an applied instrumental professor who has been on faculty for over forty years, even went as far as to say,

Probably the most important experience...looking back...I, I think it was all the relationships...All the people...I mean that included faculty and you know it included other students...Other musicians that may have not been in school, but that you interact with and play with on gigs...all of my performance classes, meaning ensembles...And, and applied. I think those were the most important, because that's, that's where I made most of the connections. You know, and spent time interacting with people.

Professor Five, an instrumental ensemble, music theory, and conducting professor who has been on faculty for twenty to thirty years, touted the importance of networking in order to develop a support system that allows you to be successful in your job.

You have to network. You have to be communicative with people in your field all over the state, all over the city, all over the nation. You have to have a network of colleagues and I didn't realize how valuable that was until I got into college orchestra directors...So networking as far...it's a support system and it adds to your personal success in your locality.

In this quote, Professor Five accentuated the importance of joining professional organizations in order to maintain contact and learn from other professionals in the field. This may include organizations such as the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the American Bandmasters Association, and the American Choral Directors Association just to name a few. They went on to say, "You do have to get out. You do have to share your knowledge. You do have to interface with people who share their knowledge with you...otherwise you're just reinventing the wheel all the time." This is such an important take away because the music industry, particularly the classical music industry, is relatively small and requires cooperation and collaboration in order to be successful, because, in many ways, there are limited resources.

Professor Two, a professor of music education and conducting who at one point served in a departmental leadership position and has been on faculty for twenty-five years, also emphasized the importance of ensembles in students learning regarding working in groups and collaboration. They discussed how ensembles provide built in groups in which students must learn to collaborate in order to be successful. They believe that this is where students primarily learn about group dynamics, which continues to be an area of importance when students enter the corporate world.

In this way, the concept of networking, collaborating, and being easy to work with seems as if it is being emphasized because the UNI School of Music requires at least seven semesters (7

credits) of ensembles for every degree program. In fact, the only degree programs that do not require eight semesters of ensembles are those of music educators because their eighth semester of study is spent student teaching.

Professor Three, a vocal ensemble director and conducting professor who has been on faculty for five to ten years, went on to discuss the importance of collaboration in particular, and how one must be easy to work with in order to collaborate successfully. “I would say you have to know how to work with others...that’s probably the most important thing. How to listen to each other and how to...how to cooperate and live together.” Professor Five emphasized the importance of this in their own way by saying,

In an ensemble, we have to work together as a group. Yet, you have to take direction from your director. It’s not a democracy in that way, so it teaches a people kind of skill that you have to have compromise. Everybody’s got to do their part or something doesn’t work.

In order to be easy to work with and thus collaborate and network successfully, one has to be reliable and prepared. Organization and timeliness are necessary basic skills. Professor Six, a vocal ensemble director and applied voice professor who has been on faculty for less than five years, elaborated on this idea of networking being a critical skill in saying that individuals must self assess and collaborate with others who have strengths that fill their own weaknesses. This demonstrates the importance of knowing oneself and one’s skills in order to get help and collaborate with others, knowing the task cannot be completed otherwise. They went on to emphasize the importance of awareness as a skill when one is working in a group. They discussed the importance of understanding how the team comes together and identifying what one’s own responsibility is within that group dynamic.

It is crucial to understand one's role in these networks and collaborations, because it becomes difficult to achieve goals if students are unaware of the group dynamics or different members are not contributing.

Professor One identified some of the specific skills or traits that allow a person to be easy to work with,

I think the most important thing that I like to have the students learn...is how important it is to be a good, true, honest, reliable, respectful person...I think that's one quality that all of our students have...And I really try to continue to emphasize that with them...You know, to show how important it is to be responsible, to be respectful, you know, and to be consistent, and follow through, and finish.

These are the core skills that students must learn and master in order to be someone with whom others want to network or collaborate. Professor Four, a vocal ensemble director and conducting professor who has been on faculty for less than five years, extrapolated on this idea,

You don't realize reputation is kind of everything in this field. I don't care if you're a performer or you're on the management side...It's a very small world we live in. So you always want to make sure that your experiences with anybody, whether they are the boss or the person running to get coffee, that you treat everybody well because you never know who knows somebody...It's being a good colleague, and being kind is really, really important. You want people to want to work with you...And you can have all the skills in the world but if you're not an easy person to work with, no one's going to want to hire you. Or you're not going to be able to keep a job.

This idea is reoccurring in nearly every interview conducted, that in order to be successful in the music industry, one must be someone with whom others want to work, and the only way a

student can acquire or hone that skill is to continuously network with people and learn about themselves in group settings throughout their undergraduate studies. On numerous occasions, the faculty interviewed made statements that emphasized the idea that a student can be the most talented person in the world, but if they are a jerk, or are consistently late, or they are not respectful, no one wants to work with them or hire them. In fact, Professor Seven, an applied instrumental and theory professor who has been on faculty for over fifteen years, specifically said, “Being dependable gets you jobs.”

