

Consultative Visit

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
Department of Theatre Arts and Dance
Dance Division

Lorelei Bayne, Professor and Chair
Dance

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DISCLAIMER

This visit was informal in nature and not officially linked to The National Association of Schools of Dance, however, Professors Rago and Vaca are acutely aware of the NASD standards for accreditation and have been asked to consider these standards when assessing the Dance Program at CSUS. Furthermore, Professor Vaca served as Chair at CSULB for 7 years and is acutely of the standards and practices regarding the management of a Dance Program in the CSU System. Professor Rago is an official NASD Site Visitor and can speak to the standards and practices of the institution in regards to possible future application for accreditation. This document will mirror an official NASD Visitors Report, but does not serve as one. Lastly, there are many sections of an official NASD response that would have an N/A response, we've chosen to omit these sections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The visiting consultants wish to thank Lorelei Bayne, Department Chair, Michelle Felten, Department Vice-Chair, Amy Wallace, Academic Vice President for Academic Excellence, the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance for a welcome reception and a thorough and well-planned on-site itinerary. We acknowledge all who participated directly and indirectly to our visit, and we hope that this report, as well as all verbal feedback provided, assists the department in all planned growth and development.

1. Purposes

The mission of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, as found on the CSUS.edu website:

The California State University, Sacramento Department of Theatre and Dance provides a broad and thorough foundation of the history, theory, literature and the practice of theatre and dance to students who wish to pursue post graduate studies or join the profession. The Department of Theatre and Dance offers an imaginative and ambitious program of historical and contextual studies supported by studio and production work. Our mission challenges our students to be independent thinkers. Our department provides a collaborative, artistic environment that reflects a richly complex and diverse global perspective complimented by national and international faculty and staff experience.

Fosters student-learning to advance critically-thinking, creative and collaborative artists.

Provides students a strong and diverse educational experience that prepares them to engage communities, cultures, and disciplines through various creative processes and performance styles.

Values its dedicated faculty, staff, students and diverse program curricula that together enrich the creation of high-quality performances.

Accredited by the ***National Association of Schools of Theatre*** (NAST) & ***Institutional Members of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival*** (KCACTF)

Institutional Members of the ***American College Dance Association*** (ACDA), ***International Association of Blacks in Dance*** (IABD), and the ***National Dance Educators Organization*** (NDEO)

The Dance Program does not appear to have a dedicated mission statement at this time, however, many “mission worthy” statements are found in the *Professionalism for Dance Artists* document. It would be advisable that leadership in dance begin working on a dance specific mission statement that captures the spirit of what the program is striving to achieve on behalf of dance majors, minors and general population students interested in dance. This document would serve the program in many ways, first and foremost in framing discussion for all dance-related decisions and actions.

One flyer offered to the visitors contains the following statement:

The Bachelor of Arts in Dance offers intensive training in the areas of:
Dance technique in Modern, Ballet, Jazz, Tap, African-Caribbean Dance,
Mexican Folklorico Dance
Dance Improvisation
Choreography
Dance Theory and Criticism
Dance History and Culture
Creative Dance for Children

The visitors were not able to observe teaching and learning in all of these areas, however, based on what we did see and conversations we had with full and part-time faculty and staff, we believe that both the broader mission of the department and the more narrow definition of what the Bachelor of Arts offers students is being met. There is always room to grow and strengthen the program (these areas for improvement will be captured throughout the document). By being open to this style of consultative visit, dance leadership and supporting administration prove their dedication to improvement.

2. Size and Scope

The Dance Program appears to have sufficient enrollment, faculty, staff, advanced courses and performances to support the stated objectives of the degree offered. However, there is currently a gap in technical support for performances which could lead to a reduction in opportunities for students to get stage time and there are opportunities for growth in several other areas.

For a relatively small department of dance (based upon the number of dance majors), the Sac State Dance Program has a somewhat rigorous production schedule. The tenured/tenure-track faculty are extremely generous in the time they give to creative work on campus, though that may be required in the pursuit of tenure (unclear to visiting team). With recent retirements in technical theater, the visiting team is concerned about maintaining the organization/management of productions and the professional standards of said productions without replacing retired faculty. As both members of the visiting team have been department chairs in stand-alone departments of dance, we both understand the importance of having experienced professionals/educators in these types of positions. Piecing together a production team with part-time staff and/or faculty places greater workload on remaining full-time technical theater staff/faculty in order to compensate for overall management, student training, and cohesion amongst the team. In a Department of Theatre and Dance, this would be exacerbated as the Department wisely utilizes technical theater staff/faculty for both Theatre and Dance productions.

3. **Finances**

The visiting consultants did not visit Finances in depth.

4. **Governance and Administration**

There is an overall sense of effective governance and administration with the Chair having a long history with the institution. The system of appointing the Chair from Dance concurrent to a Co-Chair from Theatre Arts (and vice versa) is an effective model for having administrative representation from both units. The flow of communication seems strong and there were no reports of any individual stating that communication is an issue.

5. **Faculty and Staff**

Faculty

The dance faculty is made up of qualified individuals with appropriate educational preparation and professional experience. Though the visiting team was not able to observe many faculty members teach while on campus, faculty members observed were knowledgeable, energetic, and skilled at creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for the diverse population of students observed in classes. Full-time faculty (tenured and tenure-track) were observed in more casual encounters with dance students, additionally, and were observed to be supportive, humorous, and empowering. It is obvious that the dance majors are very fond of their faculty.

The faculty is commended for their engagement in the dance community of Sacramento. Dance alumni have many opportunities to stay involved in dance through the Department, and this allows the faculty to be very in tune to alumni from the past 15 years. Faculty are also engaged with national organizations and regularly take their dance students to regional American College Dance Association conferences.

Lecture classes observed, taught by Professor Flickinger (DNCE 131) and Lecturer Siebert (DNCE 130), were enrolled to capacity, with a population largely made up of non-majors. There was adequate space for every student in class and the high enrollment in these courses indicates that the Department is serving the students of CSUS strongly in general education. In fact, enrollments are high in all GE courses offered in Dance as indicated by the Spring 2019 Theatre and Dance Workload Report, a testament to the faculty teaching these courses.

Enrollments are not as high across the board in technique courses, as indicated by the Workload Report. While enrollments seem quite appropriate for upper-division technique courses, allowing more advanced students to have more instructional support from each of their instructors, enrollments in lower-division technique classes could generate greater FTES if more populated with students. Exploring scheduling opportunities for early

morning and late-afternoon lower-division technique courses could possibly bring more students to these classes. Additionally, creating lower-division general education courses in various genres of dance that engage students in the practice and theory of each form could prove advantageous in generating FTES in a CSU university with its large emphasis on general education. There are experienced faculty already on board who could teach such GE courses in forms such as jazz, contemporary/modern dance, hip hop, and Afro-Caribbean dance.

Staff

The staff of Theatre and Dance are a highly experienced and credentialed group of professionals. The staff clearly expressed their dedication to their work and the students of the Department as they have strong direct engagement with the majors. As is the case in all arts performance departments, the staff work very closely with faculty for production planning and realization. Their work is excellent and contributes greatly to the professional nature of the program.

There is great concern amongst the staff regarding the previously mentioned loss of two technical theater faculty positions due to retirement. In a system that has very clear and specific policies regarding accruing overtime and how and when that overtime may be used for time away from the job, the staff are justifiably concerned. Hiring part-time faculty and staff to cover the work of a single missing faculty line may look like an even trade on paper, but rarely compensates for the time necessary to create continuity, tackle infrastructure improvements, and ensure a space dedicated to safety and accommodation.

6. Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety

There appears to be three dedicated dance studio spaces.

Shasta 132 is a dance studio equipped with all the necessary dance studio needs. The floor is well sprung, but tapers toward one end which may inhibit some aspects of a traditional dance technique course, specifically dance passages that travel across the floor.

Solano 1010 is a dance studio/dance theatre convertible space that serves its purposes well for technique classes. It is also more than adequate as a performance space from an audience point of view, however it lacks effective dressing room space and has no bathrooms. Both of these issues are out of compliance with NASD Standards. Similarly, there is no covered space for lobby for the audience who are not in the theatre. While not an NASD standard, being from Sacramento, both visitors have concerns about inclement weather during a performance run.

Yosemite 187 is a very large, rectangular open space that appears ideal for large dance classes. However, the floor is not sprung and is a very hard surface which raises health and safety issues for students and faculty who work there.

Shasta 240 is an adequate classroom style teaching and learning space equipped with all the current technology necessary.

7. **Library and Learning Resources**

The evaluators paid no formal visit to the library or other learning resource spaces.

8. **Published Materials and Website**

All available published materials and the CSUS Website in general, and the Theatre Arts and Dance pages specifically, appear accessible, informational and thorough. As of June 2019, the Theatre and Dance website appears to be under construction. Issues to keep a watchful eye on include:

- Utilizing the capabilities of the Department's home page to greater effect. Currently, the Music Department has four large blocks (instead of two) on its home page, more items in the Main Menu, and is utilizing more effectively the ability to create "Links of Interest" (titled "Campus Services" on the Theatre & Dance page)
- The link to the "Explore Our Degree Opportunities" currently links to the Design Department
- Faculty and Staff information page (Meet Us) currently has no linked bios or photographs
- Inclusion of more photography on Department pages will draw more attention to the program from a recruitment standpoint
- A link to the mission of the Program (once created) and the mission of the College

9. **Programs, Degrees, and Curricula**

The Department Program offers both a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and a Bachelor of Arts in Dance. Also offered are minors in both subjects and Musical Theatre. It appears that the curricula for both the Bachelor of Arts in Dance and the Dance minor are comprehensive and challenge students to engage in experiences outside of their known norms and comfort zones. The required and elective courses are well-rounded and offer both breadth and depth. It is advisable that advanced and high intermediate level courses, specifically in the areas of technique, composition and improvisation, are consistently numbered to reflect their level.

