

I will go out on the proverbial limb here and guess that if you are reading this newsletter, chances are you were, or still are, a music major in college. In fact, you probably have as many as ten years in various degree programs as a student at one of the world's finest music schools and conservatories. No doubt, these schools, teachers, cultures, and experiences molded you into the capable and inspired musician that you are today and empowered you with agency as an engaged, creative musician and academic. The College Music Society is full of such people...

Yet, I would also wager that in all those years as a music major and graduate student, you have myriad stories from your experiences with professors, teachers, staff, and other students who did or said things (often well-meaning) that were hurtful or created experiences that were less than positive for your growth as a student and as a human.

My own experiences are full of off-hand racist remarks, micro-aggressions, and subtle (and not so subtle) messaging about where I belong. Unfortunately, many of my well-meaning professors and colleagues inflicted emotional and psychological pain that cut me to the core, causing years of anxiety and damage. I have countless friends and professional colleagues with stories of traumatizing cases of bullying, harassment, and sexual abuse, leading to complicated (often unreconcilable) relationships with people in our industry who exert power over others. Just today, I had a conversation with a doctoral student in collaborative piano, who told me he was shamed out of the audition room as a freshman by a professor, causing him to immediately announce that they would never play piano again, only to return to the piano ten years and two degrees later.

These stories of negative experiences and trauma are, unfortunately, not unusual. In fact, a case could be made that this is actually the typical experience for the bulk of music students, as I think you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who went through the gauntlet of music school without some story of psychological abuse, neglect, and in all too many cases, physical or sexual abuse. All of this is trauma.

As leaders in our field, I am happy to be a part of moving the needle toward making our schools safer and healthier places to belong. For the past four years, I have been excited to watch the CMS Student Advisory Council work on creating a groundbreaking *Student Bill of Rights*. These visionary students conceptualized, presented, revamped, and brought forward this document to the board for support, endorsement, and dissemination. The CMS Student Advisory Council was led by Jenn LaRue (2021-22) who is currently a Postdoctoral Scholar at Florida State University and Secretary of the CMS Board; Kate Hamori (2023-24), a PhD candidate at UCLA; and now Adam Rizzo (2025-26), a PhD candidate at the University of Connecticut; and advised by Eric Hung. It is the vision of the CMS Student Advisory Council that the Student Bill of Rights be a living document, ever updated over the years by future CMS members as they help steer our cultures of music-making into the future.

It is our hope that this document contributes to a positive culture at colleges, universities, and conservatories worldwide and that the living Student Bill of Rights is shared widely. Please join me in celebrating and sharing the [CMS Student Advisory Council's Student Bill of Rights!](#)

BC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BK Chin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Kai Chin  
President, College Music Society