

Recruitment Best Practices

Advice from your
colleagues

*Tips collected and compiled during
Summer 2020*

In summary:

- **Communicate**
 - “Student Contact: Maintaining an active relationship with the prospective student is important. The younger generation uses email in different ways than previous generations. I have had the most success picking up the phone and talking with students. The majority of my general email blasts received no response. I think it was still worth sending the emails, though the age of the direct phone call is back! Use *67 if you want to make keep your cell phone number private.” - Joel Schut
- **Build relationships with Colorado teachers and other major influencers**
 - “Develop/maintain good relationships with Colorado directors: This is a challenge but so important! We try to be consistent about visiting schools, offering our ‘services’ for teaching and visits, and tracking who we as a dept. have been in contact with and who do we need to reach out to. We benefit GREATLY by having a very strong middle school/high school jazz education program in our area14 - CCJA - run by jazz dept. faculty Paul Romaine. All of our faculty are pretty active in this organization, in honor bands, working as clinicians, etc. BUT we need to be better about targeting new areas....Western Slope for example, underserved areas and actively recruiting schools/areas with a diverse student population.” –John Gunther
- **Look for ways to bring current undergraduate students into your process**
 - “I also have current students meet with every recruit and their parents. I sit down with them as well but sometimes prospective students feel more comfortable talking to current students to get the ‘real talk.’ Plus, prospective students can see if it the studio is a good social fit for them.”- Ryan Gardner
- **Highlight what makes CU, CoM, and/or your studio special**
 - “I really think it's has a lot to do with my sincere geek attitude toward the whole process and that they trust me when I tell them we are trying to build something unique here at CU.” –Matthew Chellis
- **Be a general source of information**
 - “Once the student(s) approaches mid-junior year, I start the conversations about careers, interests and how to make music fit in their lives either as majors or non-majors. We do have informal discussions about the scholarship picture and how that game is played at ours and other universities I’m familiar with. I never rely on high pressure sales...just give them the info, demonstrate what our program could potentially offer them in terms of artistic/educational viability and then I step way back.” - Mike Dunn

Thoughts from Joel Schut

- **Relationships. These matter most.** They are also the most time intensive. My goal this year was to make as many relationships with area teachers as possible. For me, this was 25+ classroom visits (pre-pandemic) where I coached, clinic-ed and even judged a HS school concerto competition. This took time, strategy and effort. It also meant me being a visible presenter at CMEA, attendee of Colorado ASTA meetings and guest clinician for a variety of honors groups regardless of level.
- **Student Contact:** Maintaining an active relationship with the prospective student is important. The younger generation uses email in different ways than previous generations. I have had the most success picking up the phone and talking with students. The majority of my general email blasts received no response. I think it was still worth sending the emails, though the age of the direct phone call is back! Use *67 if you want to make keep your cell phone number private.
- **Student Presence:** In my experience, a lot of performance BM/MM “info trading” with top students is done at summer music festivals. The best endorsement for a performance program is done with strong students who recommend a specific teacher and school culture. I see part of recruitment as encouraging students to attend summer festivals. Boulder has so many draws but a main way to get top students here is to send our best out.
- **Professional Presence:** It is an art to navigate building a strong local and national presence as a teacher, scholar, performer. Yet, this is why there are spaces in the schedule to do so. Having goals for each category is important. The whole system only works if there are local and national recruits. Be visible, be available, be strategic and be ready to put energy in without an immediate return.
- **In-state Recruiting:** For BME students I feel the best advocates are MS/HS orchestra directors. These individuals often have special relationships and influential sway over college choices. For BM students, I feel private studio teachers are paramount. Establishing a relationship with some of the top studios in the area is important for building the in state recruitment relationship.
- **Seek Unique Opportunity:** In State schools are recruiting the same herd. They all have unique strategies. CU does not host All-State (CSU) or Western States Honors Orchestra (UNC) or extensive high level summer programs. Finding where there is a need and how the unique skills of the faculty can target interest for the type of students who would be successful on campus is key. Brainstorming ideas with a recruitment coordinator, a department chair, a freshman or senior student are all helpful.
- **Understand “Value Added” and how CU is unique:** Location, Strength of a Tier 1 research university, performance opportunities, multi-degree colleagues (BM/MM/DMA), job placement rate, etc.

