Program Level Outcome (PLO) Assessment Report Summary

Program Level Outcomes for Music:

Upon successful completion of the Music program, a student should be able to:

- analyze the harmonic structure of music from the Common Practice Period.
- sight-sing intermediate level tonal melodies.
- demonstrate piano proficiency at the lower-intermediate level.
- perform individually on an instrument or with the voice, and collaboratively in an instrumental or vocal ensemble.
- aurally identify the genre and stylistic period of examples from the western art music tradition.
- utilize computer applications for audio recording and notation.

What we looked at:

Program Level Outcome #5--aurally identify the genre and stylistic period of examples from the western art music tradition.

This outcome is one in which is important for all of the music classes with the exception of Music 5 (ethnic musics of the U.S.). All of the music faculty agreed that students need to have this basic skill in order to do well in any of our music classes at Hartnell. We examined various models, including the model used in video/radio programming, our own experience learning and teaching, the experience of attending concerts, and the experience of performance. All of these models have something to teach us as instructors. One final point was made that we need to feel empathy for the difficulty of the task that students are going through when they try to recognize stylistic characteristics in a piece of music.

We will attempt to incorporate various aspects of these models in our teaching. We intend to isolate one model and, using exam questions, performances, essays, and discussions, to evaluate which parts of these models will work best for our students.

What we found:

We found that students in our classes have learned some basic listening skills, but need to be exposed to far more music with more instruction about the basic building blocks of music. Students have enjoyed the experience of interacting with new music, but they need much more exposure to Western Art music. Along with greater exposure, students need more mastery of the vocabulary of stylistic elements within music such as melody, rhythm, form, and texture. We have done a good job of teaching these elements in some classes (Music 2 and the Music 50 sequence), but we still have a long way to go in truly making the students fluent in this language for all of our classes. We agreed that we need to expose students to more music and to get them to master more elements of music in an age-appropriate setting.

What our next steps are:

We all agreed that the most important thing that we can do is to increase the availability and visibility of live concert attendance options. To this end, we will try to publicize our concerts better and make sure that all of our students know about it. One of the instructors volunteered to put these concerts on a department-wide calendar that instructors could pass out to their students. The second most important thing was the teaching of the elements of music in class.
This will include not only the basic tools for understanding the stylistic characteristics of Western Art music, but also using imagery as a tool for students to better understand the music. We will try to get students to use these tools consistently in their listening experience. Other approaches that we will try include doing comparative listening exercises in pairs, bringing in music that students are interested in, increasing availability of musical recordings through creating our own library or asking the main library to purchase recordings as well as books for students to use, improving the counseling that goes along with articulation to Universities on an individual and group level, enhancing and continuing the comparative essays critiquing musical performances and audio examples, purchasing access to an online listening archive, and creating a music lab staffed by an instructor to help with listening.