

# Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants

## Final Report

**Date:** 5/24/2017

**Grant Number:** 150

**Institution Name(s):** Clayton State University

**Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):**

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**Project Lead:** Dr. Michael Fuchs

**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers:** Music Appreciation (MUSC 2101)

**Semester Project Began:** Fall 2015

**Semester(s) of Implementation:** Fall 2016

**Average Number of Students Per Course Section:** 35 (Fall 2016)

**Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation:** 4 (Fall 2016) / Approximately 10 sections per year.

**Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation:** 138 (Fall 2016)

### 1. Narrative

The key textbook transformation outcomes for MUSC 2101 have been largely positive. At the outset of the process, the team knew that even if our best efforts resulted only in a no-cost textbook, our students would strongly benefit. We faced challenges, pitfalls and some negative results. However, we have had positive outcomes in general, in instruction, and in student performance.

Generally, the outcomes of the textbook transformation process show challenges in access and clarity and accomplishments in student performance. The most significant challenge we faced was location of legal, no-cost media. In this time of copyright upheaval specifically relating to

media, selecting materials for a class which relies so heavily on listening would be a challenge no matter the circumstances. Traditional music appreciation textbooks overcome this challenge in various ways which all result in a significant cost to the student. Our challenge was to find quality audio recordings at no cost to the student. Quality classical music (i.e. western art music) listening materials were significantly easier to find than quality listening for commercial music.

Another challenge came as a result of an inherent difficulty for a music appreciation class. The course requirement for the University System of Georgia is understandably vague and unlike courses such as Introduction to Physics or Introduction to Psychology, music appreciation does not function as a pre-requisite for further music study. In fact, MUSC 2101 will not count as a pre-requisite for music study at our institution. This prevents instructors from having a built-in idea of what needs to be taught in order for students to have success at higher levels. Lastly, part of the nature of music study and instructor specialization provided a general challenge to our textbook transformation process. Each music appreciation instructor has a specific area of specialization which may not match directly with the subject matter. Furthermore, the diversity of strengths and priorities of instructors for music appreciation can make creating a general course curriculum a challenge.

Our textbook transformation process also achieved significant accomplishments. Most importantly, one of cost savings for students. At Clayton State University, 92% of first-year students in the fall of 2014 received federal or state financial aid. The median Adjusted Gross Income for the same cohort was only \$23,933. If an average semester requires \$1200 spent on textbooks, our selection of a no-cost textbook cut those costs by almost 13%. This removes a significant barrier for student success in the course. As is shown in our survey results, students were much more likely to have access to the textbook from the first day as a direct result of our adoption of the no-cost textbook and associated materials.

Impacts on instruction were also largely positive reactions to the challenges mentioned above. The challenges mentioned above in our textbook transformation process demanded a more precise focus on the learning outcomes to prioritize for this course. Significant challenges in accessing materials forced us to answer the following: What do we value? What are our outcomes? How do we accomplish those outcomes? What resources best apply? Additionally, we focused our assessment strategies to more precisely reflect our values for the course. Finally, the challenge of finding resources led us to discover items that will be of future value in this course as well as other music courses we teach.

Impacts on student performance were mixed. As quotes in section two demonstrate, students deeply appreciated having no-cost course materials. This cost saving makes a real and impactful difference in the lives of our student population 92% of whom have a median Adjusted Gross Income at a level which qualifies them for poverty-related federal aid. Though grade outcomes for these students were lower than instructors had hoped at the beginning of the grant process, this single fact weighs heavily in our assessment of the value of the textbook transformation

process. Additionally, instructors reported an anecdotal sense that student understanding of the materials was deeper and have reason to expect that grade outcomes in future iterations of the course will more closely reflect the increase of understanding as assessment tools and student expectations align more closely with the values and priorities of the new curriculum.

It should be noted that comparison of the two semesters in question is difficult. Changes in the seating of the sections include Fall 15 having 2 face to face sections and 2 online sections whereas Fall 16 had only 1 out of four sections that met face to face. In addition to the change of text, the curriculum of the course changed significantly to reflect an expectation of a deeper level of musical understanding and listening. Finally, instructors faced a learning curve with regard to this course both in providing additional materials to supplement the text and with selecting appropriate musical examples that would be continually available to students outside of class.

## **2. Quotes**

- Provide three quotes from students evaluating their experience with the no-cost learning materials.

