

THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE CHORAL ORGANIZATION

— A REPORT —

EXPANDING
CHORAL
PEDAGOGY

AUGUST 2020



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AUGUST 2020

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ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

As communities around the globe responded to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, The Executive Board of the National Collegiate Choral Organization felt called to lead its members and friends in bringing forth the best research and practices to help equip choral pedagogues in colleges and universities everywhere in the task of adapting during upheaval. Guided by a national survey of our membership taken in May 2020, we designed a charge and invited a group of choral educators and scholars to work quickly on behalf of our community. Their task was **expanding choral pedagogy** to guide us all in meeting the needs of today's students and the capacity of today's technology.

The Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy was formed in May 2020 and began meeting in the very first days of June. Their charge, crafted by the Executive Board from the contributions of members around the country, is as follows:

The Executive Board of NCCO calls for the formation of a Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy. The charge is to support choral pedagogues at the tertiary level by identifying relevant research and developing practical resources aimed at adapting and adding to current pedagogies while the landscape of education shifts in a COVID– and post-COVID–influenced era.

The appearance and use of video conferencing, asynchronous/multi-tracked ensembles, countless new apps, and other technologies have come about in response to the unexpected and global shift of education from our campuses to the internet. Since many of our collegiate choral colleagues were not trained for this new climate, NCCO hopes to support its members with information and resources that can inform and improve choral teaching both in rehearsals and elsewhere during this time of social distancing.

The Task Force is encouraged to conduct their inquiry using both traditional and novel methods, producing pragmatic results that our members can use now and in the near future, such as teaching tools, lesson plans, project design templates, and other resources.

PREFACE

As communities around the globe respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Collegiate Choral Organization assembled a group of choral educators from colleges and universities around the country. Their task is **expanding choral pedagogy** to meet the needs of today's students and the capacity of today's technology. The research and resources they bring forth serves a rapidly-evolving discipline that is vocation to some and avocation to others. All of this, built on a tradition dating back nearly 1,000 years.

The Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy was formed in May 2020 and began meeting in the very first days of June. Their charge, crafted by the Executive Board from the contributions of members around the country, is as follows:

The Executive Board of NCCO calls for the formation of a Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy. The charge is to support choral pedagogues at the tertiary level by identifying relevant research and developing practical resources aimed at adapting and adding to current pedagogies while the landscape of education shifts in a COVID– and post-COVID–influenced era.

The Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy aims, with this report, to support its members with information and resources that can inform and improve choral teaching both in rehearsals and elsewhere during this time of social distancing.

This document is intended as a resource to complement and enhance previous reports shared by other national organizations, and attempts to address challenges and opportunities to help inform, prepare, and equip colleagues with data that can be used for all institutional planning, regardless of size, location, and philosophy. The work of the Task Force is ongoing, and will be revised and revisited as our realities during pandemic evolve. Please refer to [NCCO's website](https://www.ncco-usa.org) for updated information.

STATEMENT *of* PRINCIPLES *for* CHORAL SINGING

The shifting landscape of higher education (including student demographics, public perception/attitude toward advanced degrees, reduction in state subsidies, and the focus on workforce development) in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic lends the university choral community both opportunities and challenges for rethinking and reshaping choral music at the tertiary level. This lends itself to programmatic reconsiderations ranging from subject matter to content delivery, and allows for the initiative to reassess the substance and value of our professional guiding principles.

The following statement contains two sections and is designed to prompt contemplation and reflection. The questions are deliberately unanswered in recognition of the multiplicity of factors that render uniformity impossible. Instead, the goal is that these principles will help guide readers to answer their questions in ways that are grounded in a philosophical orientation toward pedagogy, craft, and artistry.

