Central Washington University
Assessment of Student Learning
Department and Program Report

Academic Year of Report: 2012-2013
College: College of Arts and Humanities
Department Music
Program: Bachelor’s degrees in Music: B.A. in Music, B.A. in Music with Specialization in Jazz; B.M. in Performance, B.M. in Music Education; B.M. in Composition/Theory

1. **What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?**

   In answering this question, please identify the specific student learning outcomes you assessed this year, reasons for assessing these outcomes, with the outcomes written in clear, measurable terms, and note how the outcomes are linked to department, college and university mission and goals.

   The Department of Music continued to evaluate aspects of two student learning outcomes in the music core curriculum for academic year 2012-2013: 1. **Students become literate musicians** and 5. **Students will be equipped with a set of theoretical and conceptual abstractions that are applicable to and useful for the understanding of a substantial body of musical literature, applicable to music degree programs in the fields of music education, performance, composition, jazz studies, and music as general field of study.** In Spring of 2012, the department approved revised student learning outcomes; the updated outcomes in the relevant areas are:

   - **MUS1 (Music Theory)** Students demonstrate music theory knowledge and aural skills sufficient to analyze and interpret a substantial body of music literature,

   - **MUS6 (Musical Disposition)** Students engage as active participants in the musical community of the university and region through event attendance, performance, teaching, creative and/or service activity.

   These outcomes are related to the Department of Music curricular goal: “Students will receive a foundation of knowledge and skills leading to specialization in one of the major programs in music education, performance, or composition” and the program goal “Increase the percentages of students retained in upper division from lower division courses.” This in turn addresses the College of Arts and Humanities student learning goals “Ensure that students develop disciplinary specific competencies for success in their field” and “Develop students’ intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning.”

   The selected outcomes are consistent with CWU’s Core Theme 1: Teaching and Learning: Outcome 1.1.1: “Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes,” and Outcome 1.1.2: “Students will persist to graduation with increased efficiency and rate.” They support CWU’s Goal I: “Maintain and strengthen an outstanding academic and student life on the Ellensburg campus,” and Goal V: “Achieve regional and national prominence for the University.”
We chose to continue monitoring these outcomes through analysis of student achievement in the core music theory sequence, piano proficiency, and attendance and participation in Convocation and department concerts and recitals. As will be explained below, our particular interest was to continue evaluating the program changes instituted in 2011-12 based on prior assessment results.

2. How were they assessed?
In answering these questions, please concisely describe the specific methods used in assessing student learning. Please also specify the population assessed, when the assessment took place, and the standard of mastery (criterion) against which you will compare your assessment results. If appropriate, please list survey or questionnaire response rate from total population.

A) What methods were used?

2.1 We examined the grade distribution of the final aural and written exams for MUS 146 (written), 146A (aural) and 246 (written and aural), which represent the culmination of the first- and second-year theory courses (125 students assessed). The population assessed was all students in the first year sequence (primarily freshmen) and students at the end of the second year sequence (primarily sophomores), and was administered in the Spring quarter. The faculty would like to see 90% or more of the students earn a C or above on these exams.

2.2 A second direct measure of student literacy in aural and written music theory was the pass (retention) rate for the six-quarter sequence composed of MUS 144-146 and MUS 144A-146A and MUS 244-246 (171 students assessed). We chose to continue monitoring this rate to allow us to compare current data with the same information collected since 2007-2008. The population assessed was all students in the music theory sequence (basically all freshmen and sophomore students with some transfer students). The department goal is to maintain a 90% pass rate throughout the sequence, with at least 73% of students completing the first year and 73% completing the second year.

