

# STUDENT LEARNING DATA

## OVERVIEW

Following a successful Fall semester in which students enjoyed multiple performance opportunities and were engaged in a minimum of 5 hours per day of physical practice, the rapid shift to remote learning during 2019/20, in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, was particularly unsettling for dancers. This is a discipline whose pedagogy operates predominantly through physical practice, makes use of tactile feedback, and relies on the co-construction of knowledge in socio-somatic form. Losing all access to dance studios--the primary resource necessary for effective learning and teaching in Dance--was exceedingly challenging for students. It was impossible to continue their work without severe disruption and immense limitations placed on how they could learn and what they could achieve. Nonetheless, candidates for the BFA in Dance were able to complete their Capstone projects (an evening of choreography and performance at the Cornish Playhouse) and all of their written coursework such that a review of student achievement in relation to our Program Outcomes was possible for both semesters. There was strong evidence of exceptional work at every level in relation to mastery of dance technique, and in relation to professional practices (including the skills required for technical production in dance).

## CLOSING EQUITY GAPS

In common with many dance programs, entry requirements for the BFA in Dance at Cornish College of the Arts have included an assessment of a student's proficiency in ballet, even though the program does not seek to train dancers for the ballet field. The requirement to demonstrate prior learning and a degree of proficiency in this particular style of dance serves to exclude students who may not have wanted to study ballet or who have not had the opportunity to take classes in this form. Further, proficiency in ballet upon entrance was not an indicator of subsequent success in achieving the program's learning outcomes. For 2020/21 we have removed the requirement for students to show their skills and their prior learning specifically in this eurocentric dance form. Rather, candidates must submit a solo in any genre of their choice alongside a short improvisation. In this way, we hope to include more dancers from different training backgrounds who have an interest in creative process and anatomically-aware technique training.

## CONTINUOUS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

During 2019/20 Dance faculty turned their attention to teaching and learning pertaining to student achievement of Program Outcomes A: Integrate mastery of a range of dance techniques in service of creative enquiry as performers and choreographers; B: Synthesize their personal research with key transferable skills in relation to projects in the dance field, culture industries, and wider professional world; D: Implement advanced professional practice strategies as appropriate to the dance field and wider world; and E: Articulate the complex cultural, historical, social, and economic contexts that shape, and are shaped by, dance practices. Our data showed that although graduates were consistently achieving at or very close to a level of expected proficiency in these areas, the articulation of the outcomes themselves made them hard to assess. Through Spring semester, having noted this deficiency in the Fall, we created clearer language and a sharper focus for our program outcomes that could be more readily understood by students, instructors, and other stakeholders. We tried to ensure that program outcomes directly reflect the values and intentions of the program and amended our model program where there may have been insufficient coursework to support achievement of these goals. These PLOs will come into effect Fall 2020 and we will continue to assess how well they serve our work in tracking student achievement.

## HIGH IMPACT TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

A considerable number of curricular, co-curricular and extra curricular activities constitute high impact learning activities for dance students. For example, they work in teams to create film projects for their Screendance class, they undertake all the planning and producing for the student-adjudicated student choreography showcase Terpsichore's Landing, and they collaborate with musicians, contributing to their peers Cornerstone and Capstone recitals. Each of these activities furthers student learning across a host of our Program Learning Outcomes. A case in point is New Moves, a faculty-adjudicated showcase of student choreography that is produced at a professional theater venue in downtown Seattle. Students in the dance department serve as choreographers, performers, and technical production crew under the direction of faculty. This event closely replicates experiences students would expect to have in the professional world and the public nature of the performance sharpens student motivation in relation to each of the learning outcomes that are addressed. The only program outcome that is not included in the preparation and execution of New Moves is Program Outcome E: Articulate the complex cultural, historical, social, and economic contexts that shape, and are shaped by, dance practices. However, in future we foresee ways in which this too might be folded in such that this high impact learning activity can serve to address the all facets of student learning in the BFA.