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Marching Band and the College Transition

Jessica Fix
jfix@bgsu.edu

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MARCHING BAND AND THE COLLEGE TRANSITION

HONORS PROJECT

JESSICA GRIFFIN FIX

ABSTRACT

The relationship between college student engagement and personal growth has been studied for decades. However, involvement in specific types of organizations or activities has not been researched as in-depth. This study examined involvement in college marching band specifically and how it affects transition into college and overall growth and learning of college students. This study analyzes quantitative data of all marching band participants at Bowling Green State University in the most recent year (2016-2017), as well as qualitative data retrieved through focus group sessions with first year marchers and returning marchers. Results of this study suggest that involvement in marching band provides its members with strong connections to peers and a sense of belonging, which positively impact the college transition and growth processes.

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INTRODCUTION

The purpose of this study is to understand how involvement in college marching band on the transition into college and development beyond a student's first year. This research is necessary because many students who participate in marching band in high school choose not to join in college marching band because they seem to perceive that it might harm their college career. However, I found the opposite trend. This study is based on a foundation of previous research about general involvement and engagement in college as well as involvement in music.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed study and research questions have a dual focus: higher education student affairs and music education. Thus, the literature review prepared for this study was focused on these two categories.

College Student Experiences and Outcomes

One of the major areas of studies in student affairs and higher education is the development of students throughout their college experience. Questions about what the processes of development are, how development is related to learning outcomes, and why students have different experiences have been the focus of much research. Among the most well-known research is that conducted by Alexander Astin. Through his research, he established a theory on student involvement in relation to development and outcomes. In *Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education*, Astin defines the concept of student involvement, its positive relationship with outcomes, and the important role higher education institutions have in increasing student involvement. His theory sets the foundation for assessing student learning outcomes through the lens of their own investment and motivation to perform within a class or organization. While investment and motivation can depend on a student's personality and behaviors, these factors can also be influenced by an instructor or peer and how they connect to a student (Astin 1984).

The idea of internal and external influence on involvement and outcomes is further studied and reported on in a more recent article titled *Personality, freshman proactive social behavior, and college transition: Predictors beyond academic strategies* (Wang et al., 2013). The authors argue that students build relationships with their instructors and peers by seeking feedback about performance and experiences. The more feedback provided, the more likely a student is to be motivated to perform and constantly improve (Wang et al., 2013). This study is relevant to that of the effects of marching band because students constantly receive feedback in marching band from a diverse group of individuals. Students receive feedback from the director about musical ability and style, from leadership peers about marching maneuvers, and from equal peers about the overall experience of marching band.

Feedback not only impacts students' relationships with others, but also their perception of their role in a particular setting or environment. Nancy Schlossberg is a Professor Emerita in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services in the College of Education at the University of Maryland and a well-known expert in the areas of adult transition and higher education. Through her research,

Schlossberg found that individuals often experience a feeling of marginality when going through transitions in life. Especially in the transition from high school student to college student, individuals feel that they play a minimal part in their new environment. However, when students feel that they are important or that they are depended on, they are likely to be motivated to act more and become more involved in their new environment (Schlossberg 1989). Thus, providing feedback to students about their role within a group leads to positive feelings and effects. In the marching band setting, it is often expressed that each individual plays a major part in the success of the whole. One wrong note or wrong move sticks out to the audience and loses the sense of unity. Therefore, the feeling of marginality in a transition period relates to the feelings of mattering that students may perceive with involvement in a marching band.

Overall, these studies found that there is importance in the professional, social interactions a student has with influential leaders. However, social interactions like friendships also play a prominent role in how a student transitions into college and develops further. The authors of *The Role of Organized Activities in Facilitating Social Adaptation Across the Transition to College* report on their study of how being involved in organizations affects a student's ability to socially adapt to a new environment (Bohnert et al. 2007). Through analyzing their research, it was concluded that people who come into college with a low ability to socially adapt will have a better chance of adapting to the college environment through getting involved. Involvement in organizations provides access to people who have similar interests, thus breaking the barrier to finding people with whom an individual could befriend.

Although each of these articles provided a different angle on the concept of student development, they all came to a similar conclusion. When students feel supported and connected to the people at the institution which they attend, they are more likely to be involved and engaged with classes and organizations, and they will develop stronger learning outcomes. Much of this research also provided recommendations for how universities are able to create environments that allow students to feel connected and become successful in developing throughout their college career. These environments are created in classrooms, residence halls, athletic events, and organizational settings. Understanding this, research can be conducted on the type of environment that the college marching band experience provides and how it influences development from college transition to graduation. However, this research cannot be completed without first having an understanding of the meaning of involvement in music and how music involvement particularly affects students.

Participation in Music Activities

Participants of a college marching band are participants of a music ensemble, and more broadly of music education. Music Education Theorist, J. Terry Gates, defined music participation as the direct or indirect production of musical events for an audience (1991). Marching band participants fit this definition by directly producing music through playing instruments to coordinate songs and shows at football games. In *Music Participation: Theory, Research, and Policy*, Gates further breaks down the types of music participants through their perception of music as work, serious leisure, or play (1991). Through a diverse population of participants in marching band who may have different perceptions of music, it can be understood that each may have a different outcome through their participation as well.

In support of this theory, further research has been done about how students perceive not only their type of participation in music, but also the effects that participation has on their lives. Through interviewing students involved in music ensembles, Dimitra Kokotsaki and Susan Hallman derived three themes in effect of participation: musical, social, and personal (2007). Naturally students involved in music ensembles will feel that their musical abilities are affected because they are constantly playing and perfecting music pieces. It is more important to not the social and personal effects indicated through experiences of making friends, contributing to a group effort, and building self-confidence and leadership skills (Kokotsaki and Hallman 2007). Based on the previously reviewed literature related to college transition, it is known that social and personal factors play a role in a student's development outcome. This study provides student perceptions of music participation which can be further investigated through marching band specifically.

Music ensembles have qualities and characteristics that differentiate them from other classes and organizations at a university. A Music Education Professor at South Dakota State University, Don Crowe, defines five key characteristics in his assessment of ensembles. First, although most music ensembles are structured academically with given credit for completion, the course is much more social in nature than other courses. Participants meet regularly to practice, perform, and even travel together, requiring the efforts and collaboration of all consistently. Additionally, involvement is both formal and informal with performances and rehearsals both on and off campus. From data collection, Crowe found that a majority of ensemble participants are non-music majors. Thus, ensembles bring together a diversity of students from across a university for one common interest. Finally, music ensembles provide a sense of continuity through routines of rehearsals and expectations for performances (Crowe 2015). Crowe discusses how these characteristics affect the retention of college students in his study titled,

Retention of College Students and Freshman-Year Music Ensemble Participation. His data analysis of college students over a four-year period showed that students involved in a music ensemble were significantly more likely to persist through college than non-participants (Crowe 2015). While this is the most closely related study to the correlation between marching band participation and college student development, the data analysis does not provide enough context as to why there is a significant difference between participants and non-participants.

Research Questions

The overall college student development process, including the transition into college, is a topic that has been thoroughly studied. In addition, the outcomes and perceptions of participation in music ensembles is also an area that has been strongly researched. However, little research has been done on the relationship between these two topics. Further study would lead to a better understanding of how participation in a music ensemble affects the college student development process. Specifically, participation in a college marching band should be studied in relation to college transition and learning outcomes. This should be a focus of study because marching bands are typically the largest music ensemble, and even largest organized activity, at a university. Furthermore, a majority of participants in marching band join during their first year at college. Having the largest population of students involved in one activity, especially first year students, provides a strong research group. This research and its findings would lead to substantial indicators on how marching band directors, and other ensemble directors, can create environments that encourage positive, beneficial outcomes for their students. The indicators could also be used as a recruitment tool for high school marching band members. To discover the indicators of a correlation between involvement in marching band and college student development, the following research question is asked:

How does the marching band experience influence one's transition to college?

METHOD

This study was conducted at Bowling Green State University, and involved the 244 members of the Falcon Marching Band (FMB) during the Fall 2016 season. The research approach is comprised of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Data was collected on each member of the band and categorized in two ways: the year in school of each member (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior) and the major of each member. This data was then transformed into holistic statistic related to the percentage of band members in each category.

To obtain thoughts on and experiences with the marching band, two separate focus groups were conducted. Two separate lists of names were pulled from the provided data of marching band members in the Fall 2016 season. One list was all first-year students, called “nugeyes” in FMB terms. The second list was upperclassmen students, called “veterans” in FMB terms. The entire band was sent an email to notify them of being placed in a selection pool for the focus groups. If an individual was not comfortable participating or was not available at the designated meeting times, he or she could request to be removed from the selection pool. Members were given a week to do so. This email can be found in appendix A. After removing members from the pool, there were 104 members on the nugeyes list and 109 members on the veterans list. The names were put into an online generator form to select eight members from each list. The individuals selected from the random generator were emailed about participating in the focus groups. This email can be found in appendix B.

When it came to meeting for the focus groups, the nugeyes group consisted of five first-year marching students whose majors were international studies, early childhood education, human development and family studies, nursing, and music education. This group was met with twice in order to get through all questions necessary for analysis. These questions can be found in appendix C. The veteran group consisted of six returning students, specifically three second-year members, two third-year members, and one fourth-year member. The majors of these participants were visual communication technology, media studies, psychology, music education, sports management, and accounting. This group was met with once in order to get through all questions necessary for analysis. These questions can be found in appendix C. Both samples of focus group participants were reflective of the member year and major make-up of the entire band, which is discussed in the data analysis. All focus group sessions were held throughout the month of February, one month into the Spring 2017 semester.

