

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION PROJECT:** A Study of Factors that Influence First-Year Nonmusic Majors' Decisions to Participate in Music Ensembles at Small Liberal Arts Colleges in Indiana

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The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that influence first-year nonmusic majors' decisions regarding participation in music ensembles at small liberal arts colleges in Indiana. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data. The data collected was analyzed to determine significant differences between the nonmusic majors who have chosen to participate in an ensemble and those who have chosen to discontinue their participation in a music ensemble. The colleges that participated in the study were four-year liberal arts, offered one music ensemble that was open to all students, and had a total enrollment of between 800 and 2,100 students. The sample population consisted of first-year students who had participated in a high school ensemble at least one year. Out of 447 respondents, 162 students were eligible for the study. Nineteen subquestions were used to guide the analysis, insight, and to interpret the survey responses and answer the main research question.

There does not appear to be one factor that influences students' decisions to participate in college ensembles, but several that interact together. Results indicated that students who became ensemble participants in college are confident in their musical abilities, in their intrinsic musical values, and are confident of being an asset to a college ensemble. Ensemble participants are influenced by the advice from friends, parents, high school directors, and college advisers; availability of ensemble credits; and influenced by the quality of the college ensemble. Significant relationships were discovered between students' academic majors, musical background, practice hours, high school ensemble quality, learning musical elements, unrelated musical activities, and students' perceptions of their musical abilities that may affect their decisions to participate in college ensembles.

Students who become ensemble nonparticipants in college were concerned with issues of time commitments and conflicts with work, rehearsals, and performances. The survey results showed that these students either do not view music as an avocation or understand the benefits that could positively affect their adult lives. Ensemble nonparticipants tend to be less confident in their musical abilities. Results indicated that negative experiences in high school music ensembles affect their decisions to participate.