

## APPENDIX 14-K

*Vocal Pacing for Student Singers: General Tips*

1. *Vocal pacing will directly affect your success as a singer.* You have chosen to include singing activities in your life and singing is important to you. The vocal pacing choices you make will have a direct impact on your success in these endeavors. Of course we all want to be able to do everything and none of us wants to feel restricted, but the reality is that there is a limit to how much your voice can do.
  - If you are active in singing ventures such as a cappella groups, musical theater, or singing in worship activities, you are making a commitment to fulfilling your role in the group. Unwise vocal pacing decisions may undermine this commitment.
  - If you sing in a school chorus, are a voice or musical theater major or minor, or are taking voice lessons for academic credit, your academic performance will be measured in part by your ability to fulfill the singing requirements of the course or program. Your grade or even your ability to finish your degree may be jeopardized by poor vocal health.
2. *Priorities are the key.* Putting your vocal activities in order from most to least important will help you to make smart decisions and manage your vocal load optimally. Make a list of all your singing and speaking activities and number them in order of how important they are to you. You may need to reduce how much time you spend on the less important activities to keep your voice healthy or to recover from a voice injury. Sometimes you have to think of priorities from multiple perspectives. For example, if you have an academic requirement to sing in choir and are also active in a student-directed a cappella group, the a cappella group may be a priority in terms of fun and fulfillment. However, if your participation threatens your ability to function in choir, your grade or even your ability to continue in the degree program may be in danger. If you want to be successful in your academic program, you may have to make the a cappella group the lower priority.
3. *It is not normal to be hoarse after rehearsals or performances and not normal to lose your voice on a regular basis.* If this is happening to you, you may have a voice injury. Repeating the pattern may make the injury worse and could jeopardize your singing future. Don't try to "just push through it." This may result in more severe or even permanent injury. Your long-term vocal health is more important than any given performance.
4. *Get your voice checked out if you are having frequent voice problems.* Ideally, you should see a laryngologist (voice doctor) and, if possible, a singing voice rehabilitation specialist. In all likelihood, optimizing vocal pacing will be part of the plan for getting your voice back on track. Often voice teachers or

choir directors will notice if a student seems to have chronic or repeated hoarseness and will recommend evaluation. If you are in a student-led group, you have to monitor your own voice and also help monitor the voices of the others in your group.

5. *Always warm up before practice, rehearsal, and performance.* The warm-up should be customized to your voice and your singing style. Choral or group warm-ups may not be adequate to ensure that you get optimal vocal exercise.
6. *For musical theater or opera performances, advocate for having an understudy or cover whenever possible.* This will give you more opportunities to rest and pace your voice. Should you experience fatigue or illness that affects your voice during the rehearsal period, having an understudy can provide you with the rest and recovery you need to be in good shape for the performance.
7. *Practice excellent vocal hygiene* (see Vocal Hygiene handout). This includes drinking at least 64 ounces of water per day. Caffeine is a diuretic and makes your body lose water. If you consume a lot of caffeinated beverages, make sure you balance that consumption with water or other noncaffeinated beverages.
8. *In the long run, a lifestyle of partying and drinking on a regular basis is not compatible with vocal health.* If singing is important to you, consider how the choices you make may impact your voice.
  - Drinking alcohol is dehydrating. More important, alcohol can make you change your behavior in ways that are ultimately unhealthy for your voice. This includes extended speaking or singing in loud environments (bars, parties, athletic events), yelling, and screaming. Alcohol affects your coordination, so if you are singing while intoxicated, it will be much more difficult for you to pay attention to your technique, which may result in voice injury or exacerbating an existing injury.
  - Smoking (anything) and singing don't mix. If you are a smoker, consider quitting for your vocal health if other health risks haven't motivated you so far. Drug use and singing also don't mix. Any substance that alters your consciousness will have a negative impact on your coordination, as well as your ability to be aware and use good judgment.