

Optional Response

August 15, 2022

**to the
NASM Visitors' Report**

**University of South Carolina
School of Music**

**813 Assembly St
Columbia, SC 29208**

Dr. Michel Amiridis, President

Dr. Tayloe Harding, Dean

Visit Date:

February 13-15, 2022

Please accept this document at the official Optional Response to the NASM Visitors' Report (VR) of their 2010 re-accreditation visit to the School of Music at the University of South Carolina.

SECTION A. RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES CITED IN P. Standards

Summary on p. 12 of the VR...

1. Given the issues with temperature and humidity control, water leaks and mold, it is not clear that “all instructional facilities shall be accessible, safe, and secure, and shall meet the standards of local fire and health codes” (see NASM *Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.g.).

Reply:

As cited by the visitors (VR, p. 5), this standards non-compliance issue is associated with the HVAC systems in the music building, and their inadequacy and inconsistency for the entire 26-year life of, and occupancy of the School of Music in, the building. The visitors addressed the issue and they also acknowledged the expressed commitment of the institution to fixing the problem with an outlay of \$1.13M in the coming months to replace those components of the HVAC system that fail and cause the unpredictable heating, cooling, ventilation, and leak problems throughout the building. Appendix A contains a document outlining the work to be done and a memo from central administration regarding the commitment and timeline to bring the school into compliance with this standard.

2. With regard to some current facilities, and the “Jazz Church” that will become operational during the projected period of accreditation, it is not clear that “acoustical treatments appropriate to music facilities shall be provided” (see NASM *Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.h.).

Reply:

The visitors citation of the School's non-compliance with standards regarding appropriate acoustical treatments is on pp. 5-6:

“...it is not clear how the School meets the standard that “all instructional facilities shall be accessible, safe, and secure, and shall meet the standards of local fire and health codes,” and that “Acoustical treatments appropriate to music facilities shall be provided”

(see *NASM Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.g. and h.). Finally, regarding facilities, the visitors had an opportunity to review the plans for the renovation of the Green(e) Street Church that will house the jazz program, and activities associated with the Bachelor of Arts in Music (Musical Theater) degree (see Self-Study, p. 14). The “Jazz Church,” as it is referred to in the Self-Study, will, once complete, allow for the growth of these strategically important programs, and further enhance the School’s excellent infrastructure for its programs. The first phase of the project has been supported by special initiative funds from the University. The visitors understand that the second phase of the project does not include funding for essential acoustical treatments and the isolation of performance spaces. As such, it is unclear how the facility could be put into use and meet the relevant health and safety standards for the period of accreditation (see *NASM Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.h.).

There are several documents attached in Appendix B below that address the School’s three main standards non-compliances relative to appropriate acoustical treatments mentioned above. There are estimates of work to be conducted to build the appropriate acoustical treatments in the music building (rooms 016, and 201/220), room 108 of the Copenhaver Band Hall, as well as in what has been planned for Phase 2 for the renovation of the Greene Street United Methodist Church (the “Jazz Church”). There is also a memo from the President of UofSC approving the expenditure of the requisite funds (\$900,000) for these acoustical treatments in each of three music facilities as warranted to come into compliance with NASM health and safety standards. These include the Music Bldg., the Copenhaver Band Hall, and the Greene Street Church as each phase of that renovation project proceeds. The estimated cost indicated in Appendix B is \$944,784 and the School of Music will commit the \$44,784 balance to complete the renovated treatments. For the Copenhaver Band Hall and the Music Bldg, the applicable treatments will be completed in summer 2023. For the Greene St Church the treatments will be completed as each phase of the renovations unfolds between 2022 and 2026.

3. It is not clear that non-majors enrolled in music courses and all faculty and staff are “provided basic information about the maintenance of health and safety within the contexts of practice, performance, teaching, and listening” (see *NASM Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation II.F.1.i.).

Reply:

The webpage located at this link below contains all of the basic information about the maintenance of health and safety within the contexts of practice, performance, teaching, and listening that must be provided non-majors and faculty and staff in the School of Music. Specifically, such information is

contained in the hyperlinks at the bottom of this page under the heading *Musician's Health Resources*. This link is distributed to the entire faculty and staff by the personnel in SPARK, the School's music leadership laboratory, every fall at the opening staff and faculty meeting in August. The link is also affixed to the syllabus of every course offered by the School of Music so that every student also has regular access to the data. (https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/music/spark_laboratory/music_wellness/index.php).

