Band director brings change to Utah State University’s marching band

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By Sam Heaps and Shelbie McGuire

A new season has brought a new direction for the Aggie Marching Band.

As band director Joseph Falvey begins his second year at Utah State University, he's making changes to the marching style and music choices.

“The style of marching has changed from the older, more traditional marching band style to the more popular and modern corps style of marching,” said James Bankhead, the head of USU's music department.

In past years, the band has played older music. This year, its members are performing more contemporary songs that many students know and the band members enjoy playing.

“This year's music is even better than last year's,” said Rayna Bell, a member of the marching band. “It is music that band members enjoy playing and students know by heart so we get a lot more involvement.”

The band is also learning new music and routines for every show.

“We are going to do a different show every game,” Falvey said. “The goal is not to repeat any music — which makes things a little harder.”

Falvey said some people have asked why the band doesn’t play more songs that are on the radio. One reason: The cost. The rights must be purchased to every song the band plays so it can be arranged for them. One song the band is currently working on cost $370 for the rights.

And that's no small amount for a band on a budget, Bankhead said.

“Funding for the USU marching band is much lower than any other university in our conference or in the entire region,” Bankhead said.

Nonetheless, the band plays on.

“Entertainment is really what we exist for, at the football games or any other USU event. We are an intricate part of the college experience,” Falvey said. “One thing, as an educator, I want my students to understand why we are doing specific things, even non-majors, so they can have the knowledge of it later in life.”