

College and University Athletic Band Guidelines
College Band Directors National Association
Athletic Band Task Force
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Purpose

This document is intended to serve college and university band directors, administrators, athletic personnel, and bowl game entertainment staff by providing guidelines, information and recommendations on the best common practices involving college and university student athletic bands.

The college band director strives for excellence amidst multiple constituencies. This document is intended to provide a starting point of dialogue between the director and those constituencies. In addition, these guidelines serve as a best “common practice” in current athletic band activities. When most or all of these guidelines are met, the director has the best chance of balancing the needs of all the constituents, and providing an organization that the college or university can be proud of.

The Role of Athletic Bands

University athletic bands play a vital role on their respective campuses.

University Athletic Bands often fulfill the most diverse role of any student organization on campus. Athletic Bands are purveyors of school tradition, pageantry, and pride on campus. They serve many constituents including athletic departments, music departments, university administration, public school band directors, alumni, the general public, and the participating students. Athletic Bands create visibility for the University and are useful for entertainment, recruitment, marketing and promotion. Most significantly, Athletic Bands contribute to the musical and social education of their participating members.

The Band Director

The College Band Director often serves multiple constituencies, and must carefully balance these roles.

The college band director strives for excellence amidst multiple constituencies and must balance the needs of these various constituents with the needs of the participating students. Most college band directors have advanced academic degrees in music, are on the faculty of music at their institution, have additional course responsibilities, and report to an academic chair or dean. Thus, there are teaching, research and service expectations placed on the band director by the university.

The band director also serves the needs of the athletic department by providing bands for their events as well as serving other constituents including band alumni, the general public, and university administration. Balancing the needs of these constituents, while providing an academically valid environment to the students, is one of the difficult challenges faced by the college band director.

Use of Athletic Bands

Different constituencies view the bands in different ways.

How athletic bands are used depends on how they are viewed. Each constituent will naturally see the role of the band based upon how he/she understands and interfaces with it. For example, athletic marketing directors may wish to use the band to promote upcoming events, coaches want the band to keep the crowd in the game, band members will expect to perform well and play challenging music, and administrators may see the potential of the band to assist with fundraising.

While all of these ways of using the band (and more) are possible, it must be remembered that any use of the band requires the time and energy of the students who make up the Athletic Bands. Today, strong economic forces exert great influence on universities and athletic departments to consider short term goals which may work against what is in the long term best interest of students and programs.

Student Time Commitment

It is important to consider the reasonable amount of time a student invests in band activities.

In most cases, the members have no curricular requirement to participate in athletic bands. As a matter of fairness as well as concern for the long-term health of the program, demands on the students' time must be taken into account so that students are willing to return the following year. An over-worked band student will likely not return, thus diminishing the size of the following year's band and potentially reducing the number of services the band can provide.

Academic Credit

College band members should receive academic credit for their participation in marching and athletic bands.

Most band rehearsal schedules include six or more hours of rehearsal a week, in addition to performances. This is significantly more class time than many academic classes. Students are learning a variety of skills through their participation in marching band, including but not limited to: teamwork and collaboration, leadership, large organizational structure, artistry, creativity, physical fitness, musicianship, spatial awareness, professionalism, responsibility, accountability, historical knowledge, communication, pedagogical skills, and discipline.

Music Selection

Decisions regarding band music selections should reside with band director.

Most band directors will welcome suggestions for consideration, but the director must maintain final responsibility for the music the band plays. In addition to physical limitations on the student musicians, the band director should work in tandem with an athletic representative to ensure a successful game atmosphere.

Allotted Performance Time

Bands should be allotted 8 to 14 minutes for entry, performance, and exit of the field at pre-game and halftime.

Students and staff spend many hours preparing for public performance, and the inherent nature of the activity requires time to move large numbers of people on and off the field. The suggested minimum time of 8 minutes actually only leaves about 5 or 6 minutes of performance time. There may be individual performances where more time is needed, including when visiting bands are in attendance (14 minutes should be allotted for the band performances at half-time when a visiting band is present).

Performance Area

The football field should be clear of non-band personnel, props, or other obstructions not related to the marching band show while the show is underway.

Due to the physical demands on the performers (who sometimes move rapidly and without warning), there is inherent danger if unexpected obstructions are on the field (defined as sideline to sideline and end zone to end zone). These obstructions may include video camera operators, props unrelated to the band performance, advertisements, football players (especially kickers near the end of half-time), or other guests, media, and personnel. Exceptions should be discussed with the band director well in advance.

Visiting Bands

Visiting bands should be afforded the opportunity to perform at least 6 minutes at halftime given that the request has been made in a timely manner as agreed upon by conference policies. The home institution should provide a safe environment for the visiting band students, and a seating area that allows for convenient access to the field and ability to participate in game activities.

In consideration of good sportsmanship, visiting bands should be allowed to perform at pre-game or half-time as agreed upon with the home band director. Refusal to allow visiting bands unnecessarily sets up an adversarial relationship that is not in keeping with the good sportsmanship promoted by universities and conferences. Homecoming performances shall be open for negotiation. Seating with field access and proximity to visiting fans and a buffer from home fans is critical.

Band directors are responsible for large numbers of students when traveling, and it is important that the host institution assist in the safety of those students who are visible representations of the opponent university. Situations often arise whereby the visiting band is subject to home fan ill will; please see the attached **“Statement on Sportsmanship.”**

Use of Public Address Systems and Pre-Recorded Music

No sound should be played over a PA system during the agreed upon time of the band’s performance. Use of pre-recorded music and video advertisements should be kept to a reasonable level, and the length of a PA read should be considered with respect to game flow.

College bands provide a pageantry and spirit that is lacking in professional sports, and should be utilized. As stated earlier, the band staff and students spend numerous hours in rehearsal preparing for the game day performances. In addition, the funding to field a band can be significant, providing motivation to use live instead of recorded music. If the band volume is perceived to be inadequate, amplifying the band should be investigated. Using PA/video for the entire duration of a time-out leads to over saturation and sterilization of collegiate pageantry; it is suggested that some time be left to allow the band to play the crowd back into the game at the end of a time out. As PA and video use encroaches on the time available for the band to play, student surveys suggest, students become unmotivated to return the following year, leading to potentially smaller band size.

Band Travel

As university students, band members' time and schedules should be considered foremost when planning travel to away games. Per diems should be provided to all members of the travel party. The hiring of representative bands (i.e. high school or other college bands) in place of the regular band is often problematic.

Band members should not be required to travel more than 600 miles on a bus in one day. Academic responsibilities on the students are tremendous. In addition comfort and safety issues are critical to successful travel. Air travel should be considered beyond 600 miles.

Travel per diem/stipends should be provided to all participating band members and staff at a level sufficient to cover the cost of meals while traveling in connection with any travel. Students will incur different levels of expense when traveling to different areas of the country.

The college band works hard to achieve a positive image for the university; when an outside group is hired to represent the university, control over that image is lost. Additionally, the negative publicity surrounding such a hire has the potential to offset any positive outcome.

Game Day Performances

Bands should not be over committed to extra performances on game day due to the already extensive physical demands on the students.

Primary game day responsibilities for the band involve pre-game, half-time, and in-game music (between plays, time-outs, quarter breaks). Other requested activities need to take these primary functions into account.

Band Uniforms

The average life of a band uniform is 7-10 years. The maximum standard period for uniforms is 10 years.

Band Directors recognize the great expense that goes into the purchase of new uniforms, and have systems in place to maintain the quality of the uniforms. However, they do wear over time, and can become a negative for both members (who need to take pride in their uniform) and the public image of the band.

Bowl or Playoff Games

When bands are asked to perform at bowl or playoff games, all members of the participating bands should be afforded the opportunity to attend the event. Entertainment other than normal pre-game and half-time shows should be carefully considered to retain the pageantry of the college game. Arrangements for student travel should be carefully considered.

Taking the full instrumentation of a band to a bowl or playoff game is the best way to ensure a quality performance that will reflect well on the participating universities. All band members that travel to the bowl or playoff game should be given the opportunity to perform on the field with their respective ensembles. The chance to travel to a bowl or playoff game can also be seen as a reward for band members who have given their time and energy to serving their university over the course of the past season. This reward will have a positive effect on recruiting and retaining band members for the following season.

Considering the financial pressures faced by bowl sites in today's market, performance time during pre-game and halftime breaks is at a premium. Attempts to sensationalize the performances of participating ensembles during these segments (ala the movie "Drumline") fail to recognize the rich tradition of pageantry associated with collegiate marching bands. The image of the participating universities and the bowl site itself are best served by allowing participating bands to perform in their own style and demonstrate their own traditions.

If a performance involving direct interaction between the bands is unavoidable, the participating band directors should be consulted well in advance. Half-time shows that involve the two bands should be planned utilizing the expertise of the participating directors. These professionals understand the pragmatic challenges of the collegiate marching band medium and will possess an intimate knowledge of the potential of their ensembles to fulfill the requests of bowl officials or entertainment consultants. Since college marching bands have missions in areas other than competition, events such as "Battle of the Bands" should have a non-competitive feel; awards should not be given to one band over another.

Bowl sites should make plans to provide sufficient rehearsal time for participating bands. Rehearsal times should be coordinated with the participating directors, utilized at their discretion, and be scheduled at a reasonable hour of the day. Whenever possible, rehearsal times should be scheduled at the event site, however, alternative sites can be considered in consultation with the directors.

An effort by the participating athletic departments should be made to accommodate the housing needs of band students preparing for a bowl or playoff game. University dormitories often close at the end of the fall term for winter break. Students who depend on these facilities should be provided, at no expense to them, a place to stay while the band is preparing to attend a bowl or playoff game. The university should allow for

reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses to students traveling from their permanent address back to their campus or the game site to perform with the band.

It is suggested that band directors receive a minimum of two weeks pay for their extra work in preparing for bowl trips, time when other faculty members in higher education are winding down or are already finished with their semester. The travel and time away from home during the trip also cuts into personal family time.

NCAA Basketball Tournament

Band students need academic assistance during extended runs into the NCAA Basketball Tournament.

While the tournament is an exciting time on college campuses, band students pay an academic price for their participation in basketball bands, especially if their team continues deep into the tournament. It is suggested that band students be given access to the academic resources that the athletes are given while traveling.

Marching Band Stadium Seating

Marching bands require a minimum of 1.5 seats per student in the stadium.

The use of percussion and other large instruments, as well as the physical nature of playing instruments, necessitates extra seating. It is simply impossible to seat a band with a 1 to 1 ratio; the 1.5 seat suggestion is a standard practice.

Statement on Sportsmanship

June, 2007

As band directors responsible for the safety of many students while traveling, we watch with growing alarm at the deterioration of fan behavior towards visiting bands in our conference and across the country. Band members are visible representations of the opposing school, and are frequent targets of ill will. Toward that end we offer the following suggestions.

- Recognize that respect for self and others will create a more conducive environment for college sports teams and spirit groups. To that end visiting bands should not play while the home band is on the field (i.e. during pre-game) or during the playing of the alma mater after the game.
- Ticket managers should seat the visiting band in a place where they are insulated from the home fans (i.e. surrounded by their own fans).
- Each member NCAA institution should allow visiting bands to perform at half-time. By offering guest bands performance time, we not only entertain our home fans, but demonstrate real respect and sportsmanship to our fans.
- Host universities should provide security to the visiting band from the time of their arrival on campus to their departure, with real sanctions on fans who violate stadium rules and codes.
- Show Public Service Announcement on video or announcement over PA.

Example - Video of home drum major with script:

“Hi, I’m _____, drum major for the _____ Marching Band. We’d like to welcome our guests from the _____ Marching Band to our stadium, and ask our fans to treat them as the invited guests that they are. _____ Band, we hope you have a great experience today at _____ University, and thanks for being here!”

- Print statement in football program (on band page if available) similar to:

The _____ Marching Band would like to welcome our guests, the _____ Marching Band to our home. As fellow band members, we recognize the unique dedication you put into your performances, and we look forward to your participation at today’s game.