



Strategic Plan

Mission

The mission of VanderCook College of Music is to enrich the lives of present and future generations by developing uniquely skilled music teachers who exhibit strong character, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence.

Vision

To offer the finest programs in music teacher education available anywhere in the world.

Educational Mission

VanderCook College of Music was established in 1909 and is today the only independent college in the nation solely dedicated to music teacher education. When our undergraduate students earn the Bachelor of Music Education degree they are qualified to teach band, choir, orchestra, and general music in schools throughout the country and internationally, at beginning through advanced levels. They have undergone rigorous performance and academic preparation, including intensive preparation to play and teach 20 instruments, to sing, and to conduct. In so doing, they are able to help others experience the joy of musical performance in school and in their communities. This comprehensive, pragmatic, and singular approach to preparing future generations of music educators is highly valued in the market, and unique to VanderCook College of Music.

The educational mission of VanderCook is extended at the graduate level where practicing teachers are able to focus and refine their education to a particular area of specialization. Our graduate students are prepared to function as music education leaders within their school and community.

Our mission is further extended through a series of non-degree but advanced, graduate level coursework offered to practicing music teachers who seek to extend their knowledge and skill, remain professionally current, and fill gaps in their skillsets. We aspire to offer the most comprehensive, rigorous and valuable set of offerings available anywhere specifically designed for working music educators.

As a small music college, the educational environment and culture are characterized by

- Small class sizes led by highly skilled faculty
- High personal interaction among students, faculty and staff

- One-on-one engagement in studio-style classes
- An emphasis on creating learning experiences where candidates continually develop and refine their professional and musical knowledge and skills.

As a result of these experiences, VanderCook graduates are uniquely qualified to provide leadership and high quality instruction to children, with the utility of being able to serve all the music education needs of the entire population of grade school and high school students.

VanderCook graduates demonstrate the desire to be excellent music educators, manifested through continuous development of the following skills and attributes:

- A high level of musicianship
- Academic ability and diligence
- Skill in the process of teaching
- Self-discipline and persistence
- Inter- and intrapersonal skills
- Good citizenship and personal integrity
- Building of pragmatic links with educational programs in diverse communities
- Professionalism in action, word and appearance.

Core Values

VanderCook graduates will mirror the college's core values stressing excellence in music, professionalism in teaching, strength in character, and respect for the essential role of music in our culture.

1. A high level of musicianship

- Study a diverse and comprehensive music curriculum.
- Accumulate extensive performance and pedagogical experiences in all phases of music education.
- Appreciate the aesthetic value of music's unique capacity to express human emotion and feeling.
- Understand that the arts in general and music specifically enhance a student's experience and the school environment.
- Develop the ability to think and speak intelligently about music.

2. Academic ability and diligence leading to a life-time of learning

- Perform academically at or above the required minimum cumulative grade point average for regular academic status.
- Complete coursework and experiences required for licensure.
- Commit to the continual development of personal, teaching and musical knowledge.

3. Skill in the process of teaching

- Develop an understanding of the national and state standards for music, technology, language arts and professional teaching.
- Acquire the skills to incorporate educational standards into the design of curriculum and instruction.
- Recognize that all students have the ability to learn and dedicate themselves to bringing out the best in their students.
- Become familiar with appropriate assessment tools and strategies.
- Develop the sensitivity and knowledge to serve diverse communities and learners.

4. Self-discipline and persistence

- Demonstrate the ability to organize and plan successfully for both short-term and long-term goals.
- Persist in following a task to completion.
- Attend and participate in classes and rehearsals regularly.
- Plan and maintain an effective practice and study schedule.

5. Inter-personal and intra-personal skills

- Engage in honest self-evaluation and welcome feedback from colleagues and professionals without being defensive
- Develop the habit of being punctual and respectful of people's time
- Develop listening skills in musical, personal and professional communications
- Develop a global perspective and the skill of observing human behavior in the context of the community, school and classroom environments.
- Modify classroom instruction and feedback based on observation and evaluation.

6. Good citizenship and personal integrity

- Demonstrate respectfulness toward people and environments.
- Demonstrate law-abiding citizenship.
- Acquire through reflection and demonstrate through action an understanding of honesty, trustworthiness and personal integrity.

7. Building of pragmatic links with educational programs in diverse communities:

- Develop a broad-based understanding of the range of educational systems and the role of music within those systems.
- Acquire an appreciation for every phase and level of education through observation of and interaction with educators in diverse schools and communities.

8. Professionalism in action, word and appearance

- Behave, speak and dress in an appropriate and respectful manner in all interactions with children, colleagues, parents and community members.

- Understand the need to function as a positive role model for the school and local community in which they work.
- Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to changes in routine, schedule and needs.
- Develop the ability to work with parents, the community and colleagues in an organized and professional manner.
- Acknowledge and seek to understand different approaches and points of view.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

1. Clear and focused mission.
2. Highly personalized, unique program.
3. Reputation for producing highly skilled teachers.
4. Proven ability to attract students nationally.
5. Loyalty and support of a highly skilled staff, donors and the music industry.
6. Urban Chicago location co-located at IIT.
7. Strong commitment to the community.

Weaknesses

1. VanderCook's singular vision has made it difficult to fully engage in strategic planning and develop a goals-based culture.
 - Staff is often over extended and jobs overlap.
 - Administrative requirements on teachers reduce time teaching.
 - Curriculum issues and challenges lack a mechanism for correction.
2. Low awareness of college and mission.
 - Without the proper representation to the students of the mass population, VanderCook will remain a product of hear-say.
 - Competitive institutions and professional leaders who do not understand that the focus of VanderCook is on music education, not music performance.
 - The Chicago philanthropy community is largely unaware of VanderCook.
3. Outdated infrastructure and business processes.
4. Resistance to change.
5. Lack of financial resources.
 - Need more resources in marketing.
 - Need more resources for alumni relations
6. Underfunded endowment resources.
7. Underleveraged relationship with IIT.

Opportunities

1. A consistent demand for elementary and high school music teachers in the US and globally.
2. A vibrant music culture in Chicago with a long tradition of supporting arts education.

3. Social media offers more efficient and cost-efficient forms of marketing and awareness building.
4. New computer technologies offer ways to enhance administrative efficiency, communication, and learning opportunities.
5. Online education is a rapidly growing industry for students seeking a degree and the general population seeking to improve their skills outside of degree programs.

Threats

1. National trend of declining enrollments in small private colleges.
2. Economic challenges.
 - Costs of operating a private college continue to rise.
 - Risk of economic downturn.
 - Risk of reduction in student loans and other support.
 - Risk of programming cuts at schools that eliminate arts teachers.
3. Interruption in our relationship with ITT.
4. Increasingly competitive environment.
 - Many education focused colleges with more resources than VanderCook.
 - Online programs, junior colleges, crowding out smaller private colleges.
5. Negative stereotypes of south side of Chicago.
6. Growing interest in modern, technology driven music at the expense of skilled musicianship.

VCM Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Academics and Innovation

Advance the quality, relevance and tradition of VanderCook's curricula to expand its reputation as a leader in music education.

Key Strategies

1. Maintain and monitor the content and delivery of an outstanding, high quality curriculum.
2. Implement innovative academic programs that respond to the market by developing new BM degrees for music education, music performance, arts leadership, music pedagogy and/or entrepreneurship.
3. Engage accrediting agencies, music associations and other stakeholders to provide regular feedback to assure we implement best practices and important trends in music education into our curriculum.
4. Establish processes for evaluating and improving VCMs standing within centers of influence, agencies and stakeholders, e.g., music education community, greater Chicago cultural community.
5. Invest in on-line programs that highlight VCM faculty and programs with the intention of becoming a leader in on-line music education.

6. Maintain a high level of student proficiency by establishing processes for measuring academic and educational outcomes on a qualitative and quantitative basis.
7. Increase experiential learning by expanding internship and student teaching opportunities.
8. Increase graduation rates and maintain high job placement rates.

Goal 2: Community and Culture

Cultivate and sustain a vibrant and welcoming educational community at VanderCook.

Key Strategies

1. Enrich VanderCook's long-standing tradition of providing excellent, highly personalized instruction.
2. Stress unity of purpose while respecting the broad diversity of our faculty, staff, students and alumni.
3. Better leverage our relationship with IIT to more fully promote the IIT campus experience.
 - Highlight and better leverage the experience of IIT students who participate in VanderCook's musical ensembles, classes and organizations.
 - Promote the IIT campus experience.
4. Promote the achievements of student organizations, ensembles and music groups with an emphasis on VCM programs and service to others.
5. Promote the idea that we prepare students so that they may lead a good life: They are preparing for a career and a lifestyle that is made more meaningful through the experience of making music.
6. Develop a plan for ensuring that our classrooms, facilities and technologies are competitive with what our peers offer, and are attractive and inspiring to students and staff.

Goal 3: Awareness

Establish VanderCook as the music education school of choice.

Key Strategies

1. Establish a comprehensive, coordinated branding, marketing and communications plan that integrates all programs and is consistent, complementary and strategic.
2. Upgrade and enhance VCMs digital communication (website, video channel and social media) to stress the college's core values and to highlight unique aspects of the academic, community and cultural experience.
 - Use social media, video and other forms of digital communication to enhance community, unity, and a sense of belonging at VanderCook.
 - Create more synergy and integration with IIT as part of the entire college experience.
 - Emphasize and communicate VCMs core values at all levels of the College.

- Promote the achievements of student organizations, ensembles and music groups with an emphasis on VCM programs and service to others.
 - Emphasize the impact of the college on schools and communities worldwide.
3. Enhance and focus our recruiting efforts.
- Recruit 40 undergraduate students to the college each academic year by the year 2020 (“40 by 20”).
 - Increase the enrollment and engagement of IIT students in the college’s academic classes and ensembles.
 - Develop a strategic approach to high school recruiting focusing on schools where students have attended VanderCook and gone on to a successful career, or where graduates of VanderCook now teach, with a priority given to graduates of the undergraduate program.
 - Leverage our internal scholarship program to recruit students from Chicago Public Schools and our recruitment schools.
 - Broaden our outreach to local K-12 schools, to the Chicago music community, and globally.

Goal 4: Leadership

Attract, inspire and retain faculty, staff, administrators and trustees who embrace VanderCook’s vision and values by being a catalyst for creativity, leadership, collaboration and lifelong professional development.

Key Strategies

1. Implement an annual survey of faculty, staff, administrators and trustees to establish baseline levels of satisfaction and engagement, and to solicit ideas for improvement.
2. Institute annual reviews of staff and faculty job descriptions.
3. Establish metrics for engagement of full time and adjunct faculty to ensure effective use of resources.
4. Establish an incentive system that financially rewards excellence in teaching and service to the college, its mission and its students.

Goal 5: Stewardship

Enhance VanderCook’s sustainability through financial discipline, strategic planning, prudent investments, cultivation of major grants and donors, and effective stewardship of the college’s reputation and resources.

Key Strategies

1. Establish a fundraising plan that includes cultivating large gifts and a grant writing effort to fund strategic projects
2. Establish a detailed plan for upgrading VCMs technology and facilities

3. Establish a more intentional and consistent outreach to the vast corporate and community foundations in Chicago that support the arts
4. Establish endowed chairs in major departments to attract and retain key faculty members.
5. Maintain a strategic planning process that sets broad, objective metrics for measuring effectiveness in executing and accomplishing the goals set forth in the plan.
6. Develop a dashboard of Critical Success Factors to be presented to the Board on a quarterly basis, comparing actual results with budgeted and strategic goals using quantifiable and measurable financial and operational statistics.