

Central Oregon Community College Music Program Department & Program Review 2023-2024

Section 1: Report on Previous Goals & Requests

What goals did you set in your last APR/DPR? What requests did you make? Briefly explain the status and/or outcome of these goals and requests.

Goal 1: Complete the review and revision of course level student outcomes for all music courses that was begun in 2018-2019. This goal was accomplished, though it will require continual monitoring and updating.

Goal 2: Establish a new sequence of courses related to music technology. The factual end of this goal has been accomplished in that we did establish, via the curriculum process, a new sequence of music technology courses. Unfortunately, we have not seen nearly as much student interest as we had hoped. The pandemic is partially to blame (this particular elephant in the room will be expanded upon below), but we are generally flummoxed with the lack of interest as we are giving the students what they had requested.

Goal 3: Increase enrollment in College Choir and reinstitute the vocal ensemble. We batted a hall-of-fame worthy .500 on this goal (or, if you prefer the glass half empty, we earned a failing grade). For the moment we have pulled College Choir from our current course offerings due to perennial low enrollment. However, the Vocal Ensemble (now known as Vocal Jazz Choir) has become one of our regular ensemble offerings with solid enrolment each term.

Section 2: Fulfilling Your Mission

What is your program or discipline mission statement, and how have you fulfilled this mission since your last APR/DPR?

The mission of the music program at Central Oregon Community College is to be an artistic presence for the college and the greater Central Oregon community as we:

1. Share the rich heritage of great music from around the world as a means of developing informed and inquiring minds and effective cultural leaders in society.
2. Foster meaningful cultural and aesthetic experiences that enhance the understanding and appreciation of the art of music.
3. Offer high quality music instruction that engages students in the creative process.

Our program, indeed, all of the non-digital based visual and performing arts at COCC, were decimated by the covid pandemic. Within a few short weeks, we went from doing everything that is mentioned above to cancelling well over 50% of our classes. In the ensuing two years, we attempted to crawl out of the covid conundrum using every required protocol, striving (hoping) to proceed with some semblance of normalcy. This included holding rehearsals outside and spread apart (yes, it was cold and windy); holding rehearsals inside even farther apart and with special masks and shields for instruments and performers (yep, expensive and a total pain in the tucus); attempting to have classes online that have no business being online (choirs are not designed to rehearse via Zoom). In hindsight, we are grateful for the many musicians who continually rallied to gather and make music under any circumstance, utilizing whatever protocols were required that term in order to legitimize the gathering.

It was the COCC ensembles, and the dedicated musician participants (students), that kept hope alive that the pandemic would end and that we would, once again, be an artistic presence for the college and the greater Central Oregon community. Having recently passed the four-year anniversary of the pandemic shutdown, we can say with confidence that the number of participating musicians as well as the number of concert attendees are finally approaching (though not equaling or surpassing) pre-pandemic levels. Tableau enrollment data confirms that numbers participating in ensembles in 22-23 (203) is approaching the pre-pandemic 18-19 level (246) and 23-24 year-to-date data suggest that the gap will continue to narrow substantially. It is important to note that these numbers do not represent individuals who participate in multiple ensembles over multiple terms. For example, most participants in the Cascade Winds play all three terms but are only counted once in the annual tally. When you add together the number of enrolled students each term, the numbers are far more telling of the actual impact: 246 for the year versus 543 when adding together enrollment for each term. This higher number still does not include the many participants who are enrolled in multiple ensembles each term.

Even though this was a frustratingly slow process, we are grateful for the success we have had as there are many ensembles across the country who did not survive the pandemic. Unfortunately, we have not seen the same resilience and return to normalcy with our traditional music classes (411 students in 18-19 versus 274 students in 22-23). We will continue to evaluate and adjust schedules and course offerings in order to draw in students. We appreciate the support of instruction as we negotiate these challenges.

Section 3: College Goals and Initiatives

How has your program or discipline participated in fulfilling the College's plans and priorities, attaining campus-wide goals, or participating in broad initiatives since your last APR/DPR?

In reviewing our 2018-2019 APR report, specifically the section that covers COCC's Academic Master Plan and Strategic Plan, we are pleased with our efforts, pandemic disruptions

notwithstanding, in fulfilling the college's mission to provide "Community Enrichment" to the Central Oregon community. Every term we provide community enrichment in spades as we offer the opportunity for hundreds of community members to participate (as registered COCC students) in one or more of our flagship music ensembles such as the Cascade Winds, Cascade Chorale, Big Band Jazz and Central Oregon Symphony. The concerts presented by these ensembles are attended by thousands of Central Oregonians each term and, as mentioned in our previous report, this "represents one of the largest, impactful and continually positive presences that COCC offers to our community."

Also recalling our previous report, we would like to emphasize the important role that the arts, and by this we mean all the arts, play in the Strategic Plan goal of developing and enhancing Student Experience. We believe wholeheartedly that Fine Arts and Communication Department is a key component in strengthening this goal by providing a student experience that is both in the classroom and well beyond the classroom. We believe strongly that an associate degree, especially an associate of "arts" degree, is rooted in the liberal arts education philosophy and that FAC exists, in part, to provide opportunities to our students that go beyond core academic requirements that contribute to a well-rounded student experience.

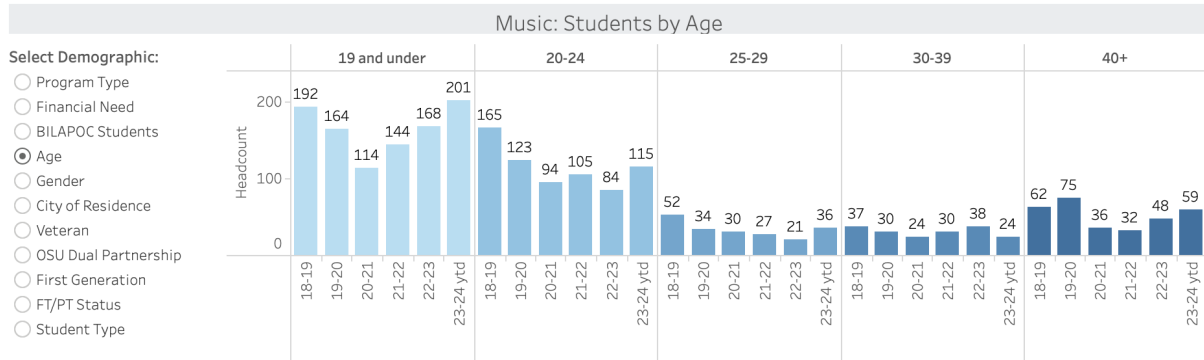
Section 4: Diversity and Inclusion Insights

What insights have you gained about your students and how you might help them achieve their goals? What are your area's strengths in terms of student equity? Challenges? How might your faculty learn more about any equity gaps represented in the data?

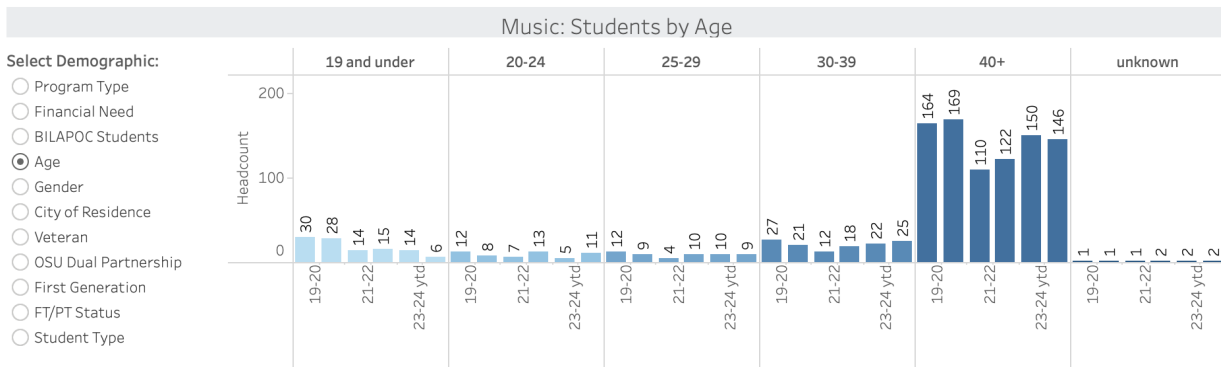
While we consider ourselves welcoming and accepting of all, music classes are not required for any specific degree and those students who choose to take our classes are predominantly white. Tableau data (averaged over the last five years) indicates that approximately 70% of our students identify as white, 14% BILAPOC, and 16% provided no answer. On the Madras Campus, a community where racial and ethnic diversity is much richer than Bend, our classroom diversity is much richer as well. (Tableau does not provide, or at least this user is unable to locate, data that indicates the ethnicity demographic of a single class on the Madras campus.) Sadly, we only serve a handful of students on that campus each year. The arts have long been a place where those who are often marginalized can feel safe. These individuals are We pride ourselves in warmly receiving all individuals, regardless of race, gender or sexual identity, as scholars and musicians and are equally appreciated and valued for the contributions that they make to the discussion and music making.

