Texas Tech University Graduate Program in Music

Executive Summary

The Graduate Degree Programs in the School of Music were reviewed and evaluated (pursuant to the periodic review policy of the Graduate School of Texas Tech University) by a committee that included Dr. Anisa Zvonkovic (Department of Human Development and Family Studies), Dr. Roger Saathoff (School of Mass Communications), Dr. Terry Morrow (Department of Art), and two outside reviewers, Dr. John Schaffer (Director of the School of Music at the University of Wisconsin Madison) and Dr. Robert Fink (Professor Emeritus & former Dean of the School of Music at the University of Colorado). This report is based on information obtained from the School of Music’s self-study document and from a series of separate meetings the committee held on March 4 and 5, 2008, with the Director of the School of Music, the Program Graduate Director, faculty, and graduate students. The charge of the committee was to evaluate the graduate degree programs in the School of Music in terms of their quality, size, resources, effectiveness, and contributions to Texas Tech University. This review is organized to focus on (1) program overview and vision; (2) faculty productivity; (3) quality and quantity of graduate students; (4) curriculum; and (5) facilities and resources. In each area, we assess the quality, justify the ranking, and include recommendations for the future.

Program Overview and Vision – very good to excellent

The Texas Tech University (TTU) School of Music graduate programs appear to be excellent in nearly every regard. The curriculum demonstrates depth and breadth, the faculty members are of outstanding caliber, the program boasts dedicated and creative leadership, and graduate students are successful.

The TTU School of Music currently demonstrates a high level of success as an outstanding regional comprehensive music graduate program that attracts a high caliber of students, trains them through a broad and comprehensive set of degree programs, and enjoys a highly successful placement rate for its graduates.

The mission statement of the School of Music states that the School desires to have a national presence, yet it is noted that most of the students come from and are ultimately placed within the state and region. In order to enhance its impact and prestige nationally, the program could benefit from emphasizing and better marketing its unique Ph.D. in Fine Arts program, not to the exclusion of the other fine programs, but as a niche.

Faculty Productivity – excellent

Faculty productivity in the areas of teaching and creative work/research was judged to be excellent. Faculty members devote considerable energy and effort to the graduate program. Leadership for the Graduate Program from the Director of the School of Music and the Associate Director for Graduate Programs, by all accounts from graduate students and faculty members, appears to be exceptional. The high teaching loads carried by graduate faculty (when examined in terms of comparable universities) could be reduced in order to assure that the program is able to sustain or even improve productivity.
Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates – satisfactory

The number of graduate students seems appropriate given the size of the faculty. The faculty members appear pleased with their placements and their quality. The faculty and administration appear to be involved in recruitment of graduate students and invested in their retention and success.

The perspectives of graduate students on their experiences were obtained through a meeting. In addition to endorsing the leadership and graduate faculty members in the School of Music, graduate students noted the positive and collegial learning environment of the program. It was noteworthy that approximately 30 graduate students came and actively participated in the meeting. Their high engagement with their programs speaks well to their quality and eventual success.

The quality of the graduate students may be limited by the relatively low stipends, especially when it is understood that tuition and insurance are not included in the stipend. Low stipends are especially difficult when the graduate faculty attempt to recruit non-Texas students to Lubbock. The program will continue to encounter great difficulty in effectively increasing its prominence outside the region if additional funds are not available. Two immediate possibilities would be through offering more scholarships and enhancing the levels of funding for Ph.D. students above Master’s students, in order to cover the full costs of insurance and tuition, and raising the stipend levels.

Curriculum and Programs of Study – excellent

The graduate degrees offered by the TTU School of Music all appear to be outstanding: comprehensive in their content, broad in their scope, reflective of national practice, and uniquely positioned in their intent. Especially noteworthy is the Ph.D. in Fine Arts degree, apparently unique in the country according to external reviewers. Graduates in this degree program are uniquely trained to teach at the multitudes of institutions across the country that are looking for broad-based music educators, since their coursework provides focus but also requires exploration of broad societal issues. Deemed to be a degree of rigor and standing up well nationally against other Ph.D. degrees, this degree may make students more competitive for university and college employment in which they might teach outside of a narrow expertise – which could also be used as a recruitment tool.

