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TO: Antonio Moreira, Vice Provost

FROM: Scott E. Casper, Dean, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

RE: National Association of Schools of Dance Review (APR), Department of Dance

I have carefully reviewed the Self-Study for the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) accreditation review for the Department of Dance (DANC) and the report of the Visitors. The Self-Study explains effectively the Department's instructional programs, its development over the past seven years (notably its move into the Performing Arts and Humanities Building [PAHB]), and its ongoing goals and challenges. The Visitors' report offers substantial praise for the department's accomplishments, as well as useful recommendations. (The NASD review process stands in for UMBC's Academic Program Review, with any differences from UMBC's process addressed as part of the NASD Self-Study and visit. Although the official notification from NASD about accreditation will not arrive until Fall 2018, the visitors' report is sufficiently detailed for me to write the Dean's Report at this time.)

Context: To provide some context for the visitors' report, I offer some data on enrollment in the Department. (This is routinely part of the CAHSS Dean's Report for APRs.)

Student numbers: Posted IRADS data for Fall 2017 indicate that the department had 51 total majors (primary and additional plans) and 13 minors. The number of majors is 5.6% lower than in Fall 2014 (54) but has been essentially consistent over the past four years; the number of minors has declined by more than half in that time (from 28 in Fall 2014).

Student-faculty ratios: In Fall 2017, the student-faculty ratio (SFR) for students in all plans was 16.0 for full-time faculty, as against 24.3 for CAHSS; it was 9.6 for FTE faculty, as against the CAHSS

average of 20.2; and it was 32.0 for tenured/tenure-track FTE faculty, as against the CAHSS average of 34.4. The SFR for FTE students was 10.9 for full-time faculty, as against 18.8 for CAHSS; it was 6.5 for FTE faculty, as against 15.6 for CAHSS; and it was 21.8 for tenured/tenure-track FTE faculty, as against 26.6 for CAHSS. Dance SFRs are lower than College ones because of the lab-studio nature of instruction in the discipline: beyond dance history and similar General Education courses, most courses are capped at 10, 15, or 20 students. The relatively higher SFRs for tenure-track faculty are due to the fact that in Fall 2017, Dance had only two tenure-track faculty members.

Reviewers' Evaluation:

The NASD Visitors praise UMBC's Dance Department for its work in many areas (quotations are from their report):

- Overall: The department fulfills its “mission goal of building a fundamental core of contemporary technique while challenging students with a variety of training approaches and research methods,” with a focus on “guiding students to engage in their own research on dance making in a knowledgeable, sophisticated, and experimental way.”
- Curriculum and teaching: “It was clear during the visit that excellent teaching and learning was occurring.” Specifically, advanced level courses “provide a rigorous curricular experience and production season”; classroom visitation revealed strong feedback to students “in all teaching observed”; and “high-quality live music ... enhanced the class session experience.”
- Faculty: Faculty members “are focused, dedicated, and bring professional and academic experience into the classroom,” and “are engaged in artistic and scholarly development.” The evaluators noted also “the strength and programmatic inclusion of highly qualified adjunct instructors.”
- Attention to diversity: “There was evident discussion and consideration of the goal to diversify the faculty body to reflect the student body when considering future hires. The visitors noted this goal repeatedly addressed in an open, transparent manner, with clear objectives in play.”
- Resources: Dance's space in the Performing Arts and Humanities Building (PAHB) is “very well organized, clean, spacious, and aligns strongly with the dance unit's mission goals.” The move to PAHB “included an increase to the operating budget for support and maintenance of the new studios and performance spaces.”
- Strategic planning: The Self-Study “presented a proactive program unafraid of change and diversity, thoroughly thinking through its identity and how its potential hires will connect to where it wants to go/what it wants to be.”

The Visitors' recommendations are quite modest, and in several respects coincide with those of the Self-Study. They fall into several distinct categories; my responses are in *italics*.

