

Program Review

Executive Summary

Kathleen Cassity, Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Western Oregon University: Department of Dance (Creative Arts Division)

Majors Reviewed:

- *Dance*

Minors Reviewed:

- *Dance:*

Dates of Program Review: Academic Year 2016-17
External Reviewer Visit: Spring 2017

Date of Executive Summary: June 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: DEPARTMENT OF DANCE (CREATIVE ARTS)

The Dance Department conducted a formal program review during the 2016-17 academic year under the direction of Mr. Tim Cowart, Visiting Associate Professor of Dance, who also served as external reviewer. The report was authored by Tim Cowart and submitted to the Dance Department. The incoming Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) joined the University in August 2017. In the Fall 2017 term, the LAS Dean met with the tenure-track Dance faculty members, Darryl Thomas and Sharon Oberst, to discuss the report and review the curricular changes being implemented as a result of the program review. Also during the time between that meeting and this executive summary, Sharon Oberst retired and Tim Cowart joined the Dance faculty permanently as her replacement. Tim Cowart will return to Western Oregon University as a tenure-track Associate Professor at WOU in Fall 2019 and will assume the administrative responsibilities for the Dance program previously undertaken by Sharon Oberst.

The program review emphasized the following programmatic strengths:

- Track record of continual improvement, including development of course goals and alignment; physical facility improvements; development of wellness program; transfer articulations; new logo and marketing efforts
- Distinguishing characteristics that sets it apart from competitor programs in region
- Strong and effective faculty, both tenured and non-tenure track
- Innovative partnership with Rainbow Dance Theatre
- Effective and inclusive dance curriculum
- Strong, innovative approach to student mentorship
- Excellent student scholarship support
- Innovative use of technology and multimedia
- Emphasis on wellness and sciences
- Strong engagement with surrounding community

The following challenges were identified:

- Need for more robust recruiting efforts
- Heavy faculty work load
- Enrollment challenges
- Lack of clarity in relationship between Dance program and Rainbow Dance Theatre
- Limited student performance opportunities
- Inadequate facilities
- Weaknesses on web site, particularly with regard to poor search engine utilization
- Some inconsistencies in course syllabi
- Excessive and unnecessarily complex credit requirements for graduation
- Potential loss of administrative capacity after expected Oberst retirement

The following opportunities for improvement were suggested:

- Consider using a studio exchange dance day to enhance recruitment efforts
- Engage more vigorously with high school admissions counselors, college fairs, local community colleges, WOU's own Admissions Office, and campus advising
- Motivate additional students to become Dance minors by only allowing Dance majors to audit dance courses

- Use Dance 251 (Introduction to Dance) more effectively as an intra-campus recruiting mechanism
- Use work-study students to assist with some non-sensitive, non-teaching duties
- Define and formalize the relationship with Rainbow Dance Theatre
- Develop dance performance ensembles
- Add another dance studio
- Engage in the Master Planning process so that Dance program needs are considered in upcoming discussions, particularly as they relate to the performing arts
- Engage in systematic web site, branding and marketing improvements, in conjunction with MARCOM
- Consider starting a Dance program blog
- Work to make syllabi more consistent
- Revise curriculum to facilitate smoother pathways to degree completion
- Add specific concentrations to the curriculum
- Revise the Dance minor to make it more accessible
- Replace Sharon Oberst, after she retires, with an incoming Dance professor who has administrative capability

As a result of the program review, the Dance program immediately began working on the suggested opportunities for improvement, particularly with regard to curriculum. An entire curricular overhaul was submitted and approved during the 2017-18 academic year, immediately following submission of the program review, and is now firmly in place. An innovative team-taught First Year Seminar in dance and technology will be co-taught with Computer Science faculty during the 2019-20 academic year. Thus, numerous initiatives are already underway or fully in place. All of these are outlined in the Implementation Matrix below.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

New Program-Driven Initiatives	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway (Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Revise curriculum to add new concentrations and career focuses	X		
Clarify and formalize relationship between Rainbow Dance and the WOU Dance Program by producing legal agreements	X		
Reduce total number of credits required in Dance major	X		
Contribute to new Gen Ed program	X		
Bring total required credits into alignment with WOU's 30-60-90 initiative	X		
Increase number of online and hybrid course offerings, where appropriate	X		

Coordinate syllabi for clarity and consistency	X		
Engage in more vigorous marketing and recruiting efforts, including web site improvements, in conjunction with MARCOM		X (Will be ongoing)	
Hire incoming new faculty member with administrative expertise	X		
Revise Dance minor to make it more accessible	X		
Increase interactions with potential recruiting partners, both on and off campus	X		
Develop Dance performance ensembles			X – start Fall 2019
Delegate non-sensitive tasks to work study students		X (Will be ongoing)	
Start a Dance program blog			X – start Fall 2020
Use Intro to Dance more consciously as a recruitment tool			X – start Fall 2019
Engage in Master Planning process, with hope of adding a dance studio in the future		X (Will be ongoing)	
Plan a studio exchange day to use as recruiting tool			X – start Fall 2019

Continuation of Ongoing Effectiveness	Completed/Ongoing	Underway Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Maintain focus on health and wellness	X		
Deliver strong annual dance performances	X		
Continue with community engagement efforts	X		
Continue emphasis on technology and multimedia	X		
Continue to deliver multiple high-impact practices and