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An Overview of a Failed Thesis

By

Avery Hoffman Glance Lewis

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
Fine and Performing Arts Scholars Program
Honors College
East Tennessee State University

 12/19/18
Date

In lieu of absence
of remaining committee
members

Dr. Arthur Haecker Date

Dr. Stephanie Frye Date

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Introduction

In the spring of 2017 while enrolled in a trombone history course with Dr. Arthur Haecker, the trombone studio professor, I brought up the topic of my music-based thesis. I have always been split between my passion for music and my interest in finance and marketing, making it a goal of mine to find a career path that best combined the two. With this in-mind, I decided to apply the same goal to my undergraduate honors thesis. Still a semester out from officially begging my thesis, Dr. Haecker and I began to brainstorm the best way to combine business and music for an undergraduate project. After a couple weeks of discussion, it was decided that we would attempt to start a summer music program for high-school aged students. Due to Dr. Haecker being of adjunct status at the time, we spoke with Dr. Stephanie Frye, the tube and euphonium studio professor, who agreed to be my thesis mentor under the guidance of Dr. Haecker while providing any assistance should could. When the term came to an end, we put the project on hold until school resumed in the fall semester. Over the summer I was to be working as a leader for the Preview and Orientation Leaders Organization (POLO). I planned to use this experience as a catalyst for ideas of how to organize and run a summer music program.

The Project

When the fall semester began, Dr. Haecker and I began to brainstorm various ideas for what a summer music program for high school students would look like. Dr. Haecker had previous experience both having participated in, as well as worked similar university events and programs. Throughout September, we developed various ideas for what kind of program we were looking to make. Eventually we concluded that we were wanting to make an event that would work excellent not only for recruiting new students to ETSU, but also to help encourage students to go into music performance or education degrees. We found this to narrow down our

target demographic to three groups. The largest group would be that of high school juniors who currently looking to apply for colleges. The next group would be high school seniors split between those who are still undecided in universities or majors and those who may have decided to attend ETSU and want to get a leg up in the department. The third group we decided could potentially be high school graduates who have not yet decided where to attend. This group would have to have more rules put onto them in order to keep the program oriented towards younger individuals. Having decided our purpose and target group, Dr. Haecker and I combined our experiences and ideas to come up with two potential program ideas.

The first program idea was based around various music or trombone “workshops” that Dr. Haecker had attended during his time as a traveling professional musician. This program would be based around the premise of coming to ETSU and staying in dorms while attending various music courses and ensembles. The idea was to make a fun summer camp utilizing resources available on campus. The age group targeted with this event would largely be high school juniors. Keeping this mind, we decided that the courses attended by the students should expose them to college level ideas in hopes of encouraging them to further their musical education. As for ensembles, we were wanting to use this motivation for the students to continue their growth as a musician. In order to do this, we were wanting to have auditions for parts as well as various ensembles such as jazz band, symphonic band, and potentially marching band exposure depending on summer rehearsal schedules. With the event being isolated to campus we would have needed various other events to keep the students entertained. We planned to use the amenities available to us through the university such as movie nights, faculty performances, the ropes course, and the list could go on. The length of the summer camp we decided could range anywhere from three to five days. We decided either Monday- Friday or a Thursday afternoon through a Sunday afternoon would be the best two options.

The second program we came up with was based around my experiences with various kinds of band and educational programs. The ETSU Honors Band program, a program that high school students are nominated for by their band directors to attend a weekend long band festival, was a big influence. Another influence was a program offered by Walters State Community College that I attended in middle school, in which students were selected by teachers to attend. In the program students commuted daily to take watered-down college courses. With these two ideas and some new ones of our own, we decided that another option would be a program in which students sign up for the courses they want to take and attended them over a pre-set window over the summer. This would allow us to target all three of the recruitment groups we determined since it would be more conducive to a wider age range. Rather than participating in bands themselves, students would take master classes and workshops taught by various faculty and staff members as well as by current ETSU students. This would allow for more growth on a personalized level as a musician for the students and would help to show the kind of one-on-one attention available at ETSU. As for the education-based music courses go, they would be simplified one to five-day variants of courses offered in the music department, or even specialized courses if any faculty members wanted to create and teach them. Students attending the program would sign up for the courses offered over a week's time starting from 8:00am – 4:00pm. Some courses might only be one day while others could be multiple, it would be up to the discretion of the instructors.

