



Dr. Monte Gris  serves as Director of Bands at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. In addition to overseeing all aspects of the band program, he teaches applied saxophone, conducting, and instrumental music education. His leadership reflects a commitment to artistic excellence, student mentorship, and innovative program development.

Prior to his appointment at Bradley, Dr. Gris  was Director of Bands and Chair of the School of Performing Arts at Minnesota State University Moorhead, where he also served as the applied saxophone instructor and Music Education Coordinator. His earlier appointments include Associate Director of Bands at Idaho State

University and Director of the Bengal Marching Band. He began his career as a 5–12 Band and Choir Director in Manhattan, Montana, later serving as Director of Bands at Capital High School in Helena, MT, following completion of his master's degree at Oklahoma State University. He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from James Madison University.

Dr. Gris  has been recognized as a Distinguished Educator by the Helena Education Foundation, and received the Excellence in Service to the Community Award from MSUM. An active teacher and conductor beyond the university setting, he also serves on the faculty each summer at the International Music Camp.



Dr. Matt Thomas was appointed as the Associate Director of Bands at the Western Illinois University School of Music in 2010. His responsibilities at WIU include conducting the Concert Band, University Band, Pep Band, and directing the "Marching Leathernecks," as well as teaching instrumental conducting and other courses within the undergraduate music education curriculum.

A native of the Midwest, Dr. Thomas was born and raised in Evansville, Indiana. He attended the University of Kentucky as a trumpet student of Terry Everson, and graduated from the institution with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. He then taught in the Cobb County, Georgia,

school district, where bands under his direction gave feature performances at the University of Georgia Middle School Festival and The Midwest Clinic, an International Band and Orchestra Conference.

Dr. Thomas' graduate studies included a Master of Music degree in Wind/Band Conducting and a Ph.D. in Music Education from The Florida State University, where he was a conducting student of Richard Clary. During his time at FSU, Dr. Thomas was an associate conductor with the numerous graduate and undergraduate concert ensembles, taught courses in music education and conducting, and designed drill for the 400 member marching band.

Since arriving at Western, Dr. Thomas has been in high demand as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and drill designer across the midwest, his biography of Alfred Watkins (former director the Lassiter High School Band in Cobb County, Georgia) was published in the Winter 2015 Peer Reviewed section of the National Band Association Journal, and the WIU Marching Leathernecks performed in front of 400,000 live spectators (and 4 million online) at the 2015 McDonald's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Chicago. Most recently in the summer of 2017, Dr. Thomas completed a one week residency in Costa Rica working with high school and college band programs across the country. He and his wife reside in Macomb with their four children.



Dr. Mack Wood is in his sixth year as the Associate Director of Bands and Director of the Big Red Marching Machine at Illinois State University. He has 11 years of high school teaching in Texas and a Bachelor's Degree in Music and Human Learning from The University of Texas at Austin, a M.M. in Instrumental Conducting from Louisiana State University, and a D.M.A. from the University of Miami, Frost School of Music.