

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE
REPORT TO THE FACULTY
REGARDING THE
MUSIC DEPARTMENT PILOT PROJECT

(November 20, 1994)

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I) Introductory comments

The Educational Policy Committee is charged by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to oversee the undergraduate curriculum. In this role, we have the responsibility to evaluate proposed curricular changes based upon existing Arts and Sciences educational policy, and to recommend changes to existing policy where appropriate. This is an important responsibility, and not always an easy one to carry out given the balance to be struck between Faculty governance of the curriculum and the need for substantial departmental autonomy in this regard. It is our desire, and our responsibility, to work with departments in a constructive manner to insure the continued excellence and improvement of the undergraduate program.

Over the course of time it is natural for the undergraduate curriculum to evolve. This is a sign of the intellectual health and vigor of the faculty, and of their commitment to seek better ways of doing things. The EPC desires to encourage innovation, while insuring that the quality of the undergraduate experience is maintained. It is in this spirit that we offer the following evaluation of the Music Department's pilot project. Our evaluation is based upon a report submitted to the EPC by the Music Department. Copies of the Music Department's report have been circulated to all Departments, and others are available from the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The report (without graphs or figures) is also available on WAMI.

In brief, the EPC recommends that the Music Department's pilot project be extended for another two years. There was no support on the committee to recommend final approval. As outlined in the Music Department's report, there have been many problems associated with the implementation of the new curriculum, and it is the judgment of the EPC that it is not possible at the present time to distinguish between problems that are structural and those that are merely bad luck or easily correctable by minor changes.

We also have more general recommendations for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences regarding the oversight process of pilot projects. These recommendations, and the full text of our recommendations regarding the Music Department pilot project, can be found at the end of our report (Section VIII, p.9). We will ask that the Faculty endorse our report at the February faculty meeting. Endorsement of the report would constitute Faculty approval of the evaluation process used by the EPC, and adoption of our recommendations.

II) Historical summary:

The Music Department underwent evaluation in 1991 as part of the ongoing campus-wide self-assessment program. The outside reviewers suggested that improvements were needed to Ewell Hall and the music library, that additional equipment should be purchased, and that additional faculty were needed to broaden the curriculum beyond its previous Western focus. The outside evaluators also strongly urged that the Department should convert to a 4-credit course curriculum. In response to these suggestions, the Music Department has made substantial improvements in its physical plant and hired a new faculty member, an ethnomusicologist. The Music Department has also overhauled its curriculum. It is this

aspect of the Music Department's recent evolution which the EPC is charged by the Faculty to evaluate.

The new Music curriculum was conditionally approved by the EPC in the spring of 1992 as a two-year pilot project. After the end of the second year the pilot project would be evaluated. Such a two-year pilot project procedure, with subsequent evaluation by the EPC and recommendation to the Faculty for final disposition, was adopted by the Faculty in the Spring of 1994 as standard procedure for any future conversions.

There were two important reasons why the Music Department received only provisional approval for the conversion. First, there was a lack of consensus among A&S Faculty about the wisdom of converting from a 3- to 4-credit course curriculum. Due to the lack of agreement among the Arts and Sciences Faculty about the relative merits of 3- versus 4-credit curricula, there was no likelihood that Arts and Sciences as a whole would convert to a 4-credit curriculum; hence if such conversions were to proceed they would occur piecemeal, department by department. The EPC proposed pilot project status for the Music conversion (and later for Art/Art History) as a compromise. Second, the Music Department was the first to propose the de-linking of credit and contact hours. At the time of the Music Department's proposal, the Faculty had not yet approved general guidelines for such de-linked courses. Such guidelines were approved by the Faculty in February 1993 and further elaborated in the Spring of 1994.

