

2021 Annual Report

2021-11-15

Introduction

Dear Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund board, donors, scholarship recipients, and the wider Michigan drum corps community,

I am proud to submit the second annual report for the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund. In many ways, our second year was more difficult than our first. As an organization, we were confronted by two major challenges:

1. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The unexpected death of cofounder and board member Jason Fritz.

I'm glad to say that we've navigated each one to build a positive future for the Fund.

Our first challenge was the ongoing pandemic. Luckily the 2021 DCI season wasn't canceled, so we didn't face the same challenges we faced in 2020. That said, we still have some outstanding funds that were awarded in 2020 and are still working closely with the corps that had these scholarships to make sure our mission is being served by those funds. On top of that, the pandemic has been a constant disruptive force for our fundraising and internal operations.

With 2020 and 2021 seasons behind us, we're proud to say we had 4 scholarship recipients on the field for the 2021 season. As a board, we were concerned that the shortened season's experience would fall short of the typical full-season experience we got when we marched. This concern was shared by many students who were marching this summer, but I'm glad to say these fears didn't come to pass. When we asked one of our recipients after the season about these expectations, they responded:

I couldn't have been more wrong. This season was nothing short of amazing, eventful, informative, difficult, life-changing, and endlessly rewarding.

This is an excellent reminder for us that drum corps, even in an ever-changing world gripped by a pandemic, continues to change lives and enriches students. Despite the challenges, the drum corps community was able to pull together and create a meaningful season - and the the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund was able to play our part. We should be proud of that, and I think it's a source of optimism for 2022.

Despite the pandemic, the largest challenge to the Fund this year was the passing of our cofounder, board member, mentor, and friend Jason Fritz.

Jason was the fourth cofounder to join the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund team. We brought him on board because the first three of us realized we were out of our depth while we were drawing up initial plans and bylaws. We knew how to manage finances and day-to-day operations, but we were worried that there wasn't a systematic way to ensure our operations reflected the needs of the Michigan band community. So we created a board position that would always be occupied by an active full-time educator to make sure students are the core of everything we do, and that we don't forget about the importance of band directors in our community. We needed someone with experience, expertise, and most importantly wisdom. For all three of us, one person immediately came to mind: Jason Fritz.

When we approached him about the position he signed on before we could finish the elevator pitch. He saw an opportunity to support students and make the drum corps experience more accessible, so he didn't think

twice. While we were thrilled to have him on the team, the truth is his confidence inspired us to set higher goals and push ourselves in a way we wouldn't have otherwise. In other words, he did what all good educators do. His impact on the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund is immeasurable - it may not be hyperbole to say that without him it wouldn't even exist. After all, the original sketches of the Fund came together while we were all teaching a band camp with him!

All of this is to say: after his death, we felt lost and shaky, like we had lost a piece of our foundation. But through this challenge, too, we were able to build something positive for the future of the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund.

Shortly after his death, his surviving wife Dani approached us about establishing an endowment and scholarship program in his name. I will forever be humbled by the trust and faith she placed in us to build something in his honor. I admit I was surprised, given that we aren't exactly dripping with experience related to endowments, but the entire board worked as hard as we could to validate Dani's trust. We educated ourselves, had conversations, and figured out how to establish an endowment.

We started raising funds in July, originally aiming for \$5000. With the help of the community, we blew past that mark, and raised more than \$10,000. In early October, we placed the endowment with the Battle Creek Community Foundation. At the time of this writing, it stands at almost \$13,500. On behalf of the entire Scholarship Fund board, I'm not sure I can express the gratitude we feel for the donations. Some individuals contributed as little as \$5, while others contributed more than \$1000. Regardless of size, each donation was a testament to the impact Jason had on the community. We realize that each donor placed the same trust in us that Dani did to honor Jason's legacy. We will approach the management of the endowment and scholarship program focused on gratitude, humility, and service.

Jason's death also left a vacancy on our Board of Directors. On the recommendation of Dani, we reached out to Robert Livingston, the music director of the Hillsdale Wind Symphony. Bob has been around the activity for decades and has a wealth of experience both in teaching band and running programs focused on supporting students and expanding access to education. He's contributed to our board meetings already, and I'm confident that his perspective will help us clarify our mission while managing resources responsibly.

And so, we move forward into 2022. Doing so without Jason will be hard, but we have a DCI season under our belts, an endowment that will serve his legacy in perpetuity, and a new board member whose perspective will be a valuable addition to our operations. I can't wait to see what we achieve together!

Sincerely,

Evan Murray
Chairperson of the Board of Directors
Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund

Financial Summary

We remain committed to financial transparency. Thus, all of our monthly financial reports are available on our website. This section will contain a more general overview than what is available in our latest financial report.

