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Should We Hire the Pianist or the Attorney?

A Study of the Educational Profiles of Music Industry Faculty

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Abstract

Hiring a music industry studies tenure-track faculty member can be a difficult task because there is no universally accepted corresponding doctorate degree within the discipline. What constitutes a terminal degree in music industry studies is determined by the institution and department where the program is housed and not necessarily the music industry studies discipline. Search committee members, especially those from outside the music industry studies field, may have a difficult task finding a suitable candidate who can meet the needs of the industry, which values professional experience; the requirements of central administration, which values academic credentials; and the needs of students, who want a relevant education leading to employment.

Finding a candidate who has the prerequisite professional experience and whose academic experience conforms to institutional scholarship expectations and norms not only creates potential headaches for search committee members outside of the discipline, but, as noted in a 2007 National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) report, some candidates hired to teach in the discipline have struggled to gain promotion at their institutions. Now thirteen years after the publication of the NASM report, this study looks at the educational profiles of music industry professors who are tenured or on the tenure track to provide guidance to search committees charged with hiring a tenure-track music industry studies colleague and evaluates if the issues highlighted in the NASM report still exist.

Keywords: music industry studies, music industry degrees, music industry faculty, music industry faculty tenure, music industry faculty promotion

Introduction

After years of pressure from falling enrollment and an institutional shift towards professional studies and away from a liberal arts educational model, a music department convinces the administration to approve a music industry degree program to increase enrollment and align the department closer with the institution's mission. With the help of local music industry professionals teaching as adjunct faculty members, the program is a success. Due to the increase in student numbers, the administration approves a tenure-track faculty line for the music industry program.

The hiring committee writes a job description that is consistent with current norms in the discipline—requiring the candidate hold a relevant terminal degree based on the institution's terminal degree requirements, and have relevant music industry experience.¹ The job is posted nationally and soon applications begin to trickle in.

As the hiring committee members thumb through the applicant pool, a number of questions arise: what is a relevant terminal degree for a professor of music industry studies? Does our institution acknowledge master's degrees or professional doctorate degrees as terminal degrees for a tenure-track position? Should we look at candidates with a Juris Doctor or MBA who have no experience in academia? Is a master's or baccalaureate degree sufficient if the candidate has significant music industry experience? Will candidates with the most music industry experience, but non-traditional terminal degrees, be able to face the rigors of scholarship expected by our institution? Since the position will be housed in the music department, should we consider only candidates with advanced music degrees? The committee may even question whether they even understand the qualifications that are necessary to fill the position since their educational backgrounds are likely rooted in traditional music studies. They may question whether their backgrounds even prepares them to assess a candidate's business and legal knowledge and experience.

While the above hypothetical scenario may not accurately reflect the manner in which all music industry studies programs are created, there are a few generalities that are consistent with many of them. First, based on the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association's (MEIEA) member institutions, over 70 percent of music industry studies programs are housed in a music department.² While there are a number of notable programs housed in the communications or business departments, many programs were originally developed in a music department, though pro-

gram histories are difficult to trace.³ Second, it is conceivable that the first tenure-track faculty position dedicated to that program, and possibly subsequent searches, were hired by faculty members whose areas of expertise were rooted in a traditional music specialty since the majority of MEIEA institutions have only one full-time faculty designated to music industry studies.⁴ Because of this, the committee may struggle to evaluate the significance of a potential candidates' education or music industry experience because most positions require a significant amount of business and legal knowledge which typically falls outside of the traditional musical scholar's field of study. Also, the committee might be concerned about candidates with the prerequisite professional experience but who hold degrees outside the departmental or institutional norm due to the importance of hiring faculty members who will be able to withstand the scrutiny of a university tenure committee. Finally, because there is no specific doctorate degree for music industry studies, the terminal degree requirement is often open to degrees from many disciplines of study and is determined by each institution's definition of a terminal degree with little or no guidance from the discipline of music industry studies as to what constitutes an appropriate degree.⁵ Therefore, the committee must analyze how each candidate's terminal degree applies to their professional experience or scholarship in the music industry. In light of these challenges, the committee must evaluate a candidate's potential ability to progress in the ranks of academia and the administration must ensure that the candidate has credentials that are in line with institutional policies.

The purpose of this study is to determine what are currently considered to be relevant terminal degrees in music industry studies and in what disciplines current music industry studies professors obtained their highest earned degree. Most job postings for tenure-track music industry studies positions require the candidates to have a relevant terminal degree and a number of years of experience working in the music industry. While some job postings occasionally ask for, or prefer, specific degree types or experience, the language is typically broad and open to interpretation by search committee members or hiring managers.⁶ Because of the emphasis on experience, a candidate's degree type is not the only factor that is predictive of potential success in academia or the ability to be an effective instructor. While a study that considers professional experience should be considered in the future, this study provides data and analysis to learn which terminal degrees successful faculty in the discipline have obtained. Hopefully, this

study will provide some guidance and insight for administrators and faculty members outside the music industry studies discipline who are tasked with making hiring decisions.

This study focuses on faculty members who have the rank of assistant professor or higher and only includes those who teach music business or music law courses as opposed to music technology courses. As mentioned, because most degrees, aside from the master's degree in music industry studies, do not directly relate to the field, understanding the educational backgrounds of music industry faculty based on rank might yield some indication of the future success of instructors recently hired into tenure-track positions. With that in mind, this study is in no way intended to bar certain degree types from the discipline. However, since there are no bright line rules within the discipline concerning educational background and, in some cases, candidates are being hired into the discipline by committees where there is no committee member or a minority of committee members with any expertise in the music industry studies discipline, it is important to provide some guidance to ensure qualified candidates are not kept out of the music industry studies discipline due to departmental or administrative ignorance.

A number of inconsistencies concerning hiring, tenure, and promotion in the music industry studies discipline were outlined in a report by the National Association of Schools of Music in 2007.⁷ The report highlights issues with tenure committees' difficulties understanding scholarship in the music industry studies discipline and deemed hiring practices where some departments consider a bachelor's degree to be a terminal degree in the discipline as problematic.⁸ The report raised concern that faculty with only a bachelor's degree may not have sufficient academic background to reach the level of research and scholarship expected for tenure and promotion. It should be noted that the report does not provide data of which degrees were held by music industry studies faculty who were successfully promoted by their institutions.⁹ Now, over a decade later, this current study looks specifically at what degrees are held by music industry studies faculty members and evaluates what degrees they hold based on rank to determine if issues with hiring and promotion still exist in music industry studies.¹⁰

This study was influenced by one conducted by Betty Medsger in 1996 that reviewed the hiring trends in the journalism discipline. It concluded that programs were hiring candidates based on academic creden-

tials as opposed to work experience.¹¹ This was a shift in practice in the discipline, and the study's conclusions caused a great deal of public tension between the journalism community and academic programs.¹² One of the goals of this study is to see if there is any indication that music industry studies, which is a professional studies discipline, was heading in a similar direction. If so, this would indicate that an additional study is needed to examine whether the music industry studies discipline is serving the industry for which it claims to prepare students. A large number of faculty members holding PhD Degrees, in and of itself, would not indicate that institutions were hiring faculty in the music industry studies discipline based on academic credentials as opposed to those who have experience in the field. However, if that were the case, it would be unusual since the MBA and Juris Doctor (JD) are often preferred, or required, degree types for high level industry positions and anecdotal evidence suggests a PhD can hinder an applicant seeking a job in the music industry.¹³ While this study does not directly address this issue of experience verses academic credentials, degree types may show the possibility of a hiring trend that favors scholars over professional practitioners.

Below are the central questions the collected data directly answer:

1. How common are tenure-track and tenured faculty members who hold a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned?
2. Based on rank, what type of academic degrees do music industry studies faculty members hold as their highest degree earned?
3. Based on rank, what fields of study are most common among music industry studies faculty members?

Methodology

This study used data collection techniques that have been used by similar studies in other disciplines to determine the prevalence of certain types of terminal degrees of current faculty.¹⁴ The data was collected from university and college faculty websites, university catalogs, faculty members' biographies (from publications and presentations), interviews, university handbooks, other news articles, the LinkedIn social media site, and publicly posted Curriculum Vitae. The faculty members sampled were from institutions that were listed as members of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association on the group's website. Based on publicly available information, eighty-eight faculty members from

MEIEA institutions met the criteria for this study based on the information each school or faculty member publicly provided.

While music technology is a crucial part of many music industry programs, this study focuses on faculty members who primarily teach music business, music law, recording industry history, and arts management related courses as opposed to those who teach music technology, songwriting, coach commercial music groups, or primarily teach traditional music courses. Especially in smaller programs, there are faculty members whose teaching load crosses over between music business and technology, general music, or commercial music courses. In those cases, professors who taught at least two music business courses during the previous academic year are included in the study. The above information was publicly available through the institutions' online searchable course catalogs.

Data was only collected on faculty members who had the rank of assistant professor or higher. Faculty members who hold the titles of lecturer, instructor, or adjunct professor were not included. One problematic issue, in terms of academic rank, is that the data collected concerning faculty with the title assistant professor are not necessarily on a tenure-track depending on the institution and nature of the position. Because of this, the overall terminal degree data of the group may not accurately reflect the tenure-track population.

Findings

1. How common are tenure-track and tenured faculty members who hold a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned?

As shown in Figure 1, only 5 percent of professors in the MEIEA faculty database hold a bachelor's degree as their highest degree earned. It is possible that some faculty who now hold a master's degree or higher were initially hired with a bachelor's degree. The NASM report in 2007 was very deliberate in highlighting the issue of music industry studies programs appointing faculty without graduate credentials but failed to list the percentage of faculty with only bachelor's degrees. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the number of faculty with the bachelor's as the highest degree earned has changed since the NASM report was issued.¹⁵ However, 5 percent of faculty without a graduate degree may be considered problematic by some observers. Since it is not unheard of for an institution to grant a tenure-track position to an individual without graduate credentials,

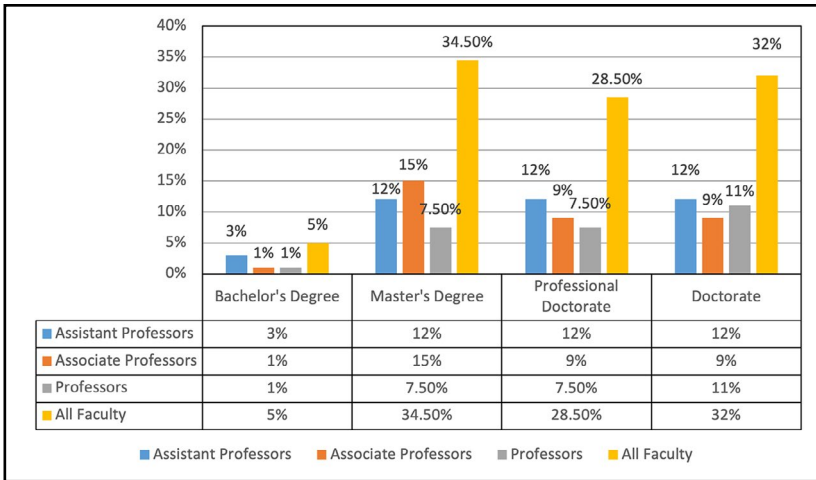


Figure 1. Based on eighty-eight faculty members from MEIEA member schools. Percentages have been rounded.

but who has made significant contributions to a discipline, it is unlikely this practice will end considering many music industry studies programs value professional expertise and focus on experiential learning. Further, there are many advantages to having a faculty member with significant professional experience on staff and in the classroom. While the practice may be more common in music industry studies programs than in other disciplines, it does not appear to be a common practice among tenure-track or tenured faculty and is instead reserved for special situations.

2. Based on rank, what type of academic degrees do music industry studies faculty members hold as their highest degree earned?

Academic degree types have been divided into categories: bachelor’s degrees (above), master’s degrees, professional doctorate, and doctorate. Each category is separately addressed below.

Doctorate

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is universally accepted as the highest degree one can earn in most disciplines. However, this category also included Doctor of Musical Arts degrees and one Doctor of Arts degree because they are treated as terminal degrees in their respective disciplines.¹⁶ Even though the specialization may correspond to a discipline where one could earn a PhD, they are generally acceptable degree types for tenure-

track positions.¹⁷ While there are certain differences between these degree types, they were categorized together since they are all generally considered terminal degrees.

Thirty-two percent of music industry studies faculty hold a PhD or similar degree. This may be equivalent to the number of PhD instructors in other disciplines where the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is often considered a terminal degree, like in theater or art. It should be noted that the MFA is not accepted as a terminal degree by all institutions in those fields since a PhD is offered in art and theatre.¹⁸ This may be due to the professional experience requirements for most positions in music industry studies programs since it typically takes four years or longer to finish a PhD. Also, obtaining a PhD in the music industry, based on experiential evidence, does not lead to advancement in the industry.¹⁹ The number of doctorate-holding faculty currently represented in this study suggests that relevant experience outweighs academic credentials in hiring decisions. This is not to infer that current faculty cannot have both experience and a PhD, but since 68 percent of the faculty surveyed do not hold a traditional doctorate degree, academic credentials are not the determining factor for hiring individuals to teach music industry studies. With that said, it does not mean that a traditional doctorate degree is not preferred in some cases.

The one category where faculty members with a doctorate degree seem to have greater success, compared to those earning a professional doctorate or master's, is at the rank of professor where 11 percent of all faculty with a doctorate hold that rank compared to 7.5 percent of those with master's degrees and 7.5 percent of those with professional doctorates. The 2007 NASM report outlined issues music industry studies faculty members were having achieving tenure and promotion at their institutions. While the data show that faculty without a doctorate are being promoted to associate professor at the same or greater numbers than faculty with doctorate degrees, a significantly higher number of doctorate degree holders have achieved the rank of professor compared to faculty with other degrees. It is possible that some institutions tend to award the rank of professor based on academic credentials. Another possibility is that faculty earn their doctorate as associate professors to achieve full rank. Finally, it may be that faculty members with master's and professional doctorates struggle to meet the high level of scholarship required for promotion to the highest rank. Regardless, looking at the data over time will indicate if this is an ongoing issue or just the current state of the discipline.

Professional Doctorate

Overall, the number of faculty members in each category of degree type, with the exception of the bachelor's degree, are fairly even. The numbers do change based on rank but not in a manner that would lead a reasonable observer to conclude that success in music industry academia is limited to a certain degree type. There is one trend in the music industry studies discipline that is unique—the number of faculty who hold a professional doctorate, which is 28.5 percent. All of those who hold a professional doctorate have earned a Juris Doctor, which is addressed below. While it is not uncommon for practitioners in a field where a professional doctorate is needed for licensure to teach one or two courses directly related to their field, it is not common for them to hold a full-time faculty position. Music industry studies is an exception. As noted above, there may be an issue with gaining the rank of professor with this degree type, but 16.5 percent of music industry studies faculty hold the JD and have successfully achieved promotion at their institutions.

Master's

Music industry faculty members whose highest degree earned is a master's degree make up the largest number of music industry studies faculty at 34.5 percent. Faculty in this category make up the largest number of associate professors. This indicates that a number of institutions consider a master's to be a terminal degree in music industry studies.

This is an important finding. There are disciplines which have historically accepted the MFA as a terminal degree (e.g., art, design, theatre, and creative writing) that now have PhD holders and candidates applying for positions.²⁰ One might wonder if a requirement for a doctorate will be more widely adopted in music industry studies. However, this study shows that, at the moment, there is a practice for institutions to widely accept a master's as a terminal degree in the discipline.

3. Based on rank, what fields of study are most common among music industry studies faculty members?

Figure 2 shows the academic disciplines of the highest degree earned by the faculty members in this study. There are generally three home departments where music industry studies programs have emerged from or transitioned into. In most cases, music industry studies programs are developed and housed in a music department. Currently, over 70 percent

of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association member programs are housed in a music department according to MEIEA membership.²¹

Music industry studies programs are also found in business and communications departments. Because of this, those disciplines are specifically listed in Figure 2 along with music business, arts administration, and law since they relate to the field. Since there are a number of faculty members who have a degree outside of these categories—in the education and humanities disciplines—those are listed as well.

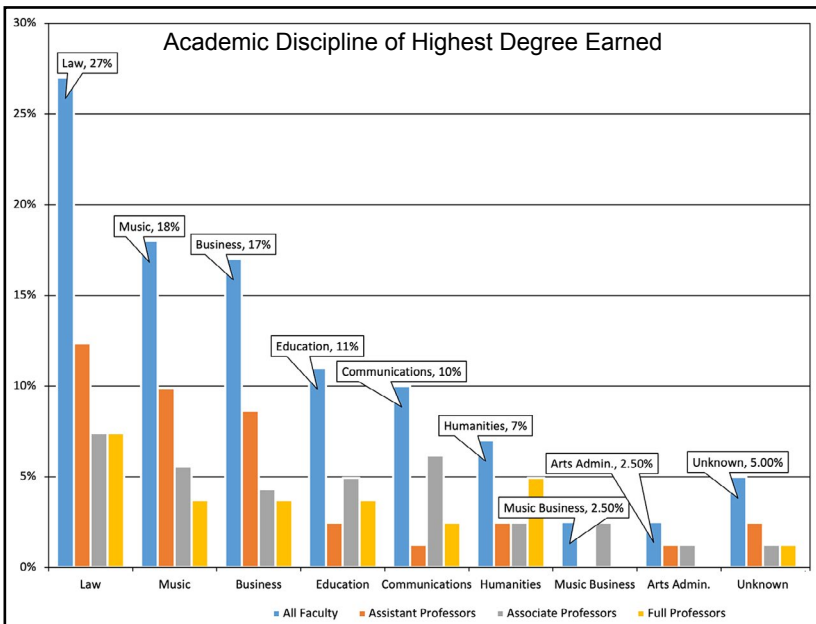


Figure 2. Discipline of highest degree earned. Based on eighty-eight faculty from MEIEA member schools. Percentages have been rounded.

Law

In general, the most prevalent terminal degree in music industry studies is the Juris Doctor (JD). Based on the data collected, 27 percent hold a JD as the highest degree earned and the JD Degree is the most prevalent in each rank.

While it might seem unusual to an outsider that a terminal degree in the law would be the most common degree in the music industry field,

many fundamental concepts in music industry studies are based on the legal framework of contracts and intellectual property. There are a number of jobs in the industry that require attorneys and, often, music industry attorneys need to understand the industry on a macro and micro level while dealing with a variety of specific complex legal and business issues across different sectors in the music and entertainment industries.

The practice of hiring faculty with a JD has faced scrutiny in some disciplines because it is not a research degree but a professional degree. For example, in 2007 undergraduate and graduate criminal justice programs were instructed by their accreditation agency, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, that they may only hire one JD for every ten faculty members.²² The number of instructors in music industry studies with a JD indicates that it is an acceptable terminal degree at a number of institutions.

Music

Overall, 18 percent of music industry studies faculty members hold a music degree as their highest degree earned. Roughly 62 percent of this group hold a doctorate degree and 38 percent hold a master's as their highest degree. Of those whose highest degree is a master's, only one also holds a second master's in the business field according to the data. Since over 70 percent of MEIEA members' music industry programs are located in a music department, and it is common for search committees to hire faculty whose backgrounds resemble their own, it might be logical to hypothesize that search committees would lean towards candidates with a graduate degree in music. This does not appear to be the case. While it may be presumable that administrators might avoid hiring outside the music field to show they are in alignment with the accreditation agency or institutional standards, the number of music industry studies professors who hold a terminal degree in music shows that, in general, some administrators are open to supporting hires with credentials outside the norm of the department. It is unusual for a tenure-track faculty member to hold a terminal degree in a discipline outside that of the home department, yet this study indicates it does occur with regularity in music industry studies.

Business

Seventeen percent of music industry studies faculty members have a degree in business as their highest degree earned, and all of these degrees are master's degrees. The majority hold the MBA degree but there are a

few individuals holding a Master of Science. At roughly fourteen percent, the MBA is also the second most common graduate degree held by music industry studies faculty. No one in the study possesses a PhD in Business. It should be noted that some faculty members in the study hold degrees that could be considered business-related but they were granted from a communications department.