In the Spring of 1994, the Faculty adopted the following policies regarding Department conversions:

"1. No large- and full-scale conversion will be approved by the EPC until it has reviewed the entire department proposal, including a sufficiently detailed review of every course in the department. 2. For the present, all large- and full-scale conversion proposals will be initially approved only on a two year trial basis. 3. The EPC will assess experimental conversion proposals and bring its assessment before the faculty before the experiments may proceed; this assessment will include an appraisal of the probable impact of implementing such proposals on the New Curriculum goals. 4. While conversion experiments are underway, the EPC will report annually on each of them to the faculty, and in its second or final faculty report will make a recommendation as to whether the experimental department conversion should become permanent, at which time the faculty will vote on that question."

In addition, in our February 1994 report to the Faculty, the EPC discussed the need to include student enrollments as part of pilot project evaluations: "EPC reports on pilot conversions will discuss any declines in overall departmental enrollments and their probable causes."

III) Summary of criteria used to evaluate the Pilot Projects

Many aspects of the pilot project assessment are standard for concentration assessment, and the Music Department was informed at the time of the approval of the pilot project that they were expected to provide such information. The EPC asked the Music Department to articulate what goals it has for its students, both concentrators and non-concentrators, and to give supporting evidence -- in the form of evaluations from instructors and students -- to demonstrate that the new curriculum is indeed meeting those goals.

As mentioned in the previous section, the EPC must also consider the impact of departmental conversions on the new GERs and the impact of pilot conversions on class enrollments. It is worth explaining why consideration of course enrollments is a necessary aspect of pilot project assessment.

First, because it is unlikely that there will be a large-scale conversion of the Arts and Sciences curriculum from a 3- to 4-credit course curriculum for the foreseeable future, we must deal with the potential side effects of such conversions when they are carried out piecemeal. Such piecemeal conversions could result in large changes in the distribution of students among the various departments on campus. Large enrollment decreases in any one department are highly undesirable.

Second, it is conceivable that a Department could substantially improve the 'quality' of its curriculum by offering only intensive or specialized courses, thereby driving away non-concentrators. Such a 'quality' improvement would not be in keeping with our shared commitment to educate our students broadly as well as deeply, and would constitute a shirking of community responsibility on the

part of any department which did this. This effect could also be an unintended side effect of any substantial reform of the curriculum.

The enrollment figure we used is the total number of students, not the student credit hours. The EPC realizes that large shifts in enrollment can and do occur for many different reasons, as pointed out in the Music Department's report. Shifts could occur because of scheduling problems, the students' lack of familiarity with the new curriculum, etc. However, it is the EPC's position that, whatever the causes, it is the responsibility of the department in question to address the problem and bring enrollments back to their previous levels. We discuss this more fully in Section VI of our report.

IV) Summary of evaluation results:

IVA) General comments on the statement of goals and comparison of old and new curricula

The goals of the Music curriculum are stated on p.2 (all page numbers refer to the Department of Music's Curricular Assessment Report unless otherwise indicated): "The Department of Music is committed to teaching music as a liberal art. Our program is designed both as an integral component of the undergraduate curriculum and as a basis for graduate studies in music...Because the vast majority of the students we teach concentrate in other disciplines, our top priority is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue music as a life-enriching activity." The EPC considered the Music report in light of these goals and priorities. The EPC finds many of the changes to be positive innovations, and acknowledges the statements in the Music report that the Music Faculty unanimously support the new curriculum. However, we do have some concerns.

When asked to compare and contrast the old and new curricula, the Music Department rightly pointed out (p.3) that in most cases there was no simple 'value added' formula that could be applied, and that comparing old and new was like comparing apples and concrete blocks. The EPC did not expect there to be a simple one-to-one relation between old and new courses. The report suggests that the new curriculum is less Western in its focus and less hierarchical in its structure, meaning that concentrators have much more flexibility in choosing a suite of courses to form their concentrator track.