This was reinforced in the quantitative study, as 94.6% of respondents identified networking as at least moderately important in their current jobs. On that point, both faculty and alumni agree. However, in the responses to the question of “How effective was your time in the School of Music at preparing you in these knowledge areas and skill sets?” there was not a consensus. In fact, the distribution of answers was a near-perfect bell curve with 11.1% of respondents claiming their preparation was extremely effective, 25.0% claiming it was very effective, 27.8% claiming it was moderately effective, 25.0% claiming it was slightly effective, and 11.1% claiming it was not at all effective. This response from alumni perhaps requires some attention from faculty. It is generally agreed upon by the participants in this study that networking is at least moderately important, so why, then, is more attention not brought to that fact during their undergraduate studies?

Survey respondents also identified group dynamics as important in their current jobs. Of the thirty-seven respondents, 91.9% reported that group dynamics were at least moderately important in their current jobs. In this way, they seem to agree with faculty on the importance of this knowledge area. A majority (83.8%) also reported that their time in the UNI School of Music was at least moderately effective in preparing them in this knowledge area. However, only

16.2% of respondents reported they were extremely effectively prepared by the UNI School of Music in group dynamics. While faculty seem to believe that ensembles are the primary way in which students are to acquire knowledge in this area, students are not actually getting out of this what is expected by faculty. It is my belief that perhaps a diversification of the required ensembles may aid in filling this gap. Additionally, it would be useful to identify in what other classroom settings students are required to work in groups. In my experience, the only course aside from ensembles in which I was required to work in a group was Music History II, and it was one group research project.

### **Core Knowledge and Musical and Performance Knowledge and Ability**

Once again, this was a topic area that all seven faculty members who participated in the study emphasized as being of critical importance to students as they enter the workforce. Their primary concern was with musical and performance knowledge and ability, but they did also recognize the importance of basic knowledge, which aligns with the Liberal Arts Core required of all UNI students. Professor One summarized this idea quite concisely,

Whatever your area of discipline, if it's math or social studies or music, you have to have certain basic elements, certain basic information...the common core of knowledge, in order to be able to pass that on.

All of the professors interviewed agreed with this sentiment. One must have basic knowledge in order to be successful. Professor Four described the idea in this way,

First and foremost, you have to have an understanding of music...even if I'm going to be in management, still having an understanding of basic musicianship...knowing, obviously your theory and all that stuff but I think in some ways too music history, and that is a little bit more important as far as having a context.

It was clear in speaking to all of these professors that they saw great value in mastering music theory, music history, and applied studies. That was reflected in the survey, as 94.4% of respondents agreed that they were at least moderately effectively prepared by the UNI School of Music in music theory, music history, sight singing, and instrumental performance. One would think that vocal performance would also be included in this, however, only 69.4% of respondents identified it as a skill for which they were at least moderately effectively prepared for by the UNI School of Music. While this may seem like an outlier, upon looking at the demographic information provided by survey respondents, one can see that this is likely due to the fact that there were simply more respondents who studied instrumental music rather than vocal music during their undergraduate degree.

Professor Two also described the importance of this basic knowledge in regards to longevity as a professional, “So one is really strong knowledge of music the fundamentals of music and how it all works. ...Those that have a lot of expertise tend to...I think they’re able to stay in the industry.” While only one professor made this particular observation, it should be noted, as this longevity and success of students seems to be an institutional goal as far as the UNI School of Music is concerned. Professors want students to learn and keep learning once they leave school, so a continuation of knowledge in the fundamentals of music is essential in achieving this goal.

### **Communication**

Five of the seven professors that were interviewed also mentioned the importance of communication. Professor Four explained why they believed it is such an important skill,

Having interpersonal skills where there are so many parts of music whether it’s ‘I’m a teacher and I’m meeting parents’ or ‘I’m going to the school board to get money for this’



or 'I'm at some big donor dinner'...the ability to just talk to random people...And to be able to, you know, be friendly and be nice but be able to have that interaction.

This demonstrates on a firsthand basis just how important communication can be in the professional world. Professor Six emphasized how communication can be the most crucial part of being successful. They claimed that it is the most crucial aspect of her job, "Communication skills...are the biggest, are essential." They also made the point that communication is what makes them successful and has the biggest repercussions when not done successfully.

It is clear from these examples that communication is considered a critical skill by the faculty that took part in this study. A few of them emphasized the importance of communication as a performer in particular. Not only is it necessary for people to communicate verbally in speaking with others, but it is also a crucial component of being a successful and convincing performer. Professor Five said,

Their job isn't to play the music perfectly, it's to create a relationship with the music that they can communicate...I mean that's our job...They can communicate that love no matter what career they choose. It's able to feed them no matter what...Audience is a real big relationship to music.

It is evident in this description that as a member of the music industry, one must have the ability to communicate with others, and that includes being able to relate to their peers, audiences, and colleagues. If one cannot relate with others and communicate effectively, it becomes incredibly difficult to be successful.

