

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a graduating senior Musical Theatre major at WCU. During my time we have experienced a lot of staff turnover (I have had four different voice professors in my four years). My first two had inconsistent practices and negatively-focused perspectives that left our voices and minds in a bad place. We then had a wonderful voice professor who was very dear to our hearts, but she tragically passed away. Following all of that, we were blessed with Micah Patt.

I give this context to present the uniquely challenging space Micah entered into. The students began this year with substantial vocal and emotional baggage, walls up and minds closed. In addition, I had decided by this point not to go into performance after graduating. This compounded my own barriers to learning and left me with no desire to get to know a new professor, let alone gain any new vocal training or knowledge. Micah entered into this impossible scenario and succeeded beyond anyone's highest expectations or wildest imaginings through use of positive culture building, intentional planning, knowledgeable individual instruction, and astonishing effort.

From the very beginning, Micah recognized the importance of culture and the necessity of supporting mental health in order to grow. She started the semester with activities designed to encourage a positive environment. We created community scrap-book pages to decorate the student lounge, we discussed and upheld positive practices for our group voice class, and we had the chance to sing fun songs for each other in a low-stakes way before any higher-stakes performing took place. These practices, among many others, established a culture of trust, honesty, and support that allowed people to process any emotions related to previous experiences, as well as to overcome present emotions keeping them from accessing their voice. As a result of this work, we moved into the semester seamlessly and productively, and ready to grow without emotional barriers.

In addition to exercises for culture building, Micah established a new standard for organization, productivity, and efficiency for voice lessons and our group voice class. She started with forms sent out to collect information about our vocal and personal history, she created a list of songs based off of

people's past repertoire as a resource, she created a clear and effective plan for our class structure, she streamlined communication with our accompanist, and she used spreadsheets of information for each student to ensure effective instruction and tracking of useful information. Our voice class had, historically, been disorganized and without real high standards or function. Micah turned this class into a well-crafted and well-oiled machine that used time effectively, set high but achievable standards, and gave us a variety of useful information and experiences to holistically build our voices. Given how efficiently and effectively Micah implemented individual and group instruction, and based off seeing some of the organizers and spreadsheets of information she compiled, it is clear just how much planning and strategy was utilized- and to great effect.

While the approach Micah took to planning, structuring, and preparing was impressive, nothing is as amazing as her individual vocal instruction. It is challenging to put into words just how awe-striking her lessons are. As a result of her planning and organization, she is always prepared and keeps effective track of all my vocal exercises, practice, etc. so she is often more well informed than I am about my own voice. And as a result of her knowledge and experience, she uses that preparation to its greatest effect by giving me specific feedback, scaffolding of instruction, consistent routines and exercises, and expert advice. The best example I have of Micah's brilliance is my desire to understand my mix. All my previous instructors had given me muddled, confusing information about what a mix was and how to access it. Micah gave explicit knowledge of the way my voice worked, how my mix fit into the puzzle, and how to use specific exercises to find and build it. I made unexpected and unbelievable growth this semester, even in spite of my own walls, because of Micah.

Last but surely not least: in addition to all of the specific strategies, knowledge, and wonderfulness Micah uses and has, she is just a machine of work ethic. She clearly spends hours and hours outside of lessons and class to support us most effectively, and she enters each day with consistent effort and a positive attitude unlike anyone else I know. Nobody will give more of themselves than Micah, and that rounds out this phenomenal teacher that I will miss dearly.