

Annual Assessment Report

Department of Music

June 2013

1. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented **any changes for your assessment including learning outcomes, assessment plan, assessment tools (methods, rubrics, curriculum map, or key assignment etc.), and/or the university baccalaureate learning goals?**

- a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?
- b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?
- c. If no, why not?

During the past academic year the Department of Music has completed and implemented Student Learning Outcomes for each of the seven undergraduate degree programs offered. The new SLOs were drafted by faculty committees and implemented by the entire faculty.

At the heart of these Student Learning Outcomes are those set up for our Bachelor of Arts in Music. The BA is our small (40 units), general major program. The three major learning outcomes are:

1. Able to demonstrate basic technique and performance skills on his/her instrument and in ensemble, as well as basic keyboard and sight singing skills.
2. Show a general knowledge of the major styles, genres, and composers in their socio-political context from the seventeenth century to the present.
3. Demonstrate the ability to synthesize general knowledge of musical forms, processes, and structures and speak or write with knowledgeable and articulate confidence about music.

These three become the basis for more advanced learning outcomes in our Bachelor of Music degree. For instance, in the B.M. Instrumental degree, the first SLO is rewritten as:

1. Perform at an advanced level on his/her instrument showing outstanding technical achievement in solo performance, musical accuracy, knowledge of style, and informed historical performance practice.

One can see that the "basic technique and performance skills" of the BA program has become "an advanced level" of performance in the professional degree program. This kind of enhancement is also seen in SLOs #2 and 3. Each of the Bachelor of Music program Student Learning Outcomes follows this general format of enhancing the SLOs presented for the B.A. above.

Also, for each of the B.M. degree programs, a fourth SLO was added – one that addressed the assessment of the elusive goal of synthesis and the development of unique, individual critical thinking as it relates to the specific degree program. For the Bachelor of Music Instrumental, that learning outcome is:

4. Express their artistic opinions in an articulate, knowledgeable and persuasive manner, and formulate constructive criticism of musical performances or repertoire.

We believe the new SLOs have achieved their desired results. The new set of Student Learning Outcomes for the undergraduate programs have clarified specific correlations between programs but has also spelled out the specific differences. These SLOs will be instructive as we refine curricula and continue assessment projects.

2. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented **any other changes at the department, the college or the university, including advising, co-curriculum, budgeting and planning?**

- a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?
- b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?
- c. If no, why not?

We have begun to assess the efficacy of our entering auditions and placement testing for incoming music majors. Placement exams are required with new freshmen and transfer students and are an important aspect of overall student success in music major programs. In particular, we looked at data from previous years, including student performance on the placement exams and success in the courses in which students were placed. We believe that many students (about half) who had previously been placed into MUSC 5 would have been more successful with a simpler entering theory course. We are implementing three strategic changes to rectify that situation and considering a fourth.

First, we have redesigned the music theory placement exams so that they give a more nuanced picture of the entering student's understanding in this subject. Second, we have restored MUSC 4 to the course schedule with the intent of placing about half of the entering freshmen into that as their first theory course. Third, we have reconfigured the class schedule to offer all levels of lower-division music theory each semester; this should improve students' ability to move efficiently through the three required semesters of study. And fourth, we are considering the implementation of a simple pre-major program that would bar students from full admittance into the music major until they had demonstrated success in three basic areas – theory, keyboard, and performance.

The goal here is to improve student success in the first two years of study at Sac State. Understanding the degree to which results have been achieved will require monitoring over the next two academic years.

3. What **PROGRAM** (not course) learning outcome(s) have you assessed this academic year?

The measure discussed in item 2 above all center around the learning outcomes related to lower-division music theory. These are part of the SLOs in each of our seven undergraduate programs. They are included in the B.A. Music SLOs #1 "...demonstrate... basic keyboard and sight singing skills" and #3 "Demonstrate the ability to synthesize general knowledge of musical forms, processes, and structures...." As discussed in item 1 above, similar (though expanded) SLOs are found for each of the Bachelor of Music programs.

We have focused in this area because these learning outcomes are so central to the overall success of all of our undergraduate major programs. The desire to improve placement into the theory curriculum and assure student success in the earliest part of the program is a central assumption of our plans for student retention.

4. What method(s)/measure(s) have you used to collect the data?

Data assessed thus far are from placement exams given to entering students over the most recent five year period, their final grades in the lower-division music theory coursework, and their retention in the music major.

5. What are the criteria and/or standards of performance for the program learning outcome?

The lower division music theory courses are sequential in nature with ever increasing difficulties of understanding related to musical forms, processes, and structures. Through regular testing, compositions, and analysis projects, students must demonstrate competence with these concepts. In upper division courses, students write and speak about these concepts as they relate to specific score analysis projects. The capstone Senior Seminar course requires students to demonstrate a synthesis of their musical experiences and knowledge through a public poster session.

This learning outcome was tested with a sample of students in 2010. Students in MUSC 6 and MUSC 7 were given an assessment based on their knowledge of altered chords in which they had to identify specific harmonies from score analysis. The results were as expected. Students who were enrolled in MUSC 6 could accurately identify the secondary dominant harmonies (100%) but most were unable to identify the augmented sixth harmonies. Those enrolled in MUSC 7 completed both assessments with ease (100%). This project was written up as our Annual Assessment Report for the department in June 2010. Faculty used the data to conclude that the two courses are accomplishing their specific learning goals at the level of achievement expected

6. What data have you collected? What are the results and findings, including the percentage of students who meet each standard?
- In what areas are students doing well and achieving the expectations?
 - In what areas do students need improvement?

As mentioned above, specific student achievement in regards to altered chord analysis skill has been measured with students from MUSC 6 and 7. Students completing MUSC 6 can identify certain altered chords (secondary dominants) from score at a very high percentage but not others. Students completing MUSC 7 were successful in identifying all altered chords from the same texture. In this regard, lower-division music theory students are achieving at expected levels.

Our concern with this report is capturing information about those students who fail to advance beyond MUSC 5: Beginning Music Theory and therefore drop out of our programs. The changes currently being implemented will help direct marginal students into remedial coursework and achieve improved success for students in the entire lower-division music theory sequence.

7. As a result of this year's assessment effort, do you anticipate or propose any changes for your program (e.g. structures, content, or learning outcomes)?
- If so, what changes do you anticipate? How do you plan to implement those changes?
 - How do you know if these changes will achieve the desired results?

We do not anticipate any changes to Student Learning Outcomes. Significant changes to the structure of placement exams in music theory are now in place as are structural changes to the lower-division music theory course schedule. Further, we are considering a small pre-major program.

As previously stated, it will take at least two academic years to collect data to begin to assess the efficacy of these changes. We hope to see improved achievement, especially in MUSC 5, and improved retention of all music majors as they progress through the lower-division theory sequence.

8. Which program learning outcome(s) do you plan to assess next year? How?

First, the continued assessment of new music majors will continue so that we can improve retention rates. We will continue to consider data from the new placement exams and the achievements of students in that cohort as compared to those from the previous five years.

Programmatic assessment for the coming year will take a first look at the Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies and specifically at SLO #1:

Perform at an advanced level on his/her primary instrument showing outstanding technical ability, musical accuracy, informed knowledge of style and creative improvisation in a variety of styles.

Our assessment of this SLO will focus on the achievement of students as demonstrated in the MUSC 185J capstone course. A faculty committee from the jazz area will review the auditions for students prior to their public performances and will score individuals on a rubric to measure achievement for this learning goal.