“My experience with the no-cost material was definitely one of the best things Clayton State has provided me with. Being a student athlete at Clayton State, I was able to do homework on the bus rides to away games, comfortably. Unlike my other classes, I would have had to take 3 huge books on the bus with me.”

“Really enjoyed the Music Appreciation course. The fact that the course is offered with no additional cost for materials was an essential part of my success in the beginning of the course. It really helped due to my other course materials being so costly.”

“I would like to inform you of the impact that the no-cost material has had on me. First of all I would like to thank you and all who have made this material free to all students. The study material that was provided was of great workmanship, self explanatory and easy to use. I being a single mother of 3 have benefited from it tremendously. My income is very limited and the ability to not have to pay for this material was a blessing. I am sure that there is a majority of students that have felt a shoulder off their backs having this material at no cost to them. I would like to ask if possible for this material to continue to be free for all future students knowing that it will be a true impact and difference in many students lives in furthering their education.”

## **3. Quantitative and Qualitative Measures**

### **3a. Overall Measurements**

#### **Student Opinion of Materials**

**Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?**

Total number of students affected in this project: 138

- Positive: 82 % of 89 number of respondents
- Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
- Negative: 18 % of 89 number of respondents

### **Student Learning Outcomes and Grades**

**Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

Choose One:

- Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
- Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
- Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

### **Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates**

**Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

**Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:**

26% of students, out of a total 138 students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

- Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

### **3b. Narrative**

#### Class Demographic Information

The classes offered in the fall of 2015 and 2016 included both online and seated sections. Fall 2015 sections included 2 seated (60 students) and 2 online (58 students) for a total of 118 students. Fall 2016 sections included 1 seated (49 students) and 3 online (89 students) for a total of 138 students.

#### Survey Results

The survey results indicated that the majority of students (nearly 60% from Fall 2015 and 56% from Fall 2016) chose to take MUSC 2101 to fulfill their Area C2 requirement because the class fit into their schedules. The second highest response rate (50%, Fall 2015 and 40%, Fall 2016) indicated that the students chose the class to learn more about music.

When asked to describe their musical background, the majority of respondents chose "I played an instrument in Elementary, Middle School, or High School" (nearly 53%, Fall 2015 and 50%, Fall 2016). The second highest response for both semesters was "I sang in choir in Elementary, Middle School, or

High School” (nearly 34%, Fall 2015 and nearly 41%, Fall 2016). A significant number of respondents played an instrument or sang in church while in Elementary, Middle School, or High School (nearly 30%, Fall 2015 and nearly 31%, Fall 2016). An option for “other” responses was included, and respondents in both semesters shared a love for listening to music. Some indicated no previous participation in musical activities, but one respondent purported to “sing like a habit” (Fall 2015) and others shared that “I played an instrument up until collage [*sic*]” and “I am a classically trained musician” (Fall 2016). However, the majority of survey respondents were not currently active with music performance (74%, Fall 2015 and nearly 88%, Fall 2016). The majority of respondents who indicated they were currently active with music performance were members of a church choir (47%, Fall 2015 and 40%, Fall 2016).

The survey asked the students to identify the genre of music they listened to most, allowing the respondents to “choose any or all that apply”. The majority of respondents answered “R&B” for both semesters (nearly 81%, Fall 2015 and nearly 74%, Fall 2016), with “Hip-Hop” being the next highest response (nearly 67%, Fall 2015 and 72%, Fall 2016).

The majority of survey respondents receive financial aid (91%, Fall 2015 and nearly 80%, Fall 2016), with the majority of that aid coming from Pell Grants (50%, Fall 2015 and 47%, Fall 2016). Survey results from both semesters indicated that the students depend on financial aid to purchase textbooks (nearly 67%, Fall 2015 and nearly 60%, Fall 2016).

In the fall of 2015, the overwhelming majority (nearly 94%, n = 73) purchased the textbook, *The Musical Experience* by John Chiego (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2010). The respondents purchased the book before class began (52%) or during the first week of class (nearly 47%). The respondents who did not purchase the textbook indicated the cost was too high (80%) or not worth the cost (20%). The majority of students who purchased the text bought a new version (nearly 67%). When purchased new, this textbook includes a semester-long subscription to Rhapsody (for listening to music) and additional online materials (i.e. timelines, Power Points, flash cards, and self-assessments). Used versions of the textbook do not come with a Rhapsody subscription or the online materials. The majority of respondents who purchased a used textbook indicated that they did not purchase a Rhapsody subscription (56%). Survey respondents who did not purchase a textbook also did not purchase a Rhapsody subscription (100%). The majority of respondents (55%) indicated they did not use the online materials that came with the new textbook in Fall 2015.