One of our concerns regards changes that have been made in courses of interest to non-concentrators. The Music report states (p.12) that: "...the new curriculum, happily, addresses the individual needs of concentrators while simultaneously meeting the needs of the general student...". However, there are instances in the new curriculum where old survey courses have been compressed and 'intensified'. For example (see p. 5): the introductory music theory sequence originally included three courses (MUS 101, 201-202), and allowed students with no formal musical training to become literate in musical notation by taking a course in the rudiments (MUS 101). The report states that enrollments in this sequence grew to the point where they could not consistently staff the upper level theory courses. With the new curriculum, this three-semester sequence has been converted into one basic, intense, core theory course (MUS 201) which has as prerequisite the ability to read staff notation. It is not clear how a student who arrives at William and Mary with no formal training can jump the hurdle and get into MUS 201⁽¹⁾.

In Music History, a popular survey (MUS 211-212) has been eliminated in favor of more specialized topics courses. MUS 107 (Composition) has been eliminated because the Department wanted "...more accomplished students." (p.5).

Also, several of the upper level courses (MUS 381, 383, 385 and 387) have become more intensive to meet the needs of concentrators. (These last changes were recommended in the Music Department's self-assessment report of 1991.)

The EPC appreciates the fact that the Music Department must do its best for its concentrators, even as it broadens the course offerings at the introductory level. The Department has introduced non-Western and interdisciplinary topics, and added Freshman seminars. None of these courses have prerequisites. The EPC supports this broadening of focus for non-concentrators. However, from the report and the catalog descriptions, it appears that the curriculum has become less accessible for non-concentrators beyond the introductory level, especially for those who arrive at William and Mary devoid of formal music

¹ Subsequent to their report, in a memo dated November 8, 1994, the Music Department has informed the EPC that the theory/composition faculty have agreed upon two curricular changes: the reinstitution of MUS 101 and MUS 202. The EPC acknowledges this intention, and notes that it would address one of our concerns.

knowledge. Is this consistent with the Department's top priority of enabling students to pursue music as a life-enriching activity? Are they serving the same students as before, or have they shifted focus to the more advanced students? The Music Department's stated intention to reinstitute the Rudiments course (MUS 101) and stretch out MUS 201 into a two-semester sequence suggests they have also recognized this gap and intend to deal with it.

IVB) Formal assessments

The EPC asked the Music Department to assess the new curriculum from three different perspectives. Faculty were asked to assess the new curriculum in general; concentrators were asked to comment on the new concentrator tracks; concentrators and non-concentrators were asked to comment on specific courses. The EPC requested that the raw data be supplied in appendices to the Music report, with summaries given in the body of report. This request seems to have generated some confusion (see the addendum to the Music report). The EPC feels that much of this confusion could have been avoided by closer cooperation between the Music Department, the EPC, and the Assessment Office.

IVBi) Faculty survey results

The faculty comments (summarized on p.23 of the Music report) indicate that the addition of the fourth credit hour is valuable and allows greater depth. Faculty support the greater flexibility afforded by the new curriculum, and recognize that the greater flexibility makes greater demands on the advising system. It is clear that the Department is committed to making the advising system effective. Each concentrator track is discussed and approved by the Music faculty as a whole, although it was also mentioned that more standardization and sample tracks would help the concentrators.

There were two problems mentioned which are associated with scheduling. One concerns the problem of scheduling 4-credit courses in the wider campus context of a mixture of 3- and 4-credit courses (point b.1, p.23). The Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopted new scheduling guidelines in the Spring of 1994 which should help alleviate this problem. The second scheduling problem concerns the scheduling of logical sequences of courses for concentrators and students who want a narrower professional focus (point b.2, p.23). It is unclear for the Music Department's report whether this problem is related to advising, or getting the courses taught in the right sequence.

IVBii) Concentrator assessment of the new curriculum

The response to assessment questionnaires by Music concentrators was disappointing (only six of eighteen replied to the questionnaires distributed last Spring, see p.24). The EPC agrees with the Music Department that it is very difficult to extract useful information from such small data sets. The EPC is disappointed that the Music Department did not take the opportunity to gather more information from concentrators this Fall.

Positive comments from concentrators centered on the flexibility of the new tracking system and the more diverse offerings. Negative comments tended to reflect the frustration of getting caught in the conversion. Two students mentioned that they thought the new curriculum did not have enough basic theory. These two comments echo our earlier concern about the compression of the theory sequence.

IVBiii) Student assessment of courses

The evaluation by the Music Department at the course level was carried out using mid-semester questionnaires developed by each instructor for his or her own use. Because there was not a uniform assessment, this leads to a problem with interpretation (p.25). The Music Department should work closely with the Assessment Office and the EPC in future to develop forms which will be more useful. Because the Music Department was aware of the non-uniformity of their assessment procedure, it is disappointing that data from the standard end-of-semester course evaluations were not used to help fill out the picture.

The Music Department summarizes the results for three questions which appeared, in one form or another, on a significant number of questionnaires (p.25): "Are you getting from this course what you expected?" "Is the workload about right?" and "Has this course been a worthwhile learning experience?"

These results are broken down further into a summation of responses from linked and de-linked courses. In the linked courses, most students said they were getting what they expected, found the workload about right and found the course a worthwhile learning experience. In the de-linked courses, however, more students said they were not getting what they expected (though most still did), most found the work load too heavy, yet the large majority still found the class a worthwhile learning experience. The Music Department points out that, since de-linking is relatively new, it is not surprising that students didn't know what to expect. Even if this is granted as reasonable, however, it is of concern that so many students in the de-linked courses (73%) found the workload too heavy.

V) Evaluation of de-linked courses:

When the new Music curriculum was approved in the Spring of 1992, the Arts and Sciences Faculty had not yet adopted general policy guidelines regarding the de-linking of credit- and contact-hours. The following guidelines and rationale were adopted by the Faculty in the Spring of 1993:

"Additional credit may be assigned for significant academic exchange between student and instructor outside the classroom during the semester...Proposals for 4-credit courses that will meet three times per week must be accompanied by a syllabus that makes it clear what the significant academic exchange will entail."

The following elaborated guidelines and rationale were approved by the Faculty in the February 1994 meeting:

"Rationale: The basic rationale for permitting 4-credit courses with fewer than 4 class hours is the idea that instructor-student interaction outside the traditional classroom structures can be educationally valuable. However, departures from such structures must have clear justification.

Application criteria: Basically, an acceptable course proposal for 4-credits with fewer than 4 contact hours must show a) that instructor-student interaction outside the classroom will be an integral part of the proposed course and have sufficient value to substitute for class time; or b) that the special nature of the skills to be taught in the proposed course is such that students will clearly benefit from augmenting traditional class time with alternative instructor-student interaction. Normally, merely adding more reading or term papers will not meet this standard. On the other hand, the EPC has granted requests for, and proposes to continue to grant requests for, the addition of a fourth credit-hour to a course that meets for only three traditional class hours a week where one of these two conditions is met:

1) Four credit hours with fewer than four lecture hours will normally be approved when there are significant additional projects over and above those assignments generally used in a 3-credit version of the course. Course proposals should contain draft syllabi with, for example, the number and types of projects students will undertake and the way they will be evaluated. Faculty should generally expect to confer formally with individual students several times as needed over the course of the semester to assess their progress.

2) Four credit courses with fewer than four lecture hours will normally be approved when there is a requirement for the entire class outside class lectures: for example, required labs, service projects, or attendance at fora (including, for example, film showing, or music performances). Such requirements must be in addition to standard requirements for a 3-credit course, and generally students will be expected to submit written reports of the lab, fora, etc. for evaluation by the instructor. Generally, the outside time required of students must equal at least 2 hours per week in addition to the outside time normally required in a 3-credit version of the course.

As these criteria indicate, the burden of proving the pedagogical efficacy of the 'extra hour' falls on the instructor. While Department chairs may submit packages of course proposals which include proposals for 4-credit courses with fewer than 4 contact hours, the EPC will decide on the appropriate number of contact hours on a case by case basis. Department chairs interested in submitting such course proposals should make sure that instructors submit a completed syllabus with the course approval request."