Many of the technique courses in dance are two unit courses, and meet twice a week for 1 hour, 15 minutes. The lone exception appears to be Afro-Caribbean dance, a three-unit course that meets twice a week for 1 hour, 50 minutes (including break). While the variety of technique courses brings breadth to the students' education, there could be greater time in other technique classes at the upper-division level in order for students to achieve the

higher-level practice necessary for professional work and/or graduate study. While it may not be possible to change courses to three units quickly, a one-unit Friday session could be added each semester that connects to the study of a particular technical form that allows dance majors more time to achieve advanced study in technique.

Students mentioned wishing that there could be a through-line and connection to Music for Dance, Improvisation, and Composition courses. They felt that Music for Dance would have greater resonance if taken earlier in the program than they had experienced it. Music for Dance could also act as a prerequisite for Composition. Additionally, there could be projects that bring students from these courses together for collaboration.

While there is a variety of upper-division courses in dance studies, most of which also count toward General Education requirements, there is only one pedagogical course in the program (Creative Dance for Children). The faculty could broaden the students' understanding of pedagogy by creating pedagogy courses in modern/contemporary dance, ballet, Afro-Caribbean dance, and/or jazz dance (or create a course that combines two or more of these genres).

The program could also better serve students graduating with degrees in dance by including a professional preparation course that serves as a physical manifestation of their education while at CSUS, while serving as a bridge for graduating students between the life of a university dance major and the life of an aspiring professional dance artist. The course could also include preparing for study on the graduate level.

There appears to be an opportunity to re-design the Dance Minor in order to give students more than one way in which they could fulfill requirements. By creating an option within the Minor that emphasizes technical training with fewer production and composition courses, you might attract students wishing to maintain physical fitness and explore various dance genres through physical participation. This could be done easily by reorganizing the options (Physical practice, Compositional exploration, Dance Performance/Pedagogy) within your "menu", still encouraging students to have upper-division and GE courses however they choose their coursework.

10. Dance Unit Evaluations, Planning and Projections

The current Chair of Theatre and Dance is commended for stepping up to lead the Department through a philosophy of inclusion and transparency. She is well-received by faculty, staff, and students, and has the confidence of the Dean. She is encouraged to create time for faculty, staff, and trusted students to dialog regarding the goals and possibilities of the Department and the Program of Dance, in particular.

As mentioned previously, the faculty are encouraged to create a mission statement for the Dance Program that encompasses the projected outcomes for students and the philosophies through which these goals are achieved. Additionally, this will allow students to gain a better understanding of the potential for their work and education through the lens of dance while

at Sac State. The faculty might find it informative and helpful to create a simple survey of alumni of the program in order to gain perspective regarding the elements of the program that have proven to be the most important and pragmatic. This engagement with alumni, both of the dance degree and the former physical education degree, could also prove exciting and useful when promoting events, introducing graduating seniors to the community, and creating possible scholarship development.

11. **Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program**

(Listed in no particular order)

1. Strengths

- Students display thoughtful and well-constructed compositional work;
- Students are articulate in sharing their inspirations, triumphs, and challenges;
- Dedicated and professional faculty and staff;
- Opportunity for university students to minor in Dance and Musical Theater;
- Harmonious melding of experienced full-time and part-time dance faculty;
- Dance Program engages with recent alumni in order to maintain high professional levels in concerts;
- On-campus performance opportunities for dance majors

2. Recommendations for Short-term Improvement

- Work with the Dean to replace retired faculty lines in technical theater through national searches;
- Collaborate with the Department of Kinesiology in order for dance majors to access athletic trainers or physical therapists on a regularly scheduled timeframe;
- Explore opportunities for allowing greater time in technical training for dance majors;
- Explore scheduling opportunities in the early morning (7:30 am or 8 am start time) or late afternoon for non-major, lower-division technique courses to work toward higher FTES and enrollment;
- Engage more directly with alumni to provide more low-cost master classes and guest lecture opportunities;
- Create a professional preparation course for graduating seniors that could also, perhaps, serve as an opportunity for students to informally present work off-campus;
- Work with University facilities in order to improve the dance floor in Yosemite 187;
- Create a more accommodating approach to utilizing shared spaces in Solano and Shasta Halls as dressing spaces while working with facilities to solve the larger issue of restroom access in Solano Hall 1010;
- Create opportunity for faculty, staff, students, and alumni to dialog regarding the vision and mission of the Department

3. Opportunities—not necessarily based upon issues or comments presented to Visiting Team

- Widening the choices for technical study in the BA, largely to include Hip Hop as a genre that fulfills major requirements;
- Create lower-division general education courses in various dance genres;
- Create one-unit technical training course on Fridays for dance majors to gain greater time in advanced-level study;
- Create pedagogy courses in technical forms;
- Develop series of master classes/guest lectures from Sacramento-area dance alumni;
- Create clear expectations in RTP documents regarding faculty scholarly and creative work that assists non-dance faculty in understanding the importance and quality of the work