

**TO:** John Pelesko, Robin Morgan, Dennis Assanis

**FROM:** Paul D. Head, Interim Chair, Department of Music

**CC:** External Review Team: Robert Walzel, Perry Goldstein, Jerry Luckhardt

**PREFACE:** What follows is the External Review of the Department of Music as requested by President Dennis Assanis as a preliminary step to elevating the music unit to a School of Music with aspirations for higher visibility and recognition amidst the most highly regarded music schools in the country.

Having first received this most recent edition of the External Review back in July, (during the *Choral Symposium in France*), I wish to apologize for the delay in moving this document forward for review here at UD. You will see there are several points where the reviewers have invited my commentary, which not only required time for reflection and contextualization, but immediately became even more complicated as I assumed the administrative duties upon my return from Europe. In short, our immediate challenges are significantly more extensive and complex than I had imagined, and the ongoing management thereof will be reflected in my commentary below, all in blue.

### **University of Delaware Department of Music External Reviewer Report, July 5, 2018**

This report was compiled by three external reviewers—Perry Goldstein, Chair, Department of Music, Stony Brook University; Jerry Luckhardt, Associate Director, School of Music, University of Minnesota; and Robert Walzel, Dean, School of Music, University of Kansas—who visited campus from Tuesday, May 29 to Thursday, May 31, 2018. The reviewers and the chair met once with President and Eleni Assanis, once with incoming chair Paul Head and President and Eleni Assanis and Provost Robin Morgan, two long sessions with incoming chair Paul Head, with faculty for over 90 minutes and with staff for 75 minutes. The reviewers also had a working lunch with full professors and a working dinner with faculty administrators and faculty. With strong donor and administrative support, the Department of Music at the University of Delaware is poised to take great strides forward in quality. The following recommendations come from information obtained in all of those meetings.

#### **I. Transitioning from a Department of Music to a School of Music**

To better attract high-quality students and faculty, and advance its focus on providing a comprehensive music education that balances rigorous academics with high-level performance training, we recommend the redesignation of the Department of Music as a School of Music. This change signals the University of Delaware's commitment to excellence in the arts generally and in the art of music specifically.

Traditionally, the designation "Department of Music" has been used to indicate smaller music units that 1) primarily offer undergraduate degrees, or 2) only offer liberal arts degrees with academic-centric study of music (e.g., musicology) without emphasis on the development of professional-level performance skills. The designation "School of Music" typically denotes programs that offer undergraduate and graduate professional degree programs, include rigorous experience in both the academic and performance aspects of

music, and contribute in a significant manner to the culture of the area. The term "School" more closely describes the music unit at the University of Delaware as it is currently constituted and best represents its size and scope to the outside world.

In addition to more accurately describing the current focus of the music unit and its aspirations for the future, the motivation to re-designate the department as a School of Music is to enhance its external image. The music schools with which Delaware competes for students and faculty, and those it wishes to emulate, are all either "Schools" or "Colleges" of Music. "School" carries a connotation of higher level/quality activity than does the word "department" within the academic music community. The change will improve the University of Delaware's position in recruiting higher quality students, particularly graduate students. Additionally, the designation "School" will improve the university's ability to attract extramural funding and/or philanthropic support in music.

Since the review, the following points have been discussed regarding naming and structure:

- Simply changing the name of the existing unit to "School of Music."
- Creating a naming opportunity with a corresponding gift. I should note that Mr. Puglisi has not seemed interested in attaching *his* name to the School of Music. Not sure why.
- Regardless of naming opportunities, keeping the School of Music as an academic unit within the College of Arts and Sciences. (CAS)
- **Creating a free-standing academic unit – School of Music – outside of the CAS with direct Provost report. *In conferring with colleagues at aspirational institutions, this has been the most fervent recommendation, though I'm told there is some reticence regarding such a proposal on the part of Provost Morgan.***
- Creating a School of Performing Arts outside of the CAS with direct Provost report. *Additional discussion with colleagues from aspirational peer institutions have been dissuasive on this concept, for a myriad of reasons best discussed in person.*

After much (internal and external) consultation, I strongly concur that for long-term substance growth and development, the free-standing School of Music option is the most enticing and meaningful.

