

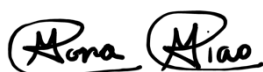
Sociology 1130: Higher Education Policy and Service at Harvard and Beyond: Action Research
Capstone Project

Managing Through Music Clarifying Radcliffe Choral Society's Decision-Making Processes

Mona Miao
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Abstract: The Radcliffe Choral Society (RCS) is a faculty-conducted choral ensemble that also happens to be a Harvard music department course, a recognized student organization and an independent, student-managed 501(c)3 non-profit. Given the rather unique but complicated organizational structure of RCS, one challenge student leaders face is navigating the different relationships that exist with the various stakeholders (members of the choir, faculty, administration, our alumni foundation, etc) involved, especially in the context of decision-making. This research project sought to clarify ambiguities surrounding decision-making processes and to start honest conversations with student leaders and artistic staff about these challenges the organization faces. Based on a survey of 18 out of 21 members on the Executive Committee and 8 interviews with some of those members and the artistic staff, the perceived issues with decision-making in RCS boiled down to clarity of voting procedures and clarity of student agency or voting implications. The findings led to recommended guidelines for future votes that included mechanisms for better communication and transparency between student leaders and artistic staff in an effort to reduce ambiguity of procedures or implications.

I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mona Miao". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

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INTRODUCION

The Radcliffe Choral Society (RCS) is a treble (meaning soprano-alto voices or higher voices) choral ensemble of about 40-60 members, open to any student at Harvard University. RCS is one of the three main choirs forming the umbrella organization, the Harvard Choruses, which also includes Harvard Glee Club (tenor-bass student choir, meaning lower voices) and Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum (mixed voices student choir, meaning all voices). What makes the Harvard Choruses unique is that each of the ensembles share four different identities. RCS, HGC and HRCM are not only faculty-conducted choirs sponsored by the Office of the Arts and music department courses that members can take for credit, but they are also independent student organizations recognized by Harvard and more importantly, student-managed 501(c)3 non-profits organizations. Student-leadership is, in fact, at the core of the mission of Harvard Choruses and RCS. Given the rather unique but complicated organizational structure of RCS, one challenge student leaders face is navigating the different relationships that exist with the various stakeholders (members of the choir, faculty, administration, our alumni foundation, etc) in the organization, especially in the context of decision-making.

The student leadership of RCS is represented by the 20+ member Executive Committee (EC), led by the president and manager. Every EC member has an individual position such as vice-president, secretary, financial manager, publicity manager, tour manager, librarian, etc and get together for weekly EC meetings. 7 of these positions are considered Voting Members, who meet together about once a semester to appoint new EC members. The artistic staff for RCS is represented by the resident conductor, Meg Weckworth and Director of Choral Activities, Dr. Andrew Clark, who is also a faculty member in the music department. However, RCS also has a teaching fellow, Liz Eschen, and works closely with the Choral Associate (currently also, Meg Weckworth), who acts as an administrator for the Harvard Choruses as a whole. Every week, the manager, president and resident conductor of each choir holds Internal Operations Committee (IOC) meetings and all the presidents, managers and resident conductors sit down with the Director of Choral Activities and Choral Associate for Harvard Choruses Operations Committee (HOC) meetings.

Being a student leader of RCS can be great because you have so much capacity for impact due to the weight of the power given to the students and the amount of respect the artistic staff have for the mutual partnership established with the students. However, it also means learning to balance the different domains of our roles and the relationships we have with other roles. For example, when is one a manager in the Harvard Choruses? The leader of a student-run Harvard organization? The student of a faculty-led choir? The CEO of a non-profit? A singer in a music ensemble? When is Andy our boss as the director of Harvard Choruses? Or our professor?