PRINCIPLES

- A. The most valuable member of a choral organization is the individual singer. Everything we do is purposed toward the optimal experience of each singer as they encounter repertoire, enhance their musical skills, enlarge their worldview, and establish personal relationships within and beyond the ensemble.
- B. The choral experience is at once reflective (inward toward ourselves), relational (outward toward and with others), and embodied (where the ephemeral becomes performative). It involves diverse peoples, processes & pedagogies, and products & performances.
- C. Choral singing in the Western tradition is but one manifestation of group singing. Group singing is always possible whenever two or more are present. Technology facilitates group singing experiences when social distance is a necessity.
- D. The confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest offers an opportunity to frame our vision as one of thoughtful renewal rather than an unexamined restoration of past paradigms and practices.
- E. The urgency of the current moment impels us to model active and critically reflective action dedicated to human well-being and flourishing, the ethical care of ourselves and others, and the positive empowerment and transformation of people in their everyday lives.¹
- F. The joy and playfulness of music-making ought to pervade our classroom and rehearsal spaces however they exist. This sense of wonder affords us the latitude to experiment with new ideas, accept the outcomes, and learn from each of these endeavors.
- G. For centuries, choral music and group singing have afforded spaces for solace, offered prospects for wonder, and provided communities of support during times of trauma and joy. These essential, humane attributes are facilitated by musical excellence and artistic transcendence. All must continue.
- H. The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying social introspection compel us to consider those who may not have been adequately recognized, or perhaps have been oppressed, by choral practices common in higher education.

1 Elliott, D. J. (2012). Another perspective: Music education as/for artistic citizenship. *Music Educators Journal*, 99(1), 21–27.

QUESTIONS POSED

1. What are the personal, institutional, and societal core values that influence our decisions about what we teach, how we teach, and who we teach? How can we open or adjust our pedagogy to center these values?
2. What opportunities for change are presented by this moment in time? Might we have occasion to make needed changes in our teaching, in our choral programs, and in our profession?
3. As we seek resources during these unsettled times, can we draw on our philosophical principles to distinguish relevant information from the enveloping noise that might otherwise distract us?
4. How does the confluence of the pandemic and social unrest affect our students, our communities, our colleagues, and our families? Does this impact different students in different ways because of their socio-economic or socio-cultural backgrounds? Are we comfortable in our personal ability to address these needs, or should we seek assistive resources?
5. What is our responsibility to our student population of young adults – developmentally, emotionally, and artistically?
6. How can we transform our programs to be intentionally inclusive of human and musical diversity rather than unintentionally exclusive? How can technology serve this purpose? Does reliance on technology burden some students with financial needs or challenging family responsibilities?
7. What tenets of social justice are at the fore of our consciousness such that they inform the decisions we make on and off the podium? What might we do differently if these ideals were more prominent in our thinking?
8. How do we best equip and position ourselves as advocates for choral music study at the tertiary level? What role should choral music have at institutions of higher education and why?

PROGRAM ADVOCACY, FACE-TO-FACE, HYBRID, & VIRTUAL PLANNING

The NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy recognizes that, depending on wider institutional policies, universities may request a proposal of program delivery (classroom procedures) safety measures for face-to-face choral music experiences. This offers the director an opportunity to proactively recommend course delivery scenarios that may satisfy university protocol while allowing students to engage based on their level of comfort and personal risk assessment. Additionally, the unique proposal designed for each program may satisfy institutional policy while simultaneously promoting program engagement. It is important to note that such scenarios may mitigate, but not eliminate, risk of contracting COVID-19. It is advised that all plans and protocols should be assessed and approved by an institutional risk management team prior to implementation.



The following three models are a case for program delivery in three areas:

1. Full face-to-face instruction,
2. hybrid/synchronous face-to-face and online instruction, and
3. comprehensive synchronous/asynchronous instruction.

The three models are designed for both choral and lecture courses of all sizes, and for all institutions, pending appropriate and dependable infrastructure. Additionally, when designing a proposal, it is important to consider whether online student synchronous engagement is limited by access to resources, location of access (time zones), or other pre-existing situations.

The Task Force acknowledges that a COVID-19 plan of course delivery for each individual institution should be based on several of the following factors:

- » Current CDC recommendations
- » Location of institution and number of diagnosed COVID-19 cases within that county
- » State and local government mandates for social distancing, mask-wearing, etc.
- » College/University guidelines set forth by administration/Institutional Emergency Management Team (including sanitation measures)
- » The size of rehearsal spaces, performance halls, and other indoor rooms within the institution
- » Duration of rehearsals
- » HVAC ventilation, filtration, and other building equipment
- » Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- » Social distancing





With the above factors taken into consideration, it is recommended that each director take proactive measures, identifying reliable sources of information to aid in making informed decisions with singer safety in mind, while simultaneously advocating for choral music during the academic year. NCCO and the Task Force are making absolutely no global recommendation for face-to-face choral music participation at the tertiary level. Rather, we wish to empower each director with data that will best serve the needs of their program and students.

