

As the Chair of the Council on Equity & Inclusion in Music and the Associate Professor of Percussion here in the music department, I thank you for your thoughtful questions. Against the backdrop of the national and global events of the summer of 2020, I was profoundly affected by the experiences of members of our Furman community shared on the Black @ Furman Instagram page, particularly those of the past and present students of the Furman Music Department. As a faculty member, reading those posts brought about a period of hard reflection as to whether I, or we as a department, were doing enough to create welcoming and equitable environments in our classrooms and performance spaces. The answer was made clear to me...we clearly could and should be doing more, particularly for our LGBTQIA+ students and students of color.

The 2020-2021 academic year was a period of interim leadership for the music department and we looked forward to the hiring of our new chair, Randall Umstead, who arrived this past August. Over that period, the department worked to respond to reports related to the Black @ Furman page via the University's policies and procedures of the time. Separate from those actions, I approached our university and departmental leadership with a proposal to create a Council on Equity & Inclusion in Music. By October of 2020, a 9-person council had been formed and we got to work.

The council - comprised of music students and faculty (of all ranks) - is an independent body that advises and guides the Furman Music Department leadership on all matters related to diversity, equity, and access within the department's curriculum, policies, and operations. Additionally it acts as a liaison between all Music Department constituencies (faculty, staff, and students) and Furman's various diversity offices. In this role, the Council is not an investigative or adjudicative body, but rather a resource that can provide appropriate support when needed by members of our music community.

While our work certainly still in progress, I am incredibly proud of what the Council achieved thus far, particularly amid the many other pandemic-related challenges of the 2020-2021 academic year:

1. We researched, created, and shared a document with our faculty that recommends inclusive pedagogy practices, suggested syllabus language, links to additional resources, and information regarding helpful workshops and events. This was especially important to us as a means to assist any of our faculty community who are new to this work, terminology, etc....

2. In collaboration with the Furman Humanities Center, we created and hosted “Amplify@Furman”, a virtual speaker series which highlights a diverse range of musicians and asks them to speak to their own lived experiences as an artist. Our inaugural series ran throughout the 2021 spring semester and was successful beyond our expectations. Each event had approximately 10% of entire Furman student body attending, in addition to a number community members and stakeholders from across the country. The Spring 2021 roster included the following guests:

- Dr. Philip Ewell: Music Theorist and author of “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame”
- Kinds of Kings: An advocacy-focused composer collective
- Devonté Hynes aka “Blood Orange”: Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter/producer
- Rhiannon Giddens: Artistic Director of the Silk Road organization
- Justin Page: Cellist for the new music ensemble “What is Noise”
- Robert Diggs aka “RZA”: de facto leader of the Wu-Tang Clan, Producer, Actor, Filmmaker

Now that we are in a new academic year, we are moving to more fully engage with our campus and departmental community. The council has resumed work on additional anti-racism initiatives that were not feasible in the environment of the 2020-21 academic year. We look forward to with working with our new department leadership, and our entire music community, to bring those to life and into public view in the future.



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