There are a few procedural highlights to note. First, administrative expenses in 2021 were about half of what they were in 2020. Because 2020 was our first year in operation, we had a few one-time expenses, including our initial registration fees and software purchases. Most of the administrative expenses in 2021 were Paypal fees associated with our online donations. That said, 2021 was the first year the Fund followed the "100% model", in which an individual donor covered all the administrative expenses for the Fund. This means **100% of all donor funds were put towards program expenses in 2021**, including scholarships, the endowment, and funds that are carried over for scholarships in the upcoming year. We hope to continue this in 2022.

The Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund is in a strong position for the 2022 season. Given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most useful way to understand our overall financial position is to consider both our 2020 and 2021 fiscal years.

Item	Amount
Total Contributions	17,767.51
<i>Net Program Expenses</i>	<i>-2,745.00</i>
<i>Administrative Expenses</i>	<i>-1,223.81</i>
Jason Fritz Memorial Endowment	11,442.37
Other Net Assets for 2022	2,345.44

Aside from the endowment, we carry more than \$2000 in net assets. We currently have \$2,140.44 available for scholarships, with \$500 of that being pre-paid to Legends Drum and Bugle Corps. This from a scholarship we awarded in February 2020 for a student who was unable to march in 2021.

Overall, the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund is in a strong financial position heading into the next fiscal year. Without any additional fundraising, we are positioned for 2022 to be a record-breaking year for scholarship awards - if the pandemic allows. That said, we would like to increase the amount of funds available to the general scholarship program if we can - more on this later.

Diversity and Inclusion

As we highlighted in our previous annual report, we are committed to making the drum corps experience more accessible to students of all backgrounds and financial positions. In our opinion, cost is the greatest structural barrier to drum corps participation because it disproportionately locks minority and underserved communities out from even considering marching drum corps. We are committed to lowering this barrier for everyone, especially people of color, and will hold ourselves accountable for doing so.

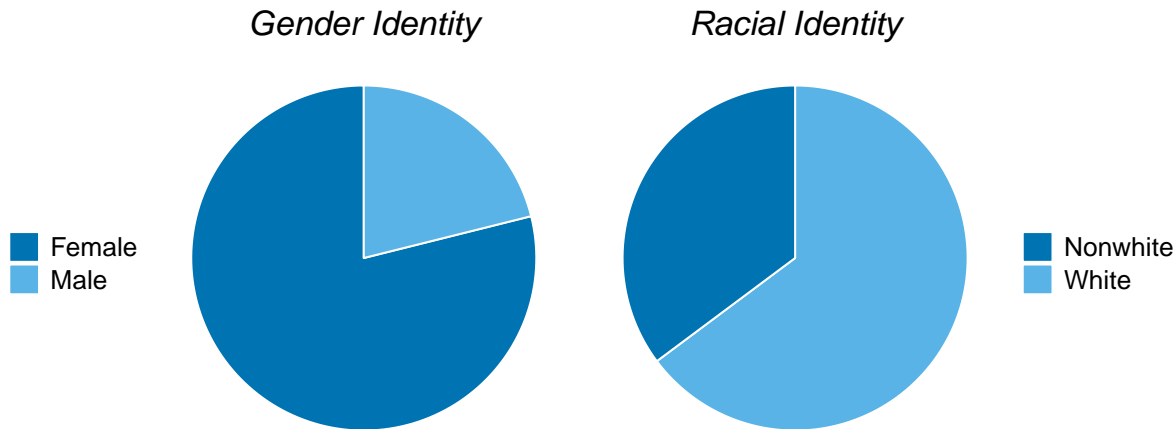
In support of this goal, we entered the 2021 fiscal year with the intent of adding diversity to the Board of Directors. We fell short of this goal, and are disappointed. Unfortunately, the reality is that the circumstances of the year limited the board's bandwidth, and we did not recruit any prospective board members aside from Bob Livingston. We are committed to following through on this goal in 2022, and are currently looking for diverse voices to add to the Board of Directors.

A concrete action we did take on promoting diversity was to stop asking scholarship applicants for letters of recommendation. In our first year, we provided the option for students to send us letters of recommendation from their educators. This was optional, so not very many students sent letters of recommendation and we don't feel our scholarship awards were changed by the few letters we received. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly apparent that letters of recommendation perpetuate privilege and systemic bias, so we stopped asking for them.

Our application still has two *optional* prompts for demographic data - one for gender identity and another for racial identity. To be clear, we do not take this demographic data into account when awarding scholarships. In fact, the disbursement committee doesn't even have this information available at the time disbursements are made. We use this data only to assess our performance only after scholarships have been awarded.

As with our 2020 annual report, we are publishing basic diversity statistics on our scholarship recipients. Statistics in this report include both the 2020 and 2021 seasons. The cancellation of the 2020 season, with some scholarships rolling over and some not, means that separating the two years doesn't give a complete picture of either. We have a small number of recipients and wish to respect their privacy, so all responses are aggregated into either male or female (we didn't have any recipients provide other identities) and white or nonwhite.

