

The Disconnect Between SCH-Centered Productivity Measures and The Functional Realities of a Successful Collegiate Music Program

Preface

Obvious financial pressures on Morehead State, currently common at colleges and universities across the United States, have increased the focus on program productivity metrics as institutions seek efficiency, cost effectiveness, and profitability. Among various measures of productivity, student credit hours (SCH) generated by a school, department, or unit and the ability of individual faculty members to reach established SCH targets currently seem to be primary factors in determining a program's relative productivity. Unfortunately, it seems that productivity—when narrowly defined in economic or financial terms—may affect the perception of a program's institutional value and its consideration in important managerial decisions. While productivity in these terms may work quite well for most programs on our campus, SCH as the primary productivity measure may work well in other areas, but it poses significant issue for any successful college music program.

Private Applied Instruction

Many characteristics make music programs unique when compared to other campus offerings, but of these, curricular private applied instruction (weekly, one-on-one) presents the strongest argument in favor of an alternative method for a managerial evaluation of productivity for our music unit. The following critical understandings should help illustrate the problem of SCH:

- Private applied instruction is inherent to collegiate music study and ubiquitous to serious music study around the world, across cultures, and throughout history.
- Collegiate music programs in the United States rely on private applied instruction and large ensembles working effectively together to attract, recruit, retain, and train music students—the success of each depends on the success of the other and both are pedagogically indispensable for collegiate music study.
- Large ensembles (like our MSU bands, for example) have prescribed needs regarding specific numbers of students playing specific instruments to function properly, maintain a music program's reputation for quality, and draw prospective students to MSU—in turn, those prescribed minimums should inform private applied enrollment goals.
- For reasons of student recruitment and retention, program reputation, and best-practices pedagogy, MSU and comparable institutions need to maintain at least two primary large vocal concert ensembles and at least two large instrumental concert ensembles differentiated by student ability level. As examples, look no further than every other public university in our own state (and beyond).

The efficacy of current SCH targets breaks down when private applied instruction is evaluated in the context of the actual instrumentation needs of our program:

INSTRUMENT	MIN	OPT	ANNUAL PA LOAD	ANNUAL PA SCH	TARGET SCH SHORTFALL	REMAINING LOAD
FLUTE	10	12	13.4 to 16.08	20 to 36	424-430	7.92-10.6
OBOE	4	5	5.36 to 6.7	8 to 15	435-442	17.3-18.64
CLARINET	15	18	20.1 to 24	30 to 54	396-420	0-3.9
BASSOON	4	5	5.36 to 6.7	8 to 15	435-442	17.3-18.64
SAXOPHONE	9	12	12.06 to 16.08	18 to 36	424 -432	7.92-11.94
HORN	8	10	10.72 to 13.4	16 to 30	420-434	10.6-13.28
TRUMPET	12	16	16.08 to 21.44	24 to 48	402-426	2.56-7.92
TROMBONE	10	14	13.4 to 18.76	20 to 42	408-430	5.24-10.6
EUPHONIUM	5	8	14.74 to 22.78	22 to 51	399-428	1.22-9.26
TUBA	6	9				
PERCUSSION	14	18	18.76 to 24	28 to 54	See below	See below

INSTRUMENT – The individual instrumental studios required to sustain our music program

MIN – The student enrollment per studio needed to support our large instrumental ensembles at a minimum level

OPT – The student enrollment per studio needed to support our large instrumental ensembles at an optimal level

ANNUAL PA LOAD – The faculty workload use required in each private applied area to support minimum to optimal studio enrollment

ANNUAL PA SCH – Student credit hours generated per year in each studio when minimum to optimal enrollment is maintained

TARGET SCH SHORTFALL – Based on the recent document distributed by the Office of the Provost, this is the quantity of SCH that each private applied faculty member needs to generate to reach current productivity targets

REMAINING LOAD – this represents the total remaining workload hours each full-time faculty member would have left after offering the prescribed private applied instruction—example: if the clarinet studio was functioning optimally for large ensembles needs, that faculty member would have no remaining workload available, yet would still be 396 hours short of current stated SCH targets. Note—nearly all the private applied professors fulfill the remainder of their 24-hour full-time workload by teaching degree-required courses (music education, music theory, and music history courses). Increases in enrollment in such courses cannot occur without commensurate increases in private applied students.

A NOTE ABOUT PERCUSSION—we have two faculty members in that area, so the remaining load and SCH shortfall is variable. Also, percussion is the one area where the instrumentation needs of large ensembles are inadequate to establish optimal enrollment targets for the studio—the percussion area can easily exceed 24 students at optimal levels

Untenable Scenarios

- Based on established targets, our Director of Bands, for example, fell 130 hours short of the established goal for SCH generation during the same timeframe that his faculty workload for the year was 29. To make target, there would be few options:
 - Increase enrollment in ensembles
 - The only way to do that without a corresponding increase in private applied instruction—and reduction in the ability of those professors to generate high SCH—would be if all additional students were non-music majors. Non-majors are not required to take applied lessons to participate in ensembles, while any additional music major would have a private applied requirement each semester until graduation.

- Significantly Increase the number of music majors in MUSE 376 and/or MUSC 472 (these courses are required for music education majors), which in turn increases the need for private applied instruction for each additional student, reducing SCH generation for private applied teachers.
- A private applied faculty member in an area like clarinet, if performing at optimal target levels for our concert ensemble needs, would have a full-time private applied workload (18 students) and be considered highly effective and successful by anyone in our profession. By the SCH metric however, this professor would only generate approximately 45 hours—9 lower division (9x2 credits) and 9 upper division (9x3 credits) lessons.

Summary

Productivity in a collegiate music program defined primarily by SCH generation is demonstrably problematic. The concern in setting SCH targets without considering the way successful collegiate music programs should function is that our program risks being devalued or judged to be unproductive or ineffective when music faculty fall short of established targets (our most productive and effective private applied professors would produce only one tenth of the established target). It is important for our program that this not become the narrative, but instead that we find ways of working with MSU administration to develop meaningful, achievable program goals and evaluation metrics for music at MSU.

Improving music program SCH generation is entirely possible, but attainment of current stated targets is unrealistic given the fundamental nature of collegiate music study. Just as we would not look for a tape measure to measure the volume of water in a bucket, we must find better ways of determining productivity in our music program. If we expand our definition of productivity beyond a strictly economic framework, we find many indicators that could be considered (e.g., regional and community engagement, short- and long-term outcomes for program graduates, contribution to campus life, our unique capacity to recruit students outside of our major). While these may prove harder to quantify and/or difficult to measure, they would provide a more valid productivity indicator for a music program than using SCH.