

UGC PREPORT ON THE ACADEMIC
PROGRAM REVIEW
OF
THE DANCE DEPARTMENT

The Dance Department's Fall 2017 Academic Program Review (APR) was coincident with its accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Therefore, the NASD provided the external reviewers and the Dance Department's Self Study as well as the Dean's Report were directed to the NASD.

The Department of Dance offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance, a minor in Dance, and in coordination with the Education Department, provides courses leading to Maryland State Department of Education Certification as a Dance Specialist. As of Fall 2017, there were 53 declared Dance majors and 12 declared minors. The number of majors has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, ranging between 48 and 53.

Historically, the Department of Dance has operated with three tenure-track faculty members. At the time of this review, the Department had two tenure-track faculty due to the retirement of one longtime faculty member and the Department was in the process of recruiting to fill this vacancy. The Dance faculty also includes one instructor, one visiting artist (Artist-in-Residence), and 12 part-time faculty members.

A. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Department of Dance has identified seven learning objectives and goals. These include goals regarding the identification and demonstration of dance technique, goals that address various aspects of choreography and performance, as well as objectives that focus on the critical and creative thinking skills associated with the evaluation of dance performance. The Department assesses learning outcomes and overall program success at several critical junctures that mark students' progress through the curriculum. These culminate in a capstone experience (DANC 475-- Senior Project), but also include a gateway course (DANC 320-- Intermediate Modern Technique II) in which students must receive a "B" grade to continue in the major. In addition, the Department uses its choreography courses (DAND 290, 350, and 400 A, B, and C) to offer feedback and assess student progress.

The Dance Department has used assessment data to refine both the tools of assessment and the curriculum to improve learning outcomes. With regard to the capstone experience, for example, the Department has acted to incorporate written assignments, oral presentations, and the use of video for rehearsals as well as for performances. As for the gateway course (DANC 320), the Department has added a more formal final performance for students in the course during finals week.

B. STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE; PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS; PROGRAM CHANGES

In their report, the NASD evaluators concluded, “The institution appears to meet the NASD standards relating to a Bachelor of Arts in Dance” (18). They also commended the Dance Department’s “state of the art” facilities in the Performing Arts and Humanities Building (PAHB). From these comments, it can be inferred that the Dance Department operations are on par with the current state of the discipline.

In recent years, Dance majors at UMBC have become a far more diverse cohort. In response, the Department is working to build a more culturally inclusive course curriculum. As part of this strategy, the Department seeks opportunities to create cross-listed courses, such as Introduction to Indian Dance and Introduction to African Dance. The challenge for the Department is to incorporate such curricular options into its program without adding additional credits to its 58-credit major (see below).

C. UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

The Department of Dance offers a major (58 credits), a minor (19 credits), and courses required for the Maryland State Department of Education Certification.

The Dance major requires a minimum of 20 credits of dance technique, including the gateway course DANC 320-- Intermediate Contemporary Dance Technique II. The major also requires ten credits of choreography, five credits of performance, six credits of dance history, 11 credits in “Dance and Related Disciplines,” and the 3-credit capstone experience, DANC 475--Senior Projects in Dance.

The Dance minor has an 8-credit core of three courses (DANC 230-Improvisation, DANC 310—Intermediate Contemporary Dance Technique I and DANC 350--Dance Workshop). It also requires one dance history course (3 credits), one course in ballet technique (2 credits), and six credits of dance electives from a prescribed list.

Dance majors interested in certification as Dance Specialists through the Maryland State Department of Education complete their required education courses through the Education Department, plus DANC 426—Teaching Methods for Dance.

UMBC Dance faculty members also provide overall supervision and evaluation of Dance internships where certificate candidates are placed in yearlong internships at Maryland schools under the immediate direction of resident dance teachers.

D. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

The Department of Dance encourages its students to engage in research in multiple ways. Students may pursue independent study through the variable credit course DANC 400. Independent study requires that students submit a research proposal and secure a faculty mentor for the project. Dance majors are also encouraged to apply for the Provost

Undergraduate Research Award (URA). URA recipients in Dance most often use their funding to study in New York City or to participate in a major dance festival (e.g., American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival). URA recipients then showcase their research achievement, usually by mounting a performance piece at the Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD). The Department also mandates that its URA recipients submit an article about their work for publication in *The UMBC Review*.