That acknowledged, there are other elements of diversity in which the music program excels. We pride ourselves in the diversity of ages in our classes and ensembles. While our academic courses tend to skew towards a younger crowd, we regularly have students who are between 40 and 70 years of age. It is exceptionally satisfying to have a septuagenarian in your class who,

side by side with an 18-year-old, wrestles with a music theory problem. The wisdom and life experience shared by both is a joy to witness.



In our music ensembles, the age range spans from 15 to 80+, all of whom are working towards the same performance goals.



The audiences for whom we perform represent and even wider age demographic. Of special note, the Central Oregon Symphony and the Cascade Winds both have an annual event that exposes hundreds of children, ages 2 to 12, to music and musical instruments. Both events are free of charge so there is no financial barrier.

Speaking of financial barriers, we also are grateful for donors to the COCC Foundation who have specifically given money to the music program so we can offer scholarships to students with need. Anyone who auditions and is accepted into a COCC music ensemble and has a financial challenge, can apply for a scholarship that will cover 100% of the tuition and fees for the group.

Section 5: Strengths and Accomplishments

Briefly share your department’s strengths and major accomplishments, noting that this should not be an exhaustive list, but rather the most important or significant accomplishments your program has achieved since the last APR/DPR.

While generally devastating, the pandemic did produce one major accomplishment for our department: livestreaming concerts. As restrictions were gradually lifted and our ensembles were allowed to give public performances once again, one major hurdle presented itself: would audiences actually attend? Not knowing the answer, we set about exploring the option of livestreaming our concerts so those who were unwilling to assemble in public spaces could still experience a live performance from an environment that suited their social gathering comfort level. This turned out to be a huge success. Thousands watched our livestreamed concerts as we slowly emerged from the pandemic. However, what was intended as an alternative to in-person concerts for local individuals, was also a way that people from all across the country could watch our performances – often friends and relatives of musicians who have never seen them perform live and in-person. As many are now returning to the concert hall, it is these individuals, along with many locals who find themselves traveling or unable to get out during a concert weekend, who are still faithfully tuning in to every concert with our livestream offerings.

While not directly connected to our credit class program, it has been our pleasure to work with the COCC Community Education program to bring about a new performing opportunity for singers in Redmond: the Redmond Community Chorus. After a gangbuster start pre-pandemic, this ensemble, primarily made up of Redmond residents, has rallied and is once again producing amazing concerts.

Our faculty members regularly serve as clinicians in local schools, adjudicators at local, regional, and national music festivals, participate as a grant awarding commissioners for organizations such as the Bend Cultural Tourism Fund, and serve as board members for local arts organizations such as the Tower Theatre and the Central Oregon Center for the Arts.

The Central Oregon Symphony has participated in the commissioning of two new works during this DPR cycle. Jennifer Stevenson wrote her *Symphony No. 1* for the COS, which was premiered in May of 2023. In 2019-2020, Chris Thomas was commissioned to write the music for *Imagine Symphony Live*, which was used as the soundtrack for a short film about a young boy's experience of attending a symphony concert for the first time and how what he heard triggered visual images from the scenery of greater Central Oregon. COS musicians are featured on mountain tops (yes, they climbed up there), on a city bus, in the forest, on a canoe in a lake, et cetera. The final filming of a live concert took place in February 2020, a few weeks prior to the shutdown and was released in the fall of 2020. If you're interested and have ten minutes to spare, google *Imagine Symphony Live* and watch the video.

Section 6: Challenges

Briefly share your program or discipline's challenges.

Among the current concerns for our program, four rise to the top.

First: Our ongoing efforts to get our in-person classes back to pre-pandemic vitality and viability. No magic bullet here, nor is this a place where an influx of cash towards program promotion, scholarships, et cetera, would likely make a meaningful difference. (But we'll gladly take either if such exists).

Second: Our desire to be a part of the branch campus offerings. While we would like to do more in order to support the college's mission, offering branch campus classes presents a troublingly skewed expense ratio under the current model, (one that is certainly not viable in the long term), exceptionally small classes, not to mention that we have a limited number of qualified faculty available to serve as instructors.

Third: Because the performing venues at the college seat a maximum of 200 people, almost all of the college ensembles perform somewhere other than on a COCC campus. Even though Central Oregon has many performance venues, primarily at high schools, the ability to secure dates in one of these venues is ever more challenging, if not outright impossible. Staffing shortages at the schools, use conflicts with other organizations, and construction/remodel projects, are leaving many arts organizations in our community with very few options and a great deal of gastrointestinal distress.

