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## Statement of Advising Philosophy Robert Willey

Advising fulfills two main objectives: to assist students in meeting the requirements of their majors, and to help them succeed in college while preparing for the future.

The need to have one's registration hold lifted provides a mechanism to bring in each student to meet individually with an advisor. This is a tremendous opportunity and should be taken seriously by the faculty. It may be one of the few chances to give students personal guidance. Creating an environment where students feel comfortable in asking for help and advice is one of the best defenses against them dropping out, and wasting the opportunity a college education offers and the effort they have already put in towards getting a degree. Choosing classes and preparing for life after classes sets students on a potentially life-altering path, and while no one can read the future, what we can do is make the best possible decision based on the information we have. Advising, during the official advising period and throughout the semester, allows us to help students clarify situations and help them to make wise choices, and to consider how their actions might impact them later on.

I am coordinator of the Music Media division, and value the opportunity to meet each of the majors in that concentration, to discuss the bigger picture away from what is going on in a particular course. Seeing the same students twice a year gives me a checkpoint on their growing maturity and acquisition of skills, and how they are doing in developing a professional manner. This is harder for teachers to do who only meet students in individual courses. I also advise a number of music education majors, who share an interest in music with the music media students, but who have some different concerns and career goals. Knowing the students better and being regularly reminded of their goals and plans keeps my perspective of the School of Music and Performing Arts' mission fresh and student-centered. I need to go through advising perhaps more than my students. It helps keep their perspective in mind, and to remember the importance of aligning the content of each class meeting with course objectives. It also helps with teaching and curricula, since it becomes apparent what effect the classes are having on the students over the course of multiple semesters.

There is no substitute for time and attention. I set up many 20-minute slots for advising in order to give students many choices and make sure we have enough time to go over which courses they plan to take the next semester, and to follow up on issues discussed during sessions from previous semesters. The appointments end up being spread out due to the number of slots, which is good, so that should a student wish to continue the discussion there will be no one signed up after them to close the conversation. I keep notes of what we talk about, such as whether they are working, and if so, how many hours per week, alternatives to work or volunteer in a job-related area,

future internship opportunities, where they feel strongest and most challenged in school, what their goals are, etc. Reviewing the notes before a session begins helps reload my memory with points I may have forgotten about since the our last meeting, and to follow up on any ideas or plans we had discussed. Music Education majors usually find employment as teachers in school music programs—with them I often talk about finding ways to work with young musicians to develop teaching skills, and to make contacts with schools to get experience and develop a network, which can later be drawn upon when they search for a job. Music Media majors know they have to create their own niche, to match their skills with the needs of society and to become entrepreneurs. Advising sessions with them usually include talking about outside projects they can do or are involved with, contacts they are making, the skills they are developing, and how well they are establishing themselves so that they will be working by the time they graduate.

The majority of courses music majors take are requirements. In addition to planning for the next semester, I have them sketch out their remaining semesters in order to see what their options are, in case they might want to take summer session or fit in an extra required class in order to graduate a semester early, or find a space to add an elective. The earlier they plan, the more options and fewer bottlenecks they have, since not all classes are offered every semester. The greatest freedom is in the choice of electives and general education classes, like whether to take geology or astronomy, or which literature or history class to take. I look for connections with what the student has liked in the past, or has a knack for, or an interest in trying something new, and point out some options they may not have thought of, like taking a language class to increase their ability to participate in the future in an increasingly global economy.

I see advising as a year-round activity, not just something done in preparation of registration. I call in students who miss more than two classes in a row in order to find out what is going on and to get them back on track before problems pile up. Most classes that I teach are in the Music Media sequence, so I see the same students semester after semester once they get to their sophomore year. At the beginning of the introductory course (that all music majors take) and in music industry (which many non-majors take) I offer an extra credit bribe to students to come in for a visit during office hours and get to know each other a bit. This improves the experience for the students who come in, as I'm able to tailor questions and comments to them and their interests, and lifts the class atmosphere in general, since there are more students who feel individually recognized.

I try to do the best I can in advising, and appreciate the training sessions and attention to the process this award brings. Advising is a vital component of the college experience and the recognition of outstanding work benefits all the faculty, whether they receive an award during a particular semester or not.