Texas Tech’s School of Music espouses a common philosophic approach throughout the entirety of their graduate offerings and has demonstrated a strong placement rate of TTU students seems clearly reflective of the nature and success of these programs. Recommendations for curricular improvement include: (1) requiring a foreign language for the Ph.D. program (examination of individual programs of study reveal that students are obtaining experiences with foreign languages and seem to demonstrate proficiency on a case-by-case basis); (2) requiring vocal music training in addition to the instrumental music requirements for the M.Ed. in General Music; and (3) requiring a course in music research methodology for the Master’s programs.

Facilities and Resources:

- Music building humidity control, temperature control, and sewer problems – unsatisfactory
• Availability and quantity of student practice rooms and TA offices; funding for graduate student travel and professional development; opera rehearsal/performance space – poor
• Library resources, new recording studio, new “smart” classrooms – good

The Texas Tech School of Music has invested wisely and creatively in enhancing some of the classroom’s technology, in a new, well-equipped recording studio, and in coordinating its music library into the university library. These efforts on behalf of the program are to be commended. If the School of Music in interested in assuring that its music collection represent all areas, it would be wise to have a consultation with a specialized music librarian on a regular basis, as the holdings at present appear adequate for many specialized areas of research, but not as comprehensive as holdings at comparator universities. Such holdings and their organization and dissemination may be put under increased scrutiny and demand if the Ph.D. in Fine Arts is sought by increased numbers of students. It is recommended that the increase in upgrading of existing spaces continue – further enhancing the technology of all classrooms. It is praiseworthy that a classroom/choir rehearsal room is being renovated at low cost and with minimal changes to be a small recital hall for student solo and chamber music performances. This work is responsive to student concerns about venues for their required performances.

The number of practice rooms and TA offices were rated as poor. It seems especially difficult that graduate students must coordinate their rehearsal times with other graduate teaching assistants. Facilities for doctoral student practicing should be seriously considered. We also noted the lack of adequate space for opera rehearsals and performances and the concerns with safety in the Hemmle Recital Hall. At a time when Texas Tech’s competition in the state has invested in new performing arts and rehearsal facilities, it will be important for Texas Tech to include in its “campus master plan” thinking a far reaching approach to the facilities for the School of Music and the rest of the arts as well. Not doing so will likely result in Texas Tech slipping in its reputation within the state, less able to attract and retain the graduate students from the region and the state.

Some aspects of the facilities are clearly unsatisfactory and in serious need of immediate attention. HVAC systems are in serious need of repair. Even more than other academic areas, musicians need to have air systems without mold. The current dysfunctions threaten their physical health and their ability to perform. Some of the rehearsal areas in the basement lack soundproofing. That area has experienced a recent flood of sewage, from which there will be health threatening residues. These problems need immediate attention, as they affect the morale and health of the current students and faculty and the ability of the program to attract quality students.

Recommendations

(1) We recommend a re-examination of the mission of the School of Music by the faculty members and stakeholders with a view to determine whether the focus should be regional and statewide in terms of student recruitment and placement, or whether the vision should aim toward becoming a premier program nationally. Further recommendations address ways the program could enhance its national reputation and increase its national draw for the graduate program.

(2) Faculty high teaching loads should be reduced.
(3) Stipends for graduate assistantships should be increased, at least for doctoral students. Another vehicle for enhancing the financial packages for graduate students would be to enhance the level of scholarship support so that it rises to the level of comparable universities that fund all tuition and student fees.

(4) Three specific curricular recommendations are included in the body of the Executive Summary. They are:

a. Including a foreign language requirement for Ph.D. students;

b. Requiring vocal music training for the M.Ed. in General Music;

c. Requiring for all Master’s Programs a course in research methodologies to comply with the NASM standards.

(5) The Ph.D. in Fine Arts was deemed to be unique degree offering that could position the School of Music on the national stage. Efforts to market the degree nationally are encouraged.

(6) Specific recommendations for facilities are detailed in the Executive Summary. These are:

a. Repair & renovate the HVAC systems and plumbing immediately.

b. Continue the technological enhancement of classrooms.

c. Work with a librarian consultant for future planning of the library collection.

d. Provide additional space for rehearsal rooms and for graduate teaching assistant offices, especially for doctoral students.

e. Provide a space for opera rehearsal and performance space. The problems with Hemmle Hall are beyond renovation, so it is recommended that enhanced performance space be included as part of the Campus Plan.

Anisa M. Zvonkovic, Ph.D.  
Roger Saathoff, Ph.D.  
Terry Morrow, Ph.D.