NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Music Industry Futures Issues

A Report of the NASM Working Group on Music Industry Programs in Higher Education

September 2007

INTRODUCTION

The following list of futures issues represents opinions gathered from meetings of the working group and through open hearings and discussions regarding music industry with the NASM membership. This special project of the working group is not a comprehensive list of all issues raised, but rather a representation of the most commonly held concerns with the most immediate consequences.

EXTERNAL FORCES

Importance of high art and popular culture
- Students in music industry programs benefit from exposure to both high art and popular culture. Programs that focus on only one of these aspects are not fully preparing a student for success in the field, especially because we can expect in the future high art and popular culture will intersect in terms of content (e.g., the genre classical crossover is an intersection between art music and popular music) and techniques in production, promotion, and sales of music from these divergent areas.

Blurring of boundaries between genres
- New genres, fusion genres, and crossovers continue to diversify the content of the field. Students must not only be prepared to adjust and adapt to trends, but also to conceive of and pursue new, boundary-blurring prospects.

Branding of products/ideas by celebrities
- As endorsements for products or messages become commonplace, students need to be prepared to think in these terms and negotiate or work with such projects.

Determining the difference between a trend and a fad
- The Information Age has made the viral nature of trends and fads exponentially faster. The staying power of ideas in the field and in popular culture must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they will have long-term ramifications or be short-lived fads.

Fast pace of change in music industry (technology, trends, fads)
- The music industry changes every second through uploading, downloading, and technological innovation. Staying current with trends, fads, and technologies and being able to anticipate future changes is vital to success in the field. Overall knowledge of technique and technology as conceptual systems may be as important as skills with current technology.

External legitimacy of music industry degrees
- The field as a whole does not see the intrinsic value of music industry degrees with any definable consistency. Determining the factors that will increase the value of a music industry degree outside higher education is essential to the future success of the programs and their graduates.

Industry looking to higher education for research, direction, and growth
- The external music industry field turns to higher education for indications as to where the field as a whole is headed in terms of expansion, innovation, and trends. Projective thinking and forecasting may be important areas for future study and research.

Fragmentation of "music industry" into smaller, more specific specializations
- As the field continues to diversify, fragment, and encompass a wider range of professions, the definition of "music industry" expands. Music industry programs have the challenge of finding workable approaches including decisions about breadth and depth in various curricular components.

Definition of "music industry" expanding to include "entertainment" (visual/multimedia arts, digital media, etc.)
- The fragmentation of the music industry into more specialized areas is turning "music industry" into a buzzword that means different things to different people. The term "entertainment industry" is also beginning to fragment and encompass elements of the music industry in non-traditional sectors (e.g., computer gaming, Internet, film, and broadcasting). A clear understanding of terms and the real world associations of those terms needs to be reached to optimize communication and decision-making especially about curricular programs.

Shift in music industry revenue streams away from recorded music
- Digital formats and online distribution are changing the traditional recorded music industry not only in terms of production and delivery, but also with regard to its financial foundation.

Impact of globalization
- As the world becomes increasingly more connected and "flattened" many issues need to be considered, including but not limited to the outsourcing of technology and manufacturing jobs, the industry's ease of access to a global community, the impact of larger markets on our own, and the influence of cultural identity on the production of music.

Impact of piracy and free source software
- File-sharing technology and the general attitude toward illegal distribution of digital audio and video content, especially concerning younger generations that do not know a world without digital piracy, are increasingly important topics for the music and entertainment industries.

Copyright and licensing issues (ownership)
- The concept of ownership continues to be challenged both legally and through the development of technologies that allow new means of content distribution and interaction with music.

Artistic vs. financial motivation
- On a project-by-project basis the music industry is in constant flux finding a balance between profit margins and artistic integrity. Students may need more study and experience that enable them to work with this relationship effectively.

Demographic shifts and changes
- It is increasingly important for the music industry to understand the demographics of its consumers and develop the skills to monitor changes in these demographics carefully.

Political, social, and economic influences on leisure time
- With leisure time becoming a precious commodity, the music industry must keep in mind the forces that shape consumers' needs and resources for purchasing, participating in, and interacting with music both on a national and international basis.

Relationships among music unit, business unit, and communications unit
- To the extent that curricular content for music industry programs begins to demand courses from multiple units, institutions must prepare for collaborative relationships in designing and administering these programs.

Program funding and administrative home
- Each institution must determine where funding for music industry programs originates and under which unit the programs should be administered.

Questions concerning music industry degrees in a traditional music department
- Some feel that the amount of music content should determine the administrative home of music industry programs; however, the number of the music resources needed for most programs is extensive no matter what the educational goals or the curricular structure. A clear sense of mission will be increasingly important.

Many variations in types of programs
- When designing or revising music industry curricula, institutions should be mindful of the fragmentation of the industry and the possibility for ever-increasing program variations.

Room for innovation within NASM standards
- The standards outlined by the Association – including general curricular standards and those standards specifically applicable to music industry programs – are crafted with the intention of not being prescriptive and allowing institutions room to be creative and to innovate.

Changes to traditional delivery systems
- With increased interest in distance learning and the constant improvements in content delivery systems, music industry programs will begin to explore ways to utilize new methods of delivering course and program content.

