

COLLEGE RECRUITMENT IN RURAL AREAS:

A Panel Discussion and Presentation of Challenges and Rewards

Moderator: Dr. Nicole Riner, University of Wyoming

Panel members:

Dr. Nicole Molumby, Boise State University,
Dr. Shelley Collins, Delta State University,
& Laurel Swinden, University of Guelph.

Common Issues:

1. Expectations/Naivete: Students may not have a clear idea of what the music major (as opposed to high school band participation) entails
 - a. students are not fully prepared for rigors of university study
 - b. limited exposure to concerts, masterclasses
 - c. students often choose a music program based on the marching band, its director, or the football team's success
2. Underdeveloped Feeder Programs:
 - a. students coming out of small programs often lack confidence in their playing which leads them to abandon their instruments in college;
 - b. students have limited access to good quality private instruction and artistic opportunities;
 - i. often missing fundamentals of tone production, technique
 - ii. often working with substandard instruments
 - iii. limited ensemble experience
 - iv. little knowledge of repertoire, technical studies, etc.
3. Students from small, isolated communities may be reluctant to move far from home.
 - a. often prefer to attend a community college close to home
 - b. used to more encouragement and personal connection with peers and mentors
 - c. students reluctant to give up social network; go outside comfort zone
4. Small Local Applicant Pool: Must take into consideration economic, geographic and demographic factors
 - a. Studies of Rural Albertans suggest that students do not have access to the same social networks and supports that place a high priority on post-secondary education as urban Albertans (i.e. sources of influence is parents, friends, guidance counselors)¹
 - b. demographic factors: family of applicants and students themselves want "return on investment" - how will degree in music translate into employment for students; or give back to their community
 - c. economic factors: financial limitations: pre-university students have limited resources for extra activities, let alone post-secondary education
 - d. students from urban areas do not wish to attend college in a rural area

To meet enrolment targets, the school has to take the best of this small pool, resulting in a class of students that are often ill-prepared for university studies in music.

¹ "Advanced Education in Rural Alberta: Challenges and Opportunities". Alberta Advanced Education. June 2005. p.5.

5. Geographical Challenges: Isolated nature of communities and distance between regional centers
 - a. difficult for university professor to go into every school in the state because of distance and time
 - i. prevents covering a number of schools in a limited time frame
 - b. difficult to collaborate with neighbor institutions because of the distance between universities
 - c. bigger distance for students to travel for concerts, events
 - i. difficult for students to come to university for concerts or guest artists
6. Financial limitations with Scholarships/Incentives:
 - a. exchange Scholarship incentives make it easier for students to afford out of state university
 - i. eg: WUE – Western University Exchange Scholarship (N. Molumby)
 - b. community colleges are able to offer full-ride marching band scholarships
7. Time Restrictions:
 - a. Students are often unavailable to visit universities because of high school marching/contest season activities or honor bands each weekend.

Strategies:

- Communication;
- Building Ongoing Connections;
- Peer Involvement/Mentoring;
- Events;
- Expanding Applicant Pool;
- Building Profile.

Communication: *Reach across the divide*

1. Maintain contact with interested students after meeting them once; keep a **record** of their graduation year and send yearly letters/emails related to their current position in school (in the junior year, invite them to sit in on a master class; early in the senior year, send an email with links to apply, etc.)
2. Create a sign-up sheet for every school and outreach event for prospective students' email addresses, to be kept updated about your studio's events.
3. Create a monthly, quarterly, or biannual **e-newsletter** using MailChimp² or other free program to keep in touch with prospective students
4. Send personal invitations to recitals, special events
5. Track students achievements (musical or non-musical) to send kudos; invite questions
6. Social media, especially **Facebook** (both personally and a departmental page)
7. Personal phone calls and texts
8. Offer **Skype** lessons
9. Are students aware of all financial resources available to them through the university?
10. Keep studio **website** up to date with information for prospective students
 - articles on what to expect as a university flute major - possibly one written by a current student
 - preparation tips, technique practice suggestions, for developing fluency
 - dates and deadlines

² <http://mailchimp.com>

Peer Involvement/Mentoring

1. Involve your current students in recruiting efforts: offer their contact information to prospective who might have questions about the program, have them house prospective students visiting campus or bring them to lunch at the school cafeteria, and get them involved with recruiting events like Flute Day, auditions days, etc. Students feel like they are part of the community before they even apply.
2. Poll existing students to find out what they like best (and least) about the program, and solicit their suggestions for recruiting.
3. Go beyond what your music office does to create tours: invite prospective to sit in on studio class, a flute lesson, etc.
4. Students from university volunteering/mentoring in rural band programs and community bands promote the university program

