

Musical Mentors and the Plight of Autonomy

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the value of volunteer-based organizations and their limitations.
- Design institutional partnerships that align with an organization's mission.
- Evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of standardization in the expansion of a music education program.
- Prioritize organizational goals in a growing music education program.

Topics For Discussion

Partnerships and Volunteers

- The study suggested broad guidelines for identifying and approaching a potential host university. Gather the universities that students selected in their partnership proposals for Musical Mentors. Discuss the rationale for the various choices. What factors drove their decisions? Within the students' recommendations, uncover how the music departments are structured and what kinds of music learning communities they promote.
- **Appendix 2** lists organizational goals, some of which require working with new people and institutions, including finding new people to lead teaching workshops and beginning a faculty-run "pedagogy blog". How do students suggest that these issues be approached for the volunteers who will be interested in investing their time and expertise with Musical Mentors?
- The people who work to create Musical Mentors' thriving program include college students, music faculty, and coordinators at the elementary school level. All personnel operate in a volunteer capacity. Using the goals found in **Appendix 2**, have students assign personnel to the listed actions (e.g. chapter leaders will be responsible for creating new training workshops by reaching out to additional faculty members). How much can one ask of the volunteers? Are there ways to reduce the time commitment needed to achieve these goals?

Standardization and Autonomy

- The case proposed rationale for the standardization of pedagogy materials in the context of program expansion. The board outlined three possible solutions for obtaining teaching materials for the program. Compare student recommendations on the central question of standardization. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the three proposed strategies? Did students devise other solutions? Is there an argument to forgo standardization of curriculum and preserve the instructors' complete autonomy in the Musical Mentors program?
 - Examine the students' recommendations for teaching materials in detail. If students elected to pursue a partnership with music publishers, which ones did they choose and what was the rationale for the decisions? For those who opted for a fundraising campaign online, how would the campaign be structured and what audiences would be the focus of communication? For those who suggested a library of teaching materials online, what kind of materials were recommended and who would oversee the selection of the documents and long-term curation of the library?
- The Columbia chapter of Musical Mentors has recently created online forms for college instructors to register and record their teaching availabilities. This information is then automatically organized and stored for later use. Scheduling software could be implemented at the parent organization to aid the chapters. What other efficiencies or areas of standardization could benefit individual chapters if implemented by Musical Mentors?

Organizational Goals

- **Appendix 2** provides a list of actions available to Musical Mentors to achieve organizational goals. Categorize each action as either focused on the long term (multi-year, or requiring extensive resources) or the short term. For each long-term action, ask students to write one or two sentences stating the resources and steps needed to implement. Invite them to list all actions in order of easiest to most difficult to execute with the current level of resources.
- Ask students to rank all actions again, this time prioritizing by need. Which steps are integral to take in a newly created Musical Mentors chapter? Which actions should be instituted and assessed within the current chapters before they are rolled out into the new chapter? How can current chapters continue to grow and evolve while a new chapter is simultaneously created with a strong foundation? Encourage students to think about prioritizing actions required for new opportunities while still considering the continued outpouring of resources and oversight needed to keep existing chapters operational.
- Have students create a list of goals and actions for the expansion plan by cross referencing the two previous lists. How often should this expansion template be reevaluated as a program takes shape in a new and distinct environment? Which aspects of the expansion plan can be applied to future university expansions, and which may be unique to a particular school and community? How well do the logistics of the plan align with – and tap into – the brand equity of Musical Mentors?