Participants in the survey also agreed with this notion. All respondents ranked persuasive communication and verbal communication as at least moderately important in their current jobs. In fact, thirty-two of the thirty-seven respondents (86.5%) ranked verbal communication as

extremely important. Additionally, thirty-two respondents claimed they were at least moderately effectively prepared in verbal communication. Interestingly, only 56.8% of respondents reported that their time was at least moderately effectively spent at the UNI School of Music in preparing them in persuasive communication. While these are somewhat acceptable percentages, it is important to note that zero respondents reported that they were extremely effectively prepared in persuasive communication, two respondents (5.4%) reported they were very effectively prepared, and nineteen respondents (51.4%) reported they were moderately effectively prepared. Nine respondents (24.3%) reported they were only slightly effectively prepared and seven respondents (18.9%) reported that they were not at all effectively prepared in persuasive communication. That being said, the majority of respondents reported that they were at least moderately effectively prepared in verbal communication. Only three of the thirty-seven respondents (8.1%) said they were slightly effectively prepared in verbal communication, and two (5.4%) responded that they were not at all effectively prepared in verbal communication.

Based on the emphasis by both faculty and alumni in the importance of these skills, it appears that time should be more effectively spent at the UNI School of Music in preparing students in communication. More research is required in order to determine the most effective additions or changes to the current curriculum that would address the gap in emphasis of communication skills being taught in the UNI School of Music.

### **Mentors, Internships, and Applied Learning**

Six of the seven professors interviewed also discussed the importance of their mentors and applied learning experiences in shaping their learning and ultimately their future successes in the music industry. Professor Two specifically noted exactly what one can learn from their mentors,

And then having outstanding mentors. Really seeing good faculty and how they function and function well...As you become an older student...you start to ask, 'Oh how are they effective in what they're doing?'...Or you try to figure out someone that's not effective...What're they doing incorrectly and what would you do differently?...You start to develop those skills over time.

While it may not be the typical master, apprentice relationship that is most often emphasized in the study of music, students learn constantly from all of their professors and mentors. Other professors discussed the importance to them of working with and learning from professors they had in their own undergraduate studies who had experience in the fields in which they were hoping to work. Professor Four noted the importance of two professors who had worked in public schools as music educators and how, as a student, they could learn so much from those professor's experiences. Professor Seven emphasized the importance of the faculty in saying, "But it's the particular faculty members who have...such a genuine interest and love of what they do that they can communicate that to students. I'd say that's the most influential thing." In this way, it is the student's love for music and the way that the professor was able to share that bond with them that allowed them to grow and create a hunger for learning.

Numerous professors discussed the importance of applied experience in addition to the mentors that helped them to get those opportunities or from whom they learned during those opportunities. There was mention of assistantships and internships that helped them to grow, learn, and discover what exactly it was that they wanted to do, and the skills that they would need to acquire in the rest of their time in school in order to succeed in those careers. Professor Seven discussed this idea and then went on to say how that helps them to better teach and mentor their current students,

And I also taught for a year when I was doing my doctoral studies. That was not part of school, but that was a very valuable experience because it gave me a perspective on what public school educators have to deal with on a daily basis. And since I actually teach a lot of people who are going to be teachers I think that that knowledge has been very useful for me.

Having those experiences and building those relationships and skills allowed them to become a better educator. Not to mention, these experiences also helped many of these professors to get other experiences and opportunities. They continued, “And having that internship opened a lot of doors for me to get both to get jobs, and to go on and get some more Suzuki training and I taught, for the rest of the time I was in Philly.” Professor One even went as far as to say that the most important things are taught by applied experiences,

What I think makes, you know, the most effective teaching methods and tools and ways to communicate are taught by life experiences. I think that the more of those kinds of challenges, situations, various places that you can insert yourself to get different experiences are the things that make you the strongest and...become the most valuable in terms of teaching.

The premise of all of these statements seems to be that the more applied experience and internships students receive, the more successful and knowledgeable they will be in their area of study. Not only that, but the more applied experience students have, the more opportunities that will be available to them, and doors that will open once they are ready to enter the work force. It allows students to gain broader perspectives, learn more about themselves, and learn more than just core music knowledge. So much beyond basic musical knowledge is necessary of students in

order to be successful in the music industry. That same professor summarized this idea as it applied to their own studies,

I remember as a student, you know, just doing everything that I could... Whatever it is, just do anything and everything to get the experiences, because I think all of them, all of the things you do contribute, you know, and shape who you are... The more of those there are... The better chance you have, you know, of developing your potential. Discovering maybe something new about yourself that you didn't know.

Professor Four described their experience more in terms of observing, claiming that the more people one works with, the more things one can pick up and that eventually one is able to solve current problems based on that prior knowledge. So much can be learned from mentors and internships, and that should not be taken lightly. College is the prime time for students to get out and learn because it is a time when mistakes are not quite so critical, and there are so many opportunities and resources surrounding students from which they can learn.

