

**Skidmore College Dance Department
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
Year Two Progress Report (2021–2022)**

OVERARCHING DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

Based on the education and training completed in AY 2020-2021 the following goals have guided and will continue to guide the work of the Dance Department moving into the future:

- 1. Create a more welcoming and inclusive departmental climate for all students**
- 2. Develop more diverse course offerings taught by a diverse faculty/staff**
- 3. Invest in more inclusive curriculum that will help support and develop more inclusive student scholarship**
- 4. Actively engage in continued anti-racist and DEIA education**

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIONS

Course Offerings

During fall 2021, the Dance Department offered several courses in African diasporic forms: DA 217: Hip Hop & Urban Dance, DA 312: Jazz Dance II, and DA 313: Tap II. In spring 2022, the department offered DA 213: Tap I, DA 217: Hip Hop & Urban Dance, and DA 312: Jazz Dance II, and included two workshops in diasporic forms (detailed below under Performance Workshops).

One significant step towards the department's stated goal of investing in more inclusive curriculum came in the development of a second section of Hip Hop & Urban Dance. In the spring of 2022, Visiting Artist in Residence, Hettie Barnhill, working with Associate Professor and Department Chair, Sarah DiPasquale, successfully passed a new course offering (DA 321: Hip Hop & Urban Dance II) through the college's Curriculum Committee. DA 321 will be offered for the first time this coming fall. This marks an official addition to our curriculum and signifies investment in multiple levels of non-western forms to facilitate student progress, skill development, growth, and mastery in non-Western forms. The Dance Department is now able to regularly offer multiple sections of Hip Hop & Urban Dance, Jazz Dance, and Tap. Further, due to overwhelming demand during registration for Hip Hop & Urban Dance I, fall 2022 will now have two sections of DA 217. In addition to three sections of Hip Hop & Urban Dance, the department will also offer two sections of Jazz Dance (I & II), Tap I, and we are particularly excited to offer a cross-listed course with the Music Department: West African Drumming and Dance.

Course Revisions

The Dance Department successfully passed a substantial revision of DA 101: The Dance Experience through the college's Curriculum Committee. DA 101— a popular course that fulfills the all-college requirement of Artistic Inquiry Through Practice—previously included only an introduction to the forms of ballet and modern dance. Recognizing that this did not constitute a “dance experience” and served to perpetuate a Eurocentric focus of dance in the department, the course now encompasses movement practices and styles that engage students with dance from diverse perspectives. This is an instrumental development in that DA 101 serves as an introduction and gateway to the department for myriad students each year.

Performance Workshops

The department is committed to presenting a diversified performance experience for both students and audiences. In fall 2021, the Guest Artist Performance Workshop featured a new work by the New York City-based choreographer Fredrick Earl Mosely entitled *Rain on Your Head*, featuring 21 dancers. In addition to setting the work, Mr. Mosely and his partner, Clifton Brown, were in residence for two weeks, teaching classes and workshops for the department.

In spring 2022, the Dance Department offered two African diasporic workshops. Tina Fretto created a new work for her Tap Performance Workshop entitled *Sound of Joy, Pursuit of Freedom*, and Hettie Barnhill created *Skin/Disordered* for her Afro-Contemporary Performance Workshop. Additionally, the Guest Artist Performance Workshop featured the Skidmore premiere of Peter Chu's *In Reaction*. Skidmore students were fortunate to have a weekend intensive with Mr. Chu before working with his official stager, Jenni Gordon. In total, the concert provided 95 roles that were performed by 65 Skidmore dancers and engaged a large spectrum of our dance community.

Annual Assessment

In 2021–2022, the Dance Department conducted our annual departmental direct assessment on the DA 230: Dance and Society I curriculum. The goal was to better understand the impact of the curricular redesign of the course on student learning. Two groups of research projects created by students in the course were analyzed: one group selected from Fall 2018 & 2019, prior to the curricular change, and one group selected from Fall 2020 & 2021, after the curricular revisions occurred. From the pool of projects, six were selected as pre-test assessments and six were selected as post-test assessments.