## **II. Improving the Quality and Visibility of the Performance Program**

The Department of Music has many fine performers on faculty and among the student body. We note that the appointment of the excellent violist Sheila Brown demonstrates a commitment to hiring performers of the highest quality. We recommend that every new hire, either in expansion of performance faculty lines or replacement lines in the case of retirement and resignation, be open rank, and that the department appoint performers of great talent and professional standing. These should be people who are visible throughout the country, for example, musicians who perform and teach at summer festivals. We also believe that the department could take better advantage of its best faculty and student performers. Great participation in highly visible performance events by members of the faculty and the department's best students will raise the profile of the department beyond the university community. The University of Delaware should increase its visibility as a destination for high-level performance events. With that in mind, the reviewers recommend the following:

A. The Master Players Concert Series

The series as it is currently conceived by violinist Xiang Gao appears to exclude the most talented members of the Department of Music. While it might continue to enlist the talents of occasional artists outside the university, we strongly recommend that the series include the best performers in the department.<sup>1</sup> Up until now, the series appears to be extra-mural, and is considered so by performance faculty in the Department of Music. Judiciously featuring department faculty will more strongly reinforce the quality of performers at the institution and enhance its reputation for performance excellence. It will have the added advantage of bringing performance faculty together in the shared effort, while recognizing and taking advantage of departmental talent. Finally, all performance activities should be vetted by the chair of the Department of Music to be certain that there is coordination among the various performers and a larger vision for the performance offerings.

B. Highly Visible Associated Ensembles

The addition of the Calidore String Quartet as an ensemble-in-residence is an excellent step in raising the visibility of music performance at Delaware. We recommend continuing this association, as well as the pedagogic activities of coaching that benefit the students, and suggest an expansion of their role in the department. The department might consider one or two more ensembles-in-residence, a brass quintet and woodwind quintet. These would be excellent ensembles with an association with the Department of Music similar to that of the Calidores. Each ensemble would give two or three concerts per year and coach chamber music ensembles. They would also join the department and be considered faculty, burnishing the reputation of the institution. The department might look to excellent young ensembles, such as those who win prestigious competitions, like Fischhoff, Coleman, and the M-Prize.

C. Graduate Student Ensembles

We recommend the establishment of three graduate student ensembles, a University of Delaware Graduate String Quartet, Graduate Brass Quintet, and Graduate Woodwind Quintet. These fourteen Master of Music students would be fully supported (tuition) and serve as ambassadors for the department. Support might come from donor endowments, with ensembles named after donors or their designees. The presence of highly skilled graduate performers to perform in the orchestra would raise the level of their peers and the ensembles as a whole.

Much progress has been made on each of the above points since the external committee's visit in June 2018:

- We are currently in the midst of three new faculty searches, two of which are already approved and underway for open-rank appointments in violin and trumpet. Open rank searches are a new concept in music and this commitment from the President and the Provost will make an immediate change to our culture for excellence. Given the recent resignation of our viola professor, we are hopeful to conduct a third open-rank search in an effort to enrich our roster of world-class teachers and performers.

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<sup>1</sup> This might follow the Stony Brook Department of Music "Starry Nights" model, two concerts (in Fall and Spring) that feature faculty and the most talented students. These concerts have been a great success over the last 15 years, routinely selling out the hall (370 seats) and drawing a large community audience.