Thoughts from Ryan Gardner

- **Students are our best recruiters.** Sharing student accolades or performances via social media is essential to success as prospective students need to know what your current students sound like, that they are successful, that your alumni are successful, and that by coming to your program, you will help them achieve their goals.
- **I also have current students meet with every recruit and their parents.** I sit down with them as well but sometimes prospective students feel more comfortable talking to current students to get the "real talk." Plus, prospective students can see if the studio is a good social fit for them.
- **I always highlight what is unique about our program:** great ensembles, chamber music, collaborative piano program, ECM, Wellness, double major possibilities, certificates in theory or arts administration, etc. It's also important to highlight that we are close to a major metropolitan city so there are opportunities to hear great music as well as to get involved in regional orchestras.
- **I think visibility is also key to successful recruiting.** This goes for professors, students, and alumni.
- **Connections with private teachers and students is essential.** I try to stay in touch with as many of the best high school and collegiate teachers as I can. I also offer lessons or to meet with incoming students as building these relationships is important. I keep tabs of students who are in All-State groups nationally and especially the ones at national competitions or festivals.

Thoughts from John Gunther

- **Have good communication with prospects:** I keep a spreadsheet of all students and their inquiries for the coming recruitment cycle (I already have a few listed for '21-22). I try to have a timely and personal response to ALL inquiries and make sure their questions are answered or referred to the right person. I cc' Veronica when appropriate. I gather names from the rest of the jazz faculty and add it to this spreadsheet. I keep detailed notes on communication so I know when a response was sent. I can use this list to help the other faculty in the dept. be organized and timely in their own communication. I save all emails sent and received from prospective students. I'll compare this list with the big list Veronica keeps and make sure both match. This really helps if someone is falling through the cracks or needs some extra follow up. I can add names of students that have NOT contacted us but that we know of through areas directors, etc.
- **Be proactive in follow ups, invitations:** In Sept/October I'll email every prospective student inviting them to campus to sit in on classes, ensembles, and to have a lesson or direct them to attending 'music day' [or to have a zoom lesson]. I'll ask each applied teacher to follow up as well asking if they "have any questions about what it's like to study jazz at UC Boulder." I try to time this outreach with any of our upcoming jazz concerts that are streamed so they can tune in. I'll have links in the email to our YouTube channel, social media, etc. I'll do this again around late January with accepted students who may not have made a campus visit. I send a follow up email to students thanking them for auditioning and a congratulations if they've been accepted.
- **Enlist the help of current students and alumni:** Also in Sept/October I email all current students and all alumni asking them to put me in touch with any prospective students. This word-of-mouth has been particularly effective with grad recruiting. In early March I'll have a graduating undergrad send a letter to all our accepted prospective students. In the letter the CU students describes their experiences and say why a new student should come to CU! Also, during auditions and campus visits, we try to have undergrad and grad students around to engage with the prospects.
- **Develop/maintain good relationships with Colorado directors:** This is a challenge but so important! We try to be consistent about visiting schools, offering our 'services' for teaching and visits, and tracking who we as a dept. have been in contact with and who do we need to reach out to. We benefit GREATLY by having a very strong middle school/high school jazz education program in our area14 - CCJA - run by jazz dept. faculty Paul Romaine. All of our faculty are pretty active in this organization, in honor bands, working as clinicians, etc. BUT we need to be better about targeting new areas....Western Slope for example, underserved areas and actively recruiting schools/areas with a diverse student population.
- **Do everything else really well - build a good foundation:** I feel like you never know what is the one thing that is going to make the difference and it could end up that the student says "I like to go skiing" ...so you just throw your hands up in the air. But in turn I think, "well then we need to be doing EVERYTHING well!"a few things....
 - Making sure our website is up-to-date, creating good content for our social media - professionally recorded audio and video for our YouTube for example.
 - Good communication and PR in our community - we have a Fall and Spring newsletter we send to all Colorado directors, alumni, donors, AND prospective students.
 - Maintain, develop good relationships with donors! Can translate into much needed scholarship support.
 - Be strategic in acceptance and scholarship offers
 - Being able to represent diversity in our offerings, social media and concert programming (we had an all female composer concert last Spring and a special unit of study around civil rights/jazz/justice)
 - Being able to 'tell our story well' - highlighting our student and faculty achievements, guest artists, etc. when meeting with prospective students and parents.
 - Keeping our curriculum and initiatives current and forward thinking - how do we best serve these students today?

