

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 29, 2007

To: Alan Smith, Associate Dean, College of Musical Arts

From: Russell Schmidt, Director of Jazz Activities

Re.: Jazz Area Assessment Report for the 2006-07 Academic Year

In compliance with the annual request for a *Summary of Assessment Accomplishments*, I am providing this Jazz Area Assessment Report. It adheres to the format traditionally prescribed, organized in four sections.

I. Learning Outcomes

The degree programs in the Jazz Area (both B.M. and M.M.) are highly reflective of the tradition of the art form: jazz is a very performance-based discipline. As a result, learning outcomes are principally measured in terms of growth as a jazz performer. In particular, development in the areas of improvisation, jazz phrasing and style mastery, and repertoire building are critical.

II. Assessment Process

The Jazz Area favors a comprehensive *Jazz Jury* system, utilizing a two-juries-per-semester approach. Every semester, each undergraduate and graduate jazz major has to first perform a *Repertoire Demonstration Jury* and then (at a later date) present a *Prepared Performance Jury*. These juries afford the Jazz Faculty---Chris Buzzelli, Jeff Halsey, Charles Saenz, Russell Schmidt, and Roger Schupp---the best opportunity to assess the afore-mentioned learning outcomes.

Jazz Faculty attending juries fill out two separate forms. One is a Jury Assessment Evaluation, which provides each jury panelist the opportunity to measure the extent to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved. It employs a "check-plus/check/check-minus" mechanism with a standard four-tier evaluative system. This form is not provided to students, except in cases of a failed jury. The second form is a Comments Sheet, given to the student shortly after the jury, which provides specific performance critique and direct feedback.

For *Repertoire Demonstration Juries*, students are required to provide an updated repertoire list (which should grow from semester to semester). During these juries, jazz majors are required to perform from memory any composition on their list for the Jazz Faculty. Unlike *Repertoire Demonstration Juries*, a student

gets to select the piece they will perform during a *Prepared Performance Jury*. Jazz majors are required to rehearse their *Prepared Performance Jury* piece with a backing student ensemble in advance of the juried performance.

In the 2006 Fall Semester, *Repertoire Demonstration Juries* were held on November 1, 2006. Subsequent *Prepared Performance Juries* were held during Final Exam Week. During the 2007 Spring Semester, *Repertoire Demonstration*
Jazz Area Assessment Report for the 2006-07 Academic Year
(May 29, 2007 – **MEMORANDUM** – *page two*)

Juries were held on April 4, 2007. Subsequent *Prepared Performance Juries* were again held during Final Exam Week.

III. Assessment Analysis

Following 2006 Fall Semester Jazz Juries, the tabulation of all Jury Assessment Evaluation forms provided the following results:

- 1 (of 1) graduate jazz majors “passed with distinction”
- 1 (of 1) graduate guitar majors “passed”
- 5 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed with distinction”
- 12 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed”
- 1 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed with reservation”
(None failed)
- 3 (of 3) undergraduate guitar majors (“jazz emphasis”) “passed

The average combined numeric score---employing a formula to convert the Jury Assessment Evaluation data into a numeric equivalent on a four-point scale---for all *undergraduate* Jazz Juries was 2.69 (out of 4.00). [As a point of comparison, the 2005 Fall Semester numeric equivalent for all undergraduate Jazz Juries was 2.48 (out of 4.00).] Graduate data has not been included in this analysis, as the core sample size makes any comparison irrelevant.

Following 2007 Spring Semester juries, the tabulation of all Jury Assessment Evaluation forms provided the following results:

- 1 (of 1) graduate jazz majors “passed with distinction”
- 1 (of 1) graduate guitar majors “passed”
- 6 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed with distinction”

11 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed”
1 (of 18) undergraduate jazz majors “passed with reservation”
(None failed)

2 (of 2) undergraduate guitar majors (“jazz emphasis”) “passed

The average combined numeric score---employing a formula to convert the Jury Assessment Evaluation data into a numeric equivalent on a four-point scale---for all *undergraduate* Jazz Juries was 2.64 (out of 4.00). [For reference, the 2006 Spring Semester numeric equivalent for all undergraduate Jazz Juries was 2.65 (out of 4.00).] Again, graduate data has not been included in this analysis, as the core sample size makes comparison irrelevant.

Jazz Area Assessment Report for the 2006-07 Academic Year
(May 29, 2007 – **MEMORANDUM** – page three)

As indicated, no jazz majors failed juries during either semester. As such, no immediate, active advisement procedure was required as a follow-up with any student.

IV. Response to Findings

Fall Semester Jazz Juries were held in November and December 2006. Spring Semester Jazz Juries were held in April and May 2007. This scheduling reflects an important change from the 2005 Fall Semester, when *all* Jazz Juries were held in December 2005. *That* semester yielded an overall average score of 2.48 out of 4.00. In the three semesters since that time, the average four-point scores have been consistently better (2.65, 2.69, and 2.64, respectively). Clearly, the decision to divide the two juries (the *Repertoire Demonstration Juries* and the *Prepared Performance Juries*) into events which happen during different points in the semester---instead of all “back-loaded” into Final Exam Week---proved beneficial for our students.

Also of interest, at first glance it appears that there is no significant change from the 2006 Fall Semester scores (2.69 average) and the 2007 Spring Semester scores (2.64 average). But it must be noted that students performing degree recitals are not required to perform a *Prepared Performance Jury*. (Their degree recitals fulfill that obligation.) During this most recent semester, three of our most outstanding undergraduate jazz majors (Tim Cieplowski, Ted Parker, and Steven Walker) performed degree recitals. (I would consider these three individuals to be among the top five undergraduate jazz majors). With the waiving of their *Prepared Performance Jury* requirement, it must be noted that the statistics skew lower with their presence only felt in half of the numerical assessment (as relating to these individuals’ *Repertoire Demonstration Jury* scores). As such, some of the typically “high end” scores were not present during this

most recent semester. (And this will, of course, henceforth be the case whenever the Jazz Area loses a particularly strong class all at once.)

On the whole, the Jazz Area believes these scores demonstrate that our jazz majors are achieving desired learning outcomes and the vast majority are moving successfully toward the completion of their degree programs as jazz performers. Approximately one-third of all jazz majors passed their 2006-07 Jazz Juries "with distinction" (up from only one-eighth in the 2005 Fall Semester). Programmatically, the Jazz Area continues to move in a strong manner.

Information (regarding the progress of each jazz major) will be provided to the Chair of the Department of Music Performance Studies in June 2007. With no students failing any jury, no other actions are deemed necessary.

Please submit any questions regarding this report (via e-mail) to the Director of Jazz Activities. Thank you.