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Helping Music Education Majors through
Positive Psychology: A Review of the Literature

H. Christian Bernhard II
The State University of New York at Fredonia, U.S.A.

Abstract

Researchers and educators have documented stress and other mental health challenges among music education majors for decades. Issues related to academic workload in competitive music environments, striving to develop a teaching identity, and adjustments to college life often combine to create tension and unease. These problems were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many music education majors still struggle to find a sense of normalcy and routine. The purpose of this article is to offer a narrative review of the literature to suggest ways in which the PERMA model of positive psychology (positive emotion, engagement, positive

relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) might help to mitigate distress among music education majors and offer pathways to enjoyment of college and flourishing in life. Specific research areas include positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and physical health.

Researchers and educators have long posited that college students can be challenged by issues related to stress (e.g., Bernhard, 2005; Gold et al., 1989; Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Kitzrow, 2003), more recently evinced by acute anxiety, depression, and impostor phenomenon among music majors (e.g., Gilbert, 2021; Payne et al., 2020; Sims & Cassidy, 2020). Gold et al. (1989) conducted an early study on burnout among college elementary education majors and found moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and perceived lack of personal accomplishment. Jacobs and Dodd (2003), as well as Kitzrow (2003), suggested that college students may be challenged by living away from home for the first time, negotiating personal relationships, and managing academic expectations. They also reported that variations in schedule, including holidays and other college vacations, may cause additional turmoil.

Bernhard (2005) extended these earlier studies to examine potential stress and burnout among college students majoring in music education and reported that unique stressors such as ensemble requirements, individual practice time, and hours of field experience may compound problems. In subsequent survey research (Bernhard, 2010), undergraduate music education majors reported high levels of emotional exhaustion (feelings of general fatigue or discomfort), moderate levels of depersonalization (blaming external factors instead of considering internal possibilities), and only moderate levels of personal accomplishment (perceptions of personal academic or social progress). Data also revealed that music majors reported significantly higher levels of burnout than non-music majors, and music education majors reported significantly higher levels of burnout than other music majors (Bernhard, 2010).

Payne et al. (2020), as well as Gilbert (2021), supported Bernhard's (2005, 2010) results more recently, finding that music majors reported higher levels of anxiety (feelings of agitation) and depression (feelings of hopelessness) than non-music majors, as measured by the Burns Anxiety Inventory and Burns Depression Checklist. Sims and Cassidy (2020) also reported high levels of impostor phenomenon (feelings of being a fraud or a lack of belonging) among music education graduate students, as measured by the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. While many higher education music faculty and administrators have attempted short-term interventions and long-term curricular changes to help students with their mental health, the sudden and turbulent shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the

existing problems. New challenges related to physical isolation, online classes, remote performances, and inequitable access to resources typically available on college campuses deepened feelings of stress and hopelessness for many music majors. Stringham and Rathgeber (2021) suggested that even as the pandemic era evolves and perhaps eases, music education majors still struggle to forge new paths as early career teachers.

Experts in positive psychology have developed models outlining how healthy human beings, including college students, can respond to stress (e.g., Carr, 2020; Wood, 2021). Instead of focusing on human distress, positive psychology scholars have examined how healthy individuals navigate challenges and leverage eustress to their advantage: "In 1998, Dr. Martin Seligman used his inaugural address as the incoming president of the American Psychological Association to shift the focus from mental illness and pathology to studying what is good and positive in life" (Madeson, 2017, para. 7). Initial studies of positive psychology focused on practices related to *happiness* – pleasure, meaning, and engagement (e.g., Peterson et al., 2005). Seligman (2011) later extended and renamed pleasure as positive emotion, as well as adding the importance of positive relationships and accomplishment, creating a five-part PERMA model: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The purpose of this article is to offer a narrative review of the literature from multiple fields of inquiry regarding ways in which the PERMA model—in addition to promoting physical health—might help to mitigate distress among music education majors and offer pathways to college enjoyment and lifelong flourishing.

Positive Emotion

Positive emotion includes experiencing and recalling pleasurable moments, reframing negative thoughts, practicing gratitude, and being mindful (Bernhard, 2021). Peterson et al. (2005) defined *pleasure* as an immediate, hedonistic pursuit of positive sensation: "The doctrine of hedonism – maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain – was articulated thousands of years ago by Aristuppus (435–366 BCE) who championed immediate sensory gratification" (p. 25). Peterson et al. posited that some pleasure is important in life, but excess can lead to poor physical and mental health. For example, Bernhard (2022) surveyed 267 music majors at a public college school of music and found that levels of pleasure had risen during the pandemic compared to previous years, while deeper levels of psychological flourishing, such as engagement and meaning, had declined. For a typical music education major, pleasure might include practicing repetitions of familiar and successful excerpts of music, playing mindless video games, consuming calorie- and sugar-rich foods, surfing social media and related internet sites, or avoiding deep work by engaging in superficial socializing.

Fredrickson (2001) studied the psychological principle of pleasure and suggested that positive emotion might be a more beneficial relative. Fredrickson proposed that experiences with positive emotion may not only help in the current moment but can "broaden and build" (p.

218) psychological defense systems to help individuals flourish in later life circumstances. By simply recalling past pleasurable events, individuals can bring increased happiness to current situations. Fredrickson et al. (2000) further found that positive emotion can turn the tide on negative thoughts, a phenomenon for which these authors coined the term *undoing effect*. Thus, in moments of distress and anxious thought, individuals can find some relief by experiencing or recalling moments of pleasure or positive emotion. Music education majors might purposefully reflect on successful performances, practice sessions, or teaching episodes from the past, remembering both emotionally and physically what it felt like to succeed.

Similarly, *gratitude* can be an important practice for music education majors. McCullough et al. (2002) found that gratitude reduced envy, depression, and anxiety while increasing optimism and life flourishing. Emmons (2007) further suggested that gratitude can enhance creativity and academic achievement while fostering motivation and self-esteem. Bass (2018) suggested that gratitude includes both personal and communal expressions, with both emotional feelings and ethical responses. Personal expressions of gratitude might include strong feelings of awe, delight, and joy when someone helps or offers a gift of some sort. Communal expressions of gratitude can occur in places of worship, sporting events, and even in music-making environments and have been shown to lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation. Bernhard (2022) found that music education majors expressed significantly higher levels of gratitude than other music majors and that senior music education students expressed significantly higher levels of gratitude than other music majors. Although further study should be pursued, it is possible that capstone music teaching experiences engender feelings of gratitude and awareness of the good in life among students. Writing notes of thanks to cooperating teachers, college supervisors, and other past mentors might further enhance students' feelings of wellness and directions for future growth.

Mindfulness can also aid in the development of positive emotion, encouraging individuals to focus on the present moment and bring anxious or longing minds in tune with the physical body (e.g., Rogers & Maytan, 2012; Srinivasan, 2014). Shapiro et al. (1998) tested the effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on the mental health of 37 medical students. They defined MBSR as a meditation practice with a focus on compassion for self and others that promotes heightened awareness. Following treatment of the students, the researchers found that MBSR can effectively "(1) reduce self-reports of overall psychological distress including depression, (2) reduce self-reported state and trait anxiety, (3) increase scores on overall empathy levels, and (4) increase scores on a measure of spiritual experiences assessed at termination of the intervention" (p. 592). Shapiro et al. (2007) similarly studied the effects of an eight-week MBSR treatment on the wellness of 64 graduate psychology therapy majors. The researchers found that MBSR improved participants' self-compassion and positive affect while mitigating the impact of anxiety, rumination, and other indicators of stress. Findings

from these two studies suggest that mindfulness meditation may be useful in promoting the interpersonal health and positive emotion of pre-professional music educators learning to help other humans.

A beneficial mindfulness practice for music education majors could involve careful listening. As students rehearse and study pitch, rhythm, timbre, and loudness, adjusting for articulation, phrasing, precision, tone quality, intonation, balance, blend, etc., it is imperative to sharpen listening acuity. Similarly, specific music pedagogies such as Orff, Kodaly, and Music Learning Theory include the importance of aural skill development, which could be pursued through expansive, mindful activities. For example, slowing musical tempo, closing eyes while breathing purposefully, and focusing on surrounding sounds would likely provide space for concentrated aural awareness. Mindfulness practices also offer opportunities to develop listening skills for spoken language. Barbezat and Bush (2014) state that "deep listening is a way of hearing in which we are fully present with what is happening in the moment" (p. 137), while Treasure (2011) cautioned that many people do not fully listen, even deliberately ignoring surrounding sounds. By focusing on aural development and mindful awareness, music education majors can enhance their positive emotion and improve psychological health.

Engagement

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) coined the term *flow*, in which individuals or communal groups become deeply engaged and experience "total experiential absorption in an activity and temporary loss of awareness of other aspects of the self and one's life situation" (Carr, 2020, p. 135). When students are presented with challenging yet achievable assignments, they are likely to learn rapidly and sense a deep level of personal satisfaction. Rogatko (2009) found that college students assigned high-flow activities were more likely to engage in work and perceive increased positive affect than peers assigned to low-flow activities.

Even prior to and after the COVID-19 pandemic—but particularly during that time—college students struggled to achieve a state of psychological flow. Digital distractions have manifested in many forms, including social media feeds, click-bait links, negative news stories, and a seemingly constant stream of email or text messages. As early as 2009, Jackson stated that "the way we live is eroding our capacity for deep, sustained, perceptive attention—the building block of intimacy, wisdom, and cultural progress" (p. 13). Zhao and Zhou (2021) studied the impact of pandemic stress on social media use among 512 college students and found that participants feeling higher levels of stress also reported higher levels of social media participation. Bernhard (2022) supported these findings, stating that while music education majors reported cumulative lower levels of psychological engagement during the pandemic, standard deviations for engagement scores were much greater than in previous studies. Thus, while some students truly struggled with focus and engagement, others were

able to rise to the challenge and work productively in the face of potential distress.

Patience is often needed to achieve deep levels of psychological engagement. In contrast to surface levels of involvement, taking time to slow the pace of life and even embracing occasional boredom may help college students experience meaningful levels of flow (Newport, 2016). In a classic experiment from the 1960s, researchers at Stanford University presented young children with a marshmallow, inviting them to eat it but offering a second option in which the children would receive two marshmallows if they could resist the temptation of eating the first one for a few minutes. In later life, participants who displayed patience were more likely to succeed academically and socially than their peers who had not resisted the marshmallow temptation (Duhigg, 2014).

For music education majors, this might translate to accepting slow practice sessions, gradual progress on lesson plans and other pedagogy projects, or embracing boredom during seemingly mundane lectures or meetings. Professors and other mentors can help teaching candidates to recognize and understand long-term development within the daily stressors of a music major's life. Positive reminders about career goals and direction can further help keep pre-service teachers motivated through small bumps in the road, remembering forthcoming opportunities and rewards. Field experiences at K-12 schools can also present opportunities for the development of psychological engagement. Student teachers might patiently and curiously consider why some children struggle musically, socially, or behaviorally. Music education majors could experience opportunities to select repertoire and plan sequential activities that will challenge but not overwhelm diverse groups of student musicians.

Positive Relationships

Positive relationships are essential for human functioning and flourishing, and traditional college years are a key time for the healthy development of related skills and experiences (Felten & Lambert, 2020). "At all levels, from families to organizations, communities, and nations, it is the quality of our relationships with each other, and the positivity in those connections, that make the most difference for wellbeing" (Roffey, 2021, p. 91). Bradford and Robin (2021) posited that while casual connections, such as brief greetings with neighbors and strangers, are helpful, deep connections with a few trusted others are even more important. For college students, these could include trusting relationships with parents, siblings, childhood friends, current roommates, or romantic partners (Felten & Lambert, 2020).

Braithwaite et al. (2010) reported that college students with a romantic partner reported fewer mental health challenges than peers without romantic partners. Whitton et al. (2013) generally supported this finding a few years later. They surveyed 889 undergraduate students regarding

relationships among self-reported romantic relationships, binge drinking experiences, and symptoms of depression. Regarding the problematic use of alcohol, the researchers found that both men and women in committed personal relationships reported fewer challenges than their single peers. Regarding symptoms of depression, females in romantic relationships had fewer challenges than single women, but there were no significant differences for male students.

Positive relationships are critical in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the light of evolving social climates. Dotson et al. (2022) surveyed 707 college students during the pandemic and found that participants were distanced not only physically but also emotionally. Challenges such as virtual classes, cancelled extracurricular events, and lack of travel resulted in psychological turmoil for many participants. Because of the critical importance of relationship development during college, these authors cautioned that such emotional challenges could adversely impact participants and their peers for many years to come. Relationship building for music education majors might be enhanced through opportunities such as chamber music groupings and peer teaching episodes. Purposefully assigning majors of varying social backgrounds can help stimulate interactions that might not otherwise occur.