- I have been working diligently with Professor Gao to coordinate the efforts and energies of the Master Players Concert Series with those of the music school. This has not been well facilitated in the past, but thanks to urging and support from the upper administration, I believe Professor Gao is beginning to recognize the benefits of coordinated efforts on this front, not only in programming, but Development efforts as well.
- Upon securing a new pledge from Donald Puglisi and Marichu Valencia, we are in the final stages of negotiating a new two-year contract with the Calidore String Quartet. As of July 1, 2019, they will officially become our quartet-in-residence as the current contract with the Serafin Quartet will terminate on June 30, 2019. We are working with the Calidores for an increased presence in the teaching/coaching activities of our chamber music program, while engaging them in targeted recruitment efforts as well.
- Upon gaining official access to budgetary records, I learned that a very high percentage of our endowment funding had already been (OVER) encumbered toward the absorption of operating expenses (S&E) for the entire coming fiscal year. Immediate efforts to roll-back some of these commitments have, understandably, been disquieting to the faculty as there are direct implications for faculty travel, guest artists, individual projects, etc. I am working diligently to “free up” endowment funds so they might be redirected to highest visibility activities in an effort to elevate our faculty reputation, while fostering new projects as exemplified by the Stony Brook “Starry Nights” events that feature collaborative programming between highly regarded guest artists, high profile faculty, and our most talented graduate and undergraduate students.
- We are currently working through the budgetary process for FY20. Pending my ability to free up and redirect funds from the endowment, I am proposing a targeted graduate student recruitment campaign. These fourteen “Puglisi Scholars” would become designated principal players in our top instrumental ensembles, while at the same time, form a graduate string quartet (4 students), a graduate wind quintet (5 students), and a graduate brass quintet (5 students). Our budget request will recommend a creative structure of tuition scholarship (funded at 85%), traditional funding for GA/TA assignments, and additional awards drawn from the Puglisi endowment as recognition of distinctive talent.
- NB: It has become increasingly apparent that the previous Department Chair was less than proactive in 1) Lobbying for appropriate program (financial) support from the CAS, 2) Fully aware of the current budgetary position on any kind of global scale, and 3) Sensitive to the transfer of operational expenses to the endowment – a point that seems especially critical for matters of donor relations and future fundraising prospects. S&E expenses should *not* be the predominant goal of our Development portfolio!

### **III. University Admissions and Scholarship Support**

#### **A. Tuition Scholarships**

Current levels of scholarship support for students in the Department of Music appear to be inadequate to attract more accomplished performers to the music major. Faculty, in our meeting, pointed out that there have been several raises in the last several years that have doubled tuition. They are now fighting for students against

other institutions that are less expensive. The external reviewers note that an available scholarship pool of \$750,000 would attract more accomplished performers, and would be consistent with scholarship money available at other institutions, including some with lower tuition.

B. Transparency in Scholarship Allocation

The faculty point out that there is very little transparency within the department about how scholarship money is allocated. Jerry Luckhardt discussed how transparency is managed at the University of Minnesota School of Music, which might serve as a model for transparency at Delaware.

C. Communications with Scholarship/Financial Aid Office

The current relationship between the Department of Music and the Scholarship/Financial Aid Office needs to be greatly improved to maximize scholarship offers. This would include the sharing of information by the Scholarship/Financial Aid Office about applicants in music so that the department can actively recruit. [Faculty feel that they are actively discouraged by the Financial Aid Office from recruiting—Paul, I think I heard this right, but please excise if not true – See Below]. The external reviewers were surprised at how little participation the Department of Music had in recruiting. There also needs to be an opportunity in day-to-day “real time” to respond to offers elsewhere. The department’s current inability to raise tuition offers to attract desirable students who have offers at other institutions is a severe handicap to its ability to draw excellent students. Other institutions have far more interaction with their Financial Aid Offices, and are far more nimble in reacting to offers elsewhere.

Interactions with Doug Zander (Admissions) and Chris Lucier (Enrollments) have been cause for significant optimism regarding much of the above, though to date, no actionable solutions have yet been implemented.

A. Tuition Scholarships: The current model of a specified allocation pool for Scholarship on the basis of anticipated yield has been increasingly and systemically problematic, since the funding source is based on an algorithm instead of “hard-funding.” In FY18, an allocated pool of \$1.2M produced a better than expected yield of \$560k of accepted awards, which sadly enough, will still be insufficient when targeting the most coveted students such as those who study bassoon or French horn. (It has also been reported to me that there is significant reticence to offer anyone an amount *greater than 50%* tuition, which is a complete deal breaker when competing with schools like University of Maryland which routinely offers fine bassoonists full-tuition scholarships. Lacking a pool of “hard-funding” for music awards, the amount of \$750k for undergraduate talent awards as recommended by the external reviewers is aligned with a proposal to increase the offered amounts to \$1.8M with a project yield of 40% which would fall just under \$750k of realized awards.

- A sub-topic of this discussion is the ability to separate and discern academic merit awards from talent-based music awards, as it is assumed that a significant portion of the \$1.8M would be offered, regardless of major, on the basis of academic standing alone.

- Additionally, our inability to recapture funding once it becomes clear that a prospective student is no longer interested in attending UD has become increasingly detrimental to our competitive recruitment position. Ironically, this has resulted in offering “bloated initial offers,” as it has been essentially impossible to make an incremental adjustment to a scholarship offer to close the deal for a highly needed instrument area. (Such flexibility is common practice at most of our competing institutions.)

