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CLASS U.S.C.  
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**From: Curriculum Committee (Jeffrey Sposato, Chair)**  
**To: Music Faculty**  
**February 18, 2014**

RECEIVED FEB 28 2014  
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**Proposal: To add a zero-credit Freshman Seminar to the undergraduate curriculum (all Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Arts in Music programs)**

The following proposal was submitted to the MSM Curriculum Committee by Academic Advisor Carrie Young and the committee approved it (in the form outlined both here and in the course's sample syllabus) unanimously.

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**To:** Dr. Jeff Sposato, Curriculum Committee Chair, Moores School of Music

**From:** Carrie Young, Academic Advisor II, Moores School of Music

**RE: Freshman Seminar Curriculum Proposal**

**Objective:** To provide a concentrated and interactive forum for students to learn about The University of Houston, the services offered on campus, opportunities in the city of Houston, and essential skills and strategies to help students transition into life as a college student in a large university, especially addressing the specific issues that music students face. This course will be focused mostly on music major issues, and will be presented in a format that allows students to ask questions and interact with faculty, staff, senior student leadership, and musical artists in the Houston community.

**Justification:** Throughout scholarly journals in higher education, retention and first year student transition are prominent concerns voiced by colleges and universities across the country. At the University of Houston, a course called CORE1101: Freshman Seminar Scholars Community, is offered to help freshman adjust to the university. This course includes information about financial aid, student organizations, library use, career services and choosing a major. Now, within CLASS, a new program has been implemented to place freshman in the same block of courses: English, Math, and a Social Science, so they move through their first semester with the same cohort to help establish a sense of community and track student success. Neither of these options is compatible for the schedules of music majors.

Across the country, freshman seminars are standard practice. Some are orientation/information based, some are topical writing seminars, while others are focused on the field of major study of the students. Regardless of format, the aim is to form a sense of community, aid freshmen in the college transition, and help them to make the most of their collegiate education.

At the Moores School of Music, our students present a unique set of transitional challenges that can only be addressed by the School of Music. I have found it to be nearly impossible to equip our students with all of the important information that helps them to succeed at UH. There is too much scattered literature: too many emails, websites, and signs around the building for them to absorb all of the important information. Establishing a weekly seminar course can provide an informational and social setting where freshmen can ask questions and gradually learn about the services and opportunities that are available to them. Music majors face unique issues, particularly related to practicing and time management, that need to be addressed early in their college life. In my position, I believe I am the best person to bring this information into a consolidated format where they can get to know me and use me as a resource on a weekly basis. As noted below, however, I would not be working alone: most of the course sessions would be team-taught with members of MSM faculty and other university administrators.

The more aware students are of the multiple programs and opportunities for their education (outside of and within UH), the more they will be able to build their college experience around their interests and the more satisfied they will be with their time at the Moores School of Music and the University of Houston.

The following are examples of sessions that would be presented in this seminar:

#### Financial Aid 101

Scholarship opportunities for Music majors and CLASS students

Health Center and Counseling Services (What to do, where to go, how to handle situations)

Jury, Performance, Audition and Audience Etiquette

Expected professionalism in rehearsals (Ensemble Directors speaking)

Resumes (musical vs. other work), cover letter and professional email composition

Music Student Organizations (what they are and how they benefit the student)

Discipline in Practicing (presented by Professor Noe Marmolejo)

Have a panel of JR/SR MSM students give advice to freshmen (more than once per semester)

Minors at UH (especially Business and Non-Profit Certification)

Internships and Summer Programs for musicians

Free performances in Houston (shared throughout the semester)

Advantages of having a Liberal Arts degree, skills gained in this degree

Career options in the Arts (MSM alumni guest speakers)

UH policies concerning CORE credit, Community College credit, 6 W limit, last 30 hours, etc.

UH Police: Safety on campus (you can call for an escort late at night!)

How to use the Music Library and what is expected when writing papers

UH Study Abroad Programs

All of these topics were chosen in response to multiple discussions with students and faculty over the last few years. Through surveys and discussions, I have worked to identify the areas where students and faculty feel that information is not adequately provided or presented. Online surveys were sent to

graduating seniors, as well as students finishing their freshman year. This seminar is largely based on the student responses, opinions, and needs in our program.

Through this seminar, students will be more educated about the community and opportunities at the Moores School of Music and the University of Houston. Therefore, they will be better prepared to take full advantage of every opportunity that appeals to them. I hope to make this interesting and entertaining for the students. I would like to also incorporate exercises where they get to know their peers and me in the course so there is a sense of community and comfort in asking for help.

**Credit issues:** This course could be offered as a zero credit hour enrollment and be required for all undergraduate music degrees. The grading would be pass/fail, based on attendance (see the sample syllabus for the attendance policy). Students would not be given any homework assignments or exams. If a student fails the course, they would need to enroll in it again the following semester.