4. It is not clear that all students in undergraduate professional degree programs “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 2021-22, Standards for Accreditation VIII.B.4*).

Reply:

As described in the body of the Visitors' Report regarding this standard citation, the visitors (VR, p. 10) found that:

“The Self-Study notes that the School is “...transitioning in 2021-2022 to a new model” (pp. 29-30) for its required music history sequence, moving away from a three-semester introduction to the Western European art music tradition (Music 353, 354, 455), to a two-semester overview and a 400-level special topics course. The Self-Study provides the rationale for the revision including the goal of exposing students to “diverse styles and traditions of music,” and it appears that the new curriculum and courses will provide abundant opportunities for students to study and experience “musical language and achievement in addition to that of the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization.” The visitors were initially provided syllabi for the sequence of courses that is being replaced, and a careful review of those syllabi revealed that, given a particular instructor, it was possible to complete the required course sequence and not engage with music outside the western art music canon. This did raise questions about whether every student in a professional undergraduate degree program would acquire the necessary competency to meet the standard for the common body of knowledge and skill relative to history and repertory. Thus, in most undergraduate degree programs, it is not clear that all students “study and experience musical language and achievement in addition to that of the primary culture” (see NASM *Handbook 2021-22, Standards for Accreditation VIII.B.4*). “

The music history and literature faculty of the School of Music have concluded that the summative judgment reached by the visitors: “...*after a careful review of those syllabi revealed that, given a particular instructor, it was possible to complete the required course sequence and not engage with*

music outside the western art music canon...” is not accurate. It is true that a student, following the required sequence of MUSC 3453 and 354 (and the freshman required literature course MUSC 100L which was not addressed by the visitors in this standard citation at all), could elect a 400-level topics course in that final music history curricularly-required slot whose focused content was a topic(s) embracing the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization. It must be noted, however, that a significant portion of the MUSC 353, 354, and 100L courses themselves DO include music content outside the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization. It appears as though the visitors assumed that the content of these three required courses in the undergraduate music history sequence were solely associated with only the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization, or the visitors may simply not have noticed that this is not the case. Either way, the faculty contend that when conducting a thorough review of the syllabi and the learning objectives and assignments required in each course, a different view emerges—one where multiple cultures outside that encompassing the area of specialization only are embraced and covered in each existing course. The syllabi for MUSC 100L, 353, and 354 are all included below as pdfs in Appendix C and the applicable learning objectives that represent content studied that is outside the primary culture encompassing the area of specialization are highlighted.

5. It is not clear that the degree Master of Music in Conducting, Choral emphasis meets the standard “Choral conducting majors must be proficient in vocal pedagogy and in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin diction” (see NASM Handbook 2021-22, Standards for Accreditation XIV.B.3.c.).

Reply:

Outlining their observation about the compliance to this standard, the visitors note on p. 15 of the VR that “*Students in choral conducting must meet language requirements of Church Latin and in any one of French, German, or Italian. It is not clear that the degree meets the standard ‘Choral conducting majors must be proficient in vocal pedagogy and in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin diction.’*”

The choral conducting faculty have approved changing the published expectations for the MM in Choral Conducting from:

“Students in choral conducting must meet language requirements of Church Latin and in anyone of French, German, or Italian...”

to

“MM Choral Conducting students must attain general phonetic knowledge and skills in Latin, Italian, German, French, and English that can be related to other languages. The MM Choral Conducting Diction Proficiency Exam (attached as Appendix D below) must be passed by MM Choral Conducting students to assert that they have acquired language competencies sufficient to understand texts in the repertory.”

This change is reflected in all degree materials and publications, including the School’s website at this page...

https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/music/study/degree_programs/master_music/MM_conducting.php

SECTION B. RESPONSE TO VISITOR COMMENTS NOT RELATED TO THRESHOLD STANDARDS SUMMARY

1. VR, p. 2, under *C. Finances*:

“Despite strong institutional support, there are concerns about the impact of the responsibility-centered budget model on the future financial footing of the School and its capacity to thrive.”