The EPC has evaluated the de-linked courses in the new Music curriculum using these guidelines. The following eleven de-linked courses meet the guidelines for the fourth credit: MUS 141, 150W (3 different sections), 171, 173, 365, 373, 381, 383, 385, 387 and 465 (2 different sections).

However, based on the information supplied by the Music Department, the EPC is unable to determine if the following ten courses satisfy the criteria for the fourth credit: MUS 113, 181, 207, 301, 303, 307, 309, 310, 379 and 407. The information supplied by the Music Department regarding the nature of the outside the class faculty-student interaction was not sufficiently detailed to justify the additional credit. The EPC has requested and received further information from the Music Department regarding these courses. The EPC is still evaluating these courses and will make a final report at the February meeting.

Unless the information supplied by the Music Department justifies the additional credit for each of the listed courses, the EPC will remove certification of the fourth credit effective in Fall 1995.

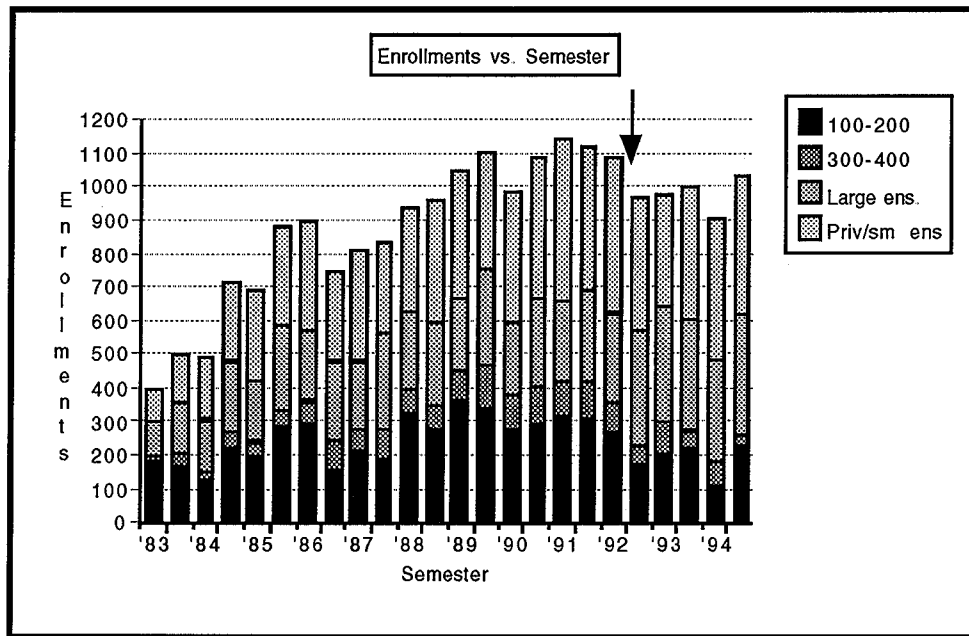
VI) Course enrollments

As mentioned in our summary of evaluation criteria (sec. III), an important aspect of the evaluation of pilot projects concerns the effects on student enrollments. The EPC requested that the Music Department supply a summary of enrollments starting several years prior to the pilot project. The Music Department has supplied a ten year history.

