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From: Wade Weast, Director, School of Music
Subject: Academic Program Review

Georgia State University's School of Music conducted its self-study during the Fall 2015 semester, a process that began in the Spring 2015 semester with the formation of an Academic Program Review (APR) committee. In the August 2015 faculty retreat, a sizable portion of the half-day meeting was dedicated to the APR, with small groups tasked to react to draft goals provided by the Director. That summit laid the groundwork for a shared authorship process and numerous small group meetings, which took place during the Fall 2015 semester. A portion of each monthly faculty meeting was devoted to the APR and Self-Study process. A draft copy of the document was shared with the full faculty prior to the November 5, 2015 meeting and during the next month the committee sought suggestions for improvement to the document from members of the faculty and staff. The APR Committee and Executive Committee unanimously recommended the final document to the faculty for approval. The full faculty voted unanimously to approve the document at its December 3, 2015 meeting.

The School of Music is indebted to the APR committee – Dr. Marva Carter (chair), Dr. Robert Ambrose, Dr. Katie Carlisle, Dr. Stuart Gerber, Prof. Kathryn Hartgrove, and Dr. Robert Thompson. The committee is appreciative for the input provided by members of the faculty and staff in the School of Music. Dr. Michael Galchinsky, GSU's Director of Academic Program Review, provided valuable guidance on several occasions and the committee is grateful to him for his expertise.

The timing of the self-study process coincided with my arrival as the new Director of the School of Music and Associate Dean for Music and Fine Arts in July 2015. Being a part of the process has enabled me to learn a great deal about the school's history and get to know its faculty, staff, and students. The study has provided me with a valuable context for identifying not only our strengths and challenges, but a concept for future priorities and goals. The School of Music faculty have benefitted from this process as well. Our
shared authorship approach to the self-study document has allowed all faculty to participate in faculty governance in a way that I think has been good for them. This process has created a sense of community within the faculty and has resulted in an impressive list of faculty and student accomplishments. This suggests the need for a better way of promoting our achievements.

I came away from this process with the realization that the School of Music has suffered from a lack of consistent leadership over the past four years. There have been four Directors in as many years and this fact coupled with the poor condition and inadequacies of the buildings in which the music program is housed has resulted in a level of tension and anxiety that is palpable. Communication lines within and across various School of Music disciplines have been severed and decision-making processes lack a student-centered approach. With enrollment figures on the downturn and the prospect of becoming a member of a new college, the School of Music is at a pivotal point. It needs to begin to rethink how it educates 21st Century musicians and retool as necessary to provide students with skills that will enable them to succeed in a musical landscape that has embraced change and innovation over the course of the past 10 years.

As we move forward, I see the need for some short and long-term strategies to make improvements in the School of Music. In the short term, the music Executive Committee and I have already begun to look at some of the factors contributing to the drop-out rate, including the music theory sequence placement exam and our class piano proficiency exam. We have already begun to address problems with the university advising process described in the self-study. We will identify courses in the School of Music with the highest number of "D," "F," and "W" grades and implement an intervention plan.

Looking more long term, we have established a series of goals that will address specific issues. We see the need for an increase in our online offerings to mitigate the problems brought on by scheduling conflicts and to meet the needs of our increasing numbers of non-traditional students who work full-time. As Director, I will pursue fundraising as a means to secure more merit-based scholarships, endowed professorships, and funding for guest artists and other initiatives that will improve the quality of our program. I will establish as an aspirational goal that 100% of our full-time faculty participate in the internal and external grant writing process, recognizing that we will likely need campus resources to help inexperienced faculty get started. With the formation of a new arts college on the horizon, I look forward to strengthening ties between the School of Music and other University Colleges with interdisciplinary research and creative activity. It is my hope faculty members will welcome these new collaborations and work across the university to develop new creative works.

Similarly, I will encourage music faculty to engage in community-based projects and to reach out to colleagues across campus for interdisciplinary research and creative projects. We will use some of the existing faculty initiatives in this area as a model. I'm hopeful to lead the faculty towards building a curriculum that focuses on the idea that emerging artists today must become artist-entrepreneurs. This will be a difficult concept for some of our faculty to embrace because it represents a radical shift from how most of us were
educated. However, with the confluence of a variety of factors specific to Atlanta and Georgia, including legislative support for the film/TV/entertainment industry, a burgeoning grassroots arts scene, and the existence of numerous nationally significant professional arts organizations at our doorstep — we have an opportunity to create something truly unique in downtown Atlanta.

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