When is he just a faculty adviser to our student organization? When is he a board member on our student-run non-profit? Due to the complexities of these relationships, there are a lot of blurred lines surrounding student agency and decision-making. Who gets to be a part of what decisions and in what way? How do we balance the voices of all the stakeholders, especially between students and faculty? How can we ensure that student leaders are making an informed decision? How do we respect the process while still making room for flexibility in light of new information? The issues with decision-making are further exacerbated by the lack of clarity surrounding voting procedures and interpretation of outcomes. This research project seeks to clarify these questions, to start honest conversations with student leaders and artistic staff about the unique challenges our organization faces and to develop recommendations and guidelines for voting that can be eventually be codified in our by-laws.

This research seeks to not only clarify these questions but present deliverables that will ensure that current EC members, new EC members and even the general membership stay informed about where they fit into the organizational structure and what decision-making procedures should exist. These deliverables will be in the form of a “blueprint for action” detailing recommended voting guidelines / procedures that will hopefully be implemented in the future.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that RCS's organizational structure is quite unique, I did not expect to find much literature that provides direct insight into our challenges, especially with voting procedures and there seemed to be minimal research even in the general areas of student-managed arts organizations or student-managed non-profits and voting structures. However, there were a few relevant articles pertaining to student leadership, organizational structure and faculty advising that was helpful in informing my research.

In *Learning Through Service: Structures that Promote Student Leadership*, Ashley Cochrane and Heather Schill really explore this idea of a living mission, the importance of connecting one's work to the mission of their institution, which is strongly rooted in an organization's history, and managing resources in a way that helps the organization realizes those aspirations grounded in the mission. Using mission-driven language and encouraging students to be involved in mission-driven work allows students to feel more connected to their organization and to really make the most of their place in the organizational structure as well as build or strengthen certain relationships and partnerships (Cochrane & Schill, 2013). Thus, in researching an organization who has such a powerful legacy, it is also important to think about how each role relates to our mission (both the mission of the Harvard Choruses and RCS specifically) and contributes to the successful realization of those missions. Furthermore, as

student leaders, how is our individual work serving our own community and the community beyond?

In *Student Partnerships in Service Learning*, Jacoby analyzes student partnerships through several theoretical and conceptual frameworks. She distinguishes the distinction between student partners and student participants, stating that partnerships embody mutual cooperation, common interests, responsibilities, privileges and power. (Jacoby, 2013). More specifically, in their paper *Youth and Adult Perceptions of their Relationships Within Community-Based Youth Programs*, Jones and Perkins defines a youth-adult partnership as one where “both parties have equal potential in making decisions, utilizing skills, mutual learning and promoting change through civic engagement, program planning and/or community development initiatives” and makes the claim that this sort of partnership leads to more positivity towards youth involvement for both youth and adults (Jones & Perkins, 2006). These definitions reconceptualizes the relationships between students and adults as one of colleagues and decentralized power. In *Partnerships with Students*, Fisher and Wilson offer suggestions for designing effective student partnerships for service learning. These partnerships must “reflect the characteristics, cultures and needs of the students and of the institutions at which the partnerships are created” and have a foundation of respect for the students, a trust in student power to achieve important results and an acceptance of ambiguity rather than letting a fear of potential failure lead to a reasserting of power (Fisher & Wilson, 2003). In her dissertation on student organization advisers, Leopard used a multi-case study research design to examine how advisers can contribute to successful student organizations and show the various approaches advisers can use to develop impactful relationships with student leaders (Leopard, 2017).

Given that student-faculty partnerships are a large part of what this research hopes to clarify, these literature sources will be particularly helpful for informing my analysis of the relationships between the students and the administration / faculty and how those relationships might come into play with recommendations for decision-making procedures, keeping in mind the context of RCS’ multidimensional structure. Jacoby mentions there is little research or guidance on student service- learning partnerships and thus, there are a lot of open questions about what particular types of partnerships are most effective with different groups of students (Jacoby, 2013). To that extent, perhaps this is a gap that I can begin to close by developing insights for action in my community and inform other similar groups.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Data Collection

Employing a participatory-collaborative research approach, I continuously engaged and involved my target community, RCS EC members, in the planning of this action research design. During one of our EC meetings, I presented my ideas for a research project, confirmed that this

would be a worthwhile pursuit, and received some feedback regarding my methods. Throughout the process, I continued to talk to EC members informally, asking them what they would like me to ask in my interviews with the artistic staff and what I can do to ensure EC gets the most out of this research. In the end, this participatory-collaborative approach was crucial to narrowing my focus and informing the direction I took with this research.

