

University of Texas on course to build in E. Austin

Designs sought for \$20M music facility

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Andy Strietelmeier (right) helps educate students in the String Project, which is slated to receive a 60,000-square-foot building soon.

The University of Texas' Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music plans to build a \$20 million community music school in East Austin.

The proposal has been long in the planning, but only got approval Feb. 18 from the university system's board of regents. The music academy will be a 60,000-square-foot building housing a successful community music program called the String Project, which teaches young people how to play Mozart and Beethoven on the viola, violin, cello and string bass. The widely lauded project, started in 1948, is funded by student fees.

The new music academy will consist of classrooms, studios and administrative offices.

The school of music is in the quiet phase of a capital campaign to fund the building, said **Glenn Chandler**, director of the Butler School of Music. The music academy is considered an auxiliary project of the UT System, so the Butler School of Music is responsible for raising the \$20 million.

Chandler did not say how much has been raised so far, but he hopes to reach the goal in the next 12 months. The music school was waiting for UT board approval to begin design and planning.

The music academy will be built on UT-owned land in East Austin. A site near UT's UFCU **Disch-Falk Field**, at 1300 E. Martin Luther King Blvd., is under consideration.

The String Project has about 300 students who attend classes every Saturday at the Butler School of Music on the UT campus. The program has a waiting list of about 700 students.

Besides being an opportunity for children in the community to learn music, the program also provides a lab for UT students to hone teaching skills, instructing children under UT faculty guidance, Chandler said.

"That's a great benefit," he said.

The new building will enable the music school to expand the string program and add programs, such as Guitar Project and Piano Project, which are in their early stages. A new building will also enable the school of music to launch additional music programs for adult students.

“Our plan is to replicate the String Project in some other areas,” Chandler said. “We know that there’s a great demand for early-childhood music education, and for adults of all ages.”

At the core, the music projects are teacher training programs for UT’s graduate students, said **Laurie Scott**, director of the String Project, adding that the selection process for teachers is highly competitive.

Scott said she’s looking forward to having a home for the program.

“Having our own space will be better for the students, parents and teachers,” Scott said. Parking on UT’s campus is extremely difficult for parents, some of whom drive from Temple, Georgetown, Lockhart and Buda.

The academy will be similar in scope to The University of Memphis’ Community Music School, which was established in 1971 and has more than 12,000 students, Chandler said.

Chandler envisions the music academy will grow to about 3,000 students in five years.

“It’ll be a comprehensive community music school,” Chandler said.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin