Site visit dates: January 24-25, 2005

External visitors:
- Edward Kocher, Professor & Dean of Music, Duquesne University
- John W. Richmond, Professor & Director of the School of Music, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- Arthur Tollefson, Dean Emeritus of the School of Music, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Report Author:
- John W. Richmond, with able assistance and important contributions from Deans Kocher and Tollefson

1. Historical and Current Context

   Given the historical and current context of the department as outlined in Sections A and B, are the programs offered and program enrollments appropriate from a disciplinary perspective?

   Yes, the programs offered in the School of Music (SOM) are completely appropriate for a professional music school in an urban context. Certain of these programs, such as the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music, have garnered national attention as exemplary trend-setters in the profession. Music enrollments in the School continue to expand at an impressive rate, despite limited resources, and are a sign of the high regard in which the School is held by alumni, colleagues, and prospective students.

   The reviewers believe it is important to note, however, the abiding concern for student recruiting held by the SOM leadership and faculty. Both meetings with the SOM area heads and the SOM faculty at large were dominated by concern regarding student recruitment. Clearly, the SOM faculty is eager to attract the brightest and most promising to the SOM, but believe that they work at a disadvantage compared to their peer institutions, especially those within the Atlanta metroplex and the State of Georgia. The Hope Scholarship puts all public institutions on something of a “level playing field” so that other tangibles and intangibles (music facilities, percentage of full-time permanent faculty as opposed to adjuncts and part-time faculty, partnerships with the music industry, ensemble touring, etc.) tip the scales toward competing institutions more often than GSU.
music faculty would like.

- **Are the faculty number, composition, and research productivity sufficient to support the programs offered by the department?**

Yes, the number, composition, and research/creative productivity of the faculty are sufficient to support the programs offered by the School of Music. It also is true that the current configuration of faculty creates certain strains upon the School. Let me explain.

It is not uncommon to find a university music faculty in a major urban center comprised largely of part-time faculty and adjuncts (largely drawn from professional symphony performers and jazz musicians). This arrangement can work if there is strong stability among these faculty groups and if there is a strong sense of institutional allegiance. DePaul University in Chicago exemplifies university schools of music that make outstanding and productive use of such non-traditional faculty arrangements. Duquesne University in Pittsburgh is another.

At GSU, however, one discovers that too many of the adjunct and part-time faculty are teaching applied music (private lessons) not only at GSU but also at a number of the competing institutions in the Atlanta metroplex. Some of these institutions are paying per-student rates to these faculty that are substantially higher than GSU can offer. Some institutions are reported to offer “finder’s fees” for such music students.

This set of realities strongly disadvantages GSU’s School of Music in the fierce competition for gifted music students. In fact, when these faculty who teach at multiple institutions come upon promising students they want to teach, there is an apparent conflict of interest in terms of directing them to GSU. The faculty member’s own financial interests are often better served by advising these students to study from them at a competing institution where these other faculty rewards are in place.

All this to say that GSU would do well to consider strongly the recommendation from the SOM administration to move in the direction of full-time faculty lines as quickly as budgets and prudence will allow. The “devil is in the details” when it comes to faculty arrangements and, in the case of the SOM faculty lines, GSU cannot expect to compete at the highest levels in music unless greater balance is achieved between its full-time, permanent faculty ranks where institutional loyalty can be assumed and its adjunct and part-time faculty cohort, where different assumptions appear to apply.
One final observation is important to note here. GSU has enjoyed remarkable success in recruiting and retaining some of the country’s most distinguished music faculty. The Director of the SOM is the former national President of the American Choral Directors Association and the Associate Director is perhaps the nation’s preeminent scholar on public/private partnerships in music education. Other members of the permanent faculty ranks enjoy national standing, or are certain to emerge very soon as national figures in their respective fields. There is good reason for optimism that GSU would see a generous return on investment in additional permanent faculty ranks were they to invest additionally in tenure-earning music faculty lines.

- **Comment on the relevance of the programs, and the degree to which the department’s programs serve various needs (community, student, professional).**

The programs of study offered in the School of Music are well organized and effectively delivered. The community outreach programs, the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music, and the music education programs are especially noteworthy.

The program in Music Management has undergone some recent shifts that warrant some discussion here. Atlanta’s location and role as the economic and cultural center of the southeast creates an attractive strategic advantage for programs in music management and arts management at Georgia State University. Atlanta is home for a wide range of noteworthy musical organizations that provide robust opportunities for internships and employment. At GSU, the recent curricular revision and increase in admission standards has resulted in a smaller but higher quality music management program.

A music management program combines relatively large music management classes with existing courses in business and general studies. That creates a profitable music program that offsets the more costly performance programs. The key to a successful music management program relies upon faculty energy and entrepreneurial ability. With inspired leadership, a music management program offers great promise.