The majority of my data collection involved surveying and interviewing the student leadership and the conductors, which provided me with both quantitative and qualitative data. For the first half of my data collection, I chose to utilize a survey because given that much of our decision-making involves EC as a whole and therefore, my research question was inherently one that needed to involve our entire leadership, I wanted to get as close to reaching the full target population and as close to accounting for all the student voices as possible. Thus, I emailed our EC email list a Qualtrics survey, a summary of the contents of which are included below. 18 out of 21 members on EC responded to the survey with very thoughtful feedback, insights and perspectives.

- How satisfied are you with our current voting procedures? *Participants rated aspects of our voting procedures on a scale of extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied.*
- If you selected “somewhat dissatisfied” or “extremely dissatisfied” for any of these, please elaborate why. *Participants wrote a free response.*
- Which stakeholders should be involved in voting on tour locations / tour timing / concerts / appointing new EC members / attire issues? *Participants checked off boxes.*
- Please write down any thoughts you have about tour voting. *Participants wrote a free response.*
- Please list other issues that should be formally voted on. *Participants wrote a free response.*
- How should votes be interpreted? *Participants selected a multiple-choice response.*
- How should we proceed with a tied vote? *Participants wrote a free response.*
- What should be the conductor’s role in these decisions, especially for things like tour? *Participants wrote a free response.*
- How can we maintain a balance between student agency and faculty voice? *Participants wrote a free response.*
- Please write down any other thoughts you have on voting procedures in general. How have you felt about past voting procedures? How do you think future voting procedures should be improved? *Participants wrote a free response.*

For the second part of my data collection, I recruited 8 people for interviews through email. Interviewing allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of people’s perspective on these issues, the nuances of which the survey would not have been able to capture as well. These 8 people were intentionally selected as it was important that in exploring student-faculty relationships and the various stakeholders involved in decision-making processes, I covered a wide range of potential perspectives. Thus, I interviewed:

- Artistic Staff / Faculty – *these are the two main people who drive the artistic vision for the chorus and who are the supporting adults for the student leadership*
 - Andy Clark (Director of Choral Activities)
 - Meg Weckworth (RCS Resident Conductor and Harvard Choruses Choral Associate)
- Main Student Leadership – *these are the two people who lead the student leadership / EC and who have the closest relationship with the artistic staff*
 - Elise Alexander (President)
 - Samantha Hung (Manager)
- EC Members – *these are two of the people who are general EC members and who have some interaction with the artistic staff*
 - Rachel Ma (Financial Manager) - *has been on EC for 3 semester and is a voting member*
 - Madi Fabber (2019 Assistant Festival Manager) - *has been on EC for less than a semester and is not a voting member*
- Tour Managers – *these are two of the people who are directly impacted by decision-making processes because EC votes on the locations of the tours they plan*
 - Frances Hisgen (2020 International Tour Manager)
 - Lily Xu (2018 Domestic Tour Manager)

These interviews guided by some questions, as seen below, but for the most part, they were rather free-flowing and often went on various tangents. I interviewed almost all of the student leadership first because I wanted their thoughts and the survey responses to inform my conversations with the artistic staff. Thus, by the time I got to the interviews with the artistic staff, I had a pretty good sense of where the student leadership stood on these issues and was able to bring that up with the conductors.

- What is involved in your role or role(s)?
- Where do you fit into the organizational structure?
- How do you view the current relationship, especially the balance of decision-making, between the student leaders and artistic staff or if there are any ambiguities, what are they? Does this change depending on what domain of our organizational structure you're functioning in?
- How have you felt about past voting procedures?
- What are your expectations when EC votes on something?
- What do you think EC should decide by themselves vs what artistic staff should have more of a say in?
- How should we balance decision-making power between artistic staff and students? How do we bring in the voices of the artistic staff without minimizing student agency?