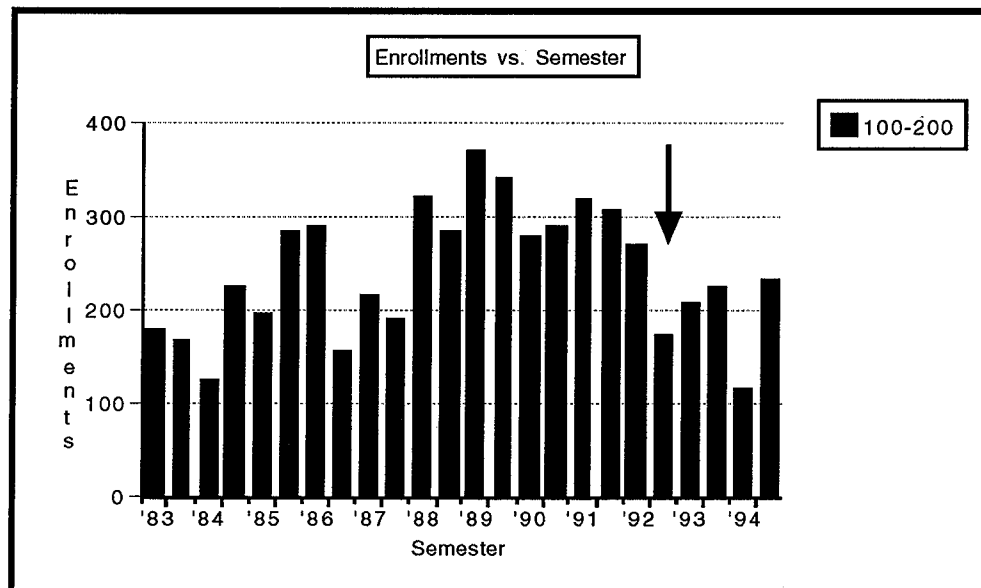
The EPC also requested that the enrollments be broken down into the following subcategories (pp.14-17): private lessons/small ensembles (1-credit courses taught by adjuncts); large ensembles (1-credit courses taught by full-time faculty); 100-200 level classroom courses; and 300-400 level classroom courses. The Music Department has protested this breakdown (see the addendum to the Music report). The EPC requested that the data be broken down in the manner specified because we are trying to review the impact of the curriculum conversion on student classroom enrollments. The pilot project involves an overhaul of the classroom activities of the Department, distinct from the other ensemble and applied music activities. While the EPC recognizes that these other activities are an integral part of the Department's educational mission (and will play an important role in GER 6), our focus in this evaluation must be on the classroom activities because that is where the major curricular changes took place.

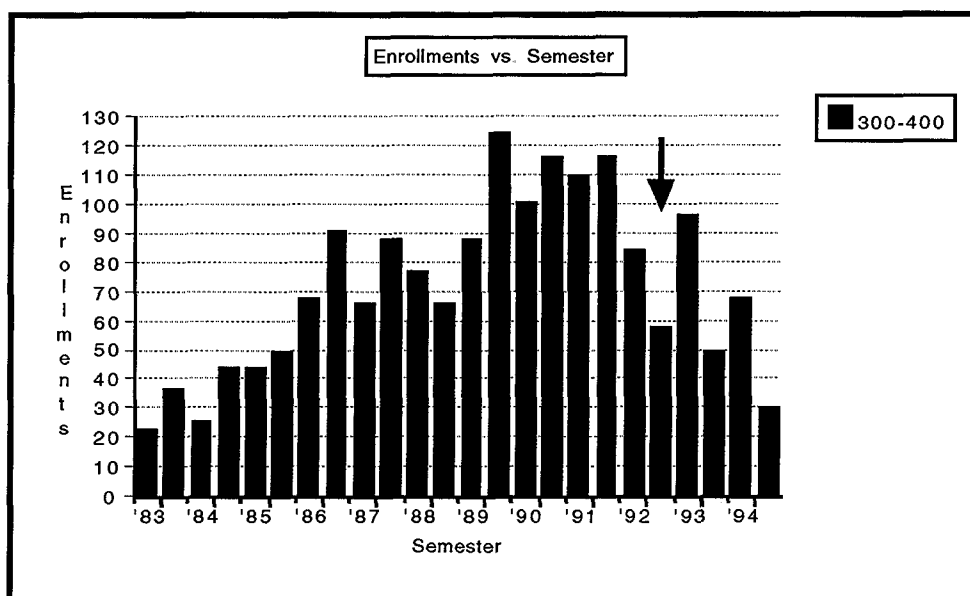
VIA) Summary of enrollment changes:

We have plotted the data from Table I of the Music report (p.16). The aggregate results are shown in our first figure:

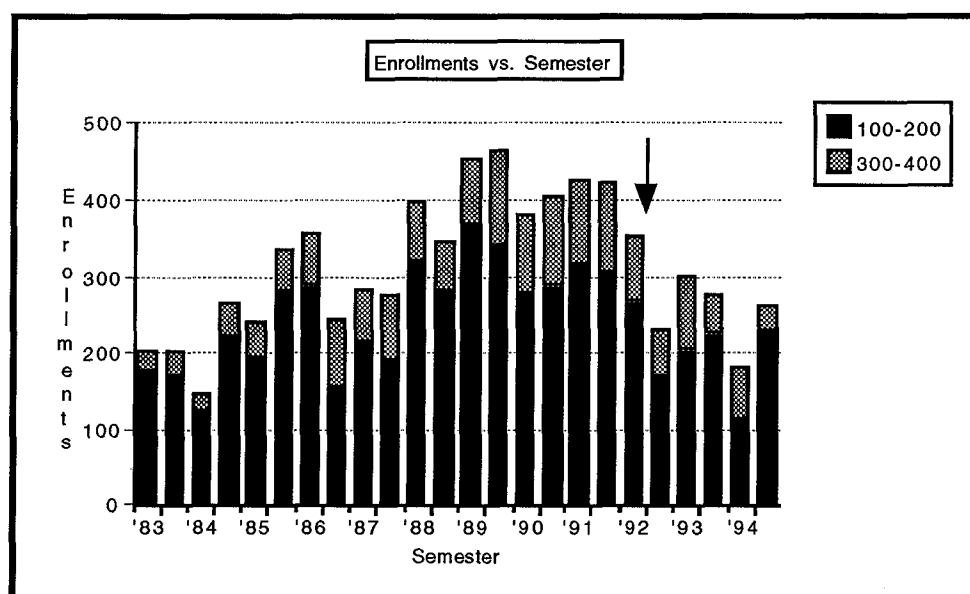


The pilot project began in the Fall of 1992 (marked by an arrow in the figures). Our primary concerns lie with the classroom courses, hence we plot them separately:





It is also worthwhile to consider the total enrollment in classroom courses (100-400 levels):



The clear trend in these graphs is that of a general increase in enrollment, with year-to-year fluctuations, from 1983 until the late 1980's. With the introduction of the pilot project in Fall 1992 there is a substantial decrease. The graphs show a decline before Fall 1992, but the magnitudes are consistent with the fluctuations seen in the immediately preceding years. Total enrollments (including ensembles) show the smallest drop and, after their initial decline, have remained approximately steady since the inception of the pilot project, albeit at a lower level than just before its start. There has been a significant shift in the enrollment distribution from the classroom courses to the 1-credit large ensemble courses (see our first figure, and the figure on p.17 of the Music report).

The fact that there has been a real decline in classroom enrollments is not in dispute (see pp.18-19). We disagree, however, with the Music Department's suggestion that these declines are not significant or that present enrollments should be compared with the ten-year averages (pp.18-19). It is not appropriate to compare the post-pilot project enrollment levels with the ten-year average, because the Music faculty has grown in numbers during that time. The Music Department's prognosis (p.19) for the

upper-level courses is that, because of the changed nature of the new curriculum, they expect upper-level enrollments to remain low relative to the old curriculum.

The Music Department was asked for possible explanations of the decline in enrollments and to suggest possible remedies. The response (p.19-23) was to suggest that the decline in enrollments is not a structural problem associated with the new curriculum, but is instead due to a combination of factors: the uncertainties associated with the EPC's conditional pilot project approval, serious health problems or retirements of senior faculty, special staffing problems, budget cuts, and scheduling conflicts. (The scheduling conflicts will, hopefully, be eased by the new scheduling guidelines adopted by the Arts and Sciences Faculty in the Spring of 1994.) The Music Department also cites the following explanations: the students are wary of 4-credit courses, new courses, de-linked courses, new faculty and the "staff" designation.