First, the Task Force realizes that the primary and main study with full recommendations about the safety of choral singing during the COVID-19 pandemic will yet to be published at the time of this report's release. In addition to this comprehensive study, the published articles in the list below make important statements about aerosol spread based on similarly studied diseases which may aid in planning and preparing for a variety of scenarios (face-to-face, hybrid, and virtual).

Second, the administrative proposal is only an example, and should not, in any way, be considered a recommendation by NCCO and the NCCO Task Force.

Please refer to Appendix III for the following documents:

- » Sample Proposal of Face-To-Face Rehearsals
- » Sample Hybrid (Face-to-face and online) Model for Instruction
- » Sample Virtual Model/Resources for Virtual Instruction

RELEVANT RESEARCH ADDRESSING COVID-19

Asadi, Sima, et al. “Aerosol Emission and Superemission during Human Speech Increase with Voice Loudness.” *Scientific Reports*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2019, doi:10.1038/s41598-019-38808-z.

Shows the correlation between the rate of particle emission during normal human speech and the amplitude (loudness) of vocalization

Banquet Tables Pro, LLC. “Social Distancing Room Space Calculator.” *Banquet Tables Pro®*, 2020. ↗

A space estimator to assist in guiding recommendations according to the square foot of available space, the number of individuals occupying that space, and the desired amount of distance between each person.

Evans, Matthew J. “r/COVID-19 - Avoiding COVID-19: Aerosol Guidelines.” *Medrxiv*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 4 June 2020. ↗

Provides information on risk assessment, close encounters, and mitigation measures for consideration when considering broad guidelines for COVID-19 recommendations

Jimenez, Jose-Luis. University of Colorado-Boulder, 2020, COVID Airborne Transmission Estimator.

An estimator that calculates COVID-19 infection risk in classrooms, choir rehearsals, bus transportation, and outdoor group activities. It allows the user to run a variety of probability scenarios customized to changing scenarios. For instructions on use and efficacy, consult the website. ↗

Miller, Shelly, and Jelena Srebric. NAMM Foundation, 2020, *Performing Arts Aerosol Study: Round One—Clarinet, Flute, Horn, Soprano Singer, Trumpet*.

An initial examination of aerosol spread in a variety of scenarios (indoor/outdoor) and mitigation measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection (general considerations begin on page 42 of the document), [Download PDF](#)

Morawska, Lidia, and Junji Cao. “Airborne Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: The World Should Face the Reality.” *Environment International*, vol. 139, 2020, p. 105, doi:10.1016/j.envint.2020.105730.

Provides basic science pertaining to viral spread, and includes precautions against airborne transmission in indoor scenarios

Nápoles, Jessica, et al. American Choral Directors Association, 2020, pp. 1–108, *ACDA COVID-19 Response Committee Report*.

Provides important advocacy narrative, instructional models, and appendices for planning

Somsen, G Aernout, et al. “Small Droplet Aerosols in Poorly Ventilated Spaces and SARS-CoV-2 Transmission.” *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, 2020, doi:10.1016/s2213-2600(20)30245-9.

Provides information on the spreading of respiratory droplets and possible preventive measures (ventilation and physical distancing)

OTHER CHORAL PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy recommends that in the time of COVID-19, it is an opportunity to assess pedagogy itself through a lens of modification and adaptation. The resources below are considerations that may improve and enhance the choral experience for our students and community.

