

Todd R. Wilkinson – Ideas for the Assistant Professor/Assistant Director of Jazz Studies Position at the University of Kansas

My Teaching Philosophy:

1. Allow students their own entry point into the medium. Then encourage them to expand outwards from their own familiarity and comfort zones.
2. Never to 'preach to the choir,' yet never assume the *singers* are all on the same page. Admit when you don't know something. Model high standards and insist that students develop their own.
3. Be entertaining and caring whenever possible. Rely on levity breaks during intense sessions. Opt for mentoring over class lecture when there is sufficient time. Most meaningful learning is done one-on-one. Make honest assessments at all times.
4. Never intimidate students with the information, especially by holding them accountable to information for its own sake. Instead provide them introductory concepts first and details later. Encourage their continued curiosity but revealing yours. Their commitment to curiosity will sustain them long after they leave your purvey.
5. Make constant efforts to master music technology, especially those technologies that are central to students. Remain a lifelong learner by continuing to research and self educate, especially in peripheral areas that will enhance the major concerns of your work.
6. Support others in music education and the performing arts field in any way possible. Make it your priority to assist anyone involved in arts fundraising and marketing. Donate money and time whenever justified.
7. Stay committed in the service of others at all times. Try to anticipate their needs in advance of their requests for help, and when possible, strive to eliminate duplicity or waste as it affects those that lack information, awareness, access, or abilities, you may have.

Objectives for the Position of Director of Jazz Studies:

Jazz Combo Program:

1. Establish a regularly rehearsing and performing faculty jazz combo. Require adjunct jazz instructors to participate, but remunerate them for rehearsal and performances. This group would perform at all combo concerts and produce a documentary recording project of arrangements and compositions once a year.
2. Insist that combos memorize their music for performances. Establish a routine for learning tunes and performing in public. All students would be encouraged to handle microphone duties. Each student would be responsible for doing one small group arrangement per semester, complete with introduction and coda, rhythm section kicks, melody and background parts, and a soli section.
3. Create a weekly lunch hour jazz combo performance on campus. Rotate combos over the schedule. More advanced students would perform earlier in the schedule, and more often in total. Students would be responsible for moving all equipment, managing set-up and tear-down.

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4. Establish a weekly the Jazz Forum master-class, to meet during the early evening, two hours once per week, if possible, the same day most of the adjunct jazz instructors are on campus. \This could be a jam session format at a local restaurant (preferred) or even in the band room. Adjuncts could rotate assignments as instructors for the sessions, or actually be responsible for leading a jam session. Guest artists could be also presented during these times. Students not performing could take notes and offer suggestions to their peer.
5. Each semester would culminate in a final concert at a local venue in Lawrence.
6. Once per semester the Faculty and student combos would perform at the Blue Room in the American Jazz Museum, or other suitable professional jazz venue. If possible the students would clinic there in the afternoon on Friday, and then perform that evening, or perform the evening concert, and stay over for a Saturday clinic.
7. Budget permitting, all jazz professionals should be invited to campus whenever they are performing in the Kansas City area. The faculty jazz combo or top KU combo would be their support group.
8. Jazz Combos should regularly attend and perform at regional jazz festivals.
9. Apart from attending the KU Jazz Workshop, an annual summer jazz excursion should be planned. National and international jazz events, or send the top combo to a Jamey Aebersold Workshop.

Ideas for the Improving the Quality of Jazz Studies and Recruiting:

Generally a jazz studies department will be judged by its effect on the jazz K-12 education in it's region, particularly in placing young educators into job openings within the state, its ability to prepare and place graduates into professional music careers, by the success of its graduates in Masters and Doctoral programs, and by the published works that its graduates produce. To accomplish these tasks, I would recommend:

1. Improve the capabilities of the entering freshmen students by offering clinics and workshops for high school band directors. Visit schools, especially those with jazz curriculums, and encourage students to study jazz.
2. Lobby to include jazz pedagogy course into the undergraduate music education degree. Lack of jazz training is the biggest deficiency of BME graduates. Find room in the degree program to include an entire semester of jazz pedagogy.
3. Mange a professional weekly jazz session in Kansas City with a group of respected jazz educators and performers. Encourage band directors, high school students and their families, as well as professional musicians to stop in and perform. Perform anything requested.
4. Include intensive and guided jazz listening sessions into the curriculum. Expand jazz history coursework to include style analysis and transcription.
5. Twice per semester the Jazz Combo 1 will do a high school recruiting tour. Wichita, Topeka, and Johnson County Schools will be the focus. (Jo. Co. once per semester, Topeka and Wichita would alternate semesters.)

