

## Interdisciplinarity@WMU- Phase One planning Template

1. **Brief Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the proposed interdisciplinary initiative. What types of questions would the initiative ask? What types of complex problems would it seek to solve?

The School of Music within the College of Fine Arts proposes to create a Center for Contemporary Musical Arts and Multimedia (final title TBD). This Center would place the programs in the SoM that focus on modern creative, technical, and performance practices under a single umbrella. The primary purposes of the Center are the following: 1) to maximize and extend the nascent collaborative potential between the affected programs for both student and faculty projects and to create more curricular opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration between students in the impacted programs; 2) to share courses between the impacted programs in order to modernize these programs and maximize how our faculty expertise and technological resources can benefit students; 3) and to redesign the curriculum of the impacted programs in order to best serve students based on current post-graduate opportunities—initial curriculum proposals already approved for Fall 2021. This initiative seeks to ask and answer the following questions: How should a contemporary music school be organized? How should students in music programs that involve the generation of new music be educated? What overlap exists between the necessary skills for all students who are creating new music? What post-graduate opportunities exist for these students and how do we best prepare them to be successful? How can we maximize collaboration and creative practice within the SoM and beyond? How do we bring faculty working on contemporary creative projects together in order to model successful research projects by replicating practices outside of academia? How can we create an entity that provides a structure that both answers the questions above and creates something that can be branded for marketing for student recruitment and to attract donors? What steps can we take to make our programs distinct from other regional and national institutions?

2. **Impacted units:** What existing units, programs, and colleges would be involved in the proposed initiative? What other possibilities for collaboration across campus or in the broader community might exist now or in the future?

The SoM and CFA will organize the following programs into a Center: BM and MM in Music Composition, BM in Jazz Studies, MM In Performance (Jazz Studies Concentration), and the BS Multimedia Arts Technology (MAT). These programs are the programs that focus on contemporary music creation and practices within the School of Music. There are additional ways in which these programs integrate with other programs in the School of Music, e.g. student composers writing for SoM ensembles and student performances and MAT majors providing technological support for SoM music events. These programs had been planning to further integrate prior to this initiative and have already completed curriculum proposals that have been approved for fall 2021. This proposal does not require an administrative restructuring, but proposes an entity with affiliated faculty and programs. Lastly, this Center

will make use of the renovated Multimedia Room and be an entity to organize collaborative, interdisciplinary projects involving sound with other units. The revisions to the composition, jazz and MAT programs involved further integration between these programs and other departments, notably the proposed Kinetic Imaging program in Art. MAT students can take theatre classes. Students in all three programs have been involved with curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular projects with dance, theater, and art. The new Center will also provide opportunities for further collaboration with the sound design program in theatre which has recently collaborated with the MAT program and composition. This will facilitate communication and encourage more exchange of students between the two schools. There are already classes that are in the MAT curriculum from communications. There is the possibility to further integrate this center with other units, including computer science which could teach MAT majors introductory computer programming concepts and could be involved in projects.

- 3. Impact on teaching, learning, and curricula:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on teaching, learning, and curricula. How might this initiative help to grow enrollment, including by reaching new audiences of learners through continuing education, dual enrollment, or professional certification? How will the proposed initiative positively impact the training of undergraduate and graduate students? How does it enhance our institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The initial curriculum changes have been created and approved. The main purposes of moving these programs under a single umbrella have been implied or stated. The curriculum changes will increase the class size and repeated offerings of some classes, thus maximizing our faculty and technology resources. The Center will be an excellent recruitment tool for all three programs, which will increase the quality of students in the programs. The jazz area has taken steps to grow its enrollment (including the aforementioned curricular changes) and the creation of the Center will only strengthen these efforts. These curriculum changes eliminate the need for students in these programs to dual enroll. E.G, composition and jazz studies students will no longer feel as if they should enroll for a MAT minor, since those courses now count in their programs. The same scenario applies to students in any one of the three degrees who are interested in content in the two other areas. The curriculum changes have modernized the degree programs and the Center will provide an entity under which those changes will gain an identity, be instituted, and evolve. These three programs are the only three programs in the SoM with a performance component that does not exclusively rely on traditions and instruments stemming from 19th Century Europe and do not have admissions requirements requiring training in Western European performance traditions. Jazz directly stems from African-American musical traditions, and the MAT program, the most racially diverse in the SoM, teaches the techniques of creating contemporary music in any genre/style with computers, which is the primary way in which the majority of music is made, including music that emanates from populations who are minorities within the US. Concentrating on these areas will, over time, facilitate recruiting a more diverse student population as barriers to admissions to the SoM evolve.

- 4. Impact on research and creative activity:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on research and creative activity. How will this initiative promote discovery and creative scholarship? How might it result in increased external funding?