Progress and Development

Upon determining our goals and vision for the project, Dr. Haeker and I took the ideas to Dr. Matthew Potterton, chair of the music department and director of choirs. Our initial meeting was at the end of October in which Dr. Potterton expressed interest in our idea. However, the take away from the first meeting was that we should include choir students as well. Dr. Potterton explained that this would open-up the departments reach to potential new students and music majors that would otherwise not get the exposure. He assured that the choral department would be more than happy to participate.

We had two more meetings with Dr. Potterton in November. In these meetings Dr. Potterton began to ask the serious questions bringing our idea to a reality. We began to do discuss costs. The main question he had was what the program was going to cost to students. To get there we needed to determine how many students we were wanting to handle. Dr. Potterton wanted me to estimate a maximum enrollment of 200 students with variations of 50 students. He also insisted that we do two bands and two choirs in order to keep the event running smoothly. The next step was to determine what faculty was needed and who was wanting to participate and also what kind of ETSU student help was needed to assist the faculty or students. Dr. Potterton also wanted me to look into various kinds of funding for the program that would be available from the university since the department was low on funds and we wanted to keep the cost of attendance to a minimum while attempting to recoup some of the costs. Dr. Potterton left me with these tasks for the semester and told me to come back in the spring with more information.

My next step later that November was to go speak with various directors and office across campus to gage what all the program would truly entail. I first started at the office I worked in which was New Student and Family Programs (NSFP). This office handles all new

incoming students to ETSU and has connections with summer programs. I spoke Heather Levesque, Director of NSFP, and she steered me towards the people I needed to speak with. First I went to speak with Kelvin Tarakwasha from Sedexo Food Services and Dr. Bonnie Burchette from Housing. When I began to inquire about event pricing, I was directed to the office of Summer Programs and was told they handle all summer programs for the university. When I got to the office of Summer Programs I was directed to speak with Kim Young, who unfortunately was out the office. From there I was led to speak with Dr. Ester Park in the music department since she was the Pre-College Programs director for them. She said that only Ms. Young would be able assist on the figures, however to keep in touch with her as she may be willing to provide some funding from Pre-College Programs. She then advised me to go speak with the Admissions office for further funding if we were wanting to use the program as a potential recruitment event. I took all of this information back to Dr. Haecker and we regrouped our standing on the project.

We determined we would need to look farther than the university for funding and began to look into outside sources of funding from both local business and brands partnered with the music department. Dr. Haecker had the knowledge and connections, so he informed me he would take lead on this portion, however he still wanted me to be involved with all final decisions. I was to keep up the work on figuring out costs associated with the program through the end of the semester. However, as the semester drew to a close, I was unable to have a meeting with Ms. Young.

When the spring semester came around, I was no longer taking courses within the music department with the exception of my thesis course. I attempted to reach out to Dr. Haecker over text message and email at the beginning of the semester with no response. Over the course of the next couple weeks I would regularly swing by his office on known office hours as well as at

random times hoping to catch him. I asked around the studio and was informed that he had been taking extra time off and was not involved with the department as much due to personal life events. I continued attempting to reach out until I became aware that he was no longer an instructor at ETSU and had moved away to Minnesota. I spoke with Dr. Frye about my options and she said to continue speaking with Dr. Potterton, however I was never able to have a meeting with him before the semester came to a close. I spoke with Dr. Scott Contreras-Koterbay, my honors advisor, about my situation and extended my thesis to fall 2018. I was continuing to work with NSFP over the summer and planned to continue my thesis the best I could. I spoke with Dr. Christian Zembower, director of bands, and he informed me that there most likely would not be any additional forthcoming support due to the construction and costs associated with the new fine and performing arts center. I attempted to meet with Dr. Potterton at the end of the summer but was informed he was out of country at that point. From there I was left with the idea of a summer recruitment program for the music department at ETSU with no way to finance or implement it due to lack of support. I brought this information back to Dr. Contreras-Koterbay where it was determined that my thesis had reached a point beyond which no further development could take place and needed to be concluded as is.

Conclusion

Over the course of this year and half thesis, I learned many things not only about myself, but also about the business and professional world. I learned that through my internships in Athletics and New Students and Family Programs that there are more ways to help the arts than just by being a musician. I found that the ideal career path for myself would be to go into marketing and event management for a university, venue, or music company. The brainstorming and financing of the programs Dr. Haecker and I came up with was something I enjoyed, I hope in the future I will be able to put my projects and ideas into action.

Bibliography

There is no bibliography.