



February 7, 2025

Dear Deans Harris and Solis:

Pursuant to your charge letter dated November 6, 2024, we have spent the last three months gathering input so as to identify and recommend candidates to serve as the Director of the School of Music beginning July 1, 2025. As part of that process, and in accordance with your charge letter, we have also evaluated the current strengths and future needs of the School of Music to help you and the Director moving forward.

In making the recommendations that follow, we reviewed the survey results of the School of Music faculty and staff that you shared with us. In addition, we held four separate listening sessions in January 2025 for tenured faculty, untenured faculty, staff, and graduate students. Finally, we shared any input that was directly communicated to us by interested members of the School of Music faculty.

Part 1 of this letter provides our summary of the current strengths and future needs of the School of Music, and is intended to be made public and available to the School of Music community. Part 2 of this letter provides a summary of the characteristics that we identified as most valuable in a Director.

### **PART 1: School of Music's Current Strengths and Future Needs**

Our listening sessions began with an open-ended prompt inquiring how people felt about the current climate in the School of Music. Happily, the responses were overwhelmingly positive, generally assessing the School to be functioning better than at any other time in memory. Several respondents noted a feeling of consistency and stability that is much needed at this time. One long-time staff member noted, "I have never seen morale as good as it is now," and a tenured faculty member described the current faculty as "the most communicative in memory."

The positive environment is not without its anxieties, however. In each of the four meetings, people expressed concerns about potential budget cuts, whether due to the state of the College of Arts & Sciences, the broader economic environment, or fears of federal government budget cuts and their potential downstream impacts. While we heard a lot of enthusiasm about the quality of the School's various programs and how they touch not just majors but communities across campus, there is also a tension between desires to expand or enrich programmatic offerings and the concern that already limited resources are likely to face further compression.

One specific area of concern is TA-ships and other sources of funding for graduate students, whether they may be cut further, and how to promote equity in funding for graduate students across programs. Another concern is the security of staff lines. There is also the recognition that the Music building is a fixed space, and there is already a shortage of office space, for example, for temporary and part-time faculty who spend a lot of time in the building.

And yet, again and again we heard the phrase "so much potential" regarding many of the School's current offerings. We heard calls for more investment in Ethnomusicology, in Music Education, as well as in large ensembles and choirs that reach so many non-majors. We also heard calls for more diversity of styles, more investment in areas outside of classical and jazz, such as popular music, and more avenues to connect with the local music community. Accordingly, respondents noted that any Director of the School of Music has to be able to see "the big picture" in terms of how resources are distributed, and will certainly have to mediate complex conversations between differing interests in the School.

In light of this tension between wishes for more investment and uncertainty about resources, numerous voices offered suggestions for engaging in expansive conversations about the future of the School of Music. Several people expressed that this is an exciting time as well as an anxious one, with excellent and inspiring new faculty on board, and that there is an unprecedented opportunity to envision the next era of the School. With the belief that any Director must do the grassroots work of listening to all constituencies came the strong suggestion that the School pursue funding to support organized visioning sessions.

There was a considerable amount of energy around proposing these kinds of conversations, along with numerous expressions of willingness to “lean into” the challenges of the current times and to work together. We noted that different constituencies advocated for each other, expressing care about the health of the whole School. We take this as a markedly positive sign that in spite of some real and present concerns, there is also a wealth of enthusiasm for the School of Music and commitment to the communities it serves.

## **PART 2: Recommendation Regarding Appointment of Director for the School of Music**

In reviewing the survey results and meeting with members of the School of Music community, we identified several characteristics that members of the community believe are important for the person appointed to serve as Director. These include strong internal and external communication skills; transparency; even-handedness; accessibility; fundraising skills; financial management skills; an even-keeled temperament; and prior administrative experience, either as the Director or Associate Director of the School of Music. It was also important that the Director was an existing member of the faculty and not someone from outside of the School of Music.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Search Committee. We have learned a great deal about the School of Music, and look forward to its future contributions to the University of Washington.

Respectfully Yours,

Jeffrey Fracé  
Associate Professor, School of Drama

Peter Nicolas  
William L. Dwyer Endowed Chair in Law Adjunct  
Professor of Music  
Adjunct Professor of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies