

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**DEPARTMENT OF DANCE ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report for the Department of Dance in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa.

**Executive Summary:** The program (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The program received first-time accreditation as an Associate Member for the maximum five-year period through the end of the 2014-2015 academic year subject to submitting a progress report in August 2010. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan objective (1.1) to “offer high-quality programs through ongoing program improvement for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and non-degree students and special school students.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of Programs.** The Department of Dance offers two undergraduate programs and one graduate program. The *Bachelor of Arts Program* is designed for students who want to acquire a strong liberal arts and sciences background while pursuing a comprehensive undergraduate dance education. The program stresses performance and choreography as well as dance theory, including dance history, dance kinesiology, and dance production.

The *Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) Program* emphasizes choreography and performance through an additional 25 semester hours of choreography, performance, and technique. Students may be admitted to the BFA program after they have completed a minimum of 30 semester hours and show academic and professional promise.

The *Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Program* offers a choice of a choreography or performance track. The MFA provides an intense focus in the areas of performance and choreography in both theory and practice.

- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD).
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Department of Dance contained the responses to the appropriate standards required by the accrediting body, including basic criteria for membership; purposes and operations; dance program components; undergraduate programs in dance; admission to undergraduate study; graduate programs in dance; tuition policies; preparation of faculty members; program facilities and equipment; and admission to graduate study.

- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In March 2008, the visiting team determined that the Department of Dance had met all curricular standards and a substantial portion of all other NASD standards. The team recommended that the institution provide clarification regarding eight standards. In addition, the team identified six recommendations for short-term improvement beyond threshold compliance; five primary future issues; and constructive suggestions for long-term development.
  
- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ☑ “Excellent teaching and high quality mentorship are evident in all degree programs.”
  - ☑ “The department provides students with many opportunities to choreograph, present work, and perform.”
  - ☑ “Students in the undergraduate degree benefit from a strong core of general education requirements in the liberal arts and sciences.”
  - ☑ “Resources for faculty development are considerable. The dance faculty members employ these resources to engage in creative projects and scholarly research that amplifies their contributions to the program and the field while bringing visibility to the university.”
  - ☑ “Upgrades of a new resilient floor to the largest Halsey Dance Studio and the new resilient floor, Marley flooring and production equipment allocations for the Space Place Theatre are significant improvements that bring those facilities much closer to providing a high quality working environment for the program.”
  
- ◇ Standards Requiring Clarification. (University responses are in italics.)
  - ☑ “It is not clear how the Master of Fine Arts in Dance meets the standard requiring that ‘one-half of the credits required for graduate degrees must be in courses intended for graduate students only.’ In addition, in specific instances in which graduate students and undergraduate students are enrolled in a single course with both graduate and undergraduate designation or number, it is not clear how degree intensity, rigor, and expectations of graduate level work are being addressed in course syllabi.”

*In the University of Iowa MFA Dance curriculum, at least ‘one-half of the credits required for graduate degrees must be in courses intended for graduate students only.’ Within the 60 semester hour MFA degree, at least 30 credits are taken in courses intended for graduate students only, or, in a few occasions, in co-convened advanced-level courses. In addition, all graduate students take between 12 and 15 semester hours of electives at the graduate level both in the Dance Department and across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.*

*The syllabi submitted to the Commission for Graduate Dance Kinesiology and Graduate Dance History were revised based on the Commission’s suggestions and now reflect the policy regarding ‘degree intensity, rigor, and expectations of graduate-level work.’ These newly revised graduate-level courses were offered beginning in Spring 2009. The department has submitted all the course syllabi for graduate courses as requested.*

- ☑ “The Commission notes the significant progress made by the institution to bring the BFA in Dance into compliance with the NASD standards, and that these changes are currently being reviewed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty governance bodies. The Commission requests confirmation from the institution when the proposal to modify the BFA has been approved.”

*The new BFA curriculum, as proposed to the NASD Commission, has been approved by the University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is being implemented at present.*

- ☑ “It is unclear how the BFA students are achieving ‘the highest level of technical skill’ and the ‘highest possible level of conceptual understanding of the medium and its expressive possibilities’ when technique levels III and IV are combined. The Commission requests additional information regarding how the institution is providing BFA students with progressively more intensive study throughout the degree program leading to advanced level competency. The Commission requests a description of technical proficiency standards for each area of technical study for each level of technique.”

*The department implemented two changes to address the Commission’s concerns about BFA competencies. The first mandates that Ballet Level III and Modern Level IV, the most challenging dance technique courses, be offered exclusively (not combined) at least three times per week. In 2009-2010, Ballet III will be offered four times per week and Modern IV three times per week. The department has also changed the BFA curriculum to mandate that all students take a minimum of three semesters (rather than two semesters) in either Ballet III or Modern IV with a grade of B- or higher.*

- ☑ “It is unclear how Master of Fine Arts students are achieving professional competence in the area of technique when technique levels III and IV are combined. The Commission requests additional information regarding how the institution is providing advanced-level technique study for Master of Fine Arts students.”

*The department implemented the change noted above – Ballet III and Modern Level IV will be offered exclusively at least three times per week.*

- ☑ “The Commission noted several concerns regarding the size and scope of the programs offered in relation to the resources available to support these programs. These concerns appear to be interrelated within the larger context of the dance unit, and the Commission requests additional information regarding the institution’s efforts to ensure that there are adequate faculty resources and facilities to meet the needs of the undergraduate and graduate programs. The institution is asked to respond to efforts to address the impact on current faculty workloads as a result of the impending loss of the Visiting Assistant Professor faculty line.”

*There has been no impact on faculty workloads due to the loss of the Visiting Assistant Professor faculty line. The majority of the courses taught by this person were General Education courses. Many of these are now being taught by a Visiting Adjunct Professor. The others are taught by faculty within their normal workload rotation.*

- “The institution is asked to respond to efforts initiated by the dance unit to establish optimal enrollment goals for the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Master of Fine Arts programs, the impact of implementing a selective admissions policy for undergraduate students, and how this policy is assisting the dance unit in achieving appropriate enrollments.”

*The department is still in the process of attaining optimal enrollment goals for the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts programs. The selective admissions policy has been implemented the past two recruiting seasons, with the second entering class arriving in Fall 2009. The number of majors has decreased as was anticipated and it is expected to continue to do so. Master of Fine Arts applications and enrollment are steady and of appropriate size.*

- “The institution is asked to respond to an analysis of administrative tasks that may be re-assigned to support staff (department secretary and administrative staff in the Performing Arts Division) and steps taken to balance faculty workloads.”

*Beginning in August 2009, distribution of certain faculty service assignments will be modified. In the past, there was some duplication of effort on various tasks (such as directing the annual concert season and directing Dances in Company); only one faculty member will head such areas in the future. Faculty teaching assignments are now more evenly divided, with each faculty member teaching between 9-11 hours per semester.*

- “The institution is asked to respond to continuing enrollment management and class scheduling efforts to maintain acceptable enrollments for the size capacities of the dance studios.”

*Addressing the problem of course over-enrollments and studio crowding, we have implemented caps on all studio courses in line with NASD recommendations for size capacities. These caps are in effect for Fall 2009.*

- “The Commission requests additional information regarding efforts to ensure that the dance executive has sufficient time to carry out the duties and responsibilities related to providing leadership for the dance unit. In addition, the Commission requests information regarding plans to ensure continuity of leadership when the current dance executive returns to full-time teaching.”

*In January 2009, the director of the Division of Performing Arts and Chair of the Theatre Arts Department, began serving as Interim DEO for the Department of Dance and will continue in that capacity through May 2010 when a new DEO, chosen from the department, will be named. During this period, the Interim DEO is working with the faculty and staff to address the Commission’s concern by (1) mentoring at least two faculty members who may serve as DEO in the future; (2) developing new procedures for working with the Production Unit so that the department mistrust of the Unit, which has resulted in poor communication and duplication of effort, is reduced to zero; (3) developing internal policies that limit and guide rehearsal time to protect both students and faculty from over-commitment; (4) delegating more authority to faculty members so the department becomes less dependent on the DEO; (5) working with the new department stage manager to take on some of the responsibilities previously handled by the DEO; (6) modeling a different kind of approach to the position, in which nearly all responsibilities (not counting teaching) can be completed in two days each week.*

- ☑ “The Commission requests additional information regarding efforts to resolve the ventilation problems in the Space Place Theatre and in the Gym and Loft studio Halsey Hall.”

*After the NASD team’s visit, the University completed a detailed examination of all facilities for Dance and Music. The report recommended that new air handling be installed in Space Place Theatre and Halsey Hall. In May 2008, the University was in the process of deciding to complete the improvements or to seek new facilities for Dance. However, the flood of June 2008 resulted in extensive damage to the majority of the arts campus.*

*Although Dance was not damaged, funds that might have been used to improve Space Place or Halsey Hall must be diverted to the more pressing priorities of Music, Art, and Theatre. Furthermore, there is the possibility that Dance will move from Halsey Hall and Space Place to a new or re-purposed facility on the arts campus. Therefore, discussion of improved ventilation in both buildings has been put on hold until long-term decisions are made about the recovery of the University as whole, the arts campus in particular, and the place Dance will take in both.*

*In the meantime, some improvements have occurred. In Summer 2009, new windows were installed in Halsey Hall at a cost of about \$1 million. They will improve temperature control throughout the building. Space Place received more than \$100,000 for new sound and video equipment. Additional ceiling and wall fans will be installed for the comfort of dancers and audiences.*

*Air conditioning is required if Space Place is to be the long-term production home of the Dance Department. However, only the months of September and June tend to have ventilation problems. Only one concert is scheduled during that period and few classes are held in Space Place at any time.*

*The University is committed to improving studio and production facilities for the Dance Department. However, there are other arts priorities for the time being.*

◇ Primary future issues identified by the Visiting Team.

- ☑ “The impending change of leadership in the Dance Department is an immediate and significant concern. Continued strong leadership will be essential for the continued growth of this excellent program.”
- ☑ “An additional faculty line (to cover the responsibilities of the Visiting Assistant Professor) will be needed to sustain the quality and scope of the undergraduate and graduate curriculum.”
- ☑ “A review and discussion among appropriate upper administration officials about salaries of the Dance DEO and Full Professors in relation to equity within the division, university and field is recommended.”
- ☑ “If it is found not logistically viable for the Administrative Staff of the Performing Arts Division to take on enough of the day-to-day administrative load of the department to eliminate overload issues of faculty and the Secretary, a plan to provide additional administrative support such as an additional secretary will be necessary to prevent faculty member burnout and sustain department quality.”

- “The University of Iowa Foundation is effective and impressively successful in raising funds for the university. The visiting team concurs with the Self-Study about the importance of the Dance Department working with the Foundation to establish fundraising strategies for scholarships and other departmental initiatives.”
  
- ◇ Accreditation Status. In October 2008, the National Association of Schools of Dance awarded accreditation to the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Dance at the University of Iowa as an Associate Member for a five-year period through the 2014-2015 academic year. The University must submit a progress on the items listed below by August 2010.
  - “The Commission notes that the process of selective admissions appears to be mitigating excessive enrollments. In light of this development, the Commission requests a report on current enrollments in each of the degree programs, as well as an indication of optimal/target enrollments for the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Master of Fine Arts degrees.”
  - “The Commission notes that the practice of establishing enrollment caps on courses was implemented in Fall 2009 and requests a report addressing the impact of this policy on students’ ability to register for required courses and complete relevant degree requirements in a timely manner.”
  - “The Commission requests a status report on the interim chair’s efforts to redefine the administrative responsibilities within the department, as well as the appointment of a new dance executive following the conclusion of the interim chair’s term in May 2010.”