When asked to suggest possible solutions to the enrollment declines, the Music Department argued that more time was needed (see p.13), and that "...one cannot assess a new curriculum after only two years." This would allow them to deal with the retirement of a popular faculty member (p.21). More time was also needed to give the students a chance to get over their skittishness. However, on p.22, they argue that students are wary of 4-credit courses in general because they are identified with Honors courses in the humanities. In addition, they argue that the decline in enrollments in the upper (300-400) levels is due to the wider range of courses available now at the lower (100-200) level, because in the old curriculum "...there was nowhere else for the non-concentrator to go...The upper level courses now service the more serious student, especially our concentrators." Thus, we would expect to see an increase in the lower levels, but the 100-200 level courses have also suffered substantial declines in enrollment.

The picture that emerges is that the new Music curriculum suffers not only from student wariness of 4-credit courses, but also from the elimination, or compression and intensification, of some of the previously popular courses, such as surveys and the theory/composition sequence (as discussed in section III of this report). If this is the case, then the enrollment declines, even at the lower levels, are structural and not a passing blip. The EPC notes, once again, that the Music Department has signaled its intention to address some of these concerns by reintroducing the Rudiments (MUS 101) course and stretching out the introductory theory course (MUS 201) into a two semester sequence.

VII) Impact on GER's

The Music Department was also asked to discuss the impact a conversion would have on the new GER's. This discussion appears on p.12 of their report. Because the Music Department's offerings range over theory/composition, history, and performance, there should be a reasonable distribution of offerings in GER 4a (European Traditions), GER 4b (non-European Traditions), GER 5 (Literature and History of the Arts), and GER 6 (Creative and Performing Arts). Music may also suggest courses for GER 7 (Philosophical, Religious and Social Thought). These courses will be both upper- and lower-level courses. The EPC is satisfied that the new curriculum would provide many opportunities for students to satisfy their GER requirements.

VIII) Summary and EPC recommendations

The EPC is of the opinion that more time is required before a realistic final assessment of the Music Department pilot project can be carried out. There was no support on the committee for a recommendation for the Faculty to grant final approval to the Music Department's curriculum conversion. It is the consensus of the EPC that the pilot project should be extended for two more years under the condition that the Music Department, in conjunction with the Assessment Office and the EPC, develop more useful assessment tools and work to reverse the drop in classroom enrollments. We therefore make the following two recommendations:

1] To avoid the problems of confusion that have occurred in the past, we propose that the Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopt the following standard policy:

"The standard pilot project period will normally last four years. For each pilot project, a Pilot Project Advisory Committee shall be formed. This committee will consist of two

members of the EPC, one representative from the Assessment Office, and two members of the relevant Department. The committee will be chaired by one of the EPC members and it will meet at least once per semester. The committee will develop appropriate assessment instruments and be a channel for discourse between the Department and the EPC. These assessment instruments will be used each semester during the pilot project period and the committee will forward a formal report once a year early in the Fall semester to the EPC. Following Arts and Sciences policy, adopted in the Spring of 1994, the EPC will report once a year to the Faculty on the status of any ongoing pilot projects, and make recommendations for Faculty action as appropriate. At the end of the pilot project period the EPC will evaluate the project and make a recommendation to the Faculty regarding the disposition of the pilot project."

2] Specifically with regard to the Music Department pilot project, the EPC makes the following recommendation.

"The Music Department pilot project will be extended for another two years, with annual reports due in the Fall of 1995 and 1996. During that time the Music Department will work with the Pilot Project Advisory Committee following guidelines adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and will carry out course assessments each semester with the results forwarded to the Pilot Project Advisory Committee. Given that the number of Music faculty has increased by one since the start of the pilot project period, a key to final approval of the pilot project will be the return of classroom (i.e. other than applied music) enrollments approximately back to the levels just prior to the start of the pilot project, especially in the lower level courses."

Respectfully submitted,

The Educational Policy Committee