Special Events: Attract attention to the program and/or instructor

1. Honor Flute Choir (N. Molumby)

- Send audition music to band directors first week of school
- Recruit in public schools with large flutes
- Auditions before labor day (auditions are more as a part check for me and to make sure the students have prepared)
- 2 hour weekly rehearsals for 6-7 weeks
- 20 participants \$50 a person: covers music, free t-shirt, MP3 of concert, photo, etc...
- Every other year a Guest Artist comes and conducts dress rehearsal and concert
- I try to find a piece where I can solo with the group
- Guest Artist also gives a university master class open to public
- Invite all private teachers and band teachers to concert for FREE

2. School Clinics (N. Molumby)

- Prepared hand outs with warm-ups, long tones, easy scale patterns, practice suggestions, recommended repertoire and books, my contact information
- Collect names and email addresses of students interested in Honor Flute Choir
- Make contact with band directors
- Work with students on three points of balance, tone production, hand position, correct fingerings, etc...
- Woodwind Faculty Tour every January allows us to go to schools further away to perform, recruit, and make contact

3. Music Audition Day: (S. Collins)

- Three Fridays during the school year
- Students and parents meet with the entire music faculty, sit in with wind ensemble or choir ensemble rehearsals, hear performances, take a campus tour, eat in the cafeteria, take private lessons, and meet with Admissions and Financial Aid.
- DSU students also attend as schedules permit to mingle with prospective students and answer questions.
- Non-majors are welcome; arrangements are made so students can meet with faculty in other departments.

Special Events, cont'd

4. Honor Band:

(S. Collins)

- Students are selected by live and recorded auditions
- Applied faculty visit high schools across the state for auditions.
- During Honor Band weekend, students participate in a sectional, clinic, or small ensemble coaching session with the applied faculty.
- Evening reception for band directors and other music alumni – all music faculty attend.

5. Workshops/Clinics/Flute Day:

- Build connections/comraderie and positive competition between schools with a semi-regular, multi-school flute workshop, rotating between schools as host institution -- see Nicole Molumby's Honor Flute Choir and Nicole Riner's Travelling Flute Day
- **Portable/Travelling Flute Day** (N. Riner)

Reducing financial burden and travel demands:

- High school site visits - travel with Admissions counselors to save money
- Combine a flute event with a regional honor band event

Expand the Applicant Pool

Prospective students from rural areas:

- Target community college transfers - investigate partnerships with institutions that can offer transfer programs to increase applicant pool
 - especially Phi Theta Kappa members
- Become good friends with the Admissions department!
- Consider the Role of the University in the Community:
 - What areas of the curriculum serve the needs of rural students and their community?
 - Consider partnerships with other faculties for cross-disciplinary study
 - Consider also the regional learning styles/needs of students and ensure they know of resources in place to help
- Address rural opinions/vocational focus:
 - does the degree provide transferable skills that can be taken to leadership roles in other vocations?
 - emphasize community-centered learning, outreach; flexible job prospects

Improve Level of Applicant Pool:

Increase Knowledge Base and Opportunities for Self-Instruction

- provide repertoire lists; links to on-line ear training resources, etc.
- offer Skype lessons in between in-person visits
- list of technical and foundational goal-posts for student self-study; option for check-ins with Smartmusic™ recording feature (email the performance or practice session)
- maintain list of regional private teachers; communicate regularly expectations for auditions
- offer workshops for middle and high school students
- College Preparatory Program: pre-college students study with DSU faculty or students

Cast the net wider to larger urban areas

- problematic if competing programs nearby
- promote support programs available to students; develop an in-studio mentor/buddy system, to ensure success for incoming students

Building Profile

- Adjudicate at regional flute festivals
- Developing visibility in a region involves connecting with students at every regional festival, band event, concert, etc.

About the Presenters:

Dr. Nicole Riner is Lecturer in Flute at University of Wyoming and director of Summit Flute Institute, an organization that publishes a monthly newsletter and hosts annual events for flute students in the Rocky Mountain region. She earned the Doctor of Music in flute performance & literature from Indiana University.
Read more at www.nicoleriner.info.

Dr. Nicole Molumby is Associate Professor of Flute and Aural Skills at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. Scholarly activities include commissioning music from Slovenia and teaching iRest, a performance anxiety relaxation technique in the flute studio. She earned a DMA from Ohio State University.
Read more at www.nicolemolumby.com.

Dr. Shelley Collins is Associate Professor of Flute and Music History at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. She is President of the Mid South Flute Society and has served as Secretary of the National Flute Association and as President of the Seattle Flute Society and the Colorado Flute Association. A native of Montana, she received the DMA in Flute Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Colorado-Boulder and a MM in Flute Performance from Arizona State University. Read more at www.shelleycollins.com.

Laurel Swinden, BMus, MMus, DMA (ABD) is a Lecturer in Flute at the University of Guelph, Western University's Don Wright Faculty of Music, and flute faculty at the Kincardine Summer Music Festival. She is completing her thesis toward a DMA at the University of Toronto.
Visit www.laurelswinden.com for more information.