Limitations

It is important to note that there were limitations to my sample because many decisions we make doesn't just impact the student leaders and the artistic staff but also the general membership of RCS, the groups we collaborate with, the university, the administration, etc, which were voices that I didn't get to bring into this research due to feasibility. Furthermore, it would have been helpful to talk to organizations outside of RCS such as the other choirs or

Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, who is the only other organization that has a somewhat similar structure.

Positionality

As a member of the participant community, my positionality in this research is very much that of an insider, which is a huge asset in that I have common expectations, intentions and power equity with many of the participants. This positionality was definitely challenged a bit when interacting with the artistic staff though it didn't prove to be a problem during the interviews as our relationships of mutual respect carried over to this research. The artistic staff were very open and willing to have an honest conversation because they appreciated hearing the thoughts of the student leaders and recognized the need to address the issues. As an insider, I had to be especially careful about maintaining people's confidentiality and privacy, recognizing that I might have a lot of insider knowledge about certain situations and that participants might feel comfortable talking to me about certain experiences or thoughts but not everything should be shared with the public. This means giving participants full decision over the level of anonymity they would like, seeking informed consent from participants on the surveys, having interviewees sign a consent form before the interviews and reviewing any quotes or thoughts I use from them.

DATA AND FINDINGS

General Results

Based on a survey of 18 out of 21 members on the Executive Committee and 8 interviews with some of those members and the artistic staff, the perceived issues with decision-making in RCS boil down to two main things: voting procedures and voting implications / student agency. As seen in Figure 1, the survey shows that about 66% of members are dissatisfied with the clarity of decision-making power that the student leaders have and about 83% of EC members are dissatisfied with the clarity of voting outcomes & implications.

#	Field	Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied	Total
5	Clarity of Student Agency / Decision-Making Power	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	27.78% 5	38.89% 7	27.78% 5	18
4	Clarity of Voting Outcomes & Implications	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	11.11% 2	72.22% 13	11.11% 2	18
1	General Voting Procedures	0.00% 0	38.89% 7	22.22% 4	38.89% 7	0.00% 0	18
2	Topic of Votes (tour, football concert, etc)	16.67% 3	66.67% 12	5.56% 1	11.11% 2	0.00% 0	18
3	Stakeholders Involved in Votes	5.56% 1	55.56% 10	22.22% 4	16.67% 3	0.00% 0	18
6	Consistency of Procedures (when we do formal votes vs discussions leading to informal votes)	0.00% 0	27.78% 5	33.33% 6	38.89% 7	0.00% 0	18

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Figure 1. *Student Leadership Satisfaction with Decision-Making Procedures.*

Many EC members expressed frustrations that when they walked into a vote, there was a lot of ambiguity about what exactly they were voting for, what the timeline or procedure of the vote was, what would happen in the outcome of a particular vote and how much agency the student leaders actually had over a decision. It is important to note that these frustrations mainly arose out of two main votes that happened in the past two years: a vote on the timing and location of our upcoming international tour and a vote on whether or not RCS would be joining the Harvard Glee Club at the Harvard-Yale football concert. Both of these votes had unclear procedures and procedural inconsistencies. Furthermore, both votes had major long-term implications for RCS in general and so they involved a lot of thoughtful discussion with different perspectives that lead to very tight votes. However, more importantly, both votes had implications for artistic vision, which gets into the jurisdiction of the artistic staff, so this issue of balancing decision-making voice between all the stakeholders was very much brought to the forefront.