During the site visit, some music management students expressed a desire for a less intensive music experience. In response, it may be worthwhile for Georgia State to explore an arts management degree that is not housed in the School of Music. That program would include general studies, management studies, and some content in the arts.
• Evaluate the appropriateness of the peer institutions selected by the department for comparison.

Of the schools identified for the purpose of comparison, the one which the reviewers agreed seemed the strongest peer or aspirational peer was the University of Houston. UH is a large, public, urban, research university with a vital, extensive school of music. The university is comparatively young and is not the “flagship” institution of the state. Conversely, although the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cited by the Self Study is a public university and comparable in enrollment, the similarities tend to stop there. UNL is the flagship public, land-grant institution. UNL was founded in 1869 and its School of Music was founded in 1894. The traditions and history of such a venerable institution create a very different sense of institutional momentum and resource base. Indeed, the reviewers agreed that UNL is more nearly like UGA than GSU as a point of reference. Oklahoma Central University is least like GSU as a point of reference among the schools of music listed in the Self-Study document.

The reviewers wanted to suggest several other universities that do share many of GSU’s circumstances and which might be useful institutions to use as points of reference for the future. These include: Towson State University (MD), the University of Texas at San Antonio, Cleveland State University, the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Wayne State University (MI), the University of South Florida (Tampa), and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

2. Progress Toward Goals and Objectives

• Taking a disciplinary perspective, evaluate the ways in which the unit has succeeded in meeting its goals and objectives since its last academic program review.

The School of Music has systematically made rapid strides towards meeting its goals and objectives since its last academic program review. It has eliminated several unproductive degree curricula, has revised several others in keeping with NASM and COAS standards, and moved closer to a doctorate in music education. It has significantly improved its student recruitment, retention and graduation rates through multiple internal and external strategies and has enhanced its offerings for non-majors. The performance quality of students, whether individually or in ensembles, has apparently risen markedly.

Although the School’s facilities still require substantial improvement to compete equitably with peer music programs, GSU and the School’s administration have, within the past few years, addressed several of the unit’s most glaring space and
equipment problems. Nevertheless, attention must continue to be focused upon remaining problems (unreliable elevators and HVAC systems, unsafe drinking water, faulty plumbing, etc). Such conditions will, if not corrected, have an increasingly negative effect upon the otherwise commendably upbeat morale of faculty and students alike.

The School’s progress in development activities and community outreach has been outstanding. Several external grants have been won and significant private funding identified. In particular, the activities of the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music, the Community Programs Office, and the Neighborhood Music Schools appear to be accomplishing precisely what should be expected of a vital, involved urban university music school.

- **Is its progress towards meeting its goals and objectives satisfactory?**

Yes. One of the external consultants, the Chair of the School’s last NASM accreditation review team, was extremely impressed with the School’s notable improvement in a relatively short period of time (the past 4-5 years). The fact that many of the improvements occurred without significant infusions of state funds rendered the progress all the more remarkable.

- **What are the factors that have helped or hindered the unit in its effort to meet its goals and objectives?**

The effort has been helped by an imaginative, dedicated, and energetic administration, faculty, and staff; a sympathetic and supportive Dean; an enthusiastic, motivated student body; and the School’s proximity to the artistic, cultural, and business resources of a major metropolitan area.

The effort has been hindered by ongoing space and facilities problems; insufficient instructional and operational budgets; and fierce in-state and out-of-state competition from competing music programs.

- **Evaluate the ways in which these goals have contributed to the College and University Strategic Plans.**

Several of the School’s programs, especially the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music, contribute directly to the University’s aspirations to achieve national distinction as an urban research institution. The activities of its community outreach programs provide a model for what a university music school in a major metropolitan area should be. In addition, its increasingly proactive involvement with major cultural organizations (the Atlanta Symphony...
Orchestra, the Atlanta Opera, etc.), world-class guests artists, and the public school system bodes well for School’s heightened reputation as a major player in the greater Atlanta educational/cultural scene.

3. **Quality of the Curriculum**

- **Evaluate the quality of the curriculum from a disciplinary perspective for each of the department’s programs (Section D).**

The Self Study reports that the School of Music curriculum is divided into four divisions: Foundation Studies, Music Education/Community Music Programs, Performance/Pedagogy, and Music Composition/Technology/Management. Each of the four areas appears to have real strength overall. The spirit of innovation and creativity is a hallmark of the curricular planning at GSU. The reviewers were impressed with the considerable array of interesting music courses for the non-major, and such innovations as the World Music Concert which support and reinforce them. Perhaps most nationally conspicuous among the curricular components at GSU is the Music Education program, including the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music, the Community Music Programs, the Music-in-Education Program, and the impressive research/programmatic initiatives receiving extramural funding in connection with these programs. Often universities claim that the research mission of the institution enhances the curriculum of the students. This is clearly the case at GSU with regard to the music education program.