2.3 An important direct measure of student skill is the departmental Piano Proficiency exam required of all majors (53 students assessed). In prior years, his exam was administered individually by a piano faculty member (or TA) on a quarterly basis. As a graduation requirement, it ultimately boasted a 100% pass rate. However, the department faculty was dissatisfied with how many students must retake the exam, or wait until late in their program to attempt it. This was a difficulty for music education majors, as they are required to demonstrate proficiency prior to applying for placement in the student teaching internship. Based on prior assessment data, the department instituted a new policy in 2011-2012 that aligned the final exam for the third quarter of piano, MUS 154A, with the proficiency requirement. Students not passing the exam/course will receive a “U” grade and will be required to repeat MUS 154A until proficiency is achieved. This will allow students the opportunity to learn without negative impact on their GPA. We would like to see 90% of students passing the proficiency exam after one quarter of MUS 154A.
2.4 Related to revised outcome MUS6, the department has a policy that requires student attendance at all Convocations (4 per quarter) and at least 8 concerts or recitals. In addition to providing a breadth of music listening experience, we also believe that this is an indicator of student disposition (attitude) to engage in the community of musicians as an active listener. Based on prior assessment results, we instituted a new policy in 2011-2012 in which student attendance is tracked via a handheld scan of student ID cards at each event and tallied as a cumulative total. Students may fall behind or exceed the quarterly requirements without immediate repercussion, as long as the required total is reached by graduation. Absence at a Convocation requires 3 additional concerts or recitals, reflecting the department’s belief that Convocation attendance represents a strong commitment to the learning community. The department goal is maintain or increase the Fall 2012 baseline of 71% of students within 8 scans of their required total at the end of the academic year (284 students assessed).

B) Who was assessed?
See above.

C) When was it assessed?
See above.

3. What was learned?
In answering this question, please report results in specific qualitative or quantitative terms, with the results linked to the outcomes you assessed, and compared to the standard of mastery (criterion) you noted above. Please also include a concise interpretation or analysis of the results.

3.1 We examined score distributions from the final aural and written exams for all sections of MUS 146, 146A, and 246 in the Spring of 2012 and calculated the percentage of students earning a C or better on the examinations. We compared this against the totals from 2010-12 and the department goal of 90% at C or above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course/Exam</th>
<th>% at C or above (2012-13)</th>
<th>% at C or above (2011-12)</th>
<th>% at C or above (2010-11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUS 146 Written</td>
<td>92 (n=72)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS 146A Aural</td>
<td>89 (n=70)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS 246 Written</td>
<td>83 (n=53)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUS 246A Aural</td>
<td>58% (n=53)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These assessments relate learning outcome MUS1; the cumulative final examinations are a direct measure of music theory knowledge and aural skills sufficient to analyze and interpret a substantial body of music literature.

These data indicate that student achievement is steady or rising in the first-year theory sequence, at or very near the department target. Student performance in aural skills showed a notable increase compared to 2012 and a nearly 20 percentage point improvement over 2011. Student achievement in the second year remains below the target in both areas, with a sizable drop in aural performance in 2012-2013. This may
be an anomaly, but the trend for lower aural grades in the second year deserves attention by the faculty. This could represent a point at which a student must retake the course based on aural grades (in 2012, there was one student who passed the written but not the aural).

3.2 Retention data for 2012-13 in the core music theory sequence demonstrate a stable trend relative to 2011-12. We are near achieving the department goal of at least 90% of students passing each course of the sequence. We are near the goal of 73% completion for both years. However, the overall retention rates remain below targets and seem to be declining after a peak in 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>MUS 144</th>
<th>MUS 145</th>
<th>MUS 146</th>
<th>Completed Sequence</th>
<th>MUS 244</th>
<th>MUS 245</th>
<th>MUS 246</th>
<th>Completed Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07-08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50% (est.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40% (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-09</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-10</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 99 students enrolled in at least one course in the first-year sequence, and 72 students enrolled in at least one course in the second year.

With regard to the split of MUS 144-146 into aural and written courses, we noted in 2012 that of the 30 students (26%) that did not pass one of the quarters, 17 of them (15%) failed both aural/written that quarter, 4 (3.5%) failed written only, and 9 (8%) failed aural only. In 2013, 30 students (30%) did not pass one course, 13 (13%) failed both aural/written, 3 (3%) failed written only, and 14 (14%) failed aural only. It appears that the splitting of course content did not result in a dramatic number of students failing one area or another and facing delay in sequence completion; however, it appears that students are having more difficulty with the aural component.