B. Transparency with Scholarship Allocation: While I was not present for the discussion between the external reviewer and the faculty on this matter, I believe the perception of faculty has been that decisions regarding the allocation of scholarship funding for various studios and disciplines had been delegated by the previous Chair to a staff member who handles admissions at the departmental level. Since that time, the following has taken place:

- The staff person who was the subject of these perceptions is no longer employed by the university and has been replaced by a new staff member working under a new paradigm.
- The roles of the two existing Associate Chairs (Graduate and Undergraduate Studies) have been elevated to greater prominence in faculty governance and two additional Associate Chairs have been added to the administrative structure. For the first time, they are actively involved in budgetary and allocation discussions.
- All four Associate Chairs have been charged with identifying departmental need for recruitment, and subsequently, to follow-through in working with faculty colleagues to prioritize future scholarship awards.

C. Communications with Scholarship/Financial Aid Office: While discussions with Doug Zander (Admissions) and his staff have been most encouraging regarding Admissions work-flow procedures and the need of personnel in the music unit to have greater access to prospective (and current) students records, at this writing, no additional access has been granted. (*We currently have a case pending with a student pursuing a change from music to another major, but we are unable to access pertinent financial records to help counsel him regarding the retention or loss of scholarship funding. Our main source of information in this case and others like it has been a direct request of the parents to forward a screenshot of information available to them!*) More specifically:

- We are hopeful the Admissions office will grant us access information to the status of prospective students
- We are hopeful that Financial Services will grant us access to information regarding the status of merit awards, talent awards, and other forms of financial assistance.
- We need to have the ability to assess a prospective student’s current financial position and adjust awards accordingly to be most competitive with our highest achieving applicants.
- Finally, we need the ability to discern Academic Merit Award, Music Talent Awards, and Endowment Based Distinction Awards with the ability to stack these to attract the brightest and most talented students.

#### **IV. Academic Scholarship**

A fine Department or School of Music boasts excellent faculty along the spectrum of musical disciplines. These include performers, composers, and faculty in such scholarly research areas as ethnomusicology, music education, musicology, and music theory. None of the faculty should be regarded as “service faculty,” though current workloads suggest that they are viewed as such by the administration. At most institutions where scholars are expected to contribute to their fields, the faculty course load is two per semester. Any additional course expectations significantly detracts from the time faculty can spend in their research and writing, to the detriment of the scholars and the institution. In addition, when assistant professors come up for tenure and their accomplishments are viewed by outside scholars, rationale for lesser productivity in the form of the heavy course teaching load must be shared. This is not good for the reputation of the institution, and is sure to decrease the productivity and visibility of faculty. The External Committee’s recommendations are 1) that the course load for all “academic” faculty be two courses per semester, 2) that faculty are expected to make significant contributions to scholarship in the field, and that expectations for tenure are linked to high scholarly productivity, and 3) that the department appoints scholars with excellent scholarly potential or accomplishments (for example, appointing experienced assistant professors or at the associate rank). The administration should consider additional lines in scholarly fields and composition, to decrease the work load on current faculty and to attract scholars/composers with excellent potential or fine track records.

This is an immediate and serious concern!

- Discussion on this topic dates back to the early stages of my previous appointment as Chair (2007-2013) where, philosophically, an agreement with the Dean and Associate Dean suggested a commitment from the norm *at that time* – a “3+3” load – to a “3+2” load, to serve as a step in the right direction. However, as my term ended during a period of successive budget cuts, this reduction was never implemented due to lack of funding to offset instructional needs.
- Russell Murray, the most recent Chair, actively moved on that initiative in 2013 to systematically reduce academic teaching loads to “3+2,” but did not secure additional funding from the CAS, thus contributing to the current budget deficit that has accrued over the past five years.
- This Chair agrees that a “2+2” load is highly desirable if we wish to attract and retain renowned academic faculty who are highly productive in their respective fields, particularly prescient at this time when the President is eager to grow our graduate school. Our academic areas hold the greatest potential in developing a viable doctoral program in music, but again, we are still under-funded for anything less than a “3+3” teaching load.

#### **V. Faculty-Staff Relations**

Our meeting with about 20 faculty and 8 staff revealed that there is a fair amount of frustration and distrust between faculty and staff. Specifically, faculty want input into how the department is marketed, which they believe has been solely the province of staff. They believe staff have not been responsive to their input in the writing of stories and in the use of the marketing budget. They further believe that staff do not have enough accountability to faculty. Staff feel that faculty do not hew to guidelines set up in the areas of advertising and auditions, and that department leadership has not enforced the rules about meeting deadlines for sending in information about concerts. Some solutions to encourage better staff relations include the following

- 1) committees formed of faculty, staff, and students
- 2) chair's enforcement of rules, for example in meeting advertising deadlines, getting faculty to attend audition dates (which are set a year in advance, and which faculty find themselves unable to attend at the last minute)
- 3) department determination about hierarchy of advertising needs
- 4) more opportunities for faculty and staff to interact.

Indeed, Faculty-Staff relations are at an all-time low, at least to my perception, during my twenty-one years at the University of Delaware, though I believe the cause of this environment can be found in the detail of much of the above.

- In short, faculty governance was, in large part, relegated to staff as assigned duties while the previous Chair was frequently unwilling to make or stand behind the difficult decisions that not only had serious funding implications, but left the staff “on the front lines” to become the target of faculty animosity and frustration.
- The new Associate Chair structure was designed to create a stronger conduit for communication amidst faculty, while specifically coordinating efforts and collaborating with the staff to create a synergy in workflow that values faculty governance while streamlining administrative process. This is a work in progress, but after a series of challenging interactions between faculty, administration, and staff, I believe we are well on our way to a more viable paradigm.

## 5) Space

The department needs the following space to fully realize its current and future aspirations.  
**Paul, please supply.**

The Roselle Center for the Arts opened in 2006 with the stated objectives as listed below:

- Provide a professional level proscenium theater and black box theater the PTTTP/REP theater company.
- Provide additional practice room space (originally in a response to student a cappella groups, but by completion of the facility, repurposed for music students.)
- Create a recital hall for over 150 student and faculty recitals each academic year.
- Create a rehearsal space large enough (and acoustically fit) for the UD Marching Band, a particular fondness of the Roselle administration.
- There were also drawings for an 1100 seat concert hall, but the additional \$20M (in 2006 dollars!) funding for this phase of the project never materialized, nor did the space.



Note that what is absent in these plans is additional studio space for private instruction and addition classroom/rehearsal space. The entire burden of those needs was and still is facilitated in the Amy E DuPont Music Bldg, opened in 1973 for a population of 75 music majors (compared to the 270 music majors today). Further, the acoustics in the marching band rehearsal space (Puglisi Hall) were a gross miscalculation where the decibel readings in that space were far beyond acceptable limits for aural health. Only now, after the \$2M renovation just reaching completion has the Marching Band been able to utilize this space, *but only when* they are able to book the space in coordination with all other Departmental ensembles.

Synopsis:

- The 300-member Marching Band needs dedicated rehearsal and storage facilities, but is relegated to sharing spaces in facilities that are consistently overbooked.
- We are struggling to function with classroom space originally allocated in 1973 for 75 students.
- A School of Music requires “lab spaces” for each applied (private) instructor, several of whom are time-sharing generic teaching spaces just to get by. This is a very precarious position for attracting new, highly esteemed faculty, especially when you compare our teaching spaces to those of other outstanding music schools. (Dr. and Mrs. Assanis have seen the teaching studios at Rice University, each of which are roughly the size of our largest classrooms!)
- The closest thing we have to a concert hall is Loudis Hall, which is suffering badly from deferred maintenance. Lighting systems are essentially defunct. The stage lift system is a liability concern. And our patrons have a better chance than not of sitting on a protruding spring when attending an event. This at a time when “competing State Schools” like Rowan and Montclair have new state-of-the-art facilities like the one drawn up for Phase Two of the Roselle Center for the Arts.

The recent closing of Conover Hall at the corner of Amstel and South Main Street presents an intriguing opportunity to either conduct a major renovation of those facilities to create additional teaching and studio space, or better yet, a new building in the Arts complex to complete the ambitions that were not realized in the CFA. Were the existing Conover apartments razed, that would provide an excellent footprint for a Concert Hall and badly needed instructional space, (Dance studio too?) all in one consolidated complex for the performing arts.