- a) Faculty recruitment, particularly to “help support the institution's goal of diversification.” In particular, the Visitors recommend developing a strategy for sequencing new permanent hires. (This is both a near-term and a long-term objective.) The Self-Study (p. 68) describes several faculty strategies to meet student demand “[i]f enrollment remains stable, or shows slight growth over the next three years.” *I agree that this is a paramount goal. A successful national search in Academic Year 2017-18 will bring a new, tenure-track faculty member to UMBC in Fall 2018,*

the Department's first new tenure-track faculty member in several decades. Unfortunately, the postdoctoral fellow will be leaving to take a tenure-track position elsewhere. For Academic Year 2018-19, we will pilot the expansion of the Artist-in-Residence (A-i-R) position from one semester to full-year, with an artist with expertise in African and African Diaspora dance. If this pilot is successful, I will consider a permanent, base-funded expansion of that position, either as an annual full-year A-i-R or as a Lecturer. In my view, the next tenure-track hire, whether an expansion of the current faculty ranks or a successor to a current tenure-track faculty member, should be focused in non-Western dance (probably African, Afro-Caribbean, or African Diaspora), so that UMBC's research strength in Dance reaches beyond Western forms. I am working with the Chair to consider strategies for increasing the proportion of Dance courses taught by regular faculty members.

- b) Sustainability of Dance spaces in the Performing Arts and Humanities Building, particularly “securing funding for future expenditures and replacement of state of the art equipment.” *This is the other key, long-term need—not just for Dance but also for the other Performing Arts departments. The Chairs, the PAHB Operations Manager, and I are currently working on multi-year projections of these needs, to be shared with the Provost for consideration in UMBC's multi-year strategic budget process. Simply put, the enhanced maintenance and operating funds that accompanied the PAHB have made an important difference (including for Dance's operating budget and technical staffing), but they do not suffice for long-term maintenance and replacement of sensitive equipment.*
- c) Curriculum and student opportunities: “alignment of competencies in the Contemporary Dance courses” (as expected in accreditation), and “increasing student opportunity to be chosen for, rehearse in, and perform in faculty dance works.” The Self-Study describes several curricular changes under consideration. *The Department should pursue these recommendations as appropriate to NASD standards and the Department's own goals for student achievement.* (I understand that the Dance faculty have drafted a table of competencies for the Contemporary Dance sequence and will submit these to NASD in its Optional Response Report. Further, there are several ways in which students perform in faculty dance works currently, both in a required course and by audition and invitation.)
- d) Marketing and image: “Enhancing and improving the public image” of the dance program and its events, “in connection to the university campus and the community,” including enhanced “image materials for the program performances, i.e., images on dance performance programs, posters, and internet.” *I agree that enhancing the Department's public image is important—and this work must begin immediately, in preparation for the next recruitment season. DANC needs strategically designed recruitment materials, including a recruitment poster with a striking photograph. Concert programs and kindred materials also need a lift. Currently some Dance productions each year, notably the Baltimore Dance Project, are part of UMBC's Arts and Humanities marketing in local media (newspapers, public radio, etc.). The Department and the Dean's Office can work with OLA to devise appropriate tactics for broader on-campus awareness, possibly in conjunction with other events marketing. The Dean's Office will work with DANC and OLA to identify modest funding to enhance its recruitment and publicity materials.*
- e) “Possibility for an assistant chair position to aid the Department Chair in administrative duties.” *I do not believe that this is necessary, nor does the Self-Study argue for this. (The recommendation seems at odds with the visitors' earlier statement that the Chair's responsibilities “appear to be manageable.” The Technical Director supervises several areas that in other departments fall within a Chair's responsibility.) I will add that the Chair, who has served in this role for more than two decades, is simply superb: invariably*

laser-focused on students' success, and exceptionally straightforward and thoughtful about the resources required to accomplish that goal. Dance is among the best-governed departments in CAHSS, thanks in no small measure to her leadership. The College is creating an ongoing program of training and leadership development for Chairs, with the goal of augmenting support, especially in small departments like Dance.

Additional Challenges:

The Self-Study indicates several additional “challenges” and “plans for addressing weaknesses and improving results” (p. 59-60) and “areas for improvement” (pp. 66-68) that could require additional support, not mentioned in the visitors’ report perhaps because their report is specific to accreditation:

- a) Increasing the frequency of some course offerings, esp. to meet the needs of transfer students. *Course offerings include a combination of fall-only, spring-only, and every-semester courses; enrollment does not warrant offering every course every semester. The Department might analyze how to increase the frequency of some semester-only courses (possibly offering them three semesters out of four), based on data about demand and students' timely path to degree. I am happy to discuss with the Chair the instructional staffing needs that such an increase might require, and also whether the pressure enrollment mechanism might help address them (as it already has for a number of sections of some Dance courses).*
- b) Faculty development and travel. *As the Self-Study notes, the College supports faculty development and travel, including the Dean's Travel Fund available to all full-time faculty, competitive research and teaching small grants (the latter available to adjunct as well as full-time faculty), and summer faculty fellowships offered by the research centers. The recent revision of the College-wide Flexible Resource Allocation Program (FRAP) is based in part upon a per-faculty-member allocation that departments may devote to research; and FRAP allocations are now to be reviewed every three years, to take account of changes in faculty numbers. Additionally, new full-time, tenure-track faculty members' start-up packages should help meet research needs between FRAP recalculations.*
- c) Computing and software needs, specifically for faculty offices and for the Sonic Computer Lab shared with Music and Theatre. *Maintaining the Sonic Computer Lab is part of the broader, PAHB-wide process described above. The College cannot create its own computer replacement initiative to supplement the University-wide program, and the FRAP per-faculty allocation might assist departments with meeting such needs. I will consider specific, one-time requests for specific technical spaces, but not an ongoing base budget allocation specifically for computer replacement.*
- d) Refreshing and enhancing the Department's costume inventory. *The Chair has raised this ongoing concern in our annual budget discussions. From the Self-Study, it appears that the Department uses some annual operating funds to meet this expense, and that other support from the Dean's Office (for students to attend the American College Dance Festival) has freed up departmental box office revenue for costume consultation and inventory. It would be useful to have more specific information about the initial and year-to-year cost of a modest, sustainable costume inventory. I am always open to considering innovative, cross-departmental proposals that provide opportunities for students, if any collaboration with Theatre faculty or students in costume design might be practicable (though I appreciate that costuming needs for Dance and for Theatre are quite distinct).*

- e) Allocations for visiting performers and dance companies, currently at \$5,000 most years and \$10,000 every fourth year (through Performing Arts Series funding): As the Self-Study indicates, most years it is impossible to “bring a high-profile dance artist or company to campus,” given these allocations. This is unfortunate both for our students and for UMBC as an artistic hub. *As several significant gifts become fully endowed over the next three years, I expect that there will be additional funds for enhancing our guest-artist opportunities. During the 2018-19 academic year, the Dean’s Office will devise a process for requesting and allocating these funds once they become available. I also expect to work with the Office of Institutional Advancement to identify additional funding opportunities.*

Conclusion

As the NASD Visitors indicate, UMBC’s Dance Department possesses many strengths, chief among them its dedication to students’ development as creative artists and thinkers. The Department’s combination of rigorous education and concern for the whole dancer, in the context of a liberal arts education, makes our program distinctive. These successes owe much to the decades-long efforts of Dance’s outstanding faculty, all talented artists highly regarded within and beyond our region. The Performing Arts and Humanities Building, with state-of-the-art spaces and technologies, has greatly enhanced the faculty’s opportunities to provide students a stellar education at the leading edge of the field.

Beyond the move to the PAHB, the Department has begun a significant transition: hiring its first new tenure-track faculty member in decades, thinking about potential future faculty recruitment, and considering curricular revisions to broaden its offerings further beyond Western dance traditions. Like the NASD visitors, I applaud the faculty for thinking insightfully and strategically about the future of Dance at UMBC. I look forward to working with the Department and appropriate administrative offices to continue and extend the outstanding work already so well begun.