Scholarship Award Demographics: 2020 and 2021



Gender Identity*	Funds Allocated
Female	78.9%
Male	21.1%

Racial Category**	Funds Allocated
White	64.8%
Nonwhite	35.2%

*No students entered other or non-binary genders
 **Answers are aggregated for privacy

Outlook for 2022

As we've stated elsewhere in this report, the Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund is in a strong position heading into 2022.

As auditions get underway, we have more than \$2000 available for scholarships, which would be a record-breaking year for our general scholarship program. We have yet to turn away an applicant for our general scholarship program, and this will likely be the case for 2022. Moreover, we will award our first Fritz Memorial Scholarship based on funds available from the Jason Fritz Memorial Endowment early in the 2022 calendar year.

In regards to the endowment, we are excited to be partnering with the Battle Creek Community Foundation. BCCF meets National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations, has a track record of sound investment strategies, and shares the same community-focused priorities that we do. We hope that our partnership extends beyond managing the endowment because they can help us meet many of our strategic goals for years to come.

At present, we have 2 major goals for the 2022 fiscal year:

1. Increase the size of the general scholarship program.
2. Diversify the Board of Directors.

The largest challenge we see moving forward is the ongoing pandemic. At this point, it is not safe to assume that the 2022 DCI season will be a return to normal. The uncertainty of the pandemic means there is also uncertainty in how much we can realistically expect to fundraise. Much of the Michigan band community is dependent on jobs whose income is entirely dependent on the pandemic, like being a musician or music teacher. We understand that those who would like to give may not be able to, including those who have donated in the past.

Therefore, we will be pursuing fundraising opportunities aside from individual contributions. Grants are a great way to acquire larger sums of money than are typically available from individual contributions, but they are time consuming to apply for and may come with restrictions for how grant funds can be used. The work needed to apply for and manage grant funds would significantly increase the board's workload.

Everything outlined above takes time and effort to manage, and our Board consists entirely of volunteers. As a volunteer-led organization, we know we need be to mindful of burnout - especially in a pandemic. Over the last year this meant that we had more ambition than bandwidth, and this will be the case for 2022 unless we can bring more volunteers into the fold. We are now actively looking for volunteers to help manage web content, fundraising projects, scholarships disbursements, and grant proposals.

Our second goal is to increase the size and diversity of the Board of Directors. If we are successful, this will also add to our capability to achieve our other goals. Please reach out if you would like to help out, and *especially* if you are interested in a board position.

Chairperson's Acknowledgements

First, I would like to recognize our 2020 and 2021 scholarship recipients. We continue to be impressed by their dedication to music and performance despite the pandemic. This will inspire us to do great things in 2022. Thank you Jeme, Joshua, Echo, Emily, Jaden, Lauren, Mallory, Abbey, and Kaitlyn.

Thank you to the volunteers on the Board of Directors, who's guidance and wisdom has been invaluable, and who's dedication to the Fund's mission will mean the Fund is going to remain in good hands moving forward. Thank you Alex, Tyler, Jason (posthumously), Alyson, and Bob.

In particular, I would like to thank Tyler Ray White, our secretary and treasurer, for all that he's done. He embodies all the values our Fund tries to live by, and his experience and thoughtfulness was especially important for creating Jason's endowment.

I would like to thank Dani for the strength she showed this year and the faith she placed in us to build the Fritz Endowment. I will forever be humbled this, and I'm glad our friendship is as strong as it is. Go Dons!

Thank you to Morgan Kelly, who took our ideas and delivered our logo. It recognizes all the sections of a drum corps and looks great doing it!

Finally, I would like to thank our donors, both for the general scholarship program and for Jason's endowment. Our 2021 donors are, in no particular order:

MSBOA District 11, Mark Haskett, Alex Holland, Beth Lee-de Amici, Jessica Fairchild, Paul Blake, Erin Snider, Rachel Yomtoob, Kyle Productions, Anneliese Knoff, Adam and Teri Noaell, Linnea Powell, Carly Holmes, Jamie Nye, Jason Hall, Satori Noel, Eric Barrier, Amanda Sager, Carol Scott, Kathleen Boswell, Kevin Specht, Steven Mouch, Carolyn Hart, Joyce Robotcek, Jan and Gary Graham, Claire Miller, Joseph Geiger, David Arnovitz, Dave and Betty Markel, Paul and Wendy Hernandez, Fred and Judy Krizan, Barbara Bouman, Kathleen Becket, Dennis Lee, Nicole Channells, Daniel Ryskamp, Allan Hollander, Erin Graham, Sheila Ryskamp, and Steven Ball

We couldn't acheive what we have without the support of our community. Here's to seeing what we achieve in 2022!

Sincerely,

Evan Murray