LIMITATIONS

There are two major limitations to this study: bias and generalization. First, I was a member of the Falcon Marching Band for three years throughout my college experience. Having such a deep involvement and connection with the band provided the challenge of keeping my own personal experience and bias out of conversations with the focus groups as well as within my analysis and conclusion. Additionally, even though the focus group participants were randomly generated, I had previous interaction with eight of the 11 total participants. I started each focus group by explaining the professional purpose of the conversations – for research – and that I wanted them to answer questions and have genuine conversations that they would with another researcher.

Second, because each focus group only consisted of five to six people, I was not able to obtain information for all experiences and feelings people may have with the marching band. Although the focus groups were diverse in year, major, and instrumentation, there is no guarantee that these individuals represent all experiences. Furthermore, by using these methods, I cannot generalize my conclusions to all college marching bands, just the Falcon Marching Band at Bowling Green State University. Other universities may have different marching band cultures and campus cultures that make the influence of marching band on transitions and learning outcomes different. Thus, further research would need to be done on a larger scale at multiple universities to truly develop a supported theory on how marching band participation affects all individuals across the country.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Study Findings

One misperception that many high school band members have about college marching band is that it's mostly students who major in music that join. In the analysis of the Falcon Marching Band statistics, it was found that only 26 percent of all members in the band were in a major related to music, while the other 74 percent were in one of 60 other majors. In other words, almost three quarters of the entire band are non-music majors that are instead involved in every other college of Bowling Green State University (BGSU). A further breakdown of the majors within the entire band (see Figure 1) shows that the college with the highest percentage of band students enrolled is the College of Arts and Sciences with 30 percent. Next is the College of Music with 26 percent, followed by the College of Education and Human Development with 15 percent. Those colleges with the least enrollment were the College of Business with nine percent, the College of Health and Human Services with eight percent, and the College of Technology with four percent. Additionally, nine percent of students in the band were in undecided or pre-major programs.

This data analysis provides a few college transition implications. First, it disbands the common misperception that a majority of college marching band participants are music majors. Second, because every college on campus is represented, there is a guarantee that a first-year student can connect with someone in the band who is also in the same college as he or she is, or possibly in the same major and same classes. This is important for social adaptation and engagement in classrooms. Having a pre-existing relationship with a peer in a classroom makes the environment of a large lecture hall less intimidating, thus allowing the student to feel more comfortable and open to engaging with academic content and group discussions. A final implication is diverse academic perspectives that students are opened to within the marching band. Art students can have conversations with science students and communication students can have conversations with engineering students. This is beneficial for first-year students who may still be questioning what they wish to pursue academically or are looking for a wide platform of ideas to understand.

Another comparison breakdown was done between the percentages of students in music-related majors across each year of college. First-year students had the lowest percentage at 22 percent, below the overall percent for the entire band. The percentage increased for second-year students at 32 percent, yet decreased for third-year students at 23 percent. The fourth-year students had the highest percent involved in a music-related major at 40 percent, or nearly half of the senior class. Overall, this

shows a trend (see Figure 1.1) that less and less non-music majors return to marching band after their first year. This trend was not analyzed further in this specific study, but is one to consider for future studies. Why does the percent of non-music major returning students decrease as students get further into college? Does being involved with marching band become more difficult for non-music majors? Do non-music majors get involved more within organizations affiliated with their academic and professional career?

A final statistical analysis was conducted based on the year (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) in college of band members (see Figure 2). The data shows that almost half, or 48 percent, of the band members are first-year students. The percentages decrease as the number of years gets higher, with 25 percent being sophomores, 16 percent being juniors, and 10 percent being seniors. By adding all of the percentages of sophomores, juniors, and seniors, comprising of the upperclassmen students, over half of the band is upperclassmen or veteran members. Another way to look at these statistics is half of the band members are just beginning college and the college marching band experience, while the other half are continuing their experience and can provide guidance based on their previous learning experiences at college. This implies that there is at least one upperclassmen per freshman in the band to act as a guide or support system, if that is found to be the environment of the band.

Overall, these findings may alter the beliefs of high school marching band members. However, it meets the expectations of college band directors and students currently involved in marching band at the collegiate level. Similar data and statistics would most likely be found at other universities that could be studied in the future.

Figures

Figure 1

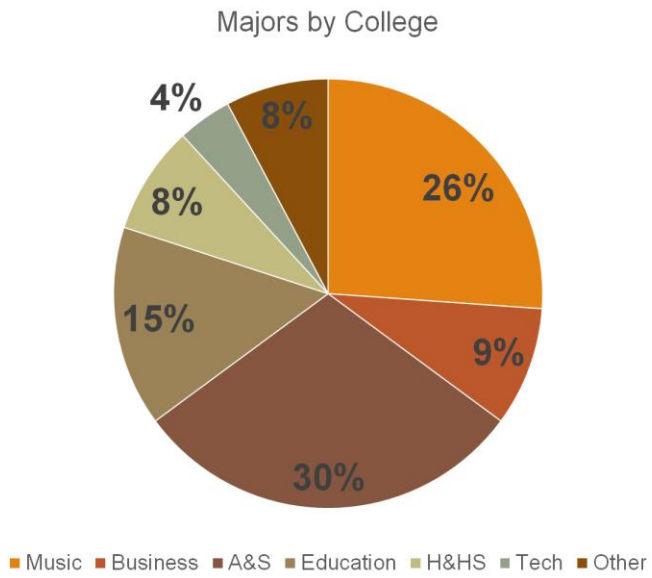


Figure 1.1

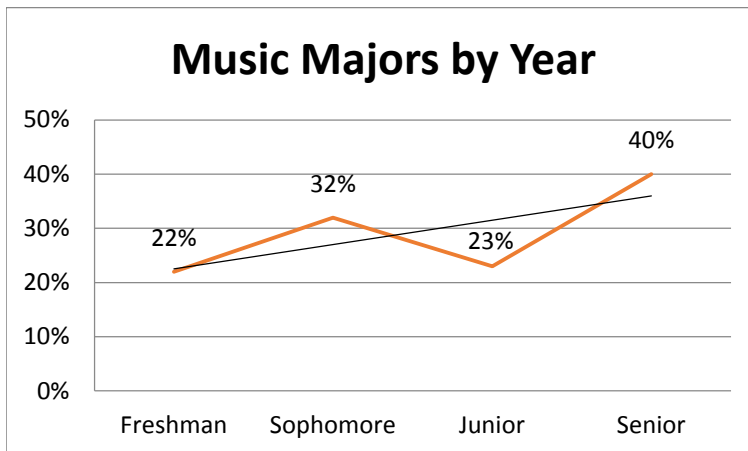
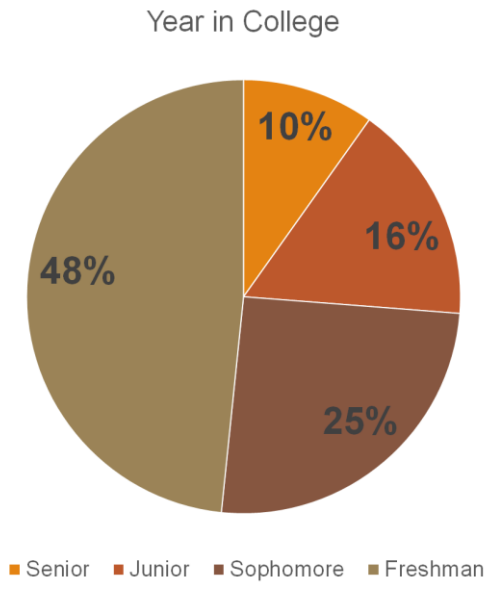


Figure 2



FOCUS GROUP STUDY FINDINGS

First-Year Student Group

The five first-year students that participated in the focus group met for two, hour-long sessions. During these sessions, the students were asked questions about their experience with the Falcon Marching Band (FMB), as well as their experience with transitioning into college. A full transcript of the questions asked and the conversation between the participating students can be found in appendix D. After analyzing these conversations, several trends were analyzed related to transitioning.

The first trend discovered was related to the reason students decided to join the FMB. All five of the participants in the focus groups referenced joining based on the experience they had with marching band in high school. Some specifically stated that they had made their closest friends in band while others enjoyed the musical participation. They joined college marching band hoping to have a similar experience to high school. Though they pointed out a few logistical differences from high school marching band, they felt that there were similarities in bonding with the other students in the band.

When asked about their favorite memory during their first season in the FMB, all participants referenced an activity or event that was related to a social experience. Three out of five members referenced an activity during fundamentals week, a full week of learning marching styles and maneuvers and music songs and memorization, which occurs the week before classes start in the Fall semester. Specifically, one student mentioned a get-to-know-you, bonding activity done with her section, while two students mentioned a campus-wide scavenger hunt that was put together by their section. The other two out of five students mentioned similar activities that happened throughout the marching band season, such as section breakfasts before game-day rehearsals or dinner after evening practices.

Not only did the participants of this focus group find friends in the members of their instrument section, but they also found mentors. Participants were asked to describe their relationship with the leadership of the band, that being section leaders, squad leaders, or drum majors. Common adjectives used to describe these student leaders were “caring” and “friendly.” More in-depth conversation about leadership revolved around the idea of being mentors. Each participant described one individual that he or she looked up to due to the qualities the mentor possessed or the actions the mentor conducted on a regular basis. For example, one student shared how she was unsure if she would be able to travel the long distance home for Thanksgiving, but her section leader offered an option to join her family nearby for the holiday.

One of the final questions asked of the participants was if they felt as though they had an identity at the university. The theme with the responses to this question was that none of the students could give a confident answer as to whether or not they felt an identity and what that might be. There was conversation about identifying as the “band person” in high school, but they had not fully made that connection at college. One student mentioned that she felt her identity was still evolving and all other participants agreed. This was initially surprising, as it was expected that the students would feel a strong identity with the Falcon Marching Band and being a Falcon at BGSU. Yet, upon further thought and analysis, it seems right that the first-year students feel this way. These students had only gone through four months of college, and it is known through other studies that students continue to develop throughout their entire college career. Therefore, there is still much for these students to experience before they form their identity.