## **VI. Opportunities for Expansion of Programs**

We believe that several of the recommendations suggested above will enhance both the quality and visibility of the Department of Music. There are other areas that seem ripe for expansion. As the university establishes a Graduate School, we recommend the addition of doctoral programs in areas of strength..

### **A. Addition of a PhD in Music Education**

Music Education is a particular strength of the University of Delaware Department of Music. The placement rate for students graduating with a degree in Music Education is excellent. We suggest consideration of a PhD in Music Education, with resources devoted to the appointment of scholarly and practical faculty in the field. This would build on the strength of the current program.

- B. Addition of a DMA (Doctor of Musical Arts) degree in Choral Conducting  
The high level of the vocal ensembles at Delaware, the department's ability to attract excellent singers, and the renown and expertise of current faculty, suggest the addition of a DMA in Choral Conducting would be an easy step, likely requiring only tuition support and teaching assistantships for a small number of students. Having such a program would enhance the institution's reputation.
- C. Paul—anything else here?
- D. The development of doctoral programs should be seen as a gateway to the larger expansion into doctoral education for areas as they grow in strength.

The Chair concurs with the assessment of the External Reviewers, including the observation that the most immediate prospects for expansion into a doctoral program would be found in the areas of Conducting, Music Education, Theory and History, and in select Applied Instrumental and Voice. (In that order.) It seems viable that a "selective doctoral program" could emerge on the basis of specific faculty expertise in the not too distant future.

## VII. Relations with the Athletic Administration

We recommend a reconceptualization of the relationship of the Athletic Bands and Athletic Administration, as facilitated by Paul Head and Chrissy Rawak. We understand that this is in progress. We also recommend that the admissions procedures take into account the recruitment of non-music majors for the athletic bands. University funding should keep pace with the growth of the institution in support of athletic bands.

- Indeed, I have met with Chrissy Rawak on repeated occasion, as well as Heidi Sarver (director of the Marching Band) and I think we are making significant progress in facility shared goals and objectives for future interactions. It is my personal opinion that a series of miscommunications has escalated a conflict greater than the originating concerns. That said, I have been working closely with Prof. Sarver with an emphasis of realigning the engagement of the band with the ideals and philosophy of the current central administration.
- While there was a great deal of discussion regarding the Marching Band during the visit of the External Reviewers, I was hoping they would have been more outspoken about the current circumstances regarding funding and space for the marching band. The marching band operating budget established in 2003 of \$125k has not only suffered from the lack of being indexed to inflation, *but was reduced in 2011 to \$116k*, where it remains flat today. \$125k in 2018 dollars would be approximately \$175k, suggesting a \$59K reduction in funding simply by time deflation. (This is parallel to the same phenomenon with the operational expenses for the entire Department of Music.)
- The discussion with the external reviewers referenced models from comparator institutions, where budgets are not only index to inflation as operational costs increase, but that the funding is drawn from university-wide funding sources, as opposed to being allocated to a single academic unit as it is here with the Department of Music. This completely side-steps the matters of facilities, as the band is still lacking a dedicated rehearsal space and is desperately in need of storage space as they have just lost a significant storage area to the renovation of Pearson Hall.

In addition, the External Committee endorses all of the suggestions of incoming Interim Chair, Paul Head, that have not been covered in this report, as outlined in his document titled “Priorities for the Interim Chair in the Department of Music” from May 31, 2018. This includes: reconsideration of the administrative structure within the department, including additional faculty administrators, work with the Athletic Department in defining the role of the Marching Band, reconsideration and redefinition of the roles of staff, and expansion of current space. Many of the topics covered in his “Action Plan: Presidential Initiatives in Music,” also dated May 31, 2018, are addressed in this document.

Clearly, I have responded as invited to the recommendations of the external team, and I working fervently with Interim Dean, John Pelesko, to draw up a plan that will position us for a national, targeted search for a Director of the new University of Delaware School of Music. I am most grateful for the input of these thoughtful and passionate colleagues, and particularly appreciative of their enthusiasm for what they believe to be a tremendous opportunity to build a renowned and highly regarded music school.

Finally, I am most grateful to Dennis Assanis for commissioning this process, to Eleni Assanis for her insight and vision of the School of Music, and to Robin Morgan for her immediate support in moving this agenda forward (Three new searches!!!!) and her willingness to think big!