Voting Procedures

“The general voting procedures for EC are very unclear – pretty much every time we vote on something, the process is slightly different. I think it should be very clear walking into EC how a vote will proceed.” – EC Member

“The inconsistencies in our voting procedures making voting – both as a member of EC and as an overall participant in RCS as an organization – very frustrating. As rules often seem to be in flux, it is hard to tell whether a vote that I make will actually count toward making a decision.” – EC Member

“In the future, I think we need to know, before we go into the voting room, what the options are, who gets to vote on them, and what constitutes a majority.” – EC Member

As seen in the quotes above, the first issue with RCS' decision-making processes is simply a lack of clarity of what the voting procedures are when EC does take a vote on something. Due to a lack of written or formalized procedures, the president and manager have essentially been operating based on ad hoc. This means that there are procedural inconsistencies from vote to vote and the student leadership has no idea what to expect every time a vote is presented. On one hand, this seems like a tangible issue to fix by ensuring we have written procedures or at least, guidelines to follow, and ensuring that the president and manager communicates to EC the step-by-step process of a vote. However, addressing this issue can still get tricky. There is disagreement even on things like who gets to vote or, as seen in Figure 2, how to interpret a vote, due to the fact that every decision EC votes on is so different in terms of context, impact, how divided EC is on the issue, etc. Thus, there needs to be further discussion before anything gets codified into the by-laws.

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Simple Majority (meaning whichever option gets more votes)	29.41% 5
2	2/3 Majority	23.53% 4
3	Reevaluate based on comments people write down during the vote	5.88% 1
4	Depends on context of vote	41.18% 7
5	Other	0.00% 0
		17

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Figure 2. *How should votes be interpreted?*

Clarity of Voting Implications and Student Agency

The second issue with RCS' decision-making processes is a lack of clarity of what the implications of a vote will look like and what agency student leadership has over a decision. This, more so than the other issue, is at the root of frustrations and dissatisfaction. Student leaders were unclear about what sort of decision-making power they actually had or what the stakes of a discussion or votes actually were because they didn't feel like they knew what would tangibly happen in either outcome of a vote and if the EC vote would actually be implemented by the artistic staff. Some of these frustrations can be addressed by implementing mechanisms in place to facilitate better communication and transparency between student leaders and the artistic staff. In conversation with the artistic staff, they agreed, and they provided some concrete suggestions for this:

“So from my perspective, of how to help kind of merge the lines of where, you know, things sit and who makes what decisions, I think just in general, if there's going to be a big decision made, I think conducting stuff needs to come to EC to help you all just like talk through it. Not that I need to be at your votes or anything like that, but helping clarify like, what you are voting on, what the past tradition has been and what it might look like in the future. Just helping give you all clarification, and then just clarity of like, you're doing this vote and this is going to be the result of this vote.” – Meg Weckworth, RCS Resident Conductor and Choral Associate

“I think being able to make informed decisions, this gets into the kind of communication transparency we talked about. There are factors in these decisions that students aren't necessarily always aware of. And we can do a better job of communicating and thinking about those ahead of time.....so I think having more content from the conductors definitely help. I think I could have done a better job in advance of the [Harvard-Yale] vote, to do two things: to just think of more factors, more information to share so that the students could make an informed vote. And number two, as you mentioned before, as it came up in the survey, being very, very clear that, you know, what the students decide, Meg and I are going to support and do.” – Andy Clark, Director of Choral Activities

However, in the grander scheme of things, this is a much harder issue to tackle because it starts getting into the complicated question of who should or who does actually have agency over certain issues. It is generally the case that the student leaders have more jurisdiction over decisions with solely logistical or operational implications (e.g. attire and appointment of new EC members) but when it comes to decisions with artistic implications, lines get blurry. Based on the survey and interviews, it seems everyone agrees that both student leaders and artistic staff should have a voice in these decisions, but no one knows what that should look like. For example, one EC member said:

“In many cases, I think that it is valid for the conductors to have a voice in the process because they have a stake in our projects as well, and it is important that we have a partnership with them. However, I wish that they would be clearer on their stances when we bring up issues to them because that would facilitate our discussion better.”

