

**WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY DANCE PROGRAM EVALUATION TEAM
REPORT**

April 7, 2022

Evaluation Committee

Dmitri Peskov (Chair of Dance Department, Snow College)
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Based on interviews with Weber State faculty: *Dean Deborah Uman* of the College of Arts & Humanities; Department of Performing Arts Interim Chair *Amanda Sowerby*, Dance Department Secretary *Patty Coan*, Dance Department Technical Director *Christopher Philion*, Dance Department faculty *Jo Blake, Erik Stern, Juan Carlos Claudio* and Dance Department students; a facilities tour; and the observation and participation in the following dance classes: Pattern Play, Moving Company, Choreography II, Modern I, Modern II/III and Improvisation.

Summary

Our assessment supports that the diverse faculty body of the Weber State Dance Department is populated by accomplished scholars and working professionals with remarkable achievements in their fields of study. The program maintains a strong vision for future growth with its ongoing development of Dance Film Certificate and Dance Movement Therapy initiative, which strongly complements current degree offerings in BA in Dance, BA/BS in Dance Education K-12, an AA in Dance, a Dance Minor, and a Dance Teaching Minor Degrees. However, it is our view that if the Dance Program's current programs are to be sustainable, they need additional support in building facilities. In addition, per our discussion with dance students and Dean Deborah Uman, we recommend that the Dance Department better align its courses with USHE Standards by increasing some of the technique course offerings from one credit a class to two credits a class. Finally, although students were overwhelmingly complimentary and appreciative of the dedication and opportunities provided by the faculty, we recommend that the Department addresses student concerns about inconsistencies in quality of teaching and advisement. We have reviewed the following eight aspects of the program's operation: Mission Statement; Curriculum; Student Learning Outcomes & Assessment; Academic Advising; Faculty, Support (Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment, and Library); Relationships with the External Communities, as well as the Results of Previous Program Reviews.

A. Mission Statement

The Dance Program's mission statement is clear: it is in alignment with both the program's own learning outcomes and the mission of the university. Nevertheless, we also assert that it does not sufficiently reflect the unique vision of the Weber State Dance Department, especially as it pertains to community engagement, professional dance opportunities for students, the diversity of degree offerings as well as the continuing practice and scholarly research of its faculty members.

B. Curriculum

Weber State Dance Department curriculum is both consistent with USHE requirements and unique in the scope of its degree offerings ranging from BA in Dance to BA/BS in Dance Education K-12. The dance department is also unique in its accessibility to students of all backgrounds and abilities. Thus, there are no audition requirements for entrance into the program and course offerings are tailored for all levels of dance proficiency. Dance department students develop their own electronic portfolios prior to graduation facilitating their transition to professional work and/or graduate studies. We feel that the development of Dance Film Certificate and Dance Movement Therapy Initiative will further strengthen the program. We also recommend that the Department considers a re-evaluation of some of the credit hours associated with its technique classes. Since Ballet I and Modern I classes are worth only one credit each but Ballet II and Modern II are worth 1.5 credits each, many of the students in the program have to simultaneously take a beginning and an advanced level technique class in order to graduate. As a result, many students often feel physically and emotionally strained. We recommend that the Department considers changing credit hours for all Modern and Ballet courses to two per course in order to better align with USHE standards and other UT dance programs and in order to better retain its students. We also recommend that the department takes advantage of the diversity of its dance faculty by eventually offering more classes in non-western dance techniques including, but not limited to, social dance, flamenco and Latin dance thus supporting the university's strategic plan of becoming an emerging HIS.

C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

We applaud the Dance Department's clearly defined Measurable Learning Outcomes as well as Target Performance and Actual Performance rubrics. We are impressed by the fact that Actual Performance numbers often exceed Target Performance numbers by at least 10%.

D. Academic Advising

All full-time faculty members are sharing the responsibility for student advising. Students expressed concerns with the inconsistent quality of advising that they receive across faculty, in some cases lacking and in others high quality. They also expressed frustration with the lack of predictability and consistency in when the courses are offered each semester which impacts the timing of graduation. We recommend providing a regular schedule of course offerings and perhaps summer offerings as well to help address this issue. Finally, we applaud the number of students in the program who receive scholarships.

D. Faculty

We observed and participated in a number of dance classes and were impressed by the quality of instruction and student engagement in each session. We commend the more recent hiring of BIPOC faculty and hope that this continues as the opportunity to hire new faculty arises.

We applaud the hiring of new faculty member Juan Carlos Claudio who brings a movement therapy expertise in addition to an individualized approach to dance training. He is currently a full-time instructor and we recommend that his position be changed to a tenure-track one followed by a hiring of another full-time instructor in order to help share the teaching load of full-time faculty and diminish the number of Adjunct Faculty required to offer the necessary courses so that students are able to graduate in a timely manner. We also recommend an increase in instructional wages for part-time faculty who often commute from SLC and beyond.

In our meeting with dance department students, they expressed their appreciation of the dedication and high-quality instruction of some faculty members but their discontent with the deficient instruction by other faculty members. We recommended that the department address how to improve the consistency of high-quality teaching of all faculty members.

E. Support (Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment, and Library)

The dance department needs more classroom spaces: currently, only two studios are available for classes, one of which is located under a swimming pool and needs updating and repair, which also are shared with other departments making it challenging to have the needed space for all departmental activities. Having more spaces and more full-time faculty members will help with course scheduling and student retention. We advocate for more access to dance spaces for students with disabilities. Finally, in our conversation with the Dance Technical Director who is hired on a part-time basis, it became apparent for the need for additional part-time tech support during dance concert production.

F. Relationships with the External Communities

We agree with previous reviewers that community outreach is the unique strength of the Weber State Dance Department. We support Moving Company's continuing performances in the schools in a multicounty area and their collaborations with a diverse group of educators and dance-makers. We learned that the students in the department are particularly excited by the new professional opportunities in SLC and beyond offered by faculty members Jo Blake and Juan Carlos Claudio. We support faculty member Erik Stern's continuing interdisciplinary collaboration and co-teaching with a professor in physics. Finally, we support the Dance Department's continuing involvement with the ACDA Conference including a possibility of co-hosting in collaboration with Westminster College.

G. Results of Previous Program Reviews

We applaud the dance department's proactive response to previous program reviews resulting in the creation of a strategic plan, a two-year dance degree, and improvement in dance assessment measures and reporting. We recommend continuing improvement in scheduling of courses and credit allocation for more efficient graduation timeline and student retention.