Jennings (2021) wrote that relationship development is particularly critical for teacher candidates in general and suggested that pre-service teachers often cause behavior problems for their students because of their own lack of awareness. Self-awareness helps educators to comprehensively study their learning styles, personality types, and inherent biases. For music education majors, this reflection might include considering why certain traditional literature is programmed, how they respond to student behavioral issues, and whether hidden curriculum practices are in place. Similarly, self-management includes ways in which teacher candidates prepare themselves and respond in the moment. In stressful situations, healthy self-management provides space for honest responses instead of stifling frustrations or reacting uncontrollably (Jennings, 2021). Music education majors should be encouraged to develop self-management routines such as waking at a consistent time each morning, using a planner to meet due dates, and knowing when to say no to handle responsibilities reasonably.

Social awareness involves the way that students, peers, and others may differ according to personal background, taking into account cultural differences, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, neurodiversity, music preference, etc. This awareness requires open-mindedness and intentional study of the inequities and social hierarchies inherent in a typical school environment. For example, music education majors might invite students to help with repertoire selection and provide space for them to teach and lead by mixing seating arrangements, presenting a special topic, or serving as a section leader for the day. This awareness can improve relationship skills and responsible decision-making for both teacher candidates and their students (Jennings, 2021).

Meaning

Deeply contemplating the meaning of life might typically be an activity of adults in mid-life or older age; however, college students also search for purpose and are typically interested in career direction and quality of life during, upon degree completion, and afterward (e.g., Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Carr, 2020; Rogers & Maytan, 2012; Wood, 2021). Trevisan et al. (2017) surveyed 96 college students and found that the sense of living a meaningful life correlated positively with healthy psychosocial adjustment, while participants still searching for meaning in their lives tended to suffer from psychosocial maladies. Shin and Steger (2016) suggested that college environments can be enhanced to help students search for meaning in life by increasing access to mental health counseling, improving career exploration through general education courses and possible transfer of major, as well as addressing related topics in class. While participants in their study who felt a strong sense of meaning in life before college were not greatly impacted by the presence or absence of these offerings, students who were searching for meaning in their lives were more likely to thrive when they felt that the resources discussed above were present and accessible to them.

Carr (2020) suggested using Seligman's and Peterson's (2010) *values in action inventory of strengths* (VIA-IS) with college students to determine and reflect upon unique strengths that might help clarify psychological meaning and career trajectory on an individual basis. Seligman and Peterson identified six virtues and 24 character strengths from major philosophical traditions around the world: "Wisdom (creativity, curiosity, judgement, love of learning, and perspective); Courage (bravery, perseverance, honesty, and zest); Humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence); Justice (teamwork, fairness, and leadership); Temperance (forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation); Transcendence (appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality)" (as cited in Carr, 2020, pp. 35-38). Although each of the 24 character strengths is essential for the survival and proper functioning of society, different people, including college students, thrive in a variety of areas. Even within a music education major, exploring character strengths may help college students focus on particular grade levels of teaching or other career trajectories such as performance, administration, counseling, or composing and arranging.

Music education majors often report healthy levels of life meaning, which remained the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bernhard (2022) found that music education majors reported experiencing higher levels of meaning than other music majors, and for some music education majors, the levels were even higher than before the pandemic. Future researchers should clarify whether they experienced these high levels of life meaning before enrolling in a music education major or whether they developed this understanding during their course of study. It is possible that some music education majors bring heightened levels of meaning based on their early interactions with family, former teachers, and music peers. Alternatively, or

additionally, it is possible that psychological meaning is strengthened by traditional music education curricula. For example, interacting with children, learning about human development and social justice, and enhancing personal relationships during group projects may help music education majors strengthen their sense of meaning more than other college majors.