Adaptive Leadership

Resources for navigating the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence: Adaptive Leadership in the Age of the Coronavirus

This website provides an incredible volume of information to rethink education and envision a future for our schools through innovative leadership, culturally responsive classroom environments, and an equitable experience for all. This resource is sponsored by the National Equity Project, an organization whose mission is to improve educational experiences for students and families who have been historically underserved by schools and districts. It provides resources for teachers to

better understand that all learning is both social and emotional, while deconstructing previously held beliefs about cultural norms, the definition of success, and normative behavior

LEARN MORE

(Scroll down to 'Adaptive Leadership')

Coronavirus & Equity Considerations

Racial Equity & Social Justice Resources

This website provides a collection of COVID-19 Racial Equity and Social Justice resources for informing the reader on existing disparities highlighted by the pandemic, including “perspectives on the virus’ impact on different communities and issue areas.”

LEARN MORE

Equity & Accessibility

The Challenge of Equity in Higher Education Under COVID-19

This article from InsideHigherEd.com is a look into our attempt as a university community to normalize some aspects of the college experience while recognizing that these online opportunities may not be available to all students from their homes. It addresses that the pandemic has “exacerbated the higher education opportunity divide,” and

that important services provided by the university will affect those students who cannot return to campus in the fall.

[READ MORE](#)

Trauma Webinar

Trauma-Informed Teaching & Learning in Times of Crisis

Janice Carello, PhD, is a professor at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, and an expert in trauma-informed approaches in higher education. Trauma affects students in a variety of ways, and it is key for teachers to be attuned to how students learn and react to learning in times of crisis. According to her research, it is estimated that 70% of adults in the United States have experienced at least one traumatic event in

their lives, and 20% of these individuals develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The presentation offers the listener perspectives on constructing our classrooms with trauma-informed awareness and how understanding trauma can shape our interactions with our students.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

Trauma Informed Classroom

Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19

Stress-induced trauma impacts student learning and faculty efficacy, and is compounded by grief, loss, isolation, socioeconomic disparity, and a sense of personal danger. COVID-19 adds layers of trauma to challenges college students face (including food and housing insecurity and a lack of adequate resources), and inhibits learning, affects atten-

dance, and can manifest itself in a myriad of behavioral patterns. This resource provides basic recommendations and strategies to recognize student hardship, increase faculty awareness, and encourage informed accommodations for those exhibiting indicators of trauma.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



The Digital Divide

The COVID-igital Divide

Authors Levander and Decherney explore the ever-widening disparity between students who lack access to equipment and technology required for an online educational experience. It brings to light broader social inequities and concerns, citing that 20% of US college students do not have appropriate technology required for virtual or face-to-face education. The authors recommend faculty become sensitized to student needs when developing alternative pedagogical approaches for course delivery.

[VISIT BLOG](#)

Universal Design for Learning

Rhonda Fuelberth: Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on cognitive neuroscience and evidence-based educational practices. Developed by CAST, a nonprofit education research and development organization, UDL guides the design of learning experiences to proactively meet the needs of all learners. Though commonly applied to diverse learners, principles of UDL offer exciting implications for expanding choral pedagogy during and beyond the pandemic.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

DIVERSIFYING & ENRICHING CHORAL PEDAGOGY BEYOND THE EURO-CENTRIC CANON

Social injustice in the United States, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted the need for a national effort to work towards societal equity. Highlighting these events through the lens of an expanded choral pedagogy permits focus on enriching the choral-ensemble curriculum to embrace and include programming of diverse composers from varied geographical, cultural, and religious origins. Such an expansion may positively influence K–12 colleagues and other music-making stakeholders, allowing for tertiary music to contribute by example and broadening its impact on the music community. To prompt meaningful change, accessible resources are necessary to aid collegiate conductors in making diverse repertoire choices with the same vigor and preparation as typically attended literature from the Western European choral canon. Therefore, the Task Force espouses the goal of facilitating an intensive study and contextualization of such repertoire and resources, particularly as adapted course delivery methods are explored as a response to the pandemic.