There were no particular questions in the first section of this survey that directly addressed this topic, however, many of the skills that students are lacking upon graduation can be learned in these types of experiences. The survey did ask, "How important were the following experiences to your success in life and career?" and asked respondents to rate classroom experience, applied/ensemble experience, and extracurricular experience from extremely important to not at all important. Of the thirty-seven respondents 97.3% reported that applied/ensemble experience was at least moderately important. Additionally, 46.0% reported that applied/ensemble experience was extremely important. Unfortunately, because this question was not more explicit, it is difficult to determine whether respondents were reporting based on their ensemble, student teaching, or internship experiences.

### **Self-Discipline and Hard Work**

Five of the seven professors interviewed also made mention of the importance of self-discipline and hard work. Professor Three called these core competencies,

Because you have skills and knowledge but the reality is there's core competencies that are beyond piano skills that are probably going to be most important. So that's why you hear me say things like grit and resilience and kindness. And these are core competencies that I think people need to have before you can even do skill and craft level.

They claimed this is the basis of all success in the music industry. That, essentially, one cannot be successful in this field unless they have mastered these skills. Professor Seven agreed with them saying, "Basic things like working hard [makes you successful]." Self-discipline and hard work seem to be universally agreed upon prerequisites for any job, and these professors seem to agree that music students at UNI have an advantage in this area. Professor Five said,

You've got to do the basic stuff...No amount of just comprehending it is going to get you there. If you can't sing a major scale, knowing how to sing it is not going to do it. You have to do it...Can you do it everyday? That's what's a little different about a liberal arts university and a conservatory...We're not a conservatory. We're a liberal arts university...But what we make our students do is to show up and try and be prepared, as prepared as they can be. And believe it or not, just showing up and doing your job on a regular basis gets you gigs.

Working hard and being disciplined is what allows students to be prepared and successful in the music industry. Working hard is what gives students that little push that puts them above their competitors when it comes to auditions or jobs. Professor Seven said, "Work trumps talent every

time,” and the impression I got in speaking to all of these professors is that nearly all, if not all, of them would agree with that sentiment. They extrapolated on this by saying,

You know we hear all these recordings of wonderful, you know, really amazing musicians. But they didn't just get there by being amazing...They also got there by really working their butts off and I think that that's a huge thing that's overlooked sometimes.

Do you have to be excellent at what you do? Of course you do, but it's more than that.

This concept was most reflected in survey participant's response to the skills organization and prioritization. In order to successfully work hard and be self-disciplined, these skills are essential. All of the respondents identified these skills as at least moderately important in their current jobs. In fact, over 80% of respondents claimed they were both extremely important in their current jobs. Over 80% of respondents also reported that they were at least moderately effectively prepared in these two areas during their time at the UNI School of Music. This appears to be quite a strong area of discipline being taught at the UNI School of Music.

### **Most Important Skills as Identified by Alumni**

There were nine skills that 90% or more of respondents categorized as at least moderately important, and there were four that 100% of respondents categorized as at least moderately important, including persuasive communication. There was a pretty even split between extremely important (15) and very important (14) with several identifying it as moderately important (8). Verbal communication was one of the most valued skills according to respondents. Thirty-two of the thirty-seven respondents (86.5%) identified this as an extremely important skill to have in their current jobs. Organization was another of these skills, which 100% of respondents identified as at least moderately important, and thirty-one respondents (83.8%) labeled it extremely important. Prioritization was also very highly valued by respondents. All respondents

identified it as at least moderately important. Thirty respondents (81.1%) labeled this skill extremely important. There were five other skills that at least 90% of respondents determined were at least moderately important. These included, group dynamics (91.9%), collaboration (94.6%), management (91.9%), leadership (97.3%), and networking (94.6%).

### **Alumni Perceptions**

Not one of the areas of knowledge or skill-sets listed in this question had a 100% response of at least moderately effective, which is interesting, considering there were four identified as at least moderately important in respondents' current jobs. There were, however, four in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. Nearly all (97.3%) of respondents identified their preparation in music theory as having been at least moderately effective. Of the thirty-seven respondents, 97.3% stated they were at least moderately effectively prepared in music history. Additionally, 97.3% responded they were at least moderately effectively prepared in sight singing. Instrumental performance was considered moderately effectively taught by 94.4% of respondents.

Interestingly, none of these topics, which respondents claimed were taught at least moderately effectively, matched the skill-sets and knowledge areas identified as most important in their current jobs. In fact, while verbal communication was identified as extremely important by 86.5% of respondents, only 10.8% of respondents identified this as a skill that was prepared extremely effectively in their time at the UNI School of Music. Additionally, organization and prioritization, which 83.8% and 81.1% respondents identified as extremely important respectively, was only identified as extremely effective in 16.2% and 18.9% of respondents respectively. However, 83.8% of respondents determined that the preparation of the School of Music in organization was at least moderately effective, and 89.2% of respondents determined



the School of Music prepared them at least moderately effectively in prioritization, so this is ultimately not as glaring of a gap.

### **Conclusion**

After completing a qualitative study with the goal of answering the following research questions: What skills and knowledge do faculty believe the entertainment/music industry requires?; What curricular changes and emphases would make graduates of the UNI School of Music more successful at meeting their career goals?; and What skills and knowledge do faculty think will be the most important in the next ten years?, faculty of the UNI School of Music identified five primary areas considered to be most important in order for students to be successful upon graduation. These included: networking, collaborating, and being easy to work with; core knowledge and musical and performance knowledge and ability; communication; mentors, internships, and applied learning; and self-discipline and hard work. Based on alumni responses via qualitative survey, verbal communication, organization, and prioritization are the three most important skills in their current jobs. These roughly align with faculty perceptions as to what is important, as they fit in the communication and self-discipline and hard work categories. Unfortunately, while persuasive communication was reported as at least moderately important in their current jobs by 100% of participants, it was one of the least effectively taught skills according to respondents. Verbal communication was identified as being taught only moderately effectively (43.3%), though some (32.43%) claimed it was very effectively taught as well. In any case, this appears to be a gap in the UNI School of Music. If both faculty and alumni agree that communication is extremely important, it should then be very effectively taught.

Networking, collaborating, and being easy to work with were largely agreed upon as an important skill sets by both faculty and alumni. However, according to the survey, alumni feel

there is room for improvement in both networking and group dynamics. This appears to be a gap in the UNI School of Music. While these areas are currently being addressed, the ways in which they are should be evaluated so as to ensure optimal preparation in these very important areas.

Core knowledge and musical and performance knowledge and ability was arguably the most important based on faculty response, and a majority of survey respondents agreed that they were at least very effectively prepared if not extremely effectively prepared in these content areas. However, far fewer of them reported that these were skills that were extremely or even very important in their current jobs. This appears to be another gap in the UNI School of Music. While it is obviously important to have this basic knowledge in order to work in the music industry, perhaps time could be better spent in other areas in order to fill the gaps of skills in which they feel they were less effectively prepared.

Mentors, internships, and applied learning were considered important by faculty, however, the survey unfortunately did not effectively address any of these areas. It was clear throughout the interviews that taking advantage of these opportunities was critical in the success of faculty and that they believe this still holds true for students. Survey respondents did agree that applied/ensemble experience was at least moderately important (97.3%), but it is not clear as to which experiences they are directly referring. It is important, then, that the UNI School of Music emphasizes taking advantage of these opportunities and the resources that are available while students are still in school.

Finally, self-discipline and hard work appear to be areas in which the UNI School of Music is excelling. Being a music student requires these skills, and the high expectations and standards required by the UNI School of Music help students to hone them throughout their undergraduate studies. This should be continued.

This study was able to examine the elements that make an effective and high quality School of Music that prepares students for success beyond graduation. Through interviews with UNI School of Music faculty, a deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge currently emphasized in the music core at the UNI was gained. A survey of UNI School of Music Alumni provided an understanding of how well the current mix of skills and knowledge align with those that are necessary in the work force. Through this research, the skills and knowledge required to work in the music industry are better understood, and changes to the UNI School of Music's existing curriculum that will support those careers were identified. Ultimately, the UNI School of Music is doing many things well, which allows for this critical analysis to carry meaning. Alumni have proven to have a strong core knowledge and musical and performance knowledge, and in fact, may be over-prepared in these areas. However, improvements should be made to encourage students development of networking and collaborating, and communication throughout their undergraduate studies.

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## Appendix

### Survey Results

*Question 1: What is your current job title?*

Band director
College Ministry Staff
Freelance Musician and Music Educator
Student/Professional Musician
Freelance Musician
Association services specialist
Self-employed musician
Personal Assistant and Security for Brian Setzer
Freelance musician, teacher
Music teacher
Middle school band director
Musician
Music teacher
6/7 Vocal Director
Band Instrument Repair Technician and Army Musician (reserves)
Musician/songwriter/arranger/producer/music director/promoter/teacher
Teacher
Lower School Music
Woodwind Instructor and doctoral student
Music director

Associate Director of Vocal Music
Speech-Language Pathologist
Church Planter
Mechanical Engineer
Freelance performer/instructor
Systems Reliability Technician
Member Consultant
K-5 Elementary Music Specialist
High School Orchestra Director
Data Migration Manager (Arts Technology Company)
Music Therapist/Mental Health Therapist
Content Specialist
Worship Leader
PhD Music & Human Learning Student-former 6 year secondary high school instructor/church choir director
Attorney
5-12 Band director
Private Piano/Voice Instructor

*Question 2: I graduated in the following year (select one).*

Answer	%	Count
2001	0.00%	0
2002	0.00%	0

2003	0.00%	0
2004	0.00%	0
2005	2.70%	1
2006	13.51%	5
2007	10.81%	4
2008	16.22%	6
2009	16.22%	6
2010	21.62%	8
2011	18.92%	7
2012	0.00%	0
2013	0.00%	0
2014	0.00%	0
2015	0.00%	0
Total	100%	37