Yet, there are other EC members who have more nuanced feelings about the way in which the opinions of the artistic staff can influence a decision and therefore, disagreements about when and how to bring in the voices of the artistic staff, if at all. In my conversation with Andy, he pushed back that as someone with decades of experience and a doctorate in choral music, his opinion should hold more weight when it comes to decisions with implications for artistic vision but he also did acknowledge that the artistic staff could be more intentional about how those opinions are communicated.

“I think it's not so much influencing the vote through, you know, making an opinion known, but actually just facts, like people just need to know the facts. Because Meg and I, you know, we've been here for 10 years. We have information. I think it's, it's the manner in which those things are communicated, when and how, that can lead to justifiable, you know, kind of feelings of frustration or of critique. And it is a tricky question too and I know I can do better with things like, well, how much agency do we have?” – Andy

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Based on these findings, I have come up with two sets of voting guidelines, one for general votes and one for tour location votes, for the president and manager to follow and enforce.

General Voting Procedures

If the artistic staff approaches the president and manager with an issue that has artistic implications and that they want the input of student leadership on, then before presenting this issue to EC, the president and manager needs to discuss with the artistic staff and clarify the following questions:

- What are the purposes of making this decision an EC vote and are those valid purposes?
- What are the options EC is voting on?
- If EC were to vote on each of the options, what would the outcome look like?
- What are the conductor's expectations?

This is to ensure that 1) there is a clear purpose to a vote that involves student leadership and the students are being given authentic agency on a decision and 2) there is constant, open communication between the student leadership and artistic staff to maximize clear expectations and minimize confusion surrounding the implications of a vote. Once the artistic staff, president and manager are clear on these answers and have all agreed that a vote is required, then the president and manager will bring the issue to EC. During this meeting, the artistic staff should be present to present the context for the issue, frame the discussion and communicate any necessary information and thoughts that will help EC make an informed decision. EC will then proceed to have a discussion without the artistic staff present. During this discussion, the president and manager will communicate answers to the following questions:

- What is the timeline of this vote?
- What are the options EC is voting on?
- How will the vote be interpreted?
- What would the outcome of each of the options look like?
- What are the potential situations in which this vote might need to be reevaluated and how would we proceed?

If time allows, members will have a chance to digest the discussion, think things through and to submit anonymous thoughts to the president and manager. At the next meeting these anonymous and other further, last-minute thoughts will be shared. Following the end of EC discussions, the

actual voting will proceed electronically for 3 days on a Google form. This timeline will give EC members the opportunity to reflect on their decision instead of feeling pressured to make a hasty vote. The electronic component of the vote will simplify logistics for the president and manager and allow them to keep track of which EC members have voted while still preserving the anonymity of their vote. To ensure all stakeholders in the vote are making a fully informed decision, only members who were present for the full (defined as 75% of the time) discussions will be allowed to vote. In the event of a tie for simple majority votes, the following procedure is suggested. If there are more than two options in the vote, the least popular option should be eliminated. At the next meeting, EC will have further discussion, after which a revote will take place. If a tie continues to occur, the president and manager should make a decision, in consultation with the artistic staff if needed. It should be noted that these guidelines are the same for general votes that don't have any artistic implications (which is rare but does occur such as attire guidelines) with the exception that artistic staff would not be involved.

Domestic and International Tour Voting Procedure

The procedure for voting on tour locations, for the most part, is relatively simpler. These guidelines are to flesh out the procedure in writing, to clear up any inconsistencies that sometimes arises and to clarify expectations from artistic staff and student leadership. Before the vote, the tour manager will research potential tour locations and prepare for a tour pitch presentation to EC. During this time, the tour manager should meet with the former tour managers, president, manager and artistic staff to consult the options. These people should communicate any strong recommendations, reservations or thoughts and approve of all the options that will be presented for the official pitch. During the tour pitch, the tour managers will present the three locations to EC, with one strong recommendation, and EC will then have a chance to ask the tour managers questions and to discuss the options. Immediately following that discussion, members will vote for one of the three options by submitting an electronic ballot. Only members who were present for the full (defined as not missing more than 10 minutes) pitch and discussion will be allowed to vote. The option with the most votes will be the chosen location. In the event of a tie, the third option will be removed and a revote will occur. If a tie occurs again, the tour manager will cast the tie-breaking vote. Unlike the general voting procedure, this vote has a much shorter timeline and takes place during the actual meeting because typically, people need less time to reflect on tour locations, there is less disagreement and most importantly, it is crucial for the tour manager to get started as soon as possible and they can only do that once EC votes on a tour location.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