Thoughts from Matthew Chellis

- I think I am able to generate excitement and interest with my being willing to keep in touch with the candidates and find interesting personal things to talk about in the emails - what shows they like, why are they interested in CU etc. I then make a point of including them in our BM/MT Facebook group as well as some Instagram postings whenever we do something really cool with the program.
- I generally use email and Facebook. Sometimes I speak in person on the phone. I try to check in weekly as to not seem too eager but interested and always ask if there's anything we can answer.
- I really think it's has a lot to do with my sincere geek attitude toward the whole process and that they trust me when I tell them we are trying to build something unique here at CU.

Thoughts from Mike Dunn

- **Establish, develop and maintain relationships with the student(s) early on in the process.** This might involve lessons, emails, phone calls, going to concerts when possible and generally showing interest. Bill Stanley got me in the habit years ago of sending letters to these students (and others) recognizing Honor Bands, All-County bands, All-State, solo& ensemble ratings, etc. I hand write these letters to add a more personal touch.
- **Once the student(s) approaches mid-junior year, I start the conversations about careers, interests and how to make music fit in their lives either as majors or non-majors.** We do have informal discussions about the scholarship picture and how that game is played at ours and other universities I'm familiar with. I never rely on high pressure sales...just give them the info, demonstrate what our program could potentially offer them in terms of artistic/educational viability and then I step way back. I never bring it up again unless they or their folks have direct questions and here's where I may differ from some of my colleagues in this biz.
- **I try to give them an all-encompassing picture of the music business and how broad it really is, I try to get the student(s) to narrow their perspective and begin zeroing in on exactly what it is they want to do.** I ask how much research they've put into it and then use examples of schools that are more likely to help them get where they want to be. Sometimes, that's not CU. I always offer to write letters or make calls of support to whichever program they decide to pursue, pointing out that this is an incestuous business and we all know one another well. Just because you didn't pick CU at this moment, you might decide to walk through that door for an advanced degree later. I help them understand that the business is tight enough that we all help each other through this process.
- **Once they begin formulating their list of schools I offer to help with the intro emails/phone calls and offer to sit down with the family and go through the curriculum and program strengths and weaknesses.** Often this approach engenders respect and appreciation and more often than not, opens their eyes to our program further. Many times my job ends up involving my communication skill with the student and convincing them (in the case of in-state kids) that regardless of where you go for that undergrad degree...the results you get from it have more to do with how hard you're willing to work and how well connected the faculty/staff are. That's what opens doors to first jobs or graduate school opportunities.
- **Lastly, I try to show the students that our reputation as a nationally recognized music program is due to the success of our students and that almost every decision I make regarding my students is based on what's best for them (whether that is apparent at the time or not).** I usually end by telling the student that they are going to make any institution proud someday, but I'd really love it if you decided to do that for us. Hokey...yeah, maybe...but I wanted to feel important at that age and kids really aren't that different now.
- **As for how often/what form in regard to contacts, etc.** With the exception of my brief and few letters, I usually communicate in person (lessons). When that's not possible or timeline dictates a different approach, I prefer phone calls because it's easier to hear inflection and get/give clearer signals. I do utilize email/texts some. As far as frequency...probably not as frequent as many would think. Perhaps 2-3 discussions, on average, per semester. I find that giving them space seems to make them more comfortable. Basically, make my interest known and let them mull it over and get back to me in their own time.