In Fall 2015, the majority of survey respondents indicated that the textbook was an effective tool for the learning goals of the class (nearly 71%). The majority of open-ended responses in Fall 2015 indicated that the textbook was necessary for the class, easy to follow, and detailed. One respondent shared, “I loved the fact that it included Rhapsody, with easy access to the playlists that are relevant to the course.” However, several students indicated that they got enough information from the class lectures and Power Points. One respondent shared, “It was effective but the professor mostly used power points so in a way it was not needed.” A few respondents shared that they did not use the textbook, with one respondent stating, “I barely used the book, and still did well in class”.

The majority of survey respondents in Fall 2016 (82%, n = 73) indicated the online textbooks were effective tools for the learning goals of the class. The majority of open-ended responses indicated that students appreciated the cost-free aspect of the online textbook and materials. One respondent shared, “Tuition and books are expensive and I do not have financial aid. Not having to purchase a text for this course was highly instrumental and beneficial for me. It was a blessing. Thank you.” Others touted its easy accessibility. One respondent stated, “Having the online textbook made it easier to search for

information, as well as, reading the material using different devices such as phone, ipad, laptop, and desktop interchangeably [*sic*] throughout the day.” Another shared: “It was an easier way to access the information without having to locate the book; all I had to do was pull up the powerpoint, open it up and then look over them together on the same screen. Instead of looking back and forth between the computer and a textbook. It also flows well with everything being technology based.”

However, some expressed a preference for a “hands-on” book. One respondent stated, “I need something in my hands that I can highlight and work with. I appreciate saving paper but it made me not read like I was supposed to.” While it is true that a student could print a copy of the book, perhaps they found the cost of printing to be prohibitive. Another expressed concern about having internet connection to use the online materials, and perhaps they did not realize they could download the PDF to their computer or, as one respondent shared, “to a thumb drive (very convenient)”. Respondents also expressed appreciation for the additional materials provided, such as Power Points and video lectures. The course instructors shared free listening materials through Spotify, which offered both a free version (with ads) and a discounted student subscription (no ads). The majority of Fall 2016 respondents (85%) chose the free version of Spotify, while nearly 15% elected to purchase the ad-free subscription. The respondents indicated they accessed the listening materials via computer (nearly 87%), along with cell phone (11%) and tablet (2%). The majority of the Fall 2016 respondents watched the videos provided by the instructors (93%).

While the majority of students in Fall 2015 considered the textbook and online materials useful (71%,  $n = 53$ ), the number of positive responses was higher for the free textbook and online materials in Fall 2016 (82%,  $n = 73$ ).

In terms of preparation for class, more of the Fall 2016 respondents completed the reading assignments than did Fall 2015 (nearly 81% compared to 77% in Fall 2015). However, the majority of the Fall 2015 respondents spent more time listening to the assigned musical selections, with nearly 27% spending “30-60 minutes” and 41% spending “15-30 minutes”. The majority of the Fall 2016 respondents spent “30-60 minutes” (34%) and “less than 15 minutes” (nearly 33%). The majority of students in the Fall 2015 survey thought their current grade to be an “A” (47%), followed by “B” (nearly 32%), with 0% failing. The majority of Fall 2016 respondents indicated “B” as their current grade (nearly 40%), followed by “A” (nearly 37%). Almost 6% of the Fall 2016 respondents indicated they were failing with an “F”.

Survey respondents from both semesters indicated that the most interesting elements of the class were learning about the different genres of music, learning about the elements of music, attending concerts, and listening to music in class or via playlists. Students reported that they enjoyed attending concerts they might not otherwise have attended if not for being a class requirement.

When asked about the least interesting elements, many survey respondents stated that “nothing” was the least interesting, and that they enjoyed the class and its contents. However, the open-ended responses revealed a wide variety of answers. Some respondents from the Fall 2015 courses described reading the text as the least interesting: “Some chapters were very long and hard to read” and that “the book was hard to learn from because [*sic*] I feel as though if you are not a music major it was hard to grasp the concept from [*sic*] just the book alone”. Others commented negatively about specific chapters in the book, such as “Music for Mourning”, or specific eras of classical music. Students in Fall 2016 also shared that they found much of the class to be interesting, but some respondents stated the least interesting was learning about various genres of classical music, quizzes, Power Points, and taking notes. However, one respondent shared, “At first the classical music was the least interesting because I wasn’t

use [sic] to this type [sic] music. It was boring to me, but by the time the course was over. I actually began to enjoy classical musi [sic]”.

