

Annual Report from the Music Department Antiracism Task Force

I. History and Formation

In June, 2020, two recent Luther College alumni created a petition on the site [organizefor.com](https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/music-at-luther-believes-black-lives-matter): <https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/music-at-luther-believes-black-lives-matter>
Within a few weeks, the petition gained over 500 signatures.

During the summer of 2020, fifteen music faculty members participated in a book group to read and discuss Ibram X. Kendi's memoir *How to Be an Antiracist*. That work resulted in a proposal to address systemic racism within the music theory curriculum, as well as the realization that a task force should be created to study racism and bias within our department as a whole.

On Thursday, October 1, 2020, the music department faculty voted unanimously to create an antiracism task force. That group was formed on October 12, consisting of 4 faculty, 1 staff member and 2 students:

Faculty: Emily Dirks, Brooke Joyce (chair), Nicholas Shaneyfelt, Jill Wilson

Staff: Chris Hale

Students: Tam Ayers, Phoenix Bradley

An advisory board was also created, consisting of 20 students, faculty, and alumni, who provide a sounding board to the task force.

II. Task Force/Advisory Board Activities, October 2020-May 2021

1) Current Student Outreach: The task force hosted a student forum on Sunday evening, November 1. About 12 students participated in the event, which was moderated by the two student members of the task force. Participants shared ideas about how to reform curriculum, broaden repertoire, create a more inclusive environment, and hold each other accountable for the change we want to see and hear.

2) Alumni Outreach: The task force hosted an alumni forum on Sunday, November 22. Both former music majors and non-majors, representing a range of class years from 1958-2020, joined us in a lively conversation. All alumni who responded to the RSVP for this event were individually contacted, resulting in several follow-up conversations. This forum, along with the current student forum held earlier this fall, gave the task force valuable insights into our department's relationship with racism, both now and in the past. Several common threads helped determine the task force's agenda this year.

3) Website: Our website, <https://www.luther.edu/music/department/antiracism/>, went live on December 16.

4) Addendum to the music department mission statement: An initial draft of an addendum to the music department's mission statement was begun in late November after we conducted the forums with alumni and current students. Input from the advisory board in December and January enabled us to share an initial draft with music faculty on January 25. Comments and suggestions were received via google form. Including members of the task force, 9 faculty, 7 students, 1 staff member and 2 alumni contributed to the initial draft.

A brief discussion of the statement happened at a music faculty meeting on February 11.

Revisions to the statement were made based on feedback, emails and one-on-one conversations. Including members of the task force, 13 faculty, 3 students, 2 staff members and 4 alumni contributed to the revisions.

A second, revised mission statement was shared with faculty on March 22 and April 15. Comments and feedback were invited.

The revised statement was discussed by the music faculty on April 22 and April 29.

A third, revised statement of multiculturalism and inclusion was shared with the faculty on May 4 and discussed as a motion on May 6. This statement was proposed as a standalone statement to be posted on the music department website, not as an addendum to the mission statement. The task force also proposed to revisit this statement in the spring of 2022 so that the faculty might reassess its content and gather feedback from constituents, and also consider making the statement part of the department's mission statement. A vote was not taken on this motion.

Here is the final version of the statement discussed on May 6:

We acknowledge that Western European concert traditions have long been prioritized at Luther College, resulting in the marginalization of musical, intellectual and aesthetic traditions of other cultures.

We commit to becoming a more just and inclusive music department. We embrace a learning environment that is multicultural, antiracist, and anti-biased. While we continue to study and perform the concert and sacred music that traces its roots to Western Europe, we endeavor to be a department that explores, celebrates, and honors musical cultures and individual musicians too often left in the margins, with the aim of understanding and appreciating their origins and contributions to our global community.

We commit to continually developing and revising policies to ensure that Luther's Music Department is a safe, inclusive, and equitable space for each student, faculty and staff member. Everyone is welcome in this department.

5) Black History Month Activities

During the month of February, the task force sent a weekly bulletin to all music faculty, students and staff to help publicize events related to Black History Month. A watch party of a virtual concert from the Stax Music Academy in Memphis was facilitated by the task force and co-sponsored by the music department and the Black Student Union. Members of the task force and advisory board helped facilitate a round table exploration of BIPOC repertoire, sponsored and organized by FMEA.

6) Faculty/Staff Forum: The task force invited current music faculty and staff members to share their experiences with racism in a forum held on March 9.

7) Inclusive Teaching Breakout Sessions: At our music faculty meeting on March 25, the task force facilitated a discussion around inclusive teaching practices. Prompted by a list of practices shared by members of the task force and advisory board, faculty were invited to share either current practices or ideas for future work around inclusivity in classroom, studio and rehearsal spaces.

8) Action items

Member of the task force and advisory board drafted a series of action items for the coming year. In doing so, all current members of the task force have recommitted to continuing this work in the 2021-22 academic year.

Submitted by Brooke Joyce, Task Force Chair
June 2021