...and later on p. 23, under *Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program*

“Primary Futures Issues : Will the University’s budget model provide sufficient support for School (see Self-Study, pp. 8, 168)?”

The issue of the variable nature of income/revenue and expense/tax that the School of Music experiences annually as a part of the current responsibility-based budget model remains a concern. The new provost and new president have been briefed on the necessity of the two most unpredictable aspects of the model (the level of every-third-year review of subvended income and expense, and the level of annual tax variation in allocations from Music to accommodate support unit special initiative funding requests) in an effort to communicate how essential stability is to the function of this national-quality School of Music’s planning and operation.

2. VR, p. 2, under *C. Finances*:

“One additional financial matter of concern for the projected period of accreditation is the School’s capacity to provide competitive financial aid and graduate stipends that may impact the capacity of the School to maintain its competitive status.”

...and later on p. 4 under *E. Faculty and Staff*:

“One issue of concern is the very low stipends. Relative to the School’s peers, the stipends are not competitive, and certainly have an impact on the School’s ability to recruit the best graduate students to its programs.”

...and later on p. 24 under *Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program*

*“**Primary Futures Issues:** *Potential erosion of competitive position because of available for financial aid at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and *Sustaining competitiveness in graduate student recruitment, given the current level of graduate stipends”*

While the School of Music maintains its highest priority for external giving is financial aid for students at all levels, and while that priority occupies the Goal 1 spot in every strategic plan and Blueprint exercise since 2005, the School has had a new level of success with addressing these matters in the last two years. Graduate assistant stipends and the number of available positions for graduate assistants have been enhanced by 33% and 11% respectively since 2020. Still, the goal of the School is to be able to offer stipends that are again 50% higher than current, and to offer 15% more undergraduate scholarship dollars by 2025. It is through the operation of the new fundraising/development model with the Koger Center as partner that we endeavor to meet these goals with philanthropy.

3. VR, p. 3, under *D Governance and Administration*:

“The Self-Study (p. 11) notes that one of these Associate Deans elects to carry a full teaching load in addition to their administrative responsibilities. The visitors did hear from faculty that since the Executive Associate Dean left, and following the subsequent reorganization, some of the administrative duties associated with that position are not being dealt with in a timely manner.”

...and later on p. 23, under *Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program*

“Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement: Address concerns about the responsiveness of the Associate Deans”

The Visitors’ Report is not entirely clear what the specific nature of the “responsiveness of the Associate Deans” has been and so addressing it is at present a bit nebulous. As a result, the School will initiate an effort at the opening of the new school year in August 2022 to determine what the actual instances of responsiveness are, and regarding what issues in the portfolios of each of the Associate Deans manifest the concerns voiced by faculty during their meeting with the visitors during the visit. Once these matters are identified, addressing them will be a priority for the dean.

4. VR, p. 23, under *Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program*

“Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement: Develop a plan and resources to address accompaniment needs that addresses both affordability and quality.”

Recognizing the shortage of accompanying services, and the quality of some of the services currently provided, the School will, in fall 2022, implement a new plan to improve the quality and availability of accompanying for student recitals in the School. The plan has two components, a short-term address, and a long-term solution. The short-term address is that the School will engage 8 to 10 more accompanying services each semester of the 2022-23 academic year with its two per-service staff accompanists. The long-term solution is that with recent changes in the composition of the school’s keyboard and piano pedagogy faculty, some of those faculty have re-organized portions of their teaching loads such that the faculty’s two most experienced collaborative pianists will devote more of their teaching and service loads to develop a more sophisticated environment for study and experience in collaborative piano among piano students at all levels. This new instructional re-direction will at first result in new, additional emphasis on collaborative work, with the aim of developing perhaps a new collaborative piano concentration at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels, or perhaps later, even a degree in collaborative piano at the appropriate level(s).

5. VR, p. 23, under *Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program*

“Recommendations for Short-Term Improvement: Address facilities concerns regarding carpeting in hallways as an ongoing health and safety issue.”

Trusting that the pending replacement of offending HVAC equipment (standards issue #1 above) will create a better environment in the future for the maintenance of carpet everywhere in the music building, the university has—at their expense--approved the replacement of carpet in the hallways of the building where the current buckling caused by unpredictable and unreliable humidity control has resulted in tripping hazards.