Gender issues in music industry program enrollment
- An apparent dominance of male students in music industry programs presents many topics for discussion regarding recruitment efforts, curricular content, faculty hiring, lesson planning, and so forth.

Music industry students with limited performance skills compared to "traditional" music students
- Among music industry students, differing skill levels regarding applied music study must be considered when designing curricula, admitting students, and setting graduation requirements.

How to work with students who can't read music, but want to enter music industry programs
- Institutions need to determine fluency levels expected in reading music and then design or revise curricula accordingly.

Students entering music industry programs with advanced technical skills (software and hardware)
- An increasing number of technically adept students are entering music industry programs with working knowledge of industry-standard hardware and software. The curricular and requirement issues raised by higher levels of such proficiencies are important futures issues.

Institutions' proximities to industry hubs (student exposure, adjunct pool)
- When creating or expanding music industry programs, institutions should consider proximity to industry hubs, especially regarding opportunities for student experiential learning, interaction with business leaders, and the pool of qualified adjuncts.

Bringing music industry research and development to campus
- As with other fields so tightly woven with new technologies, the opportunity to bring research and development activity from the industry on to campus presents many mutually advantageous possibilities.

Technological advances and influences on all music industry specialization areas
- Maintaining currency with new technologies in the areas on which the unit's specific music industry curricula focus enhances student learning and prepares students for experiential learning opportunities and professional work.

Curricular balance between real-world skills and academia
- Because most music industry programs are vocational in nature, a balance between skill acquisition and academic study is essential to preparing students to transition into the field. Among other things, academic study should lay foundations that enable analytical approaches to changes over time. Music industry programs may wish to explore counseling students into general education courses that develop such perspectives and skills.

Defining basic/core knowledge and skills in music industry
- Though specialization opportunities in music industry programs prepare individuals for specific areas of professional work, a common set of basic/core knowledge and skills for all music industry programs, regardless of specialization, can help create a consistent, base-line framework, and common ground for the field from which institutions and individuals build their specializations.

Maintaining a set of basic/core knowledge and skills as a foundation for adapting and reacting
- The creation of a common set of basic/core knowledge and skills for music industry programs would provide a solid foundation for curricular expectations that support change while ensuring the development of fundamental competencies.

Can a set of core competencies for the field be defined regardless of specialization?
- With the many specializations and further fragmenting/expanding definition of the "music industry," how hard is it to agree on and put into practice a common set of basic/core knowledge and skills? This is a futures issue for institutions and the field as a whole.

Curricular credit limitations
- As programs face local credit limitations, the need to define essential basic/core knowledge and skills may become more important in order to defend the need for maintaining specific skill/competency acquisition capabilities in a curriculum and frame a basis that is beyond the local institution.

The expanding and diverse job market for graduates of music industry programs
- Students entering the field after graduation have ever-increasing options and should be prepared to excel in their specialized area or in the field in general. This need for adaptability has a potential impact on the purposes of the curricula.

Preparing students to find and create new/alternative paths
- Students can be prepared for success in an expanding and fragmenting field by programs that emphasize right-brain thinking and encourage exploration beyond traditional careers or paths to access careers in the music industry.

The performer-entrepreneur — changing nature of culture
- Entrepreneurial skills benefit students in music industry programs as the field shows an increasing number of successful performer-entrepreneurs.

Higher education seen as a necessary step (obstacle?) on the entrepreneurial path
- While some students pursuing an entrepreneurial path perceive a baccalaureate-level degree as essential to their success, others see higher education in general as an obstacle to working in the field and beginning their career in the industry.

Internal legitimacy of music industry degrees
- Local challenges to the need for or relative merit of music industry programs can create an environment that hinders program attention, innovation, and funding.

Lack of terminal degree/graduate programs in music industry
- Because common agreement of a graduate-level or terminal degree has not been established, universally accepted educational credentials for music industry faculty are not defined.

Reluctance to accept Baccalaureate degree as terminal
- Despite the vocational nature of music industry programs, currently there is hesitation to consider an undergraduate degree as terminal.

Students opting for Baccalaureate music industry degree with MBA
- In order to overcome the lack of a terminal degree in music industry, students are pursuing MBA programs. This provides skills applicable to the field, but will typically not allow the student to focus on music industry-specific topics.

Scholarly equivalencies for earning tenure
- Music industry faculty are often challenged by tenure committees due to a lack of earned academic credentials, and the difficulties of understanding the nature of work and evaluation in the field.

Faculty credentials – experience vs. degree
- Professional experience in the field is not always accepted as being equivalent to earned academic credentials.

Faculty promotion/tenure with respect to terminal degree
- The lack of a terminal degree in music industry leaves many faculty in a position where promotion and tenure are out of reach.

Role of vocational program in a liberal arts education
- To what extent does the liberal arts framework encourage or inhibit vocational programs?

CONCLUSION

Institutions and individuals are encouraged to use these issues as a basis for discussions regarding new and existing music industry curricula.

If there are further questions or requests for clarification, or if the NASM National Office staff may be of any assistance, please feel free to call (703) 437-0700 or e-mail info@arts-accredit.org.