The vocal/choral/opera program likewise has enjoyed important growth in recent years. Too often, the various parties involved in these curricular areas compete (and sometimes combat) more than they cooperate. It is laudable to see growth and cooperation on all fronts in this area. Care should be exercised to make certain these strong working relationships continue and grow stronger. Careful program coordination is required to ensure that students receive an age-appropriate experience in which opera studies locate nearly exclusively in the graduate curriculum (per NASM guidelines, for example) while undergraduates enjoy a rich experience of studio voice and choral singing.

An impressive marker for the success of the ensemble curriculum is the recent increase in invitations to appear by blind peer review at professional music conferences. When this occurs, it is important for GSU as a university to provide the support needed so that these invitations can be accepted. The reputation of the University and School will be immeasurably enhanced thereby.

- **Evaluate the appropriateness of the learning outcomes and learning**
outcomes assessments for each of the programs.

The most compelling outcome GSU can affirm is the success of its graduates and, in this regard, the Self Study indicates that GSU graduates are competing well both in professional pursuits and in seeking advanced degrees at some of the nation’s most prestigious music schools.

One step the GSU faculty might wish to consider is the use of nationally validated and normed standardized tests to see how GSU graduates compare with other graduates from music programs across the country. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for example, requires every graduating senior music major (BA, BM, and BME) to take the Major Field Test in Music, administered by the Educational Testing Service (Princeton, NJ) during his/her final semester in school. This provides the UNL Music Faculty with feedback concerning the efficacy of their instruction in music theory and music history. With the advent of a new form of this test in 2005, music listening also will be assessed and normed. The value of this external assessment is not to take the place of the more important assessment – the success of graduates. However, such assessments can provide useful feedback in exploring the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the theory/history/listening curriculum.

It is important to note that the use of such tests must be undertaken with care, wisdom, and faculty consensus. Such assessments quickly can become the “tail that wags the dog” and provide a false sense either of security or embarrassment. Neither is appropriate. Standardized tests serve only one – and a very limited kind of – feedback loop. They should be seen as nothing more or less.

• How have the learning outcomes assessments influenced curricular modifications?

It is difficult for the reviewers to comment on this.

• Have these modifications been effective in improving student learning outcomes?

It is difficult for the reviewers to comment on this.

4. Quality of the Students

• Evaluate the quality of students, both incoming and graduated students, in the department’s programs (Section E) relative to discipline-specific norms.
Although the evaluators had limited opportunities to observe students in classroom/performance settings, student quality appeared to be very good. Brief visits to a few ensemble rehearsals and performance laboratories showcased involved, inquisitive, talented student musicians at both undergraduate and graduate levels. More extensive discussions with larger groups disclosed a diverse student body which greatly admired the School’s faculty, harbored serious career ambitions in music, and was intent upon taking full advantage of the School’s unique strengths.

- **Are the quality standards appropriate?**

From all that the evaluators were able to observe, the quality standards appeared quite appropriate.

5. **Quality of the Faculty**

- **Evaluate the quality of the department’s faculty (Section F). Include in your discussion an evaluation of the faculty with respect to peer program faculties.**

The Self Study provides impressive evidence of faculty excellence as corroborated by traditional measures of faculty productivity. These measures include publications in important, blind-peer-reviewed venues, presentations at important national and international conferences, and other traditional artifacts of artist faculty contributions (recordings, film scores, etc.). The record of faculty research and creative activity would be impressive at any major, public-university school of music.

These faculty achievements are all the more impressive, moreover, in light of GSU’s substantial reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty (see the previous discuss of faculty distribution on pages 2-3 of this Report).

6. **Resource Adequacy**

- **Considering each of the seven areas discussed in Section G, evaluate the adequacy of departmental resources.**

The GSU School of Music is now at a crossroads where strategic investment – or lack of it – will predict the School’s forward evolution or stagnation. The reviewers do not believe this is an overstatement of the case. The GSU School of Music appears now to have done all it can with existing resources to move its strategic initiatives forward. Nearly all the considerable progress made since the last Academic Program Review was accomplished by the School without
substantial investment by GSU at the institutional level. The reviewers believe little more can be expected in terms of meaningful progress unless certain strategic investments are forthcoming from the College and University administration.

The University should embrace this opportunity, in the minds of the reviewers, precisely because the SOM administration and faculty have not used a lack of additional investments from central sources as an excuse for abandoning its institutional vision and strategic plans. Less committed and gifted colleagues likely would have done precisely that. Such resolve and administrative savvy, we believe, should inspire confidence on the part of the GSU administration that careful and stewardly management of additional resources can be expected of the SOM administration and faculty and, given its recent history, will only enhance a School whose progress to this point has been a product of administrative dedication, tenacity, vision, and skill.

Several immediate priorities seem clear. The University must address the health and safety issues regarding the School of Music facilities. Impressive strides have been made to provide new large-ensemble rehearsal facilities. However, the classroom spaces and faculty offices are housed in buildings where toilets do not flush and elevators do not work reliably. Students also report that, among the limited number of music classrooms, some have lights that do not work, rending these practice rooms temporarily useless. In that there are health and safety issues which surround these issues, the GSU administration may wish to consult with their Office of General Counsel to determine what, if any, tort liability exposure may be a consequence of the current state of the GSU music facilities.

Much already has been said about the importance of correcting the current imbalance between the permanent faculty and the adjuncts and part-time faculty cohort. Suffice it to say that the reviewers endorse the recommendations of the Self Study to move incrementally in this direction.

7. **Strengths and Weaknesses**

- **Evaluate the overall strengths and weaknesses of the program, referring specifically to Section H.**

In brief, the most compelling strengths of the program are:

✔ The music education program (a national and international profile with an impressive record of extramural funding)
 ✓ Choral/opera/voice studies (an emerging national profile, especially in light of Dr. Haberlan’s profile with ACDA)
 ✓ The ensemble program, including the jazz studies program and the School’s chamber music initiatives (as substantiated by external peer-reviewed conference invitations)
 ✓ Music technology (well poised to take a leadership role nationally)

The most urgent weaknesses are:

 ✓ The string program (although important gains in string enrollment are noteworthy)
 ✓ The music management program (discussed elsewhere in this report)
 ✓ The piano area (the decline in line resources to service this foundational program of any music school)

8. **Goals and Objectives**

 ✓ **Evaluate the goals and objectives that the department has outlined in Section I for the next review cycle.**

   The goals for the unit are laudable but very ambitious, especially if considered in a strategic window of 5-7 years. The reviewers fear that the GSU central administration could find this list of recommendations overwhelming and pursue none of these worthy goals, rather developing an incremental approach that pursues a subset of these recommendations each year.

 ✓ **Are the goals and objectives appropriate for the unit?**

   Yes, in manageable increments.

 ✓ **Are they in accord with disciplinary trends?**

   Yes.

 ✓ **Are the priorities reasonable?**

   The priorities were not completely clear in the Self Study document proper, but became much clearer to the reviewers through a very helpful set of conversations with the School administration during the site visit. In light of these conversations, yes.

 ✓ **Are any changes warranted?**
The reviewers recommend the following priorities, which we believe align well with the expressed interests of the School administration and faculty. These recommendations come in two categories. The first category addresses critical needs or weaknesses in the School. If left neglected, these problems surely will undermine any future to which the School otherwise might reasonably aspire.

The second category addresses what we might call investing in strengths. During the exit interview with the Provost’s staff, we used the metaphor of “betting on fast horses” to describe the importance of making certain strong programs stronger in order to situate the School preeminent in the national and international spotlight.

To address critical needs, we endorse:

- Goal 1a cited by the Self Study on page 24. The $90,000 required to accomplish the “human capital investments” implied there is modest from an institutional perspective (where faculty start-up costs for scientists only can mean millions to a research university like GSU). By so doing, the School moves to a more balanced position with respect to permanent full-time vs. part-time faculty ranks.
- Address the health and safety issues in the School of Music facilities.

To address investing in strengths, we endorse in this order:

- Goal 1b with respect to a senior music education position to share with Dr. Myers the leadership responsibilities of the Center for Educational Partnerships in Music;
- Goal 1b with respect to the junior position in applied oboe and theory. The impact here will be felt most strongly in student recruitment and the musical health of the ensemble program (an emerging strength of the SOM);
- Goal 1c with respect to the junior position in piano;
- Goal 1b with respect to the Bobby Bailey Professorship in music technology, thus advancing an area of emerging strength and promise.

Finally, we recommend a modest investment of new monies in the recruiting budget to assist the School with what clearly is an area of great sensitivity among the SOM faculty. The only area of a university that relies upon recruiting as consistently and deeply as a school of music is the athletic program. The competition for talent is no less fierce.
The reviewers left the GSU School of Music impressed by the quality of the work, inspired by the potential contributions this fine School is poised to make, and gratified to have met a university administration devoted to advancing the School in strategic ways. We hope these comments and suggestions provide additional insight as your Self Study proceeds. Thank you for the opportunity to be of service.

Sincerely,

Edward Kocher  
Professor & Dean  
School of Music  
Duquesne University

John W. Richmond  
Professor & Director  
School of Music  
U of NE-Lincoln

Arthur Tollefson  
Dean Emeritus  
School of Music  
U of NC-Greensboro