Respondents in Fall 2015 shared that the most useful components of the class included the Power Points and lectures, the textbook and glossary, learning the elements of music, concert reports, and online discussions. The Fall 2016 respondents rated the Spotify playlists and listening, Power Points, lectures, videos, learning the elements of music, and the online textbooks as the most useful components.

When asked about the least useful elements of the class, many respondents from both semesters stated, “none” and that “it was all useful”. Some respondents from Fall 2015 stated a dislike for specific genres of music, including classical and hip-hop. Several found the textbook to be the least useful, and one added, “The Rhapsody account. It’s a great function to have, but it wasn’t convenient to the working student. When I am away from my computer, I couldn’t use it. I can read my book anywhere and should have been able to use this tool on the go as well. (Tablet or Phone).” Some respondents in Fall 2016 found the online textbook the least useful: “Unfortunately, the textbook. Although helpful, it was the least used resource”, while others shared concerns about Spotify working properly. (Although not specified, these responses could be the result of Internet issues in a particular classroom.) Other respondents referenced quizzes and concert reports as the least useful.

The survey asked respondents to share what they hoped to learn from the class. In addition to “more about music”, the responses included music history, music terminology, the different genres of music, the elements of music, how to analyze music and listen for understanding, and a better understanding and appreciation of music.

#### DFW Rates and Comparison

The DFW rates for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Fall 2015 was 19.49% (23 out of 118 students dropped, withdrew, or failed). The DFW rates for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Fall 2016 was 26.09% (36 out of 138 students dropped, withdrew, or failed). This represents an increase in the DFW rate of 6.6 % between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016.

#### Course Retention and Completion Rates

The course retention and completion rate for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Fall 2015 was 85.59% (101 out of 118 students completed the course). The course retention and completion rate for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Fall 2016 was 85.51% (118 out of 118 students completed the course). There was not a significant difference between the course retention and completion rates for Fall 2015 and Fall 2016.

#### Average Course GPA

Two instructors taught MUSC 2101 in both Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 (Fuchs and Howell). The GPA for Fall 2015 (Fuchs) was 3.02 while Fall 2016 (Fuchs) was 2.52. The average GPA in the sections taught by Fuchs lowered by .5. The GPA for Fall 2015 (Howell) was 2.52 while Fall 2016 (Howell) was 2.91. The average GPA in the sections taught by Howell increased by .39.

The failure rate for all MUSC 2101 in Fall 2015 was 6.78%, compared to 11.59% in Fall 2016.

#### Student Success in Learning Objectives

It is challenging to accurately assess student success in learning objectives, because (as is explained in section one) this Textbook Transformation Grant involved not only a development of no-cost learning materials, but also a major revision of the MUSC 2101 curriculum. Learning objectives, methods of instruction and assessment, and student assignments were modified to support the new curriculum. Therefore, there are limited opportunities to appropriately compare student success in learning objectives between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016.

One common assignment in both Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 were written concert reviews. However, it should be noted that while these assignments appear similar on the surface, the expectation, learning objectives, and assessment changed substantially. Specifically, expectations regarding writing quality, musical comprehension and description, and demonstration of appropriate listening was greatly increased in Fall 2016.

The average written concert review grade for Fall 2015 (Fuchs) was 96.46 % while Fall 2016 (Fuchs) was 91.25 percent. The average written concert review grade in the sections taught by Fuchs lowered by 5.21 percent. The average written concert review grade for Fall 2015 (Howell) was 90% while Fall 2016 (Howell) was 88.62 percent. The average written concert review grade in the sections taught by Howell lowered by 1.58 percent.

#### Co-Factors that Influenced Outcomes

The committee has identified several co-factors beyond the Textbook Transformation Grant that may have influenced the outcomes detailed above.

