Dear Spartan,

Welcome to the College of Music! I am excited to have you join our graduate program and look forward to seeing you around the building this fall.

As a Michigan State University graduate student, your professional development starts the moment you arrive on campus. Although our graduates pursue a diverse array of paths after completing their degrees, the professional standard for twenty-first century musicians is to possess an entrepreneurial mindset, actively participating in cultivating new career opportunities in the arts and developing future audiences. The Running Start program is here to support your development of this entrepreneurial mindset through programming, advising, and curriculum, and support you in the acquisition of these skills, whether you are pursuing a traditional career path or crafting your own path.

Below are five opportunities for you to maximize your career readiness during your graduate degree:

1. **Career advising**: A graduate degree in music can open up several different professional options. Have you thought about what success looks like for you, and what additional knowledge, skills, or experiences you will need to maximize your success in your desired career path(s)? Make an appointment to develop a plan for your professional development, or stop by to review (or create) professional materials, like a website, CV, or social media presence. Not sure yet where you are headed? Make appointments with both our [graduate academic advisor](mailto:susan.hoekstra@msu.edu), Susan Hoekstra, and [myself](mailto:runningstart@msu.edu) to coordinate your academic coursework and career development.

2. **Running Start-workshop series**: During the year, Running Start offers workshops with guest artists and experts who provide fresh perspectives on 21st-century arts careers and training on business skills you may need in your career, as well as knowledge about the job market. Stay up-to-date on our events by following Running Start on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/runningstartmus/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/runningstartmus), or [Instagram](https://instagram.com/runningstartmus/). We also share news of other College of Music visiting artists. There are many chances to work with these guest experts—last semester alone, there were over 25 visiting artists with national and international reputations at the College of Music.

3. **Entrepreneurial opportunities and courses**: Graduate school is a great time to channel your creativity into an entrepreneurial endeavor. [Read about the DMA students who won second and third place our Running Start Competition](https://www.msu.edu/runningstart/competition/) this year, and start thinking about starting a project, ensemble, initiative, or business of your own for the 2017 [Running Start Competition](https://www.msu.edu/runningstart/competition/). Take MUS 496 (Your Music Business), a 1-2 credit course that allows students to create a business plan for a new venture in music and learn how to market and pitch it to potential donors. You can even explore resources in Greater Lansing, such as [the Hatching](https://www.msu.edu/runningstart/hatching/), to secure funding for your idea.
4. **Running Start-experiential learning:** Gaining experience in your field can be a critical part of setting yourself up for success after graduation. Begin exploring some of our performance, teaching, and internship opportunities available to you as a graduate student, such as the **Greater Lansing Community Concert Series**, the **Educational Engagement Residency**, or the **Certificate in College Teaching**. Make an advising appointment to discuss other ways of gaining experience, such as competitions, conferences, or part-time work. You can also browse information about music festivals, internships, jobs and more on our website.

5. **MSU Graduate School Career Success:** In addition to Running Start, the Graduate School provides career support to doctoral students through **PhD Career Services**. Take advantage of their multiple online resources, workshops, and on-campus events to gain a cross-disciplinary view of career paths within and outside of academia.

The twenty-first century provides a dynamic environment for developing new opportunities in the arts, and I am excited to help you plan how to translate your passion into your profession. To get inspired and see how some of our MSU alumni have developed careers as performers, educators, composers, administrators, and entrepreneurs, check out our **Running Start Spotlight interviews**.

I have included my contact information below if you have questions for me before you get to campus; don’t hesitate to reach out if I can be of assistance. Enjoy the rest of your summer; I will see you soon!

All the best,

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