Sophomore and Junior dance majors who demonstrate excellent performance potential may apply for summer funding grants (up to \$2,500) to study at an established dance workshop or to design their own summer study program. The Department's Self Study notes that recent recipients of this award have attended the American Dance Festival in North Carolina, the Paul Taylor Dance Institute in Maryland, the Summer Contemporary Dance Institute in New York, and the Hubbard Street Summer Intensive in Chicago.

Dance majors are also invited to participate in faculty research. This has involved performing faculty choreography with *Baltimore Dance Project*, the professional dance company in residence at UMBC. It has also involved participation in creative video/film dance works or inter-disciplinary performances.

E. UNDERGRADUATE ADVISEMENT

Advising responsibilities are shared among the Deane Department's full-time faculty. The tenure-track faculty members each advise between 10 and 25 majors. The Chair, Dr. Carol Hess, advises incoming students during the summer, as well as juniors, seniors, and dance majors pursuing education certification. Professor Doug Hamby advises freshmen, sophomores, and new transfer students. He also advises the Department's Council of Majors. Instructor Sandra Lacy advises Dance minors.

On an informal basis the Department regularly evaluates its advising protocols particularly with regard to placing students in appropriate levels of dance technique instruction. Technique classes are repeatable at all levels. Some students need to remain at a specific level before they can advance. The Chair requests placement recommendations for ballet and contemporary dance from all technique instructors each semester before the beginning of advance registration in ballet and contemporary dance. The Chair then communicates these placement decisions to all advisors.

F. COUNCIL OF MAJORS, UNDERGRADUATE HONORS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

The Council of Majors in the Dance Department is a relatively active student organization. It annually attracts about 15 members and it usually meets about five times a semester. Its reported activities include the launching of a Sunday Master Class program, where adjunct faculty members and alumni are invited to offer "master classes." The Council of Majors also sponsors end-of-semester "movie nights."

The Dance Department's Self Study did not specify the number of URAs or other awards its majors have received. As discussed above, the Department notes that its students have received URAs and have other opportunities for funding awards. The Department also reports a solid record of employment success for its graduates. UMBC graduates in Dance pursue careers in professional dance companies, in private dance studios, and in K-12 education. Some students continue to graduate programs in such fields as dance, education, and physical therapy.

G. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHING QUALITY

The NASD Evaluators' Report identifies the Dance Department's attention to faculty development as a key strength of the Department. They note particularly, "the faculty exhibit a range of scholarly and professional expertise" and "the faculty are engaged in artistic and scholarly development" (19). At the time of this review, the Dance Department had as part of its faculty a Postdoctoral Fellow through the CAHSS Diversity Postdoc Fellows program and the external reviewers cite this specifically as "an exciting opportunity to diversify the faculty" (19).

The external reviewers' report also highlights key strengths in teaching quality. The report notes class sizes that are "moderate and appropriate to the degree" and "easy tracking" of students' progress through effective advisement. The report also praises as "very strong" the choreography component of the curriculum (19).

One area for improvement in teaching quality is identified in the reviewers' report. The reviewers suggest that competencies be aligned in Contemporary Dance courses among the various full- and part-time faculty members who teach these courses.

H. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS; SUMMARY EVALUATION

The accreditation process into which this APR was folded resulted in a positive outcome. This accomplishment underscores the overall quality of the Department of Dance.

Going forward, the CAHSS Dean endorses the Dance Department's efforts to diversify its program. Toward this end, he agreed to pilot the expansion of the Artist-in-Residence position from one semester to full-year. This position was to be filled with an artist with expertise in African and African Diaspora dance.

One other challenge of critical importance to the Dance Department and to UMBC as a whole is the long-term sustainability of the facilities in the Performing Arts and Humanities Building. This challenge is highlighted in the Self Study, in the NASD Evaluators' Report, and in the Dean's Report. To address the sustainability issue, the Dean, the Chairs, and the PAHB Operations Manager are working to have their multi-year cost projections included in UMBC's multi-year strategic budget process.