How can we improve decision-making processes in RCS? This research project sought to clarify the questions surrounding RCS' voting procedures by starting conversation between the student leaders and artistic staff about the unique challenges our organization faces, such as inconsistent voting procedures and ambiguous student agency, through a survey of EC members and interviews of various EC members and the artistic staff. The findings were then translated into recommended guidelines for future votes to be followed by the president and manager.

As the incoming president of RCS, I plan to implement these recommendations and evaluate their effectiveness at the end of my term. It is important the student leaders codify these guidelines into procedures to include in our by-laws or some sort of written documents as soon as possible but there are so many variables that go into every issue or vote and as mentioned above, there needs to be further discussion with the student leadership about things like whether all votes should be interpreted as simple or two-thirds majority and how to build flexibility into these procedures. At the end of every academic year, there is a brief window of opportunity to hold a meeting with a quorum of the general RCS membership, during which by-law changes can be voted on and so it is my hope that by then, we can vote on an updated by-law that includes these voting procedures.

This research project has only scratched the surface of the deeper, underlying decision-making challenges that RCS faces as a uniquely structured organization and in some ways, these voting guidelines are only a band-aid solution, so these larger conversations need to continue. There is so much that came out of my interviews with the student leaders and artistic staff that I didn't include in this paper for the sake of space and time – if I did, this would have turned into a thesis-sized paper - but I definitely want to keep reading through my interviews and notes to think deeply about where to go from here. For example, the artistic staff brought up the need for more mechanisms for input and feedback between the general membership, student leaders and artistic staff because not everyone responds equally to what currently exists, which is an area that my research did not go into as much but is something that would be important to look into in terms of examining the impact of our decision-making.

Overall, these issues keep coming back to this idea that both the students and the artistic staff are struggling to navigate the various identities that RCS holds and the different student-faculty relationships that exist within each of those identities.

"I feel like my role is different and off. It exists in all three of those contexts. But it is different in all three of those contexts. So it's a delicate dance for sure. And I think just, you know, trying to kind of feel through how to best play my role in those contexts. Our situation here at Harvard is not typical, in terms of the opportunities for students to have agency and to have leadership opportunities. So we're not necessarily trained. Before I came here, I taught for nine years at other universities, and all of these other tasks and roles that students play out, you know, I have to do, making programs and setting up risers and planning tours. And to, certain extent you have some training in that, but you have a lot of experience in that and just....yeah, so we're trying, you know, to navigate something that's really both unprecedented. And without

very many other exemplars, peer institutions to do it the way that we do it.” – Andy Clark, Director of Choral Activities

That is important to recognize, that in times of frustration with the artistic staff, the student leaders need to remind themselves that the artistic staff is still learning to navigate these challenges too and in times of frustration with the student leaders, the artistic staff needs to remind themselves of the important role they’re playing in creating a valuable, incredible leadership experience for the student leaders, which Andy sums up eloquently:

“I think is what makes it special. We also have alumni who care a lot and are invested in the group success. And part of that is because they had not only great relationships and musical experiences, but these leadership opportunities. And I think, you know, we certainly want to sustain those opportunities for the students. At the end of the day, like, what we might compromise is worth it because of the experiences that the students are able to have and the growing opportunities and a safe space where students can make mistakes and learn.”

At the end of the day, both the students and artistic staff are working towards upholding this organization’s value for student leadership and it is reassuring to know that the student leaders and artistic staff are working in good faith to address the challenges that come with that.

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