Basing analysis on five central points of criteria, the results demonstrated that the changes implemented in the DA 230 course have indeed enhanced our goals as a department to disrupt the Eurocentric focus of our teaching and present a more culturally diverse and inclusive perspective of dance history. The significant improvements in the intercultural competency seen in the post-test student projects suggest that the student experience in the DA 230 is supporting them to engage in their understanding of dance from a global and culturally competent perspective. Further, these data also suggests that by diversifying topics and content covered in DA 230, students may be able to find a greater sense of agency in selecting topics for in-depth research projects that were of personal relevance and interest. This was demonstrated by the considerable increase in diversity and range of topics shown in the post-test data. As students are also asked to present their research to the class, this may in turn further increase student cultural competency as well as overall student learning of dance with its many rich traditions and histories. This assessment directly relates to the department's overarching goal to invest in more inclusive curriculum that will help support and develop more inclusive student research.

Faculty Lines

As of spring 2022, the Dance Department has not yet been granted permission to begin search processes for replacing vacant Tenure-Track and Artist in Residence lines formerly held by recently retired faculty. It is our hope and assumption that there will be progress on this in AY 2022–2023. In the meantime, our temporary Visiting Artist in Residence position has been renewed for AY 2022–2023, as well as two Visiting Assistant Professor positions.

Continued DEIA Education and Training

During spring of 2022, the Chair of the Dance Department joined a campus-wide initiative, the Racial Justice Learning Community, which met weekly for the Spring semester, resulting in new collaboration between the library archivist and the Dance Department. In addition, the Associate Chair of the department participated in a workshop and training for department chairs and program directors focusing on using DEIA as a guiding principle to better understand, assess, and facilitate meaningful dialogue in inter-departmental conflict resolution strategies.

Accessibility

The Dance Department is working with a local physical therapist to bring physical therapy appointments and treatment back on campus in Fall 2022. The goal of this initiative is to provide accessible dance-specific medical care for students in the department. The Dance Department is committed to providing support to make this important and critical care available to all students.

Communication

In spring 2021, the Dance Department implemented a monthly departmental newsletter. These monthly newsletters have become an instrumental means of reaching the broader student community and improving communication, and they continue to be posted on the department website and shared on social media. In addition, the newsletter includes a section written by the Student Committee which has helped facilitate a greater understanding of student needs as well as provided a visible student presence in departmental function.

Additionally, the department continued to facilitate a bi-annual “Chat with the Chair” event: one during fall semester and one during spring. These events offer a casual open forum for students to engage in conversation with departmental leadership about questions or concerns they may have and provide an opportunity to inquire about departmental events, curriculum, policies, and procedures.

Collaboration with the Student Committee

The Skidmore Dance Department is committed to a continued collaborative relationship with the Student Committee. As outlined in the Student Committee policies and procedures (Appendix I), committee representatives are invited to join the departmental meeting once per month and work alongside the Chair on departmental agenda items. This year, the committee collaborated with the department to identify all-gendered changing spaces for students in the Williamson Sports Center. They also engaged in community building and outreach on campus by supporting a student-led Irish Step workshop and a student-led Indian Classical Dance Workshop as well as organizing the Arts Quad Party and presenting movement workshops for community.

Community Outreach

Dance students have been offering community dance classes through independent studies throughout the 21-22 academic year. Two students were able to offer in person dance classes at the Saratoga Bridges facilities twice per week throughout the Fall 2021 semester. Due to COVID restrictions, these classes moved into a virtual format for the Spring 2022 semester. Further, three students engaged in a virtual dance class for older adults which ran in both the Fall and Spring semester this year, culminating in a virtual performance both semesters.

In addition to the community outreach off campus, dance students were able to offer a variety of dance experiences to children in the Skidmore community. In Spring 2022, dancers performed excerpts of Paquita in the dance theater for children at Skidmore’s Early Childhood Center (ECC) and Greenberg Childcare Center. Dance students also offered a series of three dance workshops to the afternoon Pre-K class at the ECC in the Spring of 2022. We aim to continue these community outreach programs throughout AY ’22-23.