The creation of this Center will serve to foster greater creative activity; curricular advancements and discussions within all three programs have stressed less in-class time spent on “fixed-

domain” instruction (which will be available via teaching videos), with more emphasis on creative activity, discussion, and analysis. To some extent this is already happening, this proposal seeks to both codify these relationships and expand on them. Students in these three programs will take lower level classes together that will be focused on creative projects. The extra- and co-curricular projects that were already happening in the final years of these degree programs, will now happen after a strong, shared foundation. Packaging the exciting curriculum development and collaboration between these programs into a Center will provide the ability to brand this entity for donors and to showcase interdisciplinary projects in special events and on social media under a single, identifiable umbrella. Faculty within all three programs have already worked together on projects and a major initiative involving faculty in all three areas currently underway has received modest funding from a Kalamazoo Artistic Development grant. This project will lead to an event in the fall of 2021 at which we hope to announce the Center, if that fits with the timeline for forming such an entity, and to showcase for students opportunities inherent in their new curriculum. We are confident that pending administrative will, which our Dean appears to possess, that successful fundraising will occur around the Center.

- 5. Efficiencies and/or cost savings:** How might the proposed initiative contribute to increased efficiencies and/or cost savings, for example by reducing administrative positions (e.g. chairs/directors), sharing staff support services and/or by sharing facilities?

The creation of the center would contribute to efficiencies, minor cost-savings, and shared resources. Faculty are responsible for website content, social media, and recruitment. The creation of the Center will result in a single set of webpages for the three programs rather than three sets of webpages, reduced social media work as we can coordinate these things in tandem, and coordination of recruitment efforts. Public relationships and marketing can be streamlined and coordinated through the center, rather than through the individual programs. As mentioned, depending on administrative will, fundraising efforts can be linked to the identity of the Center that will benefit the Center and, given the integration of these programs within the CFA and SoM beyond the three directly impacted programs, can serve to provide opportunities and events of general benefit. We will share infrastructure and facilities, as the curriculum requires more technology classes that are both of value to students and will result in increased class sizes and greater use of our technology. Beyond the Center, there are discussions of dance students and theater students integrating into some of these classes and this idea supports and extends the proposed Performing Arts Technology minor, which is discussed in a separate proposal.

- 6. Impact on course offerings and workload:** At present, proposed initiatives will only be feasible and sustainable if they can be supported by existing resources, including instructional capacity, faculty and staff time, and facilities. Will the proposed initiative streamline existing course or program offerings? Could the initiative help create more equitable and sustainable workload for faculty, for example, by reducing the need to offer under enrolled courses, reducing the frequency of course offerings or eliminating the need to teach some courses?

This proposal does not require additional resources. We have present needs, but this does not extend those needs. The approved curriculum proposals streamline existing course offerings and reduce some requirements in each program in order to make space for more overlap. This overlap will mean a greater number of students taking already offered courses, in the case of one class this might require additional sections, especially if Dance students become required to take that class, as Kinetic Imaging, MAT, jazz, and composition majors will be. As the Center

evolves and we continually evaluate curricula, we intend to place a greater emphasis on creative projects and streamlining delivery of “fixed-domain” information to students, i.e. create or continue to use instructor videos to provide that information, and use online testing and project requirements to assess those skills. This will result in less faculty time being spent on traditional classroom activities and more classroom time focused on collaboration, creative topics, and experiential learning.

**7. Additional Information:** What additional information would you like to provide in support of this proposal?

Given that the first round of curriculum updates that provide the foundation for the creation of this Center have been designed and approved, we are providing links to those documents. •

Jazz Studies Curriculum Proposal:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hGa0VqSQ5n8aSPLghTqgaGn19qHBJNts\\_KqF7ffhzO4/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hGa0VqSQ5n8aSPLghTqgaGn19qHBJNts_KqF7ffhzO4/edit?usp=sharing) • Music Composition Curriculum Proposal:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gGX-J35gfrXt1NGVgWPOU-](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gGX-J35gfrXt1NGVgWPOU-FSmDAN8EcDIhNOpP40iQ0/edit?usp=sharing)

[FSmDAN8EcDIhNOpP40iQ0/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gGX-J35gfrXt1NGVgWPOU-FSmDAN8EcDIhNOpP40iQ0/edit?usp=sharing) • Multimedia Arts Technology Curriculum Proposal:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dxL8djwrMM8rMGEbKmbIMb1iKBz\\_oKSfvyrTaYUxRM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dxL8djwrMM8rMGEbKmbIMb1iKBz_oKSfvyrTaYUxRM/edit?usp=sharing)

Here is a letter of support from impacted faculty and teaching staff approving the curriculum and these same folks also approve of this proposal.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/137ZZYyuQz8bKphn00WMNHBffZe2yzKwekKabI5rjRTo/edit?usp=sharing>

Agility and Relevance - If Universities do not react to the ever quickening pace of change that has impacted our practical and perceived relevance, we will be greatly diminished both culturally and financially. In the arts this largely means updating curriculum to require skills that are necessary for contemporary artists and helping students understand the post-graduation market for their skills. The primary changes in the 20th and 21st Century relate to the development of technology to facilitate multimedia and collaboration in the arts, and the need for artists to foster creative communities while building their own brand. This proposal is an effort to respond to past changes that have impacted art making and opportunities for artists and to be adaptive to future changes. We intend to demonstrate that change and modernization of already exceptional programs, while scary, is necessary and attractive to students. The Center will be an activity center for interdisciplinary work and collaboration and a marketable symbol of contemporary, adaptive behavior that will be attractive students and set us apart from other institutions.

**8. Contact**

Christopher Biggs, School of Music

Andrew Rathbun, School of Music