Field	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
I graduated in the following year (select one)	5.00	11.00	8.70	1.77	3.13	37	0.00%	0.00%



*Question 3: I consider my gender to be...*

Answer	%	Count
Male	40.54%	15
Female	59.46%	22
Transgender	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0
Total	100%	37

Field	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
I consider my gender to be...	1.00	2.00	1.59	0.49	0.24	37	100%	59.46%

*Question 4: Please rate the importance of the following knowledge areas and skill-sets in your current job?*

Question	Extremely Important		Very Important		Moderately Important		Slightly Important		Not at all Important		Total
Music Theory	16.22%	6	35.14%	13	18.92%	7	8.11%	3	21.62%	8	37
Music History	8.11%	3	18.92%	7	32.43%	12	16.22%	6	24.32%	9	37

Sight Reading	37.84%	1 4	18.92%	7	10.81%	4	8.11%	3	24.32%	9	37
Instrumental Performance	40.54%	1 5	10.81%	4	16.22%	6	8.11%	3	24.32%	9	37
Vocal Performance	13.51%	5	16.22%	6	24.32%	9	10.81%	4	35.14%	1 3	37
Marketing	16.22%	6	29.73%	1 1	37.84%	1 4	8.11%	3	8.11%	3	37
Persuasive Communication	40.54%	1 5	37.84%	1 4	21.62%	8	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	37
Budget Management	27.78%	1 0	44.44%	1 6	16.67%	6	8.33%	3	2.78%	1	36
Acting	5.41%	2	16.22%	6	21.62%	8	21.62%	8	35.14%	1 3	37
Dance Performance	0.00%	0	5.56%	2	8.33%	3	11.11%	4	75.00%	2 7	36
Verbal Communication	86.49%	3 2	8.11%	3	5.41%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	37
Organization	83.78%	3 1	8.11%	3	8.11%	3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	37
Prioritization	81.08%	3 0	16.22%	6	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	37
Scholarly Writing	10.81%	4	13.51%	5	45.95%	1 7	16.22%	6	13.51%	5	37

Research	18.92%	7	27.03%	1 0	16.22%	6	18.92%	7	18.92%	7	37
Fund raising	24.32%	9	10.81%	4	21.62%	8	13.51%	5	29.73%	1 1	37
Grant Writing	8.11%	3	10.81%	4	16.22%	6	29.73%	1 1	35.14%	1 3	37
Group Dynamics	54.05%	2 0	24.32%	9	13.51%	5	2.70%	1	5.41%	2	37
Knowledge of Copyright/ Royalties	10.81%	4	27.03%	1 0	27.03%	1 0	21.62%	8	13.51%	5	37
Web Design	8.11%	3	10.81%	4	35.14%	1 3	43.24%	1 6	2.70%	1	37
Social Media	13.51%	5	29.73%	1 1	37.84%	1 4	10.81%	4	8.11%	3	37
Data Analysis	21.62%	8	21.62%	8	16.22%	6	21.62%	8	18.92%	7	37
Collaboratio n	67.57%	2 5	21.62%	8	5.41%	2	0.00%	0	5.41%	2	37
Management	48.65%	1 8	18.92%	7	24.32%	9	8.11%	3	0.00%	0	37
Leadership	48.65%	1 8	37.84%	1 4	10.81%	4	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	37

Human Resources	18.92%	7	16.22%	6	40.54%	1 5	13.51%	5	10.81%	4	37
Networking	40.54%	1 5	43.24%	1 6	10.81%	4	2.70%	1	2.70%	1	37
Music Pedagogy	40.54%	1 5	27.03%	1 0	2.70%	1	5.41%	2	24.32%	9	37

Field	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
Music Theory	1.00	5.00	2.84	1.39	1.92	37	70.27%	48.65%
Music History	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.25	1.56	37	59.46%	72.97%
Sight Reading	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.62	2.61	37	67.57%	43.24%
Instrumental Performance	1.00	5.00	2.65	1.63	2.66	37	67.57%	48.65%
Vocal Performance	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.44	2.07	37	54.05%	70.27%
Marketing	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.10	1.21	37	83.78%	54.05%
Persuasive Communication	1.00	3.00	1.81	0.77	0.59	37	100.00%	21.62%
Budget Management	1.00	5.00	2.14	1.00	1.01	36	88.89%	27.78%
Acting	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.26	1.58	37	43.24%	78.38%