Education

Eleven percent of music industry studies faculty members hold a graduate degree in education. Of the individuals in this category, 50 percent hold a doctorate and 50 percent hold a master's degree. This is interesting since these degrees are largely designed to make one an expert in teaching and learning and are typically earned by those pursuing educational administrative positions or to teach in an education department at the university level.²³ While the vast majority of job postings for music industry studies faculty positions require a terminal degree related to the music industry, a doctorate in education indicates a candidate is an expert in teaching and learning but it does not, on its face, indicate advanced knowledge of the music industry.²⁴ With that said, this study does not look at professional experience or master's degree types of those who hold a doctorate. Therefore, there may be other factors that could lead a search committee to consider a terminal degree seemingly unrelated to music industry studies.

Communications

Because in recent years the music industry has been significantly impacted by how consumers share data and interact with music and media, and because the interest in cultural studies continues to increase, it would not be surprising to see a rise in the number of assistant professors with a terminal degree in communications. Instead, there are fewer music industry professors holding a communications degree at the assistant level compared to the associate level. As indicated in Figure 2, ten percent hold a degree in the communications field of study. Of those faculty members, 60 percent have earned a PhD and 40 percent have earned a master's as their highest degree.

Humanities

Eighty-six percent of people in the study whose highest degree is in the humanities earned a PhD. The disciplines vary, but American Studies is the most common.

Master of Music Business and Master of Arts Management

The faculty members who hold a master's degrees in arts administration or music industry as their highest earned degree may be discussed together because both degrees directly relate to music industry studies. Since there has been an increase in the number of master's in music industry degree programs, it is possible this degree type could create a pathway from graduation to academia without a number of years practicing in the field. Based on the numbers, it does not appear that recent graduates from these programs are being hired in this manner. This could indicate that graduates of the master's programs are more likely to seek jobs in the industry as opposed to higher education. It is also possible that search committees have a preference to hire candidates who have a more traditional degree, like the MBA. However, because the degree is relatively new, few graduates have the experience in the field the hiring committees are looking for. The data suggest that music industry related master's programs have not, at this point, become the preferred pathway to tenure-track jobs. This is not to say such a degree should not weigh as a positive factor alongside professional experience for potential faculty candidates but a master's in music industry is not necessarily favored over other related degrees.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the general profile of the academic background of music industry studies faculty, to see if there are any issues with tenure and promotion with candidates who hold a degree other than a PhD or other research-based doctorate, and to provide some guidance to help hiring committees and administrators, who are from outside of the music industry studies field, make informed decisions when hiring music industry studies faculty members.

While the profile varies, there are some clear conclusions that can be drawn based on the data. First, there is no PhD degree type that is commonly held by music industry studies faculty. As Figure 2 indicates, faculty who do hold PhDs and other research-based doctorates earned their degrees in fields as far apart as Educational Leadership to American Studies. It is more common for music industry studies faculty members to hold

a Juris Doctor, a master's degree, or bachelor's degree, which account for approximately 65 percent of faculty sampled in this study. The most common degree type in the music industry studies field is the JD which accounts for 27 percent of music industry studies faculty. It may be unique to music industry studies that some job postings specify the JD as a preferred degree.²⁵ Also, it raises the idea that music industry studies hiring committees and university administrators might prefer candidates with a JD and experience in the field over those with strong academic credentials since a PhD is often perceived as preferable to a JD in other undergraduate programs in fields related to the study of law.²⁶ The fact that the majority of faculty do not hold a PhD or other research doctorate makes the music industry studies field an exception in academia where typically the PhD, DMA, or MFA, depending on the discipline, is necessary to be considered for a tenure-track position. It may also be that PhD faculty are in the minority because, since most job postings require the candidate to have a number of years' experience in the music industry, ideal candidates tend to be individuals with a JD or master's degree and significant professional experience.²⁷

Although the NASM's 2007 report suggested music industry studies faculty were struggling with promotion and tenure based on inadequate educational backgrounds, this study provides some evidence that the issues highlighted by the NASM report are not problematic in 2021.²⁸ The data in Figure 1 show that music industry studies faculty with all degree types have been successfully meeting their institutions' requirements for tenure and promotion. While the number of faculty members who achieve associate professor appears consistent across all degree types, this study does indicate some potential issues for those with certain degree types as they climb the professorial ranks. This study indicates a decline in the number of full music industry studies professors with a JD or master's degree, but it does not indicate issues with gaining tenure and promotion to the associate professor rank. There is a possibility that non-PhD holders are struggling to reach full professor; this will need to be reviewed over time to see if the disparity continues.