The necessity for limiting the volume of repertoire typically prepared during previous semesters is a natural derivative of adapting to rehearsal and course delivery during the pandemic. Faculty have an opportunity to make adjustments by supplementing rehearsals with intensive alternative experiences. Current circumstances offer freedom in expanding the choral canon for repertoire options more inclusive of historically underrepresented populations, and enhancing the in-class (face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual) flexibility for score study, interaction with experts, and contextualization and

Current circumstances offer freedom in expanding the choral canon for repertoire options more inclusive of historically underrepresented populations...

discussion of the newly-included repertoire. In order to inform score study and meaningfully augment rehearsal time, conductors need access to experts in these musics and scholarships. In relation, the recent increased use of virtual platforms has opened possibilities for interaction and partnership with musical experts and choirs that conductors may not have considered in the past. Opportunities to study particular music and the originating culture with experts, composers, arrangers, and culture-bearers may increase students' appreciation for the literature, expanding their capacity for developing radical empathy.

The Task Force appreciates that NCCO members are recognized specialists in one or more of these areas/initiatives and have invested decades of authoring peer-reviewed literature and conference sessions to enrich the choral profession. In addition, domestic and international colleagues in the fields of musicology, ethnomusicology, composition, conducting, and diversity initiatives have lifetimes' worth of scholarship and expertise to share. The Task Force has initiated the process of partnership and focused, intensive interaction by offering a roster titled "Professional Contacts in Diversifying and Enriching Understanding of Choral Pedagogy Beyond the Euro-centric Canon." The individuals listed in the roster are members or have agreed to serve as liaisons, offering expertise, repertoire and resources to collegiate choirs and conductors in the U.S. The roster will serve as a living document, welcoming suggestions for additions to this treasure trove of specialists. Through partnership and interaction, NCCO believes that we can accomplish goals of inclusion and connection, especially during the pandemic. The document may be referenced in "Appendix I Pedagogy Beyond the Euro-centric Canon" on page 33.



NCCO FACULTY SURVEY SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

In response to the comprehensive reports recently published by other professional music organizations, the NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy determined that rather than duplicating the remarkable work circulated, it would be prudent to compliment and narrow the focus of purpose, targeting faculty input as a valuable resource for consideration and planning. The general membership/faculty survey offered a voice to those interested in contributing to the determination, efforts, and advocacy for the fall semester, as well as an opportunity for conductors and educators to gain fellow colleagues' perspectives when making informed decisions.

METHOD

Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy formulated questions in response to salient themes and emerging concerns noted in national reports, observations, and faculty conversations. These were then divided into seven areas of focus:

1. Rehearsing,
2. Private Lessons,
3. Classroom Teaching,
4. Concerts/Performances,
5. Social Distancing,
6. Student Engagement, and
7. Faculty Agency/Additional Thoughts.

SURVEY RESULTS

At the time of reporting, a total of 187 members took part in the survey.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

30% of respondents report teaching in the Eastern Region of NCCO, followed by 22% in the Midwestern Region, 19.2% in the Western, 14% in the Southern, 12.8% in the Central, 1% from Canada, and 1% from countries outside of North America. Most respondents (57.6%) instruct undergraduate students both majoring and participating in music.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

When questioned about university course delivery plans, 28.3% of respondents indicated that their institution would begin classes 1–2 weeks early with a corresponding commencement prior to fall/Thanksgiving break. Roughly a third (36.4%) share the semester will remain unchanged, save online course/finals delivery after fall/Thanksgiving break, and 15.5% report their semester is completely unchanged. Only 6.4% of respondents report they have yet to receive information from their university about potential alterations to the academic calendar. Alternately, most (72.2%) report their institution has yet to share intended or potential adjustments to the spring semester's calendar.

MODE OF COURSE DELIVERY

Of survey participants, 70.1% indicate that fall semester course delivery is intended to take place either completely face-to-face or a combination of face-to-face and virtual instruction. Various instructional methods including smaller

class sizes, sectionals, graduate student instructors, and online complimentary materials are indicated as adjustments to course delivery in both choral rehearsals and lecture classes. For comments, please refer to Appendix IIa.