College students should also be encouraged to find meaning through extracurricular activities. King et al. (2021) surveyed and interviewed 690 students and found that over one-third of participants took part in extracurricular campus activities and generally perceived this involvement to positively impact academic performance and enhance the meaning of life for them. Yao et al. (2021) found similar results among 159 students participating in fitness, creative arts, leisure, and caregiving activities. Although finding time for extracurriculars might be a challenge for music education majors already busy with rehearsals and formal concerts, exploring other art forms, such as the visual arts, theater, or dance, could provide respite, particularly if enjoyed without pressure to produce a final product. Similarly, attempts to decrease extrinsic motivation (such as formal concerts and festivals) while increasing intrinsic motivation for music performing, teaching, and learning (such as daily practice and study) will likely reduce student stress and increase flourishing in life. Such practices also provide healthy models for music education majors' interactions with their own students, positively demonstrating the importance of process over product (Bernhard, 2021).

Accomplishment

A healthy perception of personal and communal accomplishment is important to human flourishing. Carr (2020) suggested that "accomplishments may include completing daily tasks and responsibilities, reaching goals, achieving success, and winning. They may be in the domains of work or leisure activities" (p. 7). Accomplishment has been identified as an important part of psychological health for many decades. As early as the 1970s and 1980s, Christina Maslach and colleagues included personal accomplishment as one-third of their burnout inventory. Survey items such as "I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work at school," "I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my friends and classmates," and "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in college" are indicators of personal accomplishment in a collegiate version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Gold et al., 1989, p. 557). More recently, Butler and Kern (2015) included the following three accomplishment questions in their PERMA Profiler: "How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?" "How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?" and "How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?" (p. 1). Participants who agree with these questions most of the time are deemed psychologically healthy, while those who do not are considered to be either headed toward or already suffering from psychological burnout (Butler & Kern, 2015).

Despite the importance of personal accomplishment, many college students underrate or overrate their own successes. Impostor phenomenon is a term used to describe feelings of being a fraud or fear of being exposed as incompetent in students who are performing at a high level (Sims & Cassidy, 2020). Sims and Cassidy surveyed 130 master's and doctoral music education majors and found cumulatively high levels of the imposter phenomenon. The perceptions were particularly strong for female students, participants who identified as single, first-generation graduate students, and those with full-time student status. The authors recommended strengthening mentorship programs for music education majors and discussing related issues more openly. Allowing students to realize that their fears are often also experienced by others and that success can still be found despite these fears and challenges will often help to ameliorate imposter feelings and lead to better results in the long term.

Often considered an opposite challenge, but somewhat related to the imposter phenomenon, is the psychological construct of narcissism. Overt (or grandiose) narcissism is a psychological condition in which individuals overestimate their accomplishments and seek extra attention. Although college students can display traits of this condition, such as self-centeredness, lack of empathy, and entitlement, Wetzel et al. (2017) found that general levels of grandiose narcissism among college students have decreased over the past three decades. Covert (or vulnerable) narcissists also desire attention but suffer from low self-esteem, have a constant need for reassurance, and display defensiveness regarding corrective feedback (Wetzel et al., 2017). Narcissists often become addicted to and misuse social media platforms and smartphones, regularly posting images, sound files, and stories that inflate accomplishments (grandiose) or seek reassurance about insecurities through self-deprecation (vulnerable) (e.g., Young-Chang et al., 2020). Allowing regular space for music education majors to write or speak openly about strengths and weaknesses in a safe environment may aid in appropriate recognition of academic achievements, degree progress, and social development.

Physical Health

While the PERMA model of positive psychology offers many possibilities for alleviating stress among music education majors, initial baseline checks of health and good practices for sleep, physical movement, and nutrition are imperative (e.g., Bernhard, 2021; Rath, 2013; Wachob, 2016). Walker (2018) stated that sound sleep is one of the most important components of healthy biological and psychological functioning. He suggested that college students need seven to nine hours of uninterrupted rest per night, preferably in a cool and dark environment. Avoiding caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol will help, as will eating small meals throughout the day, getting sufficient daylight exposure, even during the winter, and maintaining enough physical movement. Naps are okay occasionally but should be limited to 30 minutes or less, allowing for proper balance of deep sleep and rapid-eye-movement dream states throughout the night. Walker (2018) completed convincing studies outlining the

benefits of sleep to protect against common illnesses such as seasonal colds and deeper psychological setbacks such as anxiety and depression. College dormitories and apartments might not be the best environments for sound sleep; however, honest communication with roommates and resident assistants can help. Earplugs, blue light screen filters, sound machine apps, and eye masks can help in creating hospitable sleep environments, and music education majors should avoid peer pressure to stay up late, maintaining a consistent waking time, even on weekends.