This study did not uncover any strong new trends in hiring. The number of faculty members with a JD remains consistent between assistant and associate professors, which indicates it is a continuing trend. As of the conclusion of this study, there were only a small number of tenured and tenure track faculty members with a master's in music industry as their

terminal degree. This may increase over time, but at this point, the degree is less common among faculty than the JD and MBA as a terminal degree.

Because over 70 percent of the music industry programs listed as MEIEA members are housed in music departments, it would be reasonable to assume that a majority of music industry studies faculty members would hold terminal degrees in music.²⁹ In fact, only 23 percent have terminal degrees in music or music business (music: 18 percent, music business: 2.5 percent, arts administration: 2.5 percent).³⁰ While having a terminal degree in music (history, theory, composition, performance, etc.) does not disqualify a music industry studies candidate with the prerequisite professional experience, a large percent of individuals with terminal degrees in music will not likely possess the knowledge and experience needed to teach music business coursework. It may be worthwhile, in a separate study, to look at the music backgrounds of faculty in music industry studies music departments. As music industry studies programs continue to multiply, it will be interesting to see how faculty in disciplines outside of music industry studies and their administrators shape the music industry studies discipline through the hiring practices of different departments and institutions. A potential problem with not having a doctorate-level degree in music industry studies is that there is no agreement upon base line knowledge that faculty members must possess in order to teach and research in the discipline. Further, music industry studies programs are often housed in various departments where what constitutes music industry knowledge could be open to the interpretations of those outside the field, which could have a negative impact on students who rely on these programs to find employment in the music industry. Perhaps there is a need to develop some broad guidelines.

While this paper set out to clarify the educational credentials of music industry studies faculty, it may leave some hiring committee members outside of the discipline scratching their heads and wishing for some kind of roadmap to help them come to a decision concerning which applicants they should interview for a tenure-track position. Most search committees look to academic credentials in the relevant field of study as a predictive measure of future success when hiring new faculty; the music industry studies field is different because there is no one degree type that alone addresses the complexities of the music industry, save the master's in music industry for institutions that consider the master's degree a terminal de-

gree. Job postings often ask for a graduate degree in a field related to the music industry, which is vague and open to interpretation.

When considering academic credentials, the committee should ask the candidates how their education and their experience influence their teaching and scholarship. That explanation could be more predictive of success than a candidate's credentials alone. It may be true that some degree types are better than others in preparing a faculty member to teach a wide range of music industry courses. There is clearly a reason that 27 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty members who teach in music industry studies programs hold a JD. However, as the data show, music industry studies education is made up of faculty from a wide variety of educational backgrounds who have found success obtaining tenure and promotion at various institutions. As with every faculty hire, the puzzle for music industry hiring committees to solve is to find candidates whose experience, credentials, and interview show they can be successful in the classroom and can meet the rigors of the institution's scholarship requirements. The key for administrators and committee members charged with a music industry studies search is to avoid setting a rigid standard focused on a specific degree and, instead, to be open to candidates outside the departmental norm.

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DAIN ESTES has a diverse background as a songwriter, musician, recording artist, and music industry professional. Born in Kansas City, he signed his first record deal at the age of nineteen and went on to release a number of nationally distributed recordings on various independent labels and independently. Estes' songs have been licensed to numerous television shows, films, and commercials. As a touring musician, he has performed throughout the United States and supported a diverse group of artists including the legendary rock act Journey, Gin Blossoms, and Grammy nominee Abra Moore.



After releasing seven albums and ten years of relentless touring, Estes earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas and his Juris Doctor from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In 2011, he cofounded the Vinefield Agency, an artist management/booking agency based in Denver, Colorado. Estes has spoken at various music industry events, presented at academic conferences, consulted creative businesses on intellectual property issues, and has managed the careers of signed and independent artists. He is Assistant Professor of Music at Millersville University.

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