REHEARSING

For those planning face-to-face ensemble rehearsals, most respondents indicate that safety measures will be implemented to potentially reduce risk, including, but not limited to: reducing numbers of singers (82.9%), utilizing social distancing (98.7%), requiring the wearing of masks (80.9%), eliminating/limiting shared music between singers (83.6%), reducing rehearsal duration (70.4%), and reducing the number of rehearsals (58.6%). Over half (53.9%) indicate that ensembles will be reduced or divided into smaller numbers as an effort to mitigate or reduce risk. For comments on faculty concerns regarding ensemble rehearsals please refer to Appendix IIa.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Over half of respondents (52.2%) indicate that applied lessons will be delivered in either a total face-to-face or hybrid face-to-face/virtual environment, while 26.6% will teach entirely online. Respondents indicate that 42.7% masks will be required for face-to-face instruction, and 37.6% share that their institution has yet to communicate expectations or university/college policy for mask-wearing during lessons. For comments on faculty concerns regarding private lessons, please refer to Appendix IIa.

CLASSROOM TEACHING

At the time of reporting, 58.3% of respondents indicate that course delivery will take place using a hybrid (face-to-face/virtual) scenario, and 73.8% indicate that masks are required in the classroom, mandated by institutional policy. Responses suggest teaching scenarios include “flex” instruction, in which both face-to-face and virtual learning take place, but in alternating days. For comments on faculty concerns regarding classroom teaching scenarios, please refer to Appendix IIa.

CONCERTS/PERFORMANCES

Current performance plans vary from a live-stream concert without an audience (51.3%), virtual choir (50.3%), and live concerts with reduced audience members (19.3%). One quarter (24.6%) anticipate eliminating choir concerts/performances from the academic year, and most notably, all respondents indicate that concerts/performances will not continue as in past semesters for the upcoming academic year. For comments on faculty concerns regarding concerts and performances, please refer to Appendix IIa.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing strategies/decisions vary depending on local mandates, institutional policies, state recommendations, and current information distributed by the Center for Disease Control, but most respondents suggest a plan for at least 6 feet of space between students. For comments on faculty concerns regarding returning to campus, please refer to Appendix IIa.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Just over half (52.4%) of respondents indicate that their institution has contacted students to gather information pertaining to perceived risk or overall concerns for returning to campus. Fewer (29.4%) have contacted students to solicit input/feedback regarding adjusted course delivery or pedagogy, and 32.1% share that their institution has collected information from students which may assist in discerning needs and motivation for participation. For comments on faculty concerns regarding student engagement, please refer to Appendix IIa.

FACULTY AGENCY/ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Strikingly, 71.2% of respondents express concern about personal safety in a face-to-face course delivery model for the upcoming academic year. Most (61.2%) have been provided with the flexibility of choosing a virtual or face-to-face (or combination of the two) delivery, but share uncertainty for how the academic year will unfold. For comments on faculty agency, please refer to Appendix IIa.

ANALYSIS

Please refer to Appendix IIa for the full analysis and data tables.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey results yield two prominent themes:

1. Faculty share **concerns about course delivery, personal safety, and student engagement**, with most having entered into the mid- to late-stages of planning for the fall semester; and
2. It is yet to be determined whether institutional guidance plays a role in empowering faculty planning, but it is apparent that **most respondents seek information from professional music organizations** to construct a strategy for returning to the classroom under the safest of conditions.

Similarly to the Task Force's student survey, these results yield more questions than clarity.

The survey does, however, provoke the question of how teachers/conductors might seize this opportunity to expand choral pedagogy by amplifying student voices in the decision-making process for course development and instructional delivery. The student survey sends a message as much as it offers data: perhaps we need to disrupt the normalized top-down approach of our pedagogical practice and look to our students for not just feedback, but input. If we're going to keep our students engaged and motivated (particularly if we're not actually singing together), perhaps we listen to our students in a new way. Their needs, creativity, and values will go a long way toward constructing a shared purpose that may translate into practical solutions for choral music education at this time, and for the future of our profession.

The NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy proposes that additional, subsequent instruments are developed to measure changing and evolving perceptions, as the semester progresses during the fall of 2020. The Task Force recommends that NCCO provide platforms for sharing best practices as faculty gain experience in adapting to new environments, limitations, and creative solutions. Further need for study, particularly as public health directives evolve, is required to better equip the Task Force to make informed recommendations to collegiate choral directors and classroom instructors.

Perhaps we need to disrupt the normalized top-down approach of our pedagogical practice and look to our students for not just feedback, but input.

