Advanced Music Focus Group Information

On February 22, 2011, seven Advanced Music Program completers met via Skype to provide assessment information for the program. The discussion was led by a program faculty member. The faculty member made the arrangements for the focus group, supplied questions to each member several days prior to the session, and took notes during the session. One of the program completers was asked to lead the discussion.

Demographic information:

● All program completers were currently in a full-time teaching position
● Five of the seven completed the program while continuing in a full or part-time teaching position. Two completed the program while serving as graduate teaching assistants. One of the two completed final requirements while engaged as a full-time teacher.
● Program completers took 2 – 4 years to complete all requirements.

Graduates’ Focus Group Questions

1. Looking back at your graduate program, what courses and program experiences did you find most helpful and why?
   a. The learning theories course (MU 848) – the information was practical, immediately applicable to the field
   b. The capstone – four of the seven completed the project, two completed the instructional practicum, and one completed the thesis option. The ability to prepare and complete a capstone option directly applied to teaching was excellent. Candidates were able to utilize one or more regular class sessions in their P-12 programs to complete and assess their work.
   c. The availability of online course work greatly facilitated early program completion for most candidates.
   d. The availability of on campus courses aligned with the annual music education workshops. Courses were arranged in three week blocks separated by the one-week workshop block; candidates were able to enroll in one-two courses and attend the workshops. The one summer session during which this schedule was not maintained, was not popular.

2. Which courses and program experiences did you find least helpful and why?
   a. The music history courses – they were interesting but not particularly applicable to current teaching.

3. If you could go back and change any aspect of your training, what would you want to do differently and why?
   a. Begin the program earlier in my professional career
   b. Begin with the program at ESU. The candidate had previously enrolled in 12 graduate hours at two different universities. ESU accepted only 9 of these hours (Graduate School regulation)
4. What trends and new practices are you seeing in your job that faculty need to be mindful or observant of as they prepare future adaptive special educators?
   a. I would be interested in more curricular review work.
   b. Review of several district curricular plans. Ours is currently developing one and I am on the committee.
   c. Information of different block scheduling plans

5. What additional recommendations do you have for the faculty to continue producing outstanding music educators?
   a. Music education content information was timely. Continue to update history and theory content.
   b. There could be more elective courses such as advanced choral conducting made available as online instruction using current technology.