Dance Performance	2.00	5.00	4.56	0.86	0.75	36	13.89%	94.44%
Verbal Communication	1.00	3.00	1.19	0.51	0.26	37	100.00%	5.41%
Organization	1.00	3.00	1.24	0.59	0.35	37	100.00%	8.11%
Prioritization	1.00	3.00	1.22	0.47	0.22	37	100.00%	2.70%
Scholarly Writing	1.00	5.00	3.08	1.12	1.26	37	70.27%	75.68%
Research	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.40	1.97	37	62.16%	54.05%
Fund Raising	1.00	5.00	3.14	1.55	2.39	37	56.76%	64.86%
Grant Writing	1.00	5.00	3.73	1.27	1.60	37	35.14%	81.08%
Group Dynamics	1.00	5.00	1.81	1.11	1.23	37	91.89%	21.62%
Knowledge of Copyright/ Royalties	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.21	1.46	37	64.86%	62.16%
Web Design	1.00	5.00	3.22	0.96	0.93	37	54.05%	81.08%
Social Media	1.00	5.00	2.70	1.09	1.18	37	81.08%	56.76%
Data Analysis	1.00	5.00	2.95	1.43	2.05	37	59.46%	56.76%
Collaboration	1.00	5.00	1.54	1.00	1.01	37	94.59%	10.81%
Management	1.00	4.00	1.92	1.02	1.05	37	91.89%	32.43%
Leadership	1.00	4.00	1.68	0.77	0.60	37	97.30%	13.51%

Human Resources	1.00	5.00	2.81	1.20	1.45	37	75.68%	64.86%
Networking	1.00	5.00	1.84	0.92	0.84	37	94.59%	16.22%
Music Pedagogy	1.00	5.00	2.46	1.62	2.63	37	70.27%	32.43%

*Question 5: How effective was your time in the School of Music at preparing you in these knowledge areas and skill-sets?*

Question	Extremely Effective		Very Effective		Moderately Effective		Slightly Effective		Not Effective at all		Total
Music Theory	48.65%	18	37.84%	14	10.81%	4	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	37
Music History	40.54%	15	43.24%	16	13.51%	5	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	37
Sight Reading	43.24%	16	40.54%	15	13.51%	5	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	37
Instrumental Performance	52.78%	19	33.33%	12	8.33%	3	5.56%	2	0.00%	0	36
Vocal Performance	30.56%	11	11.11%	4	27.78%	10	16.67%	6	13.89%	5	36
Marketing	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	29.73%	11	40.54%	15	29.73%	11	37

Persuasive Communication	0.00%	0	5.41%	2	51.35%	1 9	24.32%	9	18.92%	7	37
Budget Management	0.00%	0	2.70%	1	16.22%	6	37.84%	1 4	43.24%	1 6	37
Acting	0.00%	0	5.71%	2	20.00%	7	22.68%	8	51.43%	1 8	35
Dance Performance	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	11.43%	4	2.86%	1	85.71%	3 0	35
Verbal Communication	10.81%	4	32.43%	1 2	43.24%	1 6	8.11%	3	5.41%	2	37
Organization	16.22%	6	37.84%	1 4	29.73%	1 1	10.81%	4	5.41%	2	37
Prioritization	18.92%	7	32.43%	1 2	37.84%	1 4	8.11%	3	2.70%	1	37
Scholarly Writing	21.62%	8	35.14%	1 3	27.03%	1 0	10.81%	4	5.41%	2	37
Research	8.11%	3	43.24%	1 6	32.43%	1 2	10.81%	4	5.41%	2	37
Fund Raising	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	22.22%	8	25.00%	9	52.78%	1 9	36
Grant Writing	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	5.56%	2	13.89%	5	80.56%	2 9	36
Group Dynamics	16.22%	6	32.43%	1 2	35.14%	1 3	8.11%	3	8.11%	3	37

Knowledge of Copyright/Royalties	2.70%	1	8.11%	3	13.51%	5	24.32%	9	51.35%	1	37
										9	
Web Design	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	8.33%	3	16.67%	6	75.00%	2	36
										7	
Social Media	0.00%	0	2.78%	1	13.89%	5	16.67%	6	66.67%	2	36
										4	
Data Analysis	2.70%	1	13.51%	5	18.92%	7	16.22%	6	48.65%	1	37
										8	
Collaboration	35.14%	1	32.43%	1	18.92%	7	5.41%	2	8.11%	3	37
		3		2							
Management	13.89%	5	19.44%	7	13.89%	5	27.78%	1	25.00%	9	36
								0			
Leadership	32.43%	1	21.62%	8	27.03%	1	16.22%	6	2.70%	1	37
		2				0					
Human Resources	2.78%	1	2.78%	1	13.89%	5	33.33%	1	47.22%	1	36
								2		7	
Networking	11.11%	4	25.00%	9	27.78%	1	25.00%	9	11.11%	4	36
						0					
Music Pedagogy	36.11%	1	38.89%	1	13.89%	5	2.78%	1	8.33%	3	36
		3		4							