3.3 In 2011-12 the department instituted a new policy regarding the piano proficiency graduation requirement. In prior years, this assessment was independent of required or elective piano classes, and relied on the student to independently prepare the necessary skills during their program. This led to an unacceptable number of students delaying the proficiency exam until their final quarters on campus—a particular problem for music education students, who must complete the exam prior to student teaching.

Under the new policy, the final exam for MUS 154A (Class Piano III) is aligned with the proficiency requirements, and students who are not successful must re-enroll in the class until proficiency is demonstrated. In the first year of this policy, 53 students enrolled in Class Piano III. Of these, 45 passed the class and 38 were awarded proficiency (72%). In 2013, 62 students enrolled, with 45 receiving a satisfactory grade and proficiency (73%).
As a new policy, it was difficult to estimate a target for completion and proficiency in three quarters. Given the steady percentages for the last two years, a reasonable goal would be 80%—however, given the diversity of prior experience (many years of piano lessons or no prior experience), 70% may be a more reasonable number. We will discuss this with piano faculty for input and possible revision of course content and pedagogy.

3.4 Beginning in Fall 2011, students attendance at department Convocations, recitals, and concerts was tracked using a handheld barcode scan of the student ID card. In order to graduate, students are required to attend all 4 Convocations and 8 additional performances per quarter of enrollment (a cumulative total). As this policy was implemented, Allen Larsen developed a powerful FileMaker tool to automate attendance tracking and reporting. For 2011-12, 71% of students were within 8 scans of their required totals. In 2012-13, 67% of students were within this range. As with piano proficiency, it was difficult to establish a target, and as a baseline for this new system, 70% may be a reasonable number to sustain and increase. We fell slightly below this target for 2013.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?
In answering this question, please note specific changes to your program as they affect student learning, and as they are related to results from the assessment process. If no changes are planned, please describe why no changes are needed. In addition, how will the department report the results and changes to internal and external constituents (e.g., advisory groups, newsletters, forums, etc.).

The department has monitored student performance and retention in the core theory sequence, the piano sequence, and completion of the Convocation/recital requirement for several years. We believe that these elements of all music degree programs constitute important indicators of student progress toward their degree, and any incremental improvements in these indicators are worth collective effort to achieve. The data gathered thus far will be used as baselines for improvement, and results of
changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and policies will be examined again in the 2015-16 academic year using the same or similar indicators.

We will continue to improve student support in the form of advising, degree planning checklists, feedback on attendance and academic risk, and data management. We are incorporating the services of a full-time academic advisor for the department, whose hiring was in part supported by the results of our student learning assessment data.

Results of ongoing assessment will be discussed in full faculty meetings and briefings with the CAH Dean and Associate Provost, and will continue to be an element of NASM certification and University Strategic Planning. The annual reports available on the Associate Provost website will be linked on the department homepage.

5. **What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment information?**

In answering this question, please describe any changes that have been made to improve student learning based on previous assessment results. Please also discuss any changes you have made to your assessment plan or assessment methods.

Prior assessment information reinforced the importance of student success in the core sequences of music theory and piano, and led to heightened attention to retention in these courses. The detailed data collected over the last four assessment cycles was critically important to our discussions, and helped guide our selection and orientation process for a new FT/TT faculty member in the music theory area. In addition, we felt that the collective impact of prior assessment data highlighted the importance of student advising. The department requested and was able to hire a full-time staff advisor to track and support various aspects of student retention.

The department continued its work begun in 2012 with the articulation of a long-range plan, a department strategic plan, and revised Vision, Mission, and Values statements. This resulted in a revision of the department’s student learning outcomes for the core of the music degrees, and an updated assessment plan which was approved by faculty vote in Fall, 2013.

In accordance with this revised assessment cycle, the department will be analyzing data from applied music and ensemble performance classes in 2013-14. Current work focuses on developing procedures for summarizing data from quarterly performance juries and developing direct or indirect measures of ensemble achievement.

Results of prior assessment reports were incorporated into the self-study required by NASM for their accreditation visit in Spring 2013. This work was ongoing throughout the 2012-13 academic year.

6. **Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University:**