Regular physical movement also helps to protect against a host of potential long-term problems and helps tremendously in sustaining short-term energy and positive emotion (e.g., Ratey, 2008; Wachob, 2016). Although college students may consider exercise a form of drudgery requiring full marathon training or strenuous gym workouts, physical movement can be fun, including a moderate combination of aerobic exercises, strength-building routines, and activities to promote balance and flexibility (Ratey, 2008). Aerobic activity can include brisk walking, light jogging, or participating in collegiate intramural events. A few extra walks around campus buildings, in addition to the regular movement of a music education major, should easily amass the recommended 7,000-10,000 steps per day (Ratey, 2008). Similarly, strength training should be undertaken in moderation, favoring multiple repetitions with lighter weights over a few repetitions with heavy weights. Attention should be devoted to protecting the delicate muscles and tendons used for music-making. Flexibility and balance are also crucial as humans age, but even traditional undergraduate college students reported increased life satisfaction and contentment after a session of yoga or tai chi (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

Sound nutrition helps to prevent problems later in life, such as heart attacks, diabetes, and cancer (e.g., Willett & Skerrett, 2017), and it also sustains daily energy levels needed for typical music education majors. College students should strive for a balance of micro- and macro-nutrients and limit the intake of salt, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine. Carbohydrates, proteins, and even some healthy fats are important. Although traditional college dining halls can be challenging places to find healthy options, most offer some possibilities for consuming natural, dark-colored fruits, vegetables, and whole-grains. When shopping off-campus, college students should focus on the perimeters of a traditional grocery store, avoiding the temptations of the processed foods that typically line interior aisles. Willett and Skerrett (2017) suggested eating early every day, consuming several small meals and snacks, and drinking plenty of water on a consistent basis.

Conclusion

Providing recommendations and examples for maintaining positive emotions, psychological engagement, positive relationships, life meaning, accomplishments, sound sleep, physical

movement, and sound nutrition within existing coursework, elective offerings, or extra-curricular meetings can help music education majors make better decisions about sustaining these underlying pillars of health. General activities such as mindfulness meditation, guided nature walks, or yoga practice can promote college student health. Similarly, creating opportunities for developing relationships, gratitude practice, and savoring past experiences can positively impact current moods and plans for the future.

Music education rehearsals and class sessions can also be fertile opportunities for applying the PERMA model. For example, developing aural skills through music methods such as Orff, Kodaly, Music Learning Theory, or traditional ensemble listening can help music education majors hone their awareness of self and others. Music institutions are often competitive environments, so encouraging majors to appropriately celebrate accomplishments while negotiating setbacks in a healthy manner can encourage growth in all five elements of the PERMA model. Regularly reminding music education majors why they chose to pursue the profession can also promote focus and motivation.

Further experimental research should be pursued to unpack and examine the effects of various PERMA-related treatments on the health of music education majors. For example, interventions such as mindful listening, reflective journaling, relationship-building, and healthy physical lifestyles will help to highlight the importance of positive psychology in the development of music education majors. More systematic reviews of research literature could also be helpful, such as meta-analyses of targeted sources.

In addition to the aforementioned suggestions, encouraging students to establish or continue connections with medical professionals (e.g., a primary physician) outside the college setting can help monitor general physical and mental health. Most colleges have centers with certified counselors who can work with music education majors to process feelings in individual or group settings. Inviting mental health professionals for occasional visits to classrooms, rehearsals, and non-curricular spaces such as dormitories may mitigate potential hesitation among majors who might feel embarrassed about contacting a counseling center. Providing opportunities for these interactions while embracing the tenets of the PERMA model—positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishments, and maintaining physical health—will likely help music education majors better handle daily stressors and consequently experience improved personal, academic, and professional flourishing.

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About the Author

H. Christian Bernhard II, Ph.D. is Professor of Music Education at The State University of New York at Fredonia, where he teaches undergraduate instrumental music methods and graduate courses in music education history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. He holds

degrees in music performance and education from the Peabody Conservatory of Music, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Bernhard has presented at conferences including the National Association for Music Education, College Music Society, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, and internationally at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, UK, Liszt School of Music in Weimar, Germany, and Nordoff Robbins Center in London, UK. He has authored three books, and his research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including College Music Symposium, Journal of Music Teacher Education, Journal of Band Research, and International Journal of Music Education.