

“String Instruments for the Lionel Hampton School of Music Preparatory Division”

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Abstract

The study and application of music pedagogy are fundamental to high-quality university music departments. They provide significant research opportunities for faculty and diverse professional experiences for students. Most top music schools in the United States have pre-college music programs in which students enrolled in a pedagogy practicum class teach children under the supervision of professors. These programs provide affordable music education in communities, and authentic teaching experiences for college students. The University of Idaho’s main competitor for string player recruitment in the Northwest, Central Washington University, already has such a program. In response to a demonstrable need in the university and community, Assistant Professor of Piano Pedagogy Kristin Elgersma and I are currently preparing to establish the Lionel Hampton School of Music Preparatory Division. Our chief goals are increased University of Idaho recruitment, raising new generations of Idaho string players and pianists, and promoting the University of Idaho as a leader in music pedagogy research.

As Co-Director, I want to make the LHSOM Preparatory Division accessible to children from low-income backgrounds. Accordingly, I seek funding for twenty-three instruments (violins, cellos and double basses) in child sizes, which will be owned by the LHSOM Preparatory Division and loaned to our students.

Proposed Activity

As the new Assistant Professor of Cello and Double Bass at the Lionel Hampton School of Music, I am expected to recruit high-caliber string instrumentalists, conduct research in my field, and provide musical outreach in the community. What better way to achieve these goals than to establish a preparatory music program that raises our own teachers and pre-collegiate string players? To this end, I seek Seed Grant funding to buy a collection of high-quality violins (some to be restrung as violas), cellos, and double basses in a variety of children's sizes (1/16, 1/10, 1/8, 1/4) for the soon-to-be-established Lionel Hampton School of Music Preparatory Division.

The LHSOM Preparatory Division is a project that I share with my colleague Dr. Kristin Elgersma, Assistant Professor of Piano Pedagogy, with the cooperation of other music faculty in the String, Piano, and Music Education areas. In this program, undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a practicum class in music pedagogy will teach string, piano, orchestra, and music theory lessons to local children under professors' supervision. Drawing inspiration from Venezuela's renowned *El Sistema* music education programs, the LHSOM Preparatory Division will provide high-quality music education to a broad cross-section of the Palouse community. When LHSOM-owned instruments are available to check out, even children from low-income families will have access to the privilege of learning a string instrument.

Context and Background

Now that the University of Idaho's possibilities for out-of-state recruitment are greatly altered, we must take a new approach in recruiting music students. 52% of current LHSOM students come from other western states, attracted by WUE benefits that will no longer be available to incoming students. On recruitment trips around Idaho, I have observed that string music education here is not up to the national standard. It appears that we rely on other states' music educators to provide undergraduate string musicians for us instead of nurturing our own.

Part of the problem is a shortage of qualified string teachers in public school districts, where string and orchestra programs are often lackluster and poorly taught, lagging far behind choirs and marching bands. Many school districts in Idaho do not even have an orchestra, meaning that talented wind, brass, and percussion players miss out on orchestral opportunities too.

This lack of quality string education has noticeable effects on the University of Idaho. One significant problem is a shortage of good string players and teachers among our undergraduates; correspondingly, our University Symphony suffers badly from an undersized string section. The situation is doubly worrying now that we will probably attract fewer non-Idaho residents in the near future. The LHSOM Preparatory Division can work to provide long-term solutions to these problems, and also deliver some much-needed quick fixes. For example, we will be able immediately to train excellent string teachers by offering our students authentic teaching experience with children under our supervision. We can also begin high-quality string instrument lessons to children in the community as early as Fall 2011. Soon we will be able to offer professional development to existing string educators throughout the state by collaborating with the Idaho Music Teacher Service program, currently run by LHSOM Music Education faculty. We anticipate that LHSOM Preparatory Division alumni will bring their teaching experience to

schools and communities across Idaho, further improving the state of music education and string instrument education. The recruitment potential from this program is far-reaching: the chance to undergo practical pedagogical training during undergraduate study will soon attract more and better students, and the children we educate may ultimately enter the LHSOM as undergraduates.

Contribution to the Field and to Professional Development

The LHSOM Preparatory Division will enable me to conduct peer-reviewed research in the scholarly field of string pedagogy through testing and observing string teaching methods. I hope to publish articles in pedagogical journals such as *American String Teacher*, *American Music Teacher*, and others. I am eager to establish a national profile both for myself and for the University of Idaho as a leader in string pedagogy.

Specific Objectives

- Immediate acquisition of quality string instruments and necessary accessories
- Immediate student teacher recruitment and beginning of student-taught classes in Fall 2011

Expected Outcomes

- Improving the professional capabilities and career prospects of LHSOM string students

Many LHSOM graduates will teach music in schools, and those who do not will need to set up private teaching studios. The LHSOM Preparatory Division will give our student teachers the necessary pedagogical skills to help them flourish in the music profession.

- Providing musical opportunities for low-income families in the Moscow community

The LHSOM Preparatory Division instrument collection will make the privilege of playing an instrument more affordable for families who would otherwise find the expense prohibitive.

- Increasing outreach between the LHSOM and the Moscow and Palouse communities

We will showcase student achievements every semester with free public concerts, which will bring accessible classical music to audiences who may never have listened to any.

- Making the University of Idaho a national leader in string studies and string recruitment

The LHSOM's main competitor for music student recruitment, Central Washington University, already has a preparatory strings program. This gives them an advantage over us in string player recruitment. The LHSOM Preparatory Division will stop talented Idahoan string students from leaving the state in search of string pedagogy programs, and will attract out-of-state string players too. It will substantially expand the possibilities for string playing at the University of Idaho by drawing higher numbers of good string players to the LHSOM.

- Alleviating the shortage of good string teachers, players, and orchestras in Idaho

I anticipate that the alumni of the LHSOM Preparatory Division will take their skills into their towns and communities throughout Idaho, where they will raise the standards of string teaching in the public schools and in private studios, start orchestra programs, and promote string instruments to the next generation of young Idaho musicians.