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6. To build goodwill among KS band directors, the KU Associate Director of Jazz, would present an annual clinic at KMEA. Taking every opportunity to direct all-district and all-state jazz ensembles would be assumed.
7. The KU Jazz Faculty would be expected to maintain a professional performing schedule in Kansas City, assuring the benefits of networking and maintaining a profile among regional professionals.
8. Work with KU applied instructors on incorporating appropriate jazz technical, tonal, and rhythmic devices, as well as repertoire, into the regular weekly lesson workload.
9. Develop a flexible set of expectations for all KU jazz students. Repertoire, technical abilities, performance practice. Publish a reasonably stringent set of entrance requirements for BA, MA. And DMA jazz studies. Require a 4th semester upper level barrier exam incorporating melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic dictation, in order to be eligible for upper level coursework.
10. Offer a B.M. in Jazz Performance, and create a jazz certification program for those students uninterested in the jazz major or minor.
11. As a professional degree, the B.M. Jazz Studies will need some modifications. It might make sense to offer applied lessons on electric guitar and electric bass. I would suggest splitting Jazz Arranging into two courses (1-small groups and vocal jazz, 2-large ensemble), and adding Music Business, Live Sound Reinforcement/Recording Techniques, Jazz History and Jazz Pedagogy courses. I would also require two semesters of Jazz Piano for non-pianists, and require rhythm section instrumental students to take one semester of non-major rhythm section instrument. I would strongly encourage woodwind students to take one semester of a double woodwind instrument.
12. In addition to Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Combo, and Vocal Jazz Ensembles, I would suggest a Jazz Rock Ensemble and a Studio Orchestra. Groups where students can use music synthesis and computer technologies. As well these groups would serve as labs for faculty and student composers.
13. Place emphasis on publications by faculty and students, including method books, pedagogy, arrangements, compositions, research documents, and recordings.

Recruiting Statement:

I have been recruiting in Kansas for ten years. I average about 25 school visits per year, and normally I take a student group on a tour of three or four schools (in one day) each semester. I have made the following observations:

1. Getting student on campus is more effective in getting them interested in your school than going into their schools to do a clinic. However, school visits are a much more efficient way to gain confidence and support of the band directors.
2. Facilitating contact between college and student musicians can't be overemphasized. When high school students befriend college students, there is a powerful sway. For this reason, taking the college group to the high school is better for recruiting purposes than a faculty performance.

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3. The Topeka schools push hard for Kansas State and Washburn University, as well as KU.
4. Friends University is having fairly good success in recruiting students, due to their scholarship program in music. Wichita is a tough sell. Students from there are likely to attend Pittsburg State University or Wichita State, though WSU has been in a downturn the past few years.
5. Pittsburg State has a new music facility coming on line next year. The University of Missouri - Kansas City is breaking ground on an amazing facility next to the Kaufman Center for the Arts, in the heart of downtown K.C. KU will need to make a compensatory recruiting push in the North and East side of Kansas.
6. Establishing a consistent official KU jazz 'presence' in Kanas City should be a priority. In terms of the younger working professionals, UMKC graduates are getting the bulk of this work on the K.C. jazz scene. They also have connections and experience in New York City.

**Combo Recruiting Event:
Invitational High School Rhythm Section Workshop**

1. Once per semester. All day. Eight bands maximum. Contact-intensive.
2. By invitation only. If possible, free of charge, and a KU recruiting vehicle. (Perhaps there could be some money given from the recruiting department?)
3. Fall semester date after marching band season has concluded (early December). Spring semester date before festivals begin (early February).
4. Band directors bring their jazz ensemble rhythm sections and lead players, or soloists and one tune they want to work intensively. It might be possible to do a big band piece without complete horns sections, in some cases.
5. Each student receives 50-minute session with an adjunct instructor or advanced KU student. This would entail both student and adjunct working on the individual part.
6. Each group then rehearses with Assoc. Director for 50 minutes as a group.
7. Modest Lunch is provided while KU Jazz Combo 1 performs at noon.
8. During schedule breaks, each high school group is given a 50 tour of the campus.
9. From 1-5PM, the KU student combos host a supervised 50-minute jam session, encouraging the guest to participate. Fakebooks in Bb, Eb, C, and Bass Clef, will be provided, and special attention will be placed on the yearly KMEA jazz tunes.
10. Dinner is provided while the KU Faculty Jazz Combo performs at 5PM.
11. After a 30-minute break, each high school combo performs their piece, for their peers from the other schools, back to back, on an early evening concert.
12. The event begins at 8AM and concludes by 8PM.