**Scheduling:** In the Fall semester, this course would be offered in 2 or 3 sections (based on size of incoming freshman class) that meet once per week, with 25-35 students per section. The class would meet from 9-9:50am, following freshman theory and aural skills, so the students are already in the music building. In the Spring semester, one section would be offered for incoming Spring freshmen and students who fail the Fall course. This course should not add stress to new freshman because only attendance is required. This material should actually help them be more successful music majors and college students.

**Presentation:** This information will be presented by staff members, faculty members, and panels of students and guest speakers from the community (preferably MSM alumni). The academic advisor will act as the facilitator for each session. Sessions will include a significant question & answer period for students to direct the conversation to their own concerns and questions. We will also have time to break into smaller groups so students can discuss their joys and frustrations in their university transition, and seek help and guidance from staff, faculty, and student leadership.

## MUSI 1000: Freshman Music Seminar

Carrie Young, Academic Advisor II, Moores School of Music  
713.743.3172, [cyoung11@uh.edu](mailto:cyoung11@uh.edu)

Meeting times: 9-9:50am, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in Room 160. Students attend one section per week (sections contain 25-35 students) .

### Learning Objectives:

The purpose of MUSI 1000 is to help music students transition into collegiate life at the University of Houston, while also learning the specific expectations and skills needed to be successful in an intensive music program.

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Understand the expectation of large ensemble directors in rehearsal and auditions
- Learn from the success and mistakes of senior music majors
- Be planning ahead for summer programs, graduate school, and internships
- Be familiar with general University policies and rules that apply to music students
- Understand how scholarships and financial aid works
- Be familiar with music degree and minor options at UH
- Know how to write professional correspondence, as well as properly format a resume
- Be familiar with the Music Library and its resources
- Consider multiple career options in the arts
- Know more about Health Center and Counseling services on campus

All of the topics in this course are in response to multiple discussions with students and faculty over the last few years. Through surveys and conversations, I have worked to identify the areas where students and faculty feel that information is not adequately provided or presented. Surveys were sent to graduating seniors, as well as students finishing their freshman year. This seminar is largely based on the student responses, opinions, and needs in our program.

Grading: This course is a zero credit hour class that is required for your degree. It is graded as pass/fail, and is strictly based on attendance. This course does not require homework assignments or exams. Two absences are allowed. If a student misses class due to illness, they may attend another section of this course that week to make up the absence. If a student exceeds two absences, they automatically fail the course and must take it again the following semester. *Documented* extenuating circumstances will be considered.

Materials: Handouts will be distributed for many sessions, and all materials will be posted to Blackboard for future reference. Students will not be required to purchase any textbooks or supplies for this course.

The following schedule and seminar content is subject to change, based on availability of guest speakers and panelists:

Week 1: What should I know as a freshman at the MSM? Presented by a panel of Senior Music majors in leadership positions (includes discussion of a handout with popular FAQs,

mostly taken from survey feedback, as well as one created by seniors with advice for freshmen.

Week 2: What is expected of me in MSM rehearsals, auditions, concerts, juries, and classes (etiquette, behavior, performance, preparation)? Presented by a panel of Ensemble Directors and additional faculty

Week 3: How do I balance practice time with the rest of my academics and university life? Discipline in Practice (presented by Prof. Noe Marmolejo)

Week 4: Health Center and Counseling Services: What is available to UH students? What is already covered in student fees? When should I be concerned and refer my friend/roommate to the Counseling Center? Presented by UH Health Center and Counseling Services

Week 5: How to use the Music Library (Presentation/tour by Librarian or Musicology faculty)

Week 6: Checking in: How is the semester going so far? How do you deal with midterm stress and falling behind? Resources of the Tutoring Center: presented by UH Learning Services and senior student panel. (Some information covered in the previous week with Counseling Services.)

Week 7: Financial Aid 101: Understanding your university finances. Guest speaker from UH Financial Aid

Week 8: Scholarship opportunities for Music and CLASS students and how to apply (in time for scholarship consideration): Presentation by Stacia Morgan.

Week 9: What can I do with a Liberal Arts or music degree? What skills are gained from an education in the Liberal Arts or music, and how to highlight them in interviews and cover letters. (Briefly include information about Music Service Fraternities.)

Week 10: Career options in the Arts: what to do while you are in college to get the experience you need in your field. Panel of arts professionals, (with as many MSM alums as possible), including performers, teachers, arts administrators, directors, donor relations professionals, etc. Internships discussed.

Week 11: Resumes, cover letters, and email: how to separate your musical education from your work experience, and when to combine them. Includes professional correspondence with faculty and potential employers. (Presented by John Benzer)

Week 12: Minors at UH: why a minor is a great idea. Guest speakers from Bauer College of Business and Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, Study Abroad (language)

Week 13: Wrapping up general university academic policies: CORE, taking community college courses in the summer, 6 W limit, last 30 hours, declaring another major or minor, what if I want to change my major?

Week 14: Summer programs, festivals, and graduate school: when to apply, how to apply  
(guest panel of applied faculty, Orchestra, Opera)

Possible last meeting with student panel during scheduled final exam time.