Upperclassmen Focus Group

The six upperclassmen, or veteran, students that participated in the focus group met for one, hour-long session. During this session, the students were asked some questions that were the same as the first-year group, as well as some questions that addressed their role within the marching band and skills they have gained through several years of participation with the band. A full transcript of the questions asked and the conversation between the participating students can be found in appendix E. After analyzing these conversations, several trends were analyzed related to transitioning and college student development.

The first trend discovered was how the participants of the group described the Falcon Marching Band (FMB) as their “niche.” The participants had a conversation with one another about how they felt they had developed bonds with other members of the band through the common value of music and performance in addition to social relations that developed through constant collaboration with other members. These bonds and relationships affected their comfort within the band and their motivation to perform to the best of their abilities. In other words, band was one place at BGSU where participants felt a strong bond with their peers around them.

Furthermore, the participants were asked how they would compare this feeling in band to other organizations that each was involved with. Three out of six participants specifically compared their bond and engagement with band to their lack of engagement with academic organizations. They felt that time dedicated to the organization and social connections to the people within the organization was what made the difference between levels of engagement. While the band meets on a daily basis with a

consistent, collaborative purpose, the academic organizations meet on a bi-weekly basis with random, independent purposes. This follows with Don Crowe's defining characteristics of music ensembles compared to other classes or organizations.

This group was also asked about their favorite memories within their band experience just as the first-year group; however, this group was pushed further and asked why the specific memories stood out compared to other experiences. At first, five out of six participants referenced trips taken with the marching band, whether it was to football bowl games or championship games. Specific examples were shared about the bus rides to the destinations, which indicated further social and bonding experiences. Additionally, the participants shared unique experiences they had at the destinations, such as visiting historic sites or marching through the tunnel of a professional football stadium. This indicates value in immersive and unique experiences.

The final participant of the focus group shared that his favorite memory was a tradition held by the entire band during fundamentals week. This one reference sparked a full discussion with the focus group about other traditions held by the band and instrument sections. When asked why the participants felt these traditions were important, there was unanimous agreement that participating in the traditions gave participants a sense of identity with something that was bigger than themselves. The traditions helped them recognize that there is a history behind the band that they are not only upholding, but also continuing to develop through their participation.

Another trend came from a conversation about the purpose participants felt they had in the band as upperclassmen. All participants described their purpose using the term "leader." Half of the participants suggested leadership through roles like section leader or squad leader, while the other half suggested leadership through a servant leader role in teaching new members music and marching styles as well as traditions. This role as a "leader" of the band gave the focus group participants a sense of purpose. This follows with Schlossberg's theory on marginality and mattering during periods of transition in life. These participants felt they mattered in the band, that without their leadership and guidance with other members in the band, the band would not be able to perform as a whole to the best of its ability.

Each of these trends have also related to Astin's theory on college student development, which states that the more a student is involved or engaged with a class or activity, the greater the learning outcomes they will obtain. The upperclassmen in this focus group referenced engagement through

values and social connections, through traditions and performance, which provided them with skills in communication and leadership. It is important to note that these engagements and outcomes from band pushed these students to be connected and involved in areas of college outside of the band. Every student in the focus group was involved in another organization or job on campus, and five out of six mentioned involvement due to a recommendation or connection of a friend in the band.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of both the data sets and the focus group discussions, it can be concluded that participation in college marching band at Bowling Green State University does have an effect on a student's transition to college. Four major aspects of transition and college student development stand out as a result of the analyses: belonging, mattering, identity, and involvement.

With the first-year students' focus group, a sense of belonging stood out due to trends in the formation of social bonds and support systems with other members in the band. This trend continues with upperclassmen who developed even greater bonds throughout several years of participation. Upperclassmen also felt that band was their "niche" at BGSU. Furthermore, it can be concluded that marching band forms an environment for belonging academically because of every college being represented while also bringing together all of these majors for one common value – performing music. Belonging is important during the college transition and beyond because it encourages greater participation and motivation in activities and learning outcomes.

According to Nancy Schlossberg, feeling a sense of mattering rather than marginality propels people forward through transitions in life. First-year students feel a sense of mattering or purpose within marching band because they are collaborating with a group of individuals to put on a performance seen by thousands of people. One mistake, whether musically or in marching maneuvers, changes the tone or the visual effect of the entire band. One student in the first-year focus group specifically said, "In marching band, there are no first-year, second-year, third-year, etc. There are just band members that each put in the same amount of effort and dedication to give a great performance." Furthermore, the data showed that almost half of the band in 2016 was first-year students. Therefore, first-year students make up half of each performance and truly do matter when it comes to the result of the performance. The same argument can be made for upperclassmen band members.

Because the first-year students had only been through one semester of college when they participated in the focus group, they did not have as much time or experience as the upperclassmen to evolve an identity at college or become involved in other areas of college. However, both of these were key factors in the experiences the upperclassmen had with marching band. Being a servant leader that guides new students, and being able to fully understand and participate in the band traditions, gave upperclassmen an identity that they felt strongly about. Additionally, upperclassmen were able to develop connections with other band members over more time, which allowed them to seek and take advantage of other opportunities on campus that their friends were involved in.

The results of this research will be useful for both college marching band directors and high school marching band directors. First, for college marching band directors, these results mean that there is greater purpose to the program than just performing music and providing spirit at football games. Although the target audience of a marching band might be the football fans, marching band directors can reach internally to the members of the band to cultivate a culture that positively impacts their college experience. The results of this research are useful to college marching band directors because they can better understand what their students experience and gain from the program. They can utilize this information to integrate ways of sharing this experience to all marchers, not just the ones with whom research was conducted. The results are also useful for high school marching band directors, who can share the information with their current students to encourage them to strongly consider joining marching band at the collegiate level. Finally, the results of this project will provide further evidence to support the arguments made in regards to the influence of student involvement on transition and learning outcomes.

FUTURE RESEARCH IDEAS

In addition to conducting this research at other institutions to increase the validity of the results on a holistic perspective, a few other questions arose during the process of this study that are recommended to conduct further research on in the future.

First, because participation in college marching band has an effect on transition and student development, it may also play a role in the retention of students at a university. Research could be conducted on the number of students who participate in marching band their first year and who graduate from the university. Thus, this would be a longitudinal study.

Based on the data analysis of the year of each member in the marching band, there must be some factors that cause upper-class students to cease their participation in marching band as they continue through college. Focus groups could be held to determine what these factors may be. Similarly, there must be factors that encourage students to continue their participation. Whether it is leadership and social bonds as the key aspects upperclassmen encounter throughout further participation, deeper analysis of motivation to stay one, two, or even three more years would be beneficial. Both of these would also be longitudinal studies.

Looking beyond just the marching band experience to other types of organizations would also be beneficial. Similar studies to this one could be done with academic organizations, service organizations, athletic organizations, Greek-affiliated organizations, and more. A comparative analysis could be done on how each of these types of organizations affects the college transition and how they may have similar or different effects.

APPENDIX A

Initial Email about Focus Group Sessions

Hello Fellow Bandsmen,

My name is Jessie Fix, and I am a previous member of the Falcon Marching Band. This year, I am excited to have the opportunity to conduct research with the FMB in fulfillment of an Honors Project. I plan to research how involvement in marching band affects transitioning into college.

In order to conduct this research, I am asking for your help. I will be hosting focus group sessions during which individuals will participate in a guided discussion related to experiences with the marching band and college in general. Each group will consist of six to eight people, chosen through random generation of the FMB membership list. The sessions will be hosted at 9:00 PM every Monday in February, with participating individuals asked to attend two sessions.

If you would not be comfortable participating in this research, or if you would be unable to attend the focus group sessions, please follow this link to remove your name from the list: <https://goo.gl/forms/zkh0OF7K7E8Fpwdl3>. In order to be removed, you must complete the form by next Wednesday, January 25th.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance with my project! I am looking forward to working with some of you in the near future.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Email to Participants

Hello,

My name is Jessie Fix, and I am a previous member of the Falcon Marching Band. This year, I am excited to have the opportunity to conduct research with the FMB in fulfillment on an Honors Project! I hope you saw my previous email sent through Dr. King about the focus groups that I am forming as part of my research. I pulled a list of the members in the FMB and used a random generator to choose eight individuals to form a group. You all were chosen by the random generator!

As part of a focus group, you all will be able to participate in a conversation lead by me about your experiences related to marching band and college overall. You all are part of the returning marchers (vets) group, so questions will pertain to how you feel you may have grown over the years and why you have chosen to return.

I have scheduled your focus group sessions from 9:00-10:00 PM on Monday, February 13th and February 27th. The location is still to be determined.

Please send a confirmation email to me regarding your ability to participate in this focus group by tomorrow, Friday, January 27th at 11:59 PM. Feel free to also ask me any questions you may have.

Thanks so much, you all will be a great help to me!
Jessie

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

First-Year Marchers

- What made you decide to join the Falcon Marching Band?
 - What were your expectations and how did your experience meet or contradict those expectations?
- What is one of your favorite memories from this season?
- How would you describe your connection with your peers in the marching band?
 - Section, leaders, others
- Have you had any mentoring roles in college?
 - Can you talk more about how individuals in marching band may have given role?
- What do you think about the idea of having a sense of belonging at college?
 - Do you think you “belong” at BGSU?
 - Can you talk about how participating in marching band may have influenced this feeling?
- How would you describe your identity at BGSU?
- Have you gotten involved with other organizations or bands on campus? If so, which ones?
 - Why did you get involved otherwise?
- What do you think about your role is within the marching band?
- Do you plan on returning to marching band next year? Why or why not?

Returning Marchers

- What made you decide to join the Falcon Marching Band, and what has influenced you to return for another season?
- What are some of your most memorable experiences with the marching band? What makes these experiences stick out?
- What do you think your role is within the marching band?
- What have you learned from your experience in marching band? Or what skills do you think you have gained?
 - Lessons that can’t be learned in a classroom
 - Learned about self and relationships with others/working with others
- How would you describe your connection with your peers in the marching band?
 - Section, leaders, others
- Have you had any mentoring roles in college?
 - Can you talk more about how individuals in marching band may have given role?
- What do you think about the idea of having a sense of belonging at college?
 - Do you think you “belong” at BGSU?
 - Can you talk about how participating in marching band may have influenced this feeling?
- How would you describe your identity at BGSU?
- Have you gotten involved with other organizations or bands on campus? If so, which ones?
 - Why did you get involved otherwise?

APPENDIX D

First-Year Marcher Focus Group Transcript

**The students that participated in the focus group have been given pseudo names for confidentiality purposes.

Introductions:

I have a list of different ways to introduce ourselves. Please give me your name, major, hometown, and instrument. Then for fun, your favorite fictional character and non-FMB related, BGSU memory.

Erica: "My name is Erica, I'm an international studies major, I'm from Bloomsburg, Ohio, I also play clarinet. My favorite fictional character is probably Brienne from Game of Thrones. My favorite non-FMB memory is probably going on trips with my learning community."

What learning community are you in?

Erica: "Global Village"

Oh nice, where have you gone?

Erica: "We've gone to Toledo, Michigan, to the zoo and all sorts of events on campus."

Okay, next?

Morgan: "My name is Morgan, I'm an early intervention education major, I'm from Arora, Ohio, and I play the mellophone. My favorite fictional character is Winnie the Pooh. My favorite non-FMB memory would be going to the hockey games."

Oh that's great, were you at the game this past weekend? Were you there when the glass broke?

Morgan: "Yeah, I was the section right next to it, too. It was crazy."

Next...

Mary: "I'm Mary. My major is Human Development and Family Studies, my hometown is Pittsburgh. I play the saxophone. My favorite fictional character is probably ____ from Grey's Anatomy. My favorite non-FMB memory...I was an education major last semester and I had a field placement that was pretty cool."

Awesome! Where were you placed?

Mary: "Oakdale Elementary in Toledo."

Great!

James: "I'm James. I major in nursing; I'm from Twinsburg, Ohio. I play the saxophone. Favorite fictional character...I automatically thought of animated characters. I'll go with Winnie the Pooh. Favorite non-FMB memory? That's hard because it's so tied to everything I do. Probably just hanging out with people in the Sundial until 2 AM – late night pizza with friends."

Perfect!

John: "My name is John; I'm a music education major instrumental focus. I'm from Lima, Ohio specifically Fort Shawnee High School. I'm a percussionist; I served on the snare line this past year. My favorite fictional character is Rainbow Dash from My Little Pony. I really don't have a favorite non-FMB memory outside of ensemble memories."

What made you decide to join the Falcon Marching Band?

Erica: "High school band was such a big part of like everything I did so this marching band was part of the reason I chose BG in the first place. I didn't want something big like OSU or OU or the super crazy stuff. I guess BGSU's band seemed closest to what I had back home."

James: "I would agree with that. My second choice was OU, and I remember talking to them about band and they said it was super hard to get in and competitive, so I didn't want to do it there because it sounds like they took the fun out of it."

John: "For me, I'm trying out for Drum Core International next year and this band is a step above my high school band. I want to go out for Blue Coats just working off the technique here. I guess the main factor, I mean I tried out for five different colleges – OU, ONU, Capital, Ball State, and here. I went here because I thought their band program is pretty well known."

Mary: "The reason I joined here is because in high school all my friends were in band, so I thought it would be the same. Which is kinda a good thing and a bad thing because I didn't really make any friends in my classes."

Morgan: "For me, band was not everything, but one of the main things I looked forward to everyday. So I couldn't let go of something so great and I thought, hey I'll try this and see how it goes."

So you had some expectations of band based on high school, how did your experiences with band here either confirm or contradict your expectations? Do you think it met everything you wanted it to be or were there things that were different?

James: "It was really similar to my high school. Size, people, and the way it worked. I thought it was going to be different. It was more of the same, which isn't a bad thing."

Erica: "I thought it was pretty similar, other than it was twice the size of my high school band, so I had to adjust to that. But I really enjoyed having a larger section to get to know, our section was tiny in high school. But all in all, it's basically what I expected."

Great, what kind of high school band did you all have? Four out of five were show band, one was competition.

James: "I was going to say something about differences in high school. We did one show that you learned really, really well for the competition. That's something I miss. Because here you do a few fun shows, but once you perform it, it's pretty much done."

Erica: "We did maybe three or four shows, so we had weeks to perfect it and we performed it more than once. I liked seeing how we would improve from the first time we performed to the second time. So yeah it was a little hard to adjust to having to memorize the music to one show while also learning the next show."

Okay, earlier we talked about favorite non-band memories. So now I would like to hear your favorite band memories.

Erica: "The one that comes to mind was during fundies week when we did a lot of clarinet ice breakers and what not. We specifically did one, well first we had clarinet nap time where we would all lay on the floor while someone played piano, so that's fun. And then we played this weird little game where we lied on each other's stomachs and we would go around the room and laugh without breaking the chain. I don't know it sounds weird, but we did little bonding things like that that really stuck with me."

Mary: "I really liked when we did the scavenger hunt at the beginning, that was fun. I didn't really know anyone yet, so it was kinda awkward, but it was probably my best beginning band memory. Just like hanging out with people and still knowing people from band. I walk through the CMA to get to Lot 12, just to get warm, and I always see somebody I know, and I really like that."

James: "I have that same thing. My favorite memory is probably...um...during fundies week when the vets got back and we played the fight song and chorale for the first time. I was like aw man that felt so good. It was the very first time we played full band and any of the school songs. I was so excited, it was awesome."

Erica: "I really liked when all the upperclassmen sang the alma mater to us."

Mary: "Yeah and then we sang with them."

John: "My favorite FMB memory is just all the times that snare line would be upstairs padding out to finish up cadence or finish up show 3, show 2. We were late on that so we would just come in for 2 hours and pad out on the third floor. We got lip from a few instructors, but we still padded out every Wednesday or Tuesday. Plus we went out to dinner every night. Before the semester started up, we would go out to Sundial or Oakes and pay for each other. It was fun."

Morgan: "I think my favorite memory is...before game day the mellos go out to Waffle House for breakfast and we get up at the butt-crack of dawn before rehearsal. I remember getting up at 4:00 in the morning just to go to Waffle House. But the whole section went so it was really cool to have breakfast with them before rehearsal."

James: "I'm going to change my favorite memory this one time when all the saxes went to April's house and had a sleepover – Saxover."

You've talked about bonding with your sections, and I think that's a huge part of the marching band, especially our atmosphere here at BG. How would you describe your connection with your peers? If you had to describe it using one word, what would you say your connection with your fellow marchers is?

John: "Mild, spicy sauce."

Can you explain that?

John: "Yeah, like some people are really good friends and other people I really want to punch in the face. Other than that, I feel I have some really nice relationships with the quads, bass, and symbols. Tommy on bass 5, I've been pretty good friends with. We go out to eat every once in a while. So yeah nice connections."

Erica: "If I were just talking about the clarinet section in general, I would probably say something like crazy, just because everyone is weird. Marchers as a whole, marching is such a cool thing and it takes so much. Like we all have the ability, but anyone from the outside would be like 'Ahh it's just marching.' But everyone here knows how much actually goes into it, so we all have that connection."

A connection based off your value for the action?

Mary: "For saxes it would be hot and cold."

James: "Yeah definitely love hate."

Mary: "Very. Like every so often it would be like nobody is talking to each other because we're all just mad. And then the other half of the time it's like 'Oh my God, I love you so much!' Yeah it's like really hot and cold."

James: "There are definitely some days where, okay, it was mainly with some of the tenors. Like some days I would be like they're so loud, I'm so sick of them. But then the next, I love those guys."

Mary: "There was a lot of weird stuff between the tenors and the altos. But towards the end of the season, we were okay. We just spent so much time together, that we get sick of each other sometimes but then eventually it comes full circle."

John: "We have that, but we blame the Toledo game."

Why is that?

John: "Because we were on a bus with the maggots. A bus with the maggots is a lot of fun insults and jabbing and singing. I lost a bet this year, so I had to serenade the bus and the guy I lost the bet to. But it was fun."

That's a good story you'll always be able to tell.

Morgan: "I guess for the mellos, we all just connect. We're all just the same person. The way we talk and interact and understand each other. And some of us mellos, we just finish each other's sentences. Over a few weeks, we just became one person. So like I guess it was really fun. We just all understand each other. We'll come to band, and if you're really upset or mad about something, they'll understand and help you. And if you come to band with a smile on your face, they'll laugh with you."

James: "It's also cool because you can see the dynamic of other sections. It's characteristic of your instrument in a way. It's very weird like that."

Mary: "Yeah, like you meet someone and you're like 'Mmmm, you're a trumpet.' We just look at you, and we know what you are."

So what about leadership? How do you feel you connected with your leaders this year?

Erica: "Well Stephanie is a mom, and I love her dearly. They were all so nice, honestly. They were very nice and concerned about us all the time. I felt like I could go to them for anything."

Mary: "Um, well okay."

James: "I think leadership was good this year. It was essentially a trade off in our section between April and Jeans. April was super cool and she tried super hard, but she couldn't always be there. So she delegated responsibility to the squad leaders, which was good because then Tyler and Jeans helped out."

