

The Tellez Institute First-Generation Outreach Plan

Lauren Lundy

Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver

LIS 4005: Privilege and Equity

Professor Jimena Sagas

18 January 2023

We at the Tellez institute¹ find that despite the diverse canon held within our archives, and the diversity of our staff of archivists and scholars, we find a patron base that is overwhelmingly white. While we do not believe we can single-handedly fix the multi-faceted and racist trends that lead to a white majority in academia, we recognize that we can and should do more to counteract the issue. To that end, and to honor our founding visionary, the late Dr. Carmen Helena-Tellez, who was herself, Venezuelan American, we propose this plan for the increase in outreach to first-generation students of music and the arts. We hope that we can increase student engagement in these populations by 10% through a combination of listening sessions followed by policy changes.

The first step in our plan is the scheduling of four zoom listening sessions. To increase engagement in these sessions, our team will be reaching out to all schools listed in the NASM² (National Association of Schools of Music) directory and ask for them to send students our way who are first-generation college students and especially first-generation Americans. Any student who participates will be given a \$15 Grubhub gift card for their time and trouble. At the listening session, our discussion leader will ask a series of questions: 1. Do you know what the Tellez Institute is? Have you ever used Tellez resources to get aid in a project? 2. If you have used Tellez Institute resources, was there ever a topic you wanted to study but could not find materials on? 3. What do you think are the unique struggles you face in the music academy as a first-generation student and immigrant? What aides could ease that transition and help you succeed in this career? 4. How can an archives institution help you on your way?

¹ The Tellez Institute is a 501-C3 academic archive dedicated to the preservation of classical music written by marginalized composers. They are a large open-source academic database with a physical repository located in New York City, New York. Due to generous support from donors and agreements with academic libraries across the country, Tellez Institute resources are free to access for all students and scholars of music who wish to pursue them.

² *Accredited Institutions*. National Association of Schools of Music.

After conducting these listening sessions, we found some common threads. For example, 64% of participants were interested in multi-lingual finding aides for objects in our collections. 88% mentioned financial barriers as their main issue in pursuing music as a career. 51% of students surveyed cited that there was a topic that they could not find enough information on that interested them, and 26% percent of students said that they had not used the Tellez Institute before but were interested in using it for future projects. From this data, we had a meeting with all the archivists hired by the institute to determine how best to assess these needs and do better for this community.

From this meeting, we developed the FGSP, the first-generation scholars program. This is a paid summer internship that allows for first-generation students who speak multiple languages to come for a 10-week program where they can work on translating finding aides and increasing our musico-cultural competencies. This will culminate in a special presentation on our website of intern work premiering in early September 2023. We will be opening applications on February 1 and will provide payment for the finalists to come interview in person during their spring break. Once an intern completes their summer, they are welcome to apply for a special grant funding for their research up to \$25,000, up until five years post placement. This program is estimated to cost the institute 2 million dollars per year and will be reevaluated at the five-year mark to ensure our students are going on to create great value in the community.

In addition to this, our archivist fellowship program, a research-intensive post-doctoral program will be expanded to include the role of researching and providing materials for as many of the gaps students mentioned to us in the listening session as possible. We will also be working with our web developer to include a way for anyone to anonymously suggest a topic that could require more materials, and a post-doctoral student will be assigned to investigate this. So far,

this has led to a 30% increase in Zarzuelas available in our collection and a near doubling of our indigenous composer's database among other positive trends.

We at the archives compared our findings with the relevant research in our area, looking at the struggle and successes of first-generation college students. While many of the articles emphasized the funding-first priority, our thoughts were further expanded by some of the key ideas found during this time of deliberation, that we hope to include more intentionally as we expand our program. "I Made Myself Fit In: Jonny's Story" is a first-hand account of a young music educator who recently graduated from undergrad as a first-generation student. This account highlighted the lack of formal music training available to students coming from working-class backgrounds, and the need for an appreciation of the informal and culturally informed musical background these students are coming from. The music academy as it is currently structured is entirely based on the Western hegemony, and as such tends to diminish or ignore entirely any music that is not from this very specific place and time. In this author's personal experience, as both a student and professor of music, I have seen young people who were extremely talented but were not educated ahead of time in music theory, and were unable to pass those classes, especially when they were surrounded by peers who had been studying the subject for years. This was seconded in "The Perspectives of Two First-Generation College Students Pursuing Doctoral Degrees in Music Education." The two women sharing their experience in this article seconded Jonny on the issue of background, though they referred to this with the term of "cognitive maps." They also spent more time highlighting a trend of lack of familial support. Many first-generation college students are pressured into attending a major that is "guaranteed" to gain that student access to a better life, and so it can be difficult for a family to get on board with a costly education for something that seems as risky as a music degree. In the

future, we hope to extend our program by investing more money to provide scholarships for talented middle and high-school kids from low-income areas to pursue music lessons. This is not part of our original role out of the program, but, with adequate funding, we'd like to work with community partners to roll this out in the NYC area in 2025, with a possible expansion to other cities should we be successful.

As we are intending to market our programs more to younger people, we will be investing in social media marketing, along with providing booths at all major music and music education conferences. It is our hope that we can make ourselves known to professors who will then recommend our services to their students. Our direct marketing campaign will begin with Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. All ads will be multi-lingual and highlight some of the incredible composers housed in our collection. At the one, three, and five-year marks we will evaluate and update our marketing campaign to see if it has resulted in any increase in first-generation college students in their engagement with our institute. We will consider anything above a 7.5% increase in these populations attendance on our site to indicate success but are shooting for 10% as a reach goal. In addition to student feedback, we are building our model off financing first programs like the Artist-in-Training Institute at Opera Theater of Saint Louis³, the Sphinx Scholarship program⁴, and the diversity fellowship program at the Chautauqua Institute⁵. All have shown incredible results by funding first and funding often for young students to combat the affluency bias in the classical music world today. It is our hope that by extending funding and support in the ways outlined above, we can significantly increase the diversity of our user-base, and in turn the diversity of those entering the musical academy.

³ *Bayer Fund Artist-in-Training Program*. Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

⁴ *Artist Development*. Sphinx Organization.

⁵ *Diversity Fellowship Program*. Chautauqua Institution.

Works Cited

- Accredited institutions.* National Association of Schools of Music. (2016, June 27). Retrieved January 18, 2023, from <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/directory-lists/accredited-institutions/>
- Artist development.* Sphinx Organization. (n.d.). Retrieved January 18, 2023, from <https://www.sphinxmusic.org/artist-development>
- Bayer Fund Artists-in-training program.* Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. (n.d.). Retrieved January 18, 2023, from <https://opera-stl.org/explore-learn/bayer-fund-artists-in-training-program/>
- Diversity fellowship program.* Chautauqua Institution. (2022, September 7). Retrieved January 18, 2023, from <https://www.chq.org/schedule/resident-programs/chautauqua-symphony-orchestra/diversity-fellows/>
- Draves, T. J., & Vargas, J. E. (2021). "I made myself fit in": Johnny's Story. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 70(1), 4–21.
- Vasil, M., & McCall, J. M. (2017). The perspectives of two first-generation college students pursuing doctoral degrees in music education. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 27(2), 67–81.