leagues across the county contributed recommended selections for all-campus choirs. That list can be found by visiting https://acda.org/repertoire/college-and-university-choirs-repertoire or by scanning the QR code.

Conclusion

Peisner and Tubiolo agree that the all-campus choir can be missing from the collective consciousness. If you listen to recordings of collegiate choirs online, chances are you will hear the university's flagship ensemble, not the all-campus choir. At conferences, it is often the same. Tubiolo notes that working with this level of choir also requires a unique pedagogical skill set. If we can make all-campus choirs more visible within the wider choral community, this will equip us all for greater success, she adds.

In summary, this energizing conversation revealed the depth and breadth of possibilities within the all-campus choir setting. Correspondingly, it underscored the need for greater advocacy for these types of collegiate choirs. If you lead an all-campus choir, or would like to continue the conversation, please reach out by email: daleyc1@duq.edu.

2-Year College Choirs

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Building a Choral Community in a 2-Year College
by Brandon Elliott

The choral program within a 2-year college environment presents distinct challenges and opportunities. Students in these institutions often come from diverse backgrounds and have varying levels of musical experience. This transient nature of enrollment can make establishing a cohesive and sustained community complex. However, fostering a sense of belonging and community within a choral ensemble is crucial for promoting student engagement, retention, and the program's overall success. This article explores strategies for building and maintaining a robust choral community in the context of a 2-year college. While many of these strategies might perhaps be obvious to many choral directors, it always helps to reassess how we shape culture within our choral programs.

Understanding the 2-Year College Student Demographic

Students at 2-year colleges represent various life experiences and educational backgrounds. Many students are recent high school graduates, while others are returning to education after time in the workforce or other life pursuits. This diversity extends to their musical experiences. Some students have significant choral backgrounds, while others may be encountering structured music education for the first time.

The relatively short duration of students' enrollment—often limited to one or two years, though some may stick around for several years—can complicate the process of building an enduring community within the choir. Unlike 4-year institutions, where students typically remain in the program for an extended period, 2-year colleges require choral directors to continuously adapt to a changing membership base. This fluidity can disrupt continuity and a sense of shared purpose within the ensemble.

Recruitment and Onboarding

Effective community building begins with thoughtful recruitment and onboarding processes. Directors should aim to attract a diverse group of students by actively engaging with various campus populations and ensuring that the choral program is accessible to students with different levels of musical experience. It is essential to communicate that the choir is a welcoming space for all students, regardless of their prior exposure to choral music or major.

Once students are recruited, the onboarding pro-

cess should emphasize the importance of community within the choir. Initial rehearsals can include activities designed to foster interpersonal connections, such as structured introductions, group discussions about shared goals, and social events that allow students to interact outside the formal rehearsal setting. Establishing these connections early on helps create a foundation for a supportive and collaborative environment. Providing recruits with tangible "swag" (e.g., a water bottle with your choir's logo) is another effective way for people to feel connected to the program immediately.

Creating a Sense of Belonging

A crucial component of building a choral community is cultivating a sense of belonging among students. Directors can achieve this by organizing regular social activities that allow students to develop personal connections outside of rehearsal. These activities might include informal gatherings, shared meals, festivals, field trips, or attendance at performances as a group. By fostering relationships among choir members, directors can help create a more cohesive ensemble that works together more effectively in rehearsal and performance.

Peer mentorship programs can also play a significant role in building community. By pairing new members with returning students, directors can provide newcomers with a support system that helps them navigate the challenges of joining a new ensemble. This mentorship not only aids in the acclimatization process but also strengthens the overall sense of unity within the choir.

Group Travel as a Community-Building Tool

Group travel offers a unique and powerful way to strengthen the bonds within a choral ensemble. Traveling together for performances, festivals, or workshops allows students to share experiences outside the usual rehearsal environment, fostering deeper connections and a stronger sense of unity. While the costs associated with group travel can be prohibitive for some programs, especially within 2-year colleges, creative solutions such as fundraising initiatives, grant opportu-

nities, and partnerships with on-campus resources can make travel more feasible.

By involving students in fundraising—whether through organizing events, seeking donations, or collaborating with campus organizations—directors make travel accessible to all students and give students a sense of ownership and investment in the experience. Moreover, these shared efforts contribute to developing a communal identity and pride in the ensemble, further reinforcing the community bonds established through the travel experience.

Establishing a Group Identity

Developing a clear group identity is another vital aspect of community building. Directors can cultivate this identity through consistent messaging about the choir's goals, values, and vision. Regularly communicating these elements can help students feel connected to the larger purpose of the ensemble. It encourages them to take ownership of their roles within the group.

In addition to verbal communication, visual elements can reinforce the choir's identity. This might include creating choir-specific apparel, such as t-shirts or jackets, that students can wear with pride. Social media presence can also help with this; several media-savvy students are likely willing to run an account. Establishing traditions, such as annual performances or signature repertoire, can also contribute to a sense of continuity and shared experience, even as individual members come and go.

Building a choral community in a 2-year college requires intentional effort and thoughtful strategies that address the unique characteristics of the student population. By focusing on inclusive recruitment, fostering personal connections, utilizing group travel, and developing a strong group identity, choral directors can create an environment that enhances student engagement and ensures the program's long-term success. The cultivation of such a community is essential for maximizing the educational and artistic potential of the 2-year college choral ensemble.