

Work of the Panther Marching Band

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Outreach Through Music the Work of the Panther Marching Band

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If you've been to a Northern Iowa sporting event, chances are you have witnessed UNI's largest student organization in action. The Panther Marching Band combines Panther pride and more than 120 years of



tradition to create an atmosphere unlike any other. And the excitement of the Panther Marching Band is nothing new to the Panther Nation.

Justin Mertz, assistant professor in the School of Music at UNI shares the Panther experience by hosting a high school marching band day in the UNI Dome. Over 300 high school students from Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois were able to join the Panther Marching Band for an entire day devoted to music. Culminating with a performance at the halftime of a UNI football game. Band Day began as a way to connect high school musicians and the Panther Marching Band in a collaborative music-making and social activity.

"As a state university, we wanted to be open and inviting to all musicians and bring them onto campus to see what opportunities there are here for them," states Mertz. "We wanted younger musicians to meet college-aged musicians to see what the potential is for continuing their musical lives past high school."

The collaboration of outside community members is not a new notion for the Panther Marching Band as the students have always been community and service-oriented. At the very core of the group is sharing their talents while helping others tap into theirs. In the past, the Panther

Marching Band has hosted leadership clinics and festivals to bring students directly into the world of music on UNI's campus; truly showing students what #EngagedUNI looks like through the eyes of the Panther Nation.



The Panther Marching Band has hosted many events to expose students to their musical dynamic. Numerous

members of the Panther Marching Band are also studying to become music educators, thus the event allows for a chance to encounter students at varying levels of experience and ability. By working with public high schools, ensembles were able to come to campus and be exposed to the next level of music in higher education.

"The students are now much more proactive in how they can take the initiative to create opportunities for their fellow musicians and began their own outreach efforts to grow the annual event and reach more people in the community," remarks Mertz.

Mertz also touches on the fact of how important community engagement is, especially in instances of higher education. The Panther Marching Band not only puts on Band Day in the fall, but participates in community engagement work throughout the year. They work with high school students to immerse them in a personal "day in the life" experience as a member of the band at UNI football games. They also provide music for a handful of local events such as the Park to Park Half Marathon. Mertz views UNI as a major asset in providing learning and enrichment opportunities for people of all ages and stages of life. Music in particular, Mertz remarks, is ideally suited for the collaboration because of the very nature of ensembles.

"It is my belief that institutions of higher learning have an obligation to their communities and the people in them, one that goes beyond



the (very important!) job of educating students who attend the institution.”

UNI Band Day is only a small fraction of the powerful portfolio of community engagement work that the School of Music at UNI partakes in. From ensembles and marching on the field at halftime to teaching the younger generation about Panther pride through the form of music, The Panther Marching Band exudes energy and excitement for Panther Nation. For more information on the Panther Marching Band, visit bands.uni.edu/pmb.

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