Fourth: From the beginning, there have been encroachment issues with Wille Hall. This lovely space was not in the original Coats Campus Center plans. However, the serendipity of a 1.25-million-dollar donation from a former musician in COCC ensembles to the music program, allowed the appending of Wille Hall to existing plans.

What has all but been forgotten is that when the donors first approached Michael Gesme about the donation, their original intent had nothing to do with creating a space for music rehearsals. They were looking at something with a much smaller scope of impact. After several discussions they amended the scope of intended use of their donation. In addition to creating an endowment for instrumental music activities through the COCC Foundation, they wished to contribute to the building of a first-rate rehearsal space for COCC instrumental ensembles. Could the room be used for other things? Of course. However, it should be (and was) designed for music. For our program, this is a dedicated classroom space in the same way that a chemistry lab is a classroom. It is where we spend the bulk of our time, and it is where the majority of our equipment is stored – hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment.

In the years since it was built, we have continually lost space in the storage area and the main room. For example: All of the risers that are currently stored in Wille Hall proper, which cuts into available floor space and is a blight on the beauty of the room for all users, were originally intended to be stored in the closet. This is no longer possible because of all the non-music related equipment that is stored there. Indeed, so much non-musical equipment is stored in the closet that nearly half of the closet needs to be emptied just to get to the instruments used for rehearsals.

Michael Gesme has had numerous conversations with facilities managers over the years proposing that we add additional storage to the building, which would make it a more manageable space for everyone – even offering up to \$100,000 in Wille Endowment funds to assist with the project. The result of these conversations to date: crickets.

Section 7: New Goals

List your goals and needs here. Include no more than five goals and indicate where/how you see these goals aligning with and/or positively impacting the current strategic plan or other important initiatives.

1. More music classes on the branch campuses (and specifically dedicated teachers from those communities to teach on the branch campuses)
2. COCC presence (specifically high-level administration) in the ongoing discussions regarding an arts center in Central Oregon
3. Remodel of the Pinckney Center for the Arts

Section 8: Resource Needs

Indicate what kind of resources, strategies, or support you need to achieve your stated objectives. The DPR Response team will review these requests and recommend the next step as appropriate in their written response.

Goal 1: We acknowledge that this goal is a challenge on many levels. Simply offering more classes does not ensure that they will have enrollment; having enrollment does not ensure that they won't be cancelled; and even if a class runs, does having one or two students really providing a college classroom experience? It's a conundrum. While not specifically addressing the small class issue, it would be ideal we could have a music faculty member who lives in those communities teach in those communities. This has happened in the past, and with tremendous success in Madras, and we will continue to seek qualified individuals who are interested in taking on this responsibility.

Goal 2: We would like for the college administration to be vocally supportive, not to mention fiscally or territorially supportive if appropriate, of the community-wide effort led by the Central Oregon Center for the Arts board of directors to bring about the creation of a vibrant and sustainable performing arts center in Central Oregon. It is our opinion that the support of the college as a whole, and not simply a handful of music faculty, is integral to the success of such a project. Imagine the crown jewel of the campus being a brand-new arts center that the college neither has to pay for or manage. There are efforts underway as we speak and, by and large, when the administration of COCC is solicited for assistance in moving the project forward,

or asked questions about the possibility of having the college as a potential site for a new facility, radio silence is the result.

Goal 3: Quoting from our last report: We request the completion of the proposed remodel of the Pinckney Center for the Arts, monies for which were set aside in 2015-2016. This has been a painstakingly slow process that has continually limited our activities and blocked a potential funding stream from outside events. The room has no match in Central Oregon and, with the remodel and other needed improvements, it will have the potential to shed its current reputation as a hidden (if not rough cut) gem and the best-kept-secret in the performance community. We are regularly approached by performing arts organizations asking to use PCA for rehearsals and performances. Groups include BEAT Children's Theatre, Ovation Performing Arts, and the Tower Theatre, which is looking to expand programming. Because of numerous factors, most notably the lack of our own COCC campus safety personnel on the weekends, inadequate facilities (lack of dressing areas, a lighting system installed during the Reagan administration, leaks in the roof, electrical issues leading to concerns about lights actually working during shows, et cetera), and the lack of a point person whose job is at least partially dedicated to maintaining and running PCA, we are unable to open the facility to outside organizations and it has limited use by campus organizations.

Were PCA to receive a substantial remodel, not only could it generate revenue for the college, but it could serve as a main venue for presentations such as the Chandler Lecture Series. With PCA there is the possibility for more seating than Wille Hall and, instead of having to construct a stage, there is stadium seating and, as they say, not a bad seat in the house – all with theatrical lighting that would add much to any presentation.