Field	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
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Music Theory	1.00	4.00	1.68	0.77	0.60	37	97.30%	13.51%
Music History	1.00	4.00	1.78	0.78	0.60	37	97.30%	16.22%
Sight Reading	1.00	4.00	1.76	0.79	0.62	37	97.30%	16.22%
Instrumental Performance	1.00	4.00	1.67	0.85	0.72	36	94.44%	13.89%
Vocal Performance	1.00	5.00	2.72	1.41	1.98	36	69.44%	58.33%
Marketing	3.00	5.00	4.00	0.77	0.59	37	29.73%	100.00%
Persuasive Communication	2.00	5.00	3.57	0.86	0.73	37	56.76%	94.59%
Budget Management	2.00	5.00	4.22	0.81	0.66	37	18.92%	97.30%
Acting	2.00	5.00	4.20	0.95	0.90	35	25.71%	94.29%
Dance Performance	3.00	5.00	4.74	0.65	0.42	35	11.43%	100.00%
Verbal Communication	1.00	5.00	2.65	0.96	0.93	37	86.49%	56.76%
Organization	1.00	5.00	2.51	1.06	1.11	37	83.78%	45.95%
Prioritization	1.00	5.00	2.43	0.97	0.95	37	89.19%	48.65%
Scholarly Writing	1.00	5.00	2.43	1.10	1.22	37	83.78%	43.24%
Research	1.00	5.00	2.62	0.97	0.94	37	83.78%	48.65%
Fund Raising	3.00	5.00	4.31	0.81	0.66	36	22.22%	100.00%

Grant Writing	3.00	5.00	4.75	0.55	0.30	36	5.56%	100.00%
Group Dynamics	1.00	5.00	2.59	1.10	1.21	37	83.78%	51.35%
Knowledge of Copyright/Royalties	1.00	5.00	4.14	1.09	1.20	37	24.32%	89.19%
Web Design	3.00	5.00	4.67	0.62	0.39	36	8.33%	100.00%
Social Media	2.00	5.00	4.47	0.83	0.69	36	16.67%	97.22%
Data Analysis	1.00	5.00	3.95	1.21	1.46	37	35.14%	83.78%
Collaboration	1.00	5.00	2.19	1.20	1.45	37	86.49%	32.43
Management	1.00	5.00	3.31	1.39	1.93	36	47.22%	66.67%
Leadership	1.00	5.00	2.35	1.17	1.36	37	81.08%	45.96%
Human Resources	1.00	5.00	4.19	0.97	0.93	36	19.44%	94.44%
Networking	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.18	1.39	36	63.89%	63.89%
Music Pedagogy	1.00	5.00	2.08	1.16	1.35	36	88.89%	25.00%

*Question 6: What important skill-sets and knowledge areas were left off this list?*

Integrity
Making music
Music Technology
Assessment, writing curriculum, secondary instrument performance (technique classes)

Recording/engineering
Dealing with severe behaviors
As a teacher- classroom management, curriculum writing, creating assessments, etc
Music production, booking, promotion, contracts, and publicity
Piano skills
Non-verbal/body language and tone of voice in written communication
Secondary areas: ex vocal training for instrumentalists
Work ethic
Manipulative technology (ex: interactive SMARTboard)
Conducting
Composition
Pedagogy/strategies
Recruitment, applications, programming
Repertoire knowledge

*Question 7: How important were the following experiences to your success in life and career?*

Question	Extremely Important		Very Important		Moderately Important		Slightly Important		Not at all Important		Total
Classroom experiences	37.84%	14	32.43%	12	18.92%	7	5.41%	2	5.41%	2	37
Applied/ensemble experience	45.95%	17	35.14%	13	16.22%	6	2.70%	1	0.00%	0	37

Extra-curricular experience	35.14%	13	24.32%	9	27.03%	10	10.81%	4	2.70%	1	37
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Field	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
Classroom experiences	1.00	5.00	2.08	1.12	1.26	37	89.19%	29.73%
Applied/ensemble experience	1.00	4.00	1.76	0.82	0.67	37	97.30%	18.92%
Extracurricular experience	1.00	5.00	2.22	1.12	1.25	37	86.49%	40.54%

*Question 8: What degree(s) did you earn at UNI?*

Bachelor of Music-Instrumental Education
Bachelors in Music Education
Music BA
BA in Music
Bachelor of Arts in Music
Bachelor’s of music, vocal performance
BA Music, minor Portuguese
Bachelor of Arts in Music, Minor in Jazz Studies

Performance
Bachelor of Music Education, Instrumental and B.A. in Spanish
BA in Music Education
BA in Music/BA in Religion and Philosophy
BME
BME
Music BA
BA music in trombone minor in jazz studies
Bachelor of music education
BM Music Ed
BA in music
BM-music education
Bachelor of Music-Music Education
Communicative Disorders and Music
BA in Music, Jazz Studies
B.A. Music
BA music, minor Portuguese
BA in Music, BA in Biotechnology
BM, MM
BA in Music Education
Bachelor of Music Education
BA Vocal Music
BA Music and BA Psychology

Bachelor of Arts (Music and Spanish)
Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, Master of Arts in Music
B in Music Education, BA German Teaching
BA Music
Bachelor of Music Education, minor in jazz studies
Bachelor of Music Education