Because of staffing shortages at the Saratoga Bridges facilities, we were not able to offer the Bridges to Skidmore course in AY ’21-22 and do not anticipate offering it in AY ’22-23. However, preliminary conversations are underway to offer this course the following year.

APPENDIX I

SKIDMORE COLLEGE DANCE DEPARTMENT Student Committee Policies and Procedures

Developed 1/8/21

Accepted by Faculty/Staff 2/5/21

Revised 2/16/21

Accepted by Student Committee 3/12/21

MEMBERSHIP

The student committee serves as an important liaison between the student body and the dance faculty. The committee will be comprised of five student representatives appointed by the faculty/staff based on their academic standing, history of leadership, and engagement in the department. A call for nominations will be sent in the Spring semester to appoint a committee each Fall. Members of the committee must be currently engaged in matriculated academic coursework within the department and will be appointed for a maximum of a 2-year term. Committee members will typically be declared dance majors but may also include 1st and 2nd year students intending to declare a major in dance. Each academic year, the committee will elect a Chair and if desired, a Co-Chair, to lead the group in its work. Sub-committees and subsequent committee Chairs may also be appointed by the student committee (IE: Outreach Committee, Health and Wellness Committee, etc.).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The student committee is expected to engage in communication with the student body of the dance department. Ideally, this is done through regular meetings that support an open and productive dialogue between students. The student committee is responsible for gaining the perspective and being inclusive of all members of the dance department. As such, if students have solicited and collected ‘data’ on a topic, it is expected that these data be aggregated and presented in a cohesive and formal manner to the faculty/staff.

MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATION

The Skidmore Dance Committee will meet on a regular basis as determined by its members. Student committee meetings should be formally documented through meeting notes and filed for future committees to access if needed. Additionally, meetings between the student committee and the student body should be held on a regular basis and documented as such.

Each month, no more than two representatives of the committee will be invited to join the faculty/staff for 30-45 minutes during regularly scheduled department meetings to bring forward a formal agenda on behalf of the student body. Department meeting days/times will fluctuate each semester but are generally scheduled on Friday mornings. Meeting dates/times will be shared with the Student Committee Chair at the beginning of each semester. The student meeting agenda must be shared in writing with the Chair of the Dance Department no later than the end of day (5pm) on the Wednesday prior to the meeting date. The department Chair will also share the faculty/staff agenda for the student committee with the student representatives at this time. If no agenda or communication is shared by either party, it will be assumed that the committee will not be attending and the meeting will be canceled. Please see “Ground Rules’ below for policies to support an open and productive dialogue during meetings.

Communication between the student committee and faculty/staff will happen during monthly meetings as described above. If more immediate communication is required, a student representative will bring forward the

information to the Chair and Associate Chair who will then share the information with the faculty/staff and/or involved parties as needed. Any immediate communication between the student committee and the Chair must be done in writing. While individual students are always invited and welcome to obtain information, mentorship, advise from any faculty/staff member within the department, official communication between the committee and department must come through the above described channels. The student committee will be invited to write a 'news and notes' section in the monthly department newsletter in order to share events and other reports from the committee.

The Student Committee may not utilize a departmental listserv to communicate with the student body at any time. If communication with the full dance community is required (IE: sharing an event listing, community forum, etc.) the student committee may send the announcement to the department Chair who will determine if and when the announcement will be sent to the community. Additionally, it is understood that meetings and information from the student committee (including information shared during faculty/staff meetings) will be dispersed through formal institutional channels and/or student committee meetings – not through social media platforms.

**Student infractions of the above policies and procedures are taken seriously and may lead to a suspension of the student committee.*

Ground Rules for both Student and Student/Faculty/Staff Meetings

- We will respect and include all voices. If possible, we will use the "raise hand" or "chat" feature to comment or ask questions.
- We will not interrupt. We will focus on listening as well as speaking.
- We will speak from our own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
- We will respect the privacy of others – individuals' comments and perspectives shared during this meeting should remain with those whom the storyteller has chosen to share. You are encouraged to implement the lessons learned from others' experiences.