NCCO STUDENT SURVEY SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

In response to the comprehensive reports recently published by other professional music organizations, the NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy determined that it would be prudent to complement similar efforts by other national service organizations by soliciting student input as a valuable resource for consideration and planning. The student survey offered a voice to those interested in contributing to the determination, efforts, and advocacy for the fall semester, as well as an opportunity for conductors and educators to gain student perspective when making informed decisions.

The [Task Force] determined that it would be prudent to complement similar efforts by other national service organizations

METHOD

Questions were developed by the Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy based on salient themes and emerging concerns noted in national reports, observations, and student conversations. These were then divided into four areas of focus:

- » Survey Demographics (response required)
- » Student Concern (response required)
- » Student Accessibility and Interest (response required)
- » Student Recommendations (response optional)

SURVEY RESULTS

At the time of reporting, a total of 347 students took part in the survey.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

One third (33.3%) of respondents attend university/college in NCCO's Central Region, 29% Western, 26.7% Eastern, 6.2% Southern, and 4.8% Midwestern. Of respondents, 68.9% attend public institutions, the remaining attending private schools. Most participants attend school in urban areas (60.9%) and just over half (52.9%) reside on campus during a typical academic year. Undergraduate students account for 89.1% of respondents, and of those, an equal percentage are entering their sophomore, junior, and senior years (year 4) of school. A majority of respondents (85.6%) are anticipating enrolling for the upcoming academic year, 10.3% indicated "maybe", and 4.1% are not planning to return.

STUDENT CONCERN

Four out of five student participants (82.5%) share that their institution has provided a plan to return for the fall, with 63.3% reporting that their institutional plan is for face-to-face learning or a combination of face-to-face learning with online instruction for content delivery. Nearly three quarters (72.9%) expressed that they feel very concerned, concerned, or some concern about how face-to-face instruction will take place, but 81.6% of total respondents share that they will register or are likely to register in face-to-face ensembles this fall.



STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY AND INTEREST

Of those students surveyed, 96.3% report that they have both access to a computer off-campus and are able to complete school work from home, and have reliable internet. Over half (53.7%) expressed interest in a virtual choir experience, 79% of those expressing interest, but not as their top preference for participating in a choral ensemble. Of total respondents, 79% report interest in a hybrid ensemble experience that includes both online and face-to-face rehearsals. In written comments, students shared concerns regarding lack of recording equipment, unreliable internet, small spaces not conducive to privacy, sharing work/study spaces with family who work remotely, safety and health concerns for themselves and loved ones, and the need for a true face-to-face choral experience.

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that approximately 34% of total respondents provided written recommendations solicited by the survey, and those emerging and recurring themes are represented in the full analysis. The percentages below represent the number of students who chose to respond.

When questioned about student spring 2020 semester experience, 62.3% of respondents shared that their collegiate choral experience continued in an adjusted fashion, while 9.8% continued singing assignments, virtual choirs or virtual performances. 21.6% report that the semester rehearsals/activities enrichment ended when the school ceased face-to-face instruction. In written comments, students recommended that communication, positivity, and the willingness to test various options is important to them when professors are faced with pivoting to an online experience. They expressed their desire to continue singing, but are unsettled about the risk choral singing may pose, and suggest mitigation efforts to reduce infection. Additional comments can be read in the full analysis.

ANALYSIS

Please refer to [Appendix IIb](#) for the full analysis and data tables.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Though the survey results perhaps yield more questions than clarity, this data provides an important resource for faculty to incorporate student input in decision-making for course development and instructional delivery. The student survey sends a message as much as it offers data: perhaps we need to disrupt the normalized top-down approach of our pedagogical practice and look to our students for not just feedback, but input. If we're going to keep our students engaged and motivated (particularly if we're not actually singing together), perhaps we listen to our students in a new way. Expanding choral pedagogy through the lens of student input may allow for innovation, building trust and nurturing student involvement, and leading to bolstered student/teacher relationships and a fortified choral music experience.

The NCCO Task Force on Expanding Choral Pedagogy proposes that the following instruments are developed to measure changing and evolving perceptions, as the semester progresses during the fall of 2020. Further need for study is required to better equip the Task Force to make informed recommendations to collegiate choral directors and classroom instructors.