Mary: "Well because April always said that her weakest thing with marching band was that she can't lead sectionals because she can't hear when things aren't being played right. So Jeans would always do that and he loves that stuff. He was fun. They were all fun. April is literally one of the nicest people I've ever met. I didn't think I could go home for Thanksgiving because I live kinda far away and stuff, and she like literally opened her house to me. She said, 'You can come over for Thanksgiving!' So nice."

James: "Me and Jeans were supposed to go see Joe over break, but we never ended up doing it. They're almost too nice though. We would fight Jeans on a daily basis, sarcastically."

Mary: "Yeah, I forgot Emily since she's tenor, but I know there were some serious issues. But then the tenors separated so I didn't see her after that. But I know during fundies week there were some tensions. And a little throughout the season. Drama. Overall great though."

John: "Me and Brenden have a personal connection where every time we see each other in the hallway, we just touch each other's hands. During marching band we did that. Me and Graeme have a personal connection. Both Stephen and the other, I can't think of her name..."

Kayla?

John: "Right, Kayla. Yeah I have a personal connection with all of them. I stayed over at Graeme's house for the night when me and my roommate had an argument. But drumline leadership was not fun this year because we had Tommy, the man in charge; we had Jacob, symbols; we had Victoria, tenors. It was fun there. But back to Ron, he's one of those guys that wants the power. He would just do stuff out of his pocket for no reason, and we didn't like it. We almost got cut this year by Dr. King for doing all of this stuff. There's a lot of flaws in percussion. When we're all in line working, there's no squad or section leader, it's all listening to Brady because he's our director. Even on the field it's the same way unless he's up at the tower. When he's on the tower, we have our squad and section leaders back. But there's some flaws in drumline leadership."

James: "I had a thought about the drum majors. I think they're all amazing and awesome. I remember fundies week, like Graeme and Stephen sat next to me, and I had a really cool conversation with them. And then every time I saw them after that, they would always say hi to me first. I didn't talk to Brenden too much, but he was really cool. And Kayla. They're just really cool people and friendly."

Mary: "I thought the drum majors were super good. Like Graeme learned everyone's name in the first week. That was really sweet. That was like going the extra mile."

James: "Yeah and they all get along so well. Great dynamic."

Morgan: "Well back to the section leaders. Sarah was our section leader and Adam was our squad leader, but Adam took over like sectionals so he was mainly the section leader. But he had a lot of relationship issues, like 99% he was good and we had fun, but then he just had those days where he was not having it with anything. And Sarah was just like a really kind person, she was so caring. She took authority when she needed to. They were both mom and dad of the mellos."

John: "Was it like that where they were parently figures for the whole section?"

Morgan: "Yeah."

Alright, I think I'm going to do one more for tonight and then we can wrap up and do the next in two weeks. Going off of that, looking a leadership and personal connections, do you feel that you have a mentoring role, someone you look up to, either from band or just another part of campus in general? Do you feel you've made that sort of connection with someone at BG?

John: "I do, but it's outside of FMB. I have three. One is Nick Fox, one of our percussion DMAs, associated with Scott Sharvey. Scott's a graduate and Nick is a DMA. Me and Nick get along really well, and he is the happiest guy right next to RJ. Nick's just a step above on the enthusiasm level. The second one is a guy up in campus ops. He works there, his name is Felix, he's also a percussion. And the third guy is Dr. King. I've worked with him, and I'm working with him to try to perform one of my compositions for concert band."

Wow, that would be neat.

John: "Yeah, me and Dr. King would work together. He would help me a bit on like full band stuff. Even in marching band, he would help me out a little bit. Even with my squad leader saying don't go to Dr. King with questions, I would still go. I knew he would make some time for the kids, he's not a hard professor."

James: "As far as FMB goes, I would say Jeans. He just has such an amazing work ethic. He has so many crazy stories and life experiences. He's kinda an odd ball, but he's just so interesting as a person. I'm definitely learning a lot from him. He's someone I can look up to musically and as a person. Second, I would say Michael more or less because he's my big and we're slowly getting to know each other better. Um he's just a cool guy. He's almost like Jeans in that he has a good work ethic and he has a lot of cool stories to share. He's a good person."

Mary: "I have two also. Alana because she's in the same major as me, so I text her everyday saying like, 'Hey, should I take this class,' just always asking something. And she's gonna go to this professional day with me and stuff like that. It's so nice. She's just like really helpful. Yeah and I knew her from the beginning because of Tyler, but yeah she's like my first one. Also April because she just took me under her wing a little bit. She's kinda shy too I think, so she was like, 'I see you, we're both shy come on.' And she's like best friends with Gates, and I was really close with Gates, so we would like hang out at her boyfriend's house and stuff like that. She's just really cool, that she would hang out with freshman."

John: "Quick comment. FMB is like the only on campus social group that has seniors interacting with freshman as friends."

James: "Yeah the only people that I talk to that are 20 or older, I know through band."

Erica: "FMB wise, I really look up to Stephanie and Jocelyn. They don't treat any of us like we're underclassmen. That sort of respect there, I liked a lot. But I think more towards people in my own major. So I'm taking an international service learning class this semester so we're working on community projects with partners both at home and abroad. I'm the only freshman in that class, so I have to constantly interact with older people in my major. They have plans, they know about scholarships and all of these available opportunities that they share with me."

Morgan: "So Laura Gieseler in the mellophone section, we went to high school together. So I've known her since my freshman year. She's always been a mentor to me. We always bonded together and just know each other. I've known her since my freshman year of high school so she understands me and stuff. Throughout the whole process of me coming to BG, I went to her with every single question I had. And she always says she recruited me. She's a good listener."

That's so great! Well, I think this is where we are going to end tonight. I appreciate you all being here!

Pt. 2

So the first question that I have for tonight is what do you think about having a sense of belonging at college? To give you an idea, what does belonging mean to you? Why might this be important or unimportant?

Mary: "So like the first semester for me, even though we had marching band to help you feel like you belonged, I didn't. Because I was so busy with classes and stuff, I didn't really hang out with anybody outside of band. So that kinda sucked. But as far as, now it's a lot better and I'm fine now. But a sense of belonging I feel like just means your professors and friends care about you and they're invested in you, you're not just a number."

What do you think helped this semester versus last semester?

Mary: "I think it was a homesickness thing. I don't think it really had anything to do with Bowling Green. I think it was just kinda like I can't go home and see my mom and my cat and stuff."

James: "I feel that more this semester because I'm less busy. I only have one class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's so boring. By the end of the day, it's just like....I need to find a job or something because I get so bored on those days. It's just really hard when you're not busy to keep focused on school and what's important. Being busy can be better because it keeps you focused and occupied and more goal-oriented I would say. And to answer your question. I think a sense of belonging can be important or not important depending on who you are. That can go hand in hand with your school. Like for example, a reason that I didn't want to go to OSU or some of the bigger schools is because you are like a number in a way. There's just so many people and it's kind of hard to find a sense of belonging. Whereas it's a little bit easier here, there's fewer people. It's easier to find a group of people that you really click with or an activity or hobby or something you really enjoy."

So do you think getting involved is how you find your sense of belonging?

James: "Um I don't know. I would say yes, but I'm not really sure."

That's okay. Does anyone else have thoughts on that? How do you find that sense of belonging?

Erica: "I think it is finding that group or organization that really makes you want to come back to BG. It's what makes you during the last week of winter break be like, 'Wow, I just really want to go back to BG.'"

Morgan: I felt like throughout high school you're finding yourself and then in college you know what group to look for. You kinda built yourself up in middle school and high school to be the kind of person you want to be. Then in college, you're like I'm this type of person. I mean you can still be finding yourself, but you kind of know who you are so you try to find those type of people and you click with those type of people. I guess it's just like a time progression to find who you really want to be with."

Mary, I like how you brought up professors too. How do you feel academically? What do your professors do that show you they care about you?

Mary: "I think it's just like if they're unapproachable, you're not going to approach them. So they have to be approachable and friendly. And also if you're in a lecture hall with 300 people, there's a big difference between that like my psych class versus my English class is like 20 people. I like that, I like my English teacher a lot more than the psych teacher. And the psych teacher might be just as cool as the English teacher, but I wouldn't know because I never interacted with her. So the class size matters a lot to me."

James: "I would agree with that. I had a class in here – a music history class – with only ten people. That was the best class I had last semester. It was the most engaging, you learn the most. You kind of get more of a relationship with the instructor or professor. I had some smaller classes and those were my favorite because I really got to know the professor."

I'm also going to bounce back to you Erica, you mentioned finding you're niche of people. I like how you phrased it – that last week of winter break, who is motivating you to go back to BG. Who are those people for you all?

Erica: "Most of the girls on my floor and in my learning community."

Morgan: "Well I think some of the mellos. Because we hang out and talk a lot. We talk about our day and then run into each other. I was so excited to see everyone again, even though I don't see them as much this semester because we don't have band. But I was excited to see them and my roommate too because we get along really well."

You guys are bringing up a lot of good stuff today. So there's definitely a difference between fall and spring semester. How are you feeling about not having marching band now?

Erica: "I feel like I get a lot sleep, a lot more free time."

Mary: "I feel like I can get a lot better grades. Because I honestly just didn't have enough time to do the studying and the sleeping that I wanted to do. And this semester it's like you have no excuse not to get a 4.0, like you better do it. Last semester it was like I literally didn't have the time. It's nice to have more time for school work. It was like I'm here for school, but I'm spending all my time on band. That kind of bothered me during the band season."

James: "It's almost worse for me. I need to be busy because I'm such a procrastinator, I'm really bad at putting things off and being hit with deadlines. It's nice having extra time this semester, but those days where I don't have any classes, it eats away at me because I feel like I should be doing something productive, but I'm not."