- The committee purposefully adopted more challenging and substantial learning objectives for MUSC 2101. These objectives featured higher level thinking and writing skills. The negative movement in objective measures (DFW and GPA) may partially be attributed to students struggling with the more challenging objectives and assessments.
- The extensive curricular revision, in addition to the textbook transformation, creates challenges in comparing Fall 2015 to Fall 2016.
- In Fall 2015, 49.15% of students took MUSC 2101 online. In Fall 2016, this percentage increased to 64.49%. It has been the subjective experience of this committee that online classes feature a higher DFW and Failure rates than seated sections.
- The comparison between the sections of MUSC 2101 taught by Fuchs is particularly difficult because Fall 2015 was a seated sections while Fall 2016 was online. The differences between these two learning environments, in addition to the curricular changes, makes determining the effect of the Textbook Transformation particularly challenging.
- There will inevitably be learning and adaptation by instructors whenever new learning objectives and course materials are used. It is the opinion of the committee that DFW, Failure Rates, and GPA will increase as the instructors revise and refine their approach to the new course materials and curriculum.

#### Summary

Although objective measurements of academic success were lower in Fall 2016 as compared to Fall 2015, the committee is fully committed to the revised curriculum and learning objectives. The subjective experience of the MUSC 2101 instructors this semester, informal feedback from students, and the establishment of more challenging learning objectives suggest an increase in comprehension and understanding, even though the actual grades have been marginally lower. The committee asserts that the increase in the DFW rate and decrease in course GPA is more the result of the factors listed above

and the small sample of terms being compared rather than inherent flaws in the learning materials and course objectives developed through this grant. Over the next several terms, the committee expects that the DFW rate and course GPA of MUSC 2101 sections will improve as the new curriculum becomes more established.

### **Spring 2017 Addendum**

While the work for this grant was complete by the end the Fall 2016, final report submission was delayed until Spring 2017 due to technical and administrative reasons. As a result, the committee was able to gather an additional semester of data regarding DFW rates, Course Retention and Completion Rates, and Average Course GPA.

#### **Spring 2017 DFW Rates**

The DFW rates for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Spring 2017 was 27.07% (36 out of 133 students dropped, withdrew, or failed). This represents less than a one percent increase from the DFW rate of 26.09% in Fall 2016.

#### **Spring 2017 Course Retention and Completion Rates**

The course retention and completion rate for all sections of MUSC 2101 in Spring 2017 was 84.96% (101 out of 118 students completed the course). This represents less than a one percent decrease from the completion rate of 85.51% in Fall 2016.

#### **2017 Average Course GPA**

Two instructors taught MUSC 2101 in Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017 (Fuchs and Howell). The GPA for Fall 2015 (Fuchs) was 3.02, Fall 2016 (Fuchs) was 2.52, and Spring 2017 (Fuchs) was 3.05. The GPA for Fall 2015 (Howell) was 2.52, Fall 2016 (Howell) was 2.91, and Spring 2017 (Howell) was 2.21.

## **4. Sustainability Plan**

The course materials developed through this textbook transformation grant are stored in two locations: an instructor resource guide on Desire2Learn and a publically accessible LibGuide (<http://clayton.libguides.com/MusicAppreciation>), both hosted by Clayton State University. These materials are available to future instructors of Music Appreciation and are updated regularly as new materials are incorporated into the instruction of the course.

## **5. Future Plans**

This project has increased our awareness of the financial difficulties faced by our students, the barriers those difficulties create, and our ability to remove some of those barriers. When evaluating learning materials, questions of affordability and necessity are given more weight and thought than previous semesters. In addition, the experience of locating and compiling open educational materials has increased our awareness of these materials and the likelihood of use in future sections of this course and other courses that we teach.

We are looking for opportunities to share our experience with open educational resources with other music appreciation instructors through presentations at conferences and other professional gatherings.

## **6. Description of Photograph**

Description of the photograph (Left to right):

Row 1: Prof. Conley, instructor; B. Thompson, student; Dr. Howell, instructor; T. Garrison, student; Dr. Fuchs, team leader and instructor of record

Row 2: C. Sisana, student; J. Draughon, student

Row 3: W. Johnson, student; E. Lampkin, student; A. Alvarado, student; S. Raza, student

Row 4: A. Davis, student; K. Brown, student; M. Willis, student

Row 5: S. Glenn, student; H. Bruce, student; M. Najar, student

Row 6: C. Shadle, student; M. Johnson, student; N. Patel, student

Row 7: K. Brown, student; D. Daniel, student; T. Cottrell, student

Row 8: C. Hatcher, student; M. Guzman, student; N. Bryant-El, student; Q. O'Neal, student