That's interesting because there are different ways of working and work ethics and balancing time and time management. What do you think could have been done last semester? If somebody in the saxophone section formed a study group giving that dedicated time while still being around people. What would have helped you feel that academic focus during marching band?

Mary: "That's a really tough question because I tried a lot of different things. I tried planning out every minute of my day but that didn't work. It was like sometimes I'm going to be hungry at this time, but

other times I'm not so I could study but sometimes not. That's just a really hard question because I don't think we get anything done if there's more than three of us in a room, we're just messing around."

Morgan: "I feel like for me, honestly, it was the thought of you have band practice every single day and games on the weekends so you need to get the work done before band practice. You know you have this much time at band practice and this much time before you need to go to sleep so you need to get the work done. I think the thought of being busy with band was motivating to me because band is going to come up and smack you in the face. Like oh crap I need to go to band, but I'm not done with this assignment yet. The thought of having to go to band and do all this stuff involving band forced me to get my work done."

Now having seen both sides, having gone through marching band and now having more free time, what are your plans on potentially returning to marching band next year and why are you feeling that way?

Erica: "I'm definitely planning on doing it as long as it fits with my schedule. I'm low key worried that some of the classes essential to my major are going to conflict. I love all of my clarinet section and I love performing, so I'm not ready to give that up yet."

John: "I'll be back because I'm auditioning for drum major. If not, I'll be back on drum line."

James: "I'd say I'm kind of, like during the season...with band I just have this love hate relationship. It was like this in high school, like when I wasn't doing it I would like about how fun it was and psych myself up but towards the end of the season it's like I'm done with this. It's such a big commitment and it's hard work. Maybe it's me being lazy. I've told myself recently that I should do it. Also I get two credit hours out of it and it's an easy A and that's where all of my friends are. I do enjoy doing it. I've been on the fence, but recently I've been talking myself into doing it."

Mary: "I'm trying to be an RA, I'm in the alternate pool. So if I do end up getting that position, I can't be in marching band. But by the end of the season, I was like don't you do it again because you were miserable. Now I'm like it was so fun! But in the back of my head...I don't know if I'll do it again. It's like a probably not at this point because I would rather get a job, but I don't know. There's still a good chance that I'll be an RA, so I won't have a choice."

Morgan: "I think I'm going to do it again. I just had a lot of fun. It was a good college experience – a good way to experience college. College marching band is way different than high school marching band, really cool and really fun. But my advisor told me select students in my major have problems with marching band, so just be prepared if you can't do it one year. She was like your major is so hands-on. If you're going to do your major and marching band, you might have to do some summer classes. Last semester wasn't that bad. Field experience is taking up a lot of time this semester and it's only a one or two credit class."

Mary: "Are you in intro to ed?"

Morgan: "Yeah."

Mary: "That's what I took last semester. That with marching band, it was ridiculous. It was a really bad pairing."

Okay moving on. How would you describe your identity at BGSU?

Mary: "I was actually thinking about that recently. In high school, we did five years of band starting in middle school, so it's been a part of my life for a long time. I was always the band kid. But now that I'm probably not going to be in it anymore, it's like what does that mean? I was always the band kid in high school, I wasn't known as the smart kid or the nerdy kid, it was always the band kid. So now if I don't have that, then it's like it gets real complicated. The kid who tries pretty hard in school and likes her cat. I don't know."

James: "I would say the same thing. I've done info cards for class and they ask to list a hobby and I always put I'm in band I play the saxophone. When you boil it down, what do you do?"

Mary: "I feel like I have to join an organization now. Because who just goes to college and doesn't do anything? If you just do your classes, you feel like you need to have a job or be in an organization or do something."

Morgan: "I feel like again, in high school it was band geeks, orchestra, jocks. But then you get to college and there's 16,000 people so how do you organize and categorize those people. I think you more categorize yourself. I really don't know how to word it. I still consider myself that band person because that's all that I was in. I was in a dance studio outside of school but in school I was the band person."

What about your identity as far as, let's say the year after you graduate BGSU?

John: "BG grad of course."

Mary: "Grad school? Your job?"

What I'm trying to get at is do you feel like you have a set identity right now or do you feel like you're evolving?

Mary: "Evolving."

Erica: "Definitely evolving. You asked what our identity is to you now, but I don't think I could answer that."

John: "Ascribed identity is your identity handed to you at birth. Voluntary identity is like we're all in band – stuff that we chose to get. Ascribed will never change, but past college your voluntary will change. It's always a combination of the two."

James: "We've never not been in school. We've never not been in a place where there are people trying to get you to do something, parents or teachers or people around you. It's kind of scary to think about what you do after college. There's still stuff, but you have to really actively put yourself out there to be a part of the organizations in your town or your job."

Alright well that's all that I had, so thanks so much for your participation.

APPENDIX E

Upperclassmen Focus Group Transcript

**The students that participated in the focus group have been given pseudo names for confidentiality purposes.

Introductions:

I have a list of different ways to introduce ourselves. Please give me your name, year, major, hometown, and instrument. Then for fun, your favorite fictional character and non-FMB related, BGSU memory.

Brent: "My name is Brent. I'm a second year, my major is accounting. I'm from Saint Mary, Ohio, which is a half hour from Lima. I play the trombone. My favorite fictional character is definitely Pepe. Favorite BGSU, non-FMB memory. My favorite BGSU memory was my first hockey game."

Miranda: "I'm Miranda, I'm a third-year psychology major. I'm from Perrysburg, Ohio. I play the piccolo. I really hate picking favorites, so I have no idea who my favorite fictional character is. I'd probably say my favorite BGSU memory would be running the high school honor band three or four weeks ago."

Jason: "My name is Jason. I'm a fourth-year media production studies major. I'm from Fairfield, Ohio which is 30 minutes from Cincinnati. I play clarinet and mellophone. My favorite fictional character is Captain America. My favorite BGSU memory...I'm gonna say becoming a tour guide."

Brian: "My name is Brian Giere. I'm from Coldwater, Ohio about 45 minutes south of here. I'm a junior this year. Play trumpet. My favorite fictional character would probably be Peter Griffin. And my favorite BGSU memory was when I met my roommate freshman year for the first time, it was a cool experience."

Cody: "I'm Cody. Second-year music education. I'm from Perrysburg and I play trumpet. And my favorite fictional character is probably Tom & Jerry. My favorite BGSU, non-FMB memory, is when I played club tennis there was a specific match where we won and it was because of my match and it was awesome."

Emily: "I'm Emily. I'm a second-year visual communication technology major. I'm from Hilliard, Ohio, which is just west of Columbus. I play tenor saxophone in FMB and usually clarinet in university band. My favorite fictional character, I'll say Nico Deangelo from the Percy Jackson series. And my favorite BGSU, non-FMB memory is probably a specific critique on one of my projects for my major. Everyone in my class thought it was really good and it was my first time where I was like, 'I really, really like my major.'"

Questions:

Nice! So now we'll go ahead and get started with. If there are any questions you don't feel comfortable with, you don't have to answer. I just want it to be an open discussion about your experiences so I can learn from them and figure out how they're connected. So the first question is what made you decide to join the Falcon Marching Band, and what has influenced you to return?

Emily: "I personally think I'm just not capable of not doing band. I came out of high school, and I was like I'm not gonna do band in college, I don't need that it's fine. And then all of the sudden, I'm getting the information in the mail and I'm like oh okay. And then I showed up to fundies week and it snow-balled

from there. I decided I really liked it and I would go for leadership and that's why I came back this year because I really wanted to try it from the leadership perspective of being in the band."

Brent: "I definitely think it's a familiarity thing for me. Just because I'd gone through band so much in high school that I couldn't really see my life without band. So I definitely wanted to continue that in college. I looked at the band and it seemed like the FMB had a great reputation, watched the Frontiers show and was completely blown away 10/10. And so after I'd gone through the first year, it was such an amazing experience that I wanted to do as much as I could, which inspired me to do it the next year. It's been great ever since."

Jason: "The main reason I joined marching band and continued in college is because of my [high school] band director. She personally, when I was a sophomore, thinking about band and my passion for band – I wanted to continue. I returned to band because of the people – the connections I made – as well as the leadership opportunities."

Miranda: "High school for me was surrounded by band. Band is life. And just the thought of going to college and not spending all of those hours. And all of my friends in high school were found in band, so I was just like it's my SOAR registration day, I don't care what other classes I have, but band has to be in there from 4-6. And then my freshman year, deciding whether or not to come back for my sophomore year, I was actually conflicted because I had mixed feelings about how the season had went. But I came back because I really wanted to try to make it a better experience than what I had. I really wanted to try to make other people by being leadership and helping out in general, making it an awesome experience like one I had in high school."

Brian: "Whenever I was younger, I always wanted to be in a college marching band. I actually wanted to be in the Ohio State marching band, but as I got older, I realized I probably wasn't good enough for that but I still really wanted to do marching band. So when I settled on BG, I looked at the opportunity and band was something I could do. I came back because mainly, honestly, my big bird was Connor Mancini and we had a close connection so he really inspired me to come back the next year."

Cody: "I wanted to join FMB because it's literally a part of my major. It's like you're kind of expected to but I really wanted to ever since I had seen shows since I was eight years old, nine years old when I would come to games, especially the Toledo-BG game. But yeah it was right for me to join band. And then I came back because it was awesome and fun."

Now that I've made you think about your favorite non-FMB memories as well as looking back on why you joined FMB, what are some of your most memorable experiences with the band? It doesn't have to be one specific memory, but general experiences. What makes these experiences stick out to you?

Cody: "I'm gonna say marching into the MAC Championship game in Detroit. It was my first time ever being in a professional football stadium and it was like, 'woah, this is amazing.' We marched in to the BGSU cadence and I was speechless."

Emily: "I found a dog on a bowl trip. Literally, I was walking around the side of the hotel to get to the back because I wasn't sure I could navigate through the hotel to get to the back. So I walked around the side, I was in full-uniform, and this lady had dropped off the dog. She pulled up and walk like, 'Do you work here?' I'm in full-uniform and I'm like 'No!' So I had to find a hotel worker to take care of this dog

and it was just the weirdest experience but it made me laugh so hard. Weird random thing that I remember. Quirky little things that happen like that because of band.”

Jason: “I would definitely say the bowl games. We didn’t go to one this past year, but I’ve been in the FMB for four years, and I’ve been to three bowl games and three MAC championships. So like the trips with my sections are the most memorable things for me. You either love them or hate them. It’s a lot of fun, like this past year we went to Alabama again. We were on the bus for 24 hours and we were all just screaming at each other, but it was fine! Great memories!”

Miranda: “I would definitely also say travelling with the band to bowl games and championship.”

Brian: “I would also have to agree, the bowl games. I kind of liked the fact that we were allowed to explore the city a little bit. It allowed us to get to know our section a little bit better when we were all hanging out and doing stuff like that. And I really liked when we went to Montgomery and saw the church where Dr. Martin Luther King preached and stuff. I’m kinda a history buff type of dude, so I kind of liked that.”

Brent: “I mean all of the experiences have been really awesome, but I think fundies week always stuck out to me in particular, particularly when I came in for my first year. It’s a very large campus and you don’t know a whole lot of people, but I think band acts as a way to kind of usher you into the college and especially when we do our whole big alma mater thing in Kobacker. It really put into perspective that I was going to be able to find a family away from home that I can always come back to. It made it so that I already knew people before college even started. So I wasn’t walking around feeling like it was unfamiliar territory or uncomfortable. But yeah I think it’s just been a great way to make friends coming to college and to keep those friends throughout college. Even though it sometimes seems like college can be overwhelming, it’s nice to have those people.”

Emily: “I kind of want to second that. Like my section, we had a Thanksgiving together since we had a game on Black Friday this year. It was super cute and it was just one of those moments where I was like ‘I love band so much, I love my section, I love everyone I met here.’”

Jason: “Also the traditions that we have.”

Why do you think those are important? What makes you feel good about the traditions we have?

Emily: “I would say it’s kind of like you feel a part of a whole, instead of you just thinking, ‘I’m a bandsman,’ it’s actually, ‘I’m part of the band, I’m part of this organization that has decades of history behind it.’ You’re following in other people’s footsteps, it’s not you going alone. It makes you take a step back and think, ‘This isn’t entirely about me, this isn’t even entirely about the band that’s performing right now. This is about the reputation of the university and the bands.’ Continuing to bring back the feeling and the presence we have in the community year after year.”

Jason: “I feel like the traditions bring us closer together as friends in more of a family aspect. I think that’s what I mostly got from the traditions. They’re fun to do and we get closer throughout all of the traditions that we do in the season.”

Brent: “Yeah, to kind of go off of what Emily’s been saying, I mean it kind of puts into perspective like she was saying that you’re part of something bigger. To bounce off of what Jason was saying too, it

instills that sense of belonging. Because I know what these traditions are, because I participate in them year after year, it helps give you a sense of identity.”

Brian: “I think it promotes a form of connection. Alumni can relate to each other, even though it can be years apart from when you’re in band, you still have something in common.”

Being a part of marching band for several years now, what do you think your role is in the marching band? Title is not specific to this.

Cody: “This year, since I was the trumpet section leader. As a trumpet section leader, my goals were to bring the trumpet section as best as they could be every day and to ultimately improve a certain excellence that we’re held to. And then once we did that, if all of the sections came together with their excellent work, it would bring together the entire band. So I felt like in my standpoint, I brought together the leadership so that we were one unit, and then we brought together the section, which hopefully would help bring together the entire band. I felt like that’s what my role was.”

Miranda: “I feel like in general, all of us that are returning members are servants. Whether you’re a leader specifically, you’re obviously serving your section by actually teaching them. But also if you’re a vet, you’re serving and helping the nugeyes learn and even serving the leadership and helping them get through it. And then as a band as a whole, we’re serving athletics by bringing spirit and what not. We’re serving the community by going out and doing parades and different things like that.”

Emily: “I think just about any upperclassmen, and really to some extent the nugeyes, I think everyone’s position in the band is a position of being an example for others. Just because I feel like that’s the best way to learn about anything is by seeing other people doing it and enacting it in their lives. I just think about all of the people I’ve known through band and how I’m learning new things from them every day, you know things about not only music and marching, but also about life – how to be a better leader, how to be more dedicated to just keep working to get better. So I think we’re all teachers and learners.”

Going off of that, how do you all feel you have gained a mentor role or mentee role through marching band or through college in general? Do you feel like you have some kind of role model or leader, someone who has shown you through college and has helped you develop and maybe now you have become the mentor to somebody else?

Brent: “Yeah, I would definitely say that marching band has provided me with a lot of figures to look up to, mainly those being trombone leadership during my freshman year. They had always been great leaders, considering how confident they were in their position, that inspired me to take on that role as I went throughout my freshman year and going into my sophomore year. Kinda elaborating – I don’t know if all of the sections do this, but to give background – when nugeyes come into the band program, they are presented with a ‘big bird’ that serves as a mentor for them. It’s someone to look up to. This year, as a returning member and veteran, I had the opportunity to be a big bird for one of my good friends who is also an accounting major. But not only have I gained leadership experience from helping to guide him in the right direction, but I also kind of feed off of what he is presenting as well because it’s not necessarily an alpha and beta situation. It’s more like we kind of feed off of each other. I’m influenced by what he does, and he’s influenced by what I do. It’s a symbiotic relationship. I feel I’ve really grown from looking up to someone, and also being a mentor for someone else. They have both been very valuable experiences from FMB.”

Emily: "I would say two of the biggest mentors I had through FMB were never actually in the FMB at the same time I was. But you know whenever I was really stressed or upset or felt like I wasn't doing enough in my position as leadership this past year, one specifically – Amanda Pack, who is a really great friend of mine – it was always really great to reach out to her and ask her questions. She's a terrific leader even though she was never a leader in the FMB, I still never would have met her if I wasn't in the Falcon Marching Band. I kind of got a lot of...I picked her brain a lot about leadership and being a good friend from her. Also from watching Akilah Thomas and how she led outside of marching band. Now I don't feel like I have as much of a mentee as maybe I could have, but I was able to help nugeyes coming in with just about anything they mentioned they needed help with. I was trying to offer to be as helpful as possible. I don't feel like I was often took up on that, but I tried as hard as I could to support people where I could."

Jason: "So my mentor from my first year of FMB was my section leader, Evan. He was always willing to help out with anything in the marching band. He would have sectionals every week. Not a lot of people would show up to them, but he always made the effort to help people when they needed it. I always showed up even though I didn't really need the help. So when I tried out for leadership the next year, I tried to be there as much as I could for people, no matter if they needed help with music or marching, I always stayed after to help people if they were struggling with anything. Basically what I learned from that is always be there for someone, and always try to be a role model to someone because you never know what you can leave on someone. You can leave a huge impact on someone just based on a little help."

Brent: "I would definitely emphasize the point that the leaders we've had throughout the band program, at least that I've seen, have not necessarily been exclusive to the title of section leader. Particularly in my section, I've seen a lot of individuals step forward and offer their help even though they might not have the official title. Jason brought up sectionals – we had one individual who would organize sectionals and take time out of his schedule to really help anyone, especially nugeyes, to memorize standard tunes we play. At least for me, I fed a lot off of that, it kind of inspires me to take a leadership role, even though I might not have that title. I think that's something that FMB has taught a lot of individuals, to help be a leader even though you're not designated with the official title."

What are some other examples of things that you've learned from other mentors or other people that are not necessarily related to just music, but that have helped your grow as an individual?

Miranda: "For me, being a squad leader this year, I thought I really want to have a squad that interacts with each other and is involved. So looking back to my squad leader from the previous year, I asked what did she do that really made me feel that it was great and we're in this together. So for me, it was just a lot of like yeah we're here and we're marching and stuff, but I always tried to do stuff outside of band and form this group of people who was such a group of odd balls and so different in so many different ways but we would just hang out and have all of these different interactions. We did a corn maze, just being lost in corn in the middle of the night. Being able to appreciate that we all have this similar common love of music, but then learning from each other about other aspects of life."

Emily: "I learned a lot about leadership specifically this past year, having to be the leader of a section of very strong people who were ready to take initiative without any help. I learned a lot about different kinds of leadership styles because if you read a book on leadership, it will have some kind of mention of leadership styles, but really it's still kind of teaching one way to lead and be an example. Even when you

go to different kinds of leadership seminars, it still kind of blends into one style. I learned a lot about being more flexible and how leadership is a more dynamic thing than it is in books. In addition to that, I learned a lot about being a friend and a leader at the same time because it can be really hard to strike a balance. I absolutely think I've grown to be a better person through being in FMB both my first year and this past year, just because I've had to work with the section, whether it's in leadership or as part of the people being taught. I think I learned about cooperation and helping other people. Just being compassionate and making time for other people."

How do you think being in marching band has helped you learn to work with others?

Brian: "For me personally, where I'm from, I come from a really small farm town and we are all exactly the same. Being in band has really opened up my eyes to how different people are and I think it helped me to get along with people better and see things from their point of view, different from my side. View the world in a different way."

Jason: "What I realized with being leadership my sophomore year, everyone comes from a different background of music and marching style. So you have to learn to cooperate with everyone's learning style there. Teaching marching routines, you have to do it in a way that everyone will understand, so I would cooperate vocally learning how to do it."

Miranda: "I think along with different types of learning styles is that everyone has different types of motivations for being in band. So you have some people who come every day ready, excited, and gung-ho, and then you have people who they have other things on their mind, are busy, and just not at that high level of interest. So trying to find this level of balance like how excited and what can I do to get everyone on the same page so it's not just like this group over here are all moping around. Trying to get everyone to work together too and keep up the morale."

Emily: "In addition to different marching and music levels and levels of interest, there's also all the different personalities you have to work with. I was fortunate enough that so far as leadership my section is pretty chill and everyone has got along for nine-tenths of the season. But there were some conflicts that a lesson to learn to give and take with how I felt about people as well as helping others compromise and realize there's never going to be a situation where everyone has 100% exactly what they want so everyone kind of needs to work for the betterment of the section and the band. Trying to move past personal problems and to rise above all of the to give the best performance that we could give."

Alright let's move on. I really want to dig into this. What do you think about the idea of having a sense of belonging at college? Do you feel you belong at BGSU? How do you feel different aspects of your college experience have related to that sense of belonging?

Brent: "I think that there is a lot of subgroups within the culture of BGSU, FMB being one of those. There's so many ways to get involved at BG and to find some friend groups that it's almost like you find home right away. I mean I know I have a lot of friend groups outside of FMB that have influenced me, whether it be music related or not. Experiences in residence halls, different student organizations. I think it's a great way to...I think it's just very easy to find a group of people that share the same values as you do."

Emily: "I had a little bit of a different experience just because I thrive off of close relationships. So for the first month of me being here, the first three weeks of school, it was just very weird for me. I came here for three different tours, believe it or not, I just really liked the feeling that I felt like this could be home. That first month for me actually made me think, 'I don't know, did I make the right decision?' I thrive off of very, very close relationships, but I'm not particularly great at making those relationships. So for the first month or so, I was just unsure if I fit here. Obviously I'm in the band and involved with that and enjoyed that. It was a little bit of limbo for me. But as time passed, I definitely settled into my group of people that I found through band. Nine out of ten of my friends are involved with music some way. So I do wish I would have been able to get more involved outside of FMB. I tried a couple of times, but it didn't quite work out. I still have a lot of really great friends through all of the music stuff I have been doing. I definitely think if it had gone on like that much longer, I probably would not have returned to FMB. I was fortunate enough that it just took a little longer for me."

Why do you feel a sense of belonging is important?

Emily: "I definitely think it's hard to work at your highest capacity both within FMB as well as within your school work if you're not feeling comfortable where you are physically. Because I'm sure I could have continued going here, because I love BG and I love my major, I just don't know that I would have been as able to produce the quality of work I'm able to produce. My friends are kind of like my muse, I've done multiple projects based around music or organizations affiliated with the FMB or the FMB itself. I definitely think the level of involvement and comfort can really affect how you're performing in your school work as well and how you feel as an individual."

Brent: "Yeah I would definitely go off of that. There are several organizations that I do on campus, but it's just not the same because you don't have that sense of belonging. And I feel you can't function at your highest capacity if you aren't around those people because you don't have that common bond. I think when that's the case, it's just a bit harder to work with people sometimes."

Brian: "I think it's kind of nice, whether your friends are in band or not, you see someone walking around campus and they say hi to you it just lifts up your mood and brightens your day. You're not so depressed that way and you return the favor and say hi to someone else."

Jason: "I know for me, the sense of feeling like I belong there keeps me motivated to continue doing whatever I'm doing. I'm involved with my student association for my major, and I feel like I don't belong there because it's just not my interest. I love my major but the organization overall, I don't feel like I belong there or at the meetings. I've got the sense of belonging in any music organization that I'm involved in, so that keeps me motivated to continue."

Why do you think FMB has a different sense than other organizations on campus?

Miranda: "I know for me, I'm very similar to Jason. The organization I'm in for my major, it's like, 'Okay, we meet every other week, talk about stuff for an hour, alright bye.' There's really, I feel like no one has a sense of belonging there. We all love psychology, but I think that for that versus marching band, it's the time, the commitment of it. For this organization, we meet every other week for an hour, it's not much of a commitment, you don't have to come, it's optional. With marching band, it's a class, you have to come. But also, you're dedicating yourself, you know every day you have to come to marching band

for two hours, football games on the weekends. So you're investing yourself timewise more, but also you chose to do it, so you know it's coming. That alone, I think, sets you up for it."

Brent: "Yeah, I definitely think it's a big timing component. Considering that FMB happens before school even starts, you very quickly get attributed. The social factor too helps reinforce that bond. Whereas, the organization I have for my major, there's not a social component. I feel that's the big component that sets other organizations apart. If you don't get the chance to know people on a deeper level than just the base level of 'This is what we're here to meet for, let's do it, we're done, bye.' I feel it doesn't have the same effect than if it has that social component."

Jason: "Also another thing is the unfamiliar faces of the organization that you're involved in. Through marching band, you see familiar faces every day so you look forward to going to marching band every day. As for my student association, I know a few people, but I don't know everyone there. So the unfamiliar faces throw me off a little bit. We all have a sense of community in that we're all the same major, but we all have different focuses in our major and different interests. Like we're going to Ann Arbor to the Google company for an internship fair and it interests us, but it's more interesting for some people than others."

Emily: "I definitely think a big part of it is the time component. I'm not actually involved very much with the organization associated with my major. It's very much an extension upon what we do in class, though. I know that we have required three-hour long labs with every course in my major except for one. So you definitely end up spending a lot of time with those people and getting to know those faces. You don't see as many unfamiliar faces basically after your first year being in the major. But it's still just the kind of work you're doing, because mine is very technology based. So I can sit there and tap away at a computer for three hours and it's definitely not even the same as one hour of being in marching band because [marching band] is such an interactive activity where you're constantly having to talk to other people outside of your section, inside your section, grad assistants, Dr. King, just all over the place. You can't really get through a rehearsal without talking. You need to talk, whether it's just to make sure you're not going to ram the person ahead of you in the head with your instrument or if it's a more complicated issue. Even simple things such as knowing a person's name builds an intricate sense of community in the band."

What made you all decide to join your other organizations? What was the intent or drive to get involved?

Brent: "Those organizations are known for the professional experience. Whereas with all of my other music organizations, it's more for the fun and social aspect. I feel that it's more a sense of being there for professional development rather than, 'I'm here because I really, really want to be.'"

Miranda: "I definitely agree with that. Psychology association, the point of it is to have psychologists come speak, professors come speak. How do we make a good resume, how do we apply to grad school? All of that kind of what's the future going to be for a psychology major. So it's very professional development based. Joining that, it's like I know I'm going to grad school so now I can have an outside source that will help me get there."

Jason: "I wanted to learn more about my major, that why I joined my student association. Also so I could get closer to the faculty members in case I ever a letter of recommendation for a job as well."

Emily: "I'm not super involved outside of music. I definitely tried to be but it hasn't worked out for me so far."

Why do you think it hasn't worked out, if you don't mind me asking?

Emily: "I'm not sure, I just keep applying for things, and getting told, 'No, you're not really what we need at the moment.' I applied to be a campus tour guide, and that didn't work out. I also applied for the Bleacher Creatures, and that didn't work out. Another one I was looking at getting involved in is DREAM, which is Disability Rights Education Advocating and Mentoring, which I just didn't feel like I super belonged there. I just haven't had a lot of luck with getting involved. But my motivation behind getting involved as a tour guide and with the Bleacher Creatures mostly is just that I want to give back to my school because I love BG so much. I do as much as I can already to help other people discover how awesome it is and why they should look at it. That kind of extends into the FMB. I'm in the task force for recruiting for the FMB. I just try to spread as much information about BG as I can."

Brian: "I'm not really in any other organizations, but last year I worked for the Athletic Department. I guess the reason I decided to do that was because I could join the two passions of my life, which is music and sports, together. The position I had was playing music at athletic events and telling Athletic Band when to play and stuff. I was able to watch the game and still have a connection with music."

Alright, has anyone else worked on campus?

Jason: "Campus tour guide."

Miranda: "I work for the Astronomy Department. I'm a star gaze leader. Anyone in astronomy class is required to attend a star gaze session, and they're also open to the public. So essentially I can take people up to the roof, show them stuff in the sky just with your eyes, look at stuff through smaller telescopes or bigger telescopes. My experience with that has been phenomenal. I know random space facts, which is fun. It's really helped me with public speaking because most of the people that do come are students, so they have some level of knowledge already of what I'm teaching them about, so being able to translate what they already know into application. Like looking at stuff and understanding that's a nebula and different things. Also being able to interact with different sizes of groups. One night, we'll have two people show up, the next we'll have a full 20. So that's always been Brenteficial to me because you really do talk to different groups differently. Being able to adapt the same concept that you always have to, okay like I gotta make sure all 20 of these people understand what I'm saying when I point to that random object in the sky versus these just two people."

How did you all find your jobs?

Miranda: "I was in an astronomy class in the fall semester, and my professor is the director of the planetarium and he recruits people from his classes. I loved his class, so I joined."

Brian: "In my case, I personally emailed David Thebe, he's the marketing director of Athletics, to see if there was an open position and there was."

How did you know to contact him?

Brian: "One of the saxophone players, Kellen, worked for him. I knew Kellen from band, and I knew that he worked with athletics, so that's how I got his name."

Jason: "I found out about my job through a bunch of my friends, they were all like, 'Apply to be a tour guide!' My parents when I first came to visit were like, 'You're going to be a tour guide,' and I was like, 'Ha, no I'm not.' And then I ended up applying, and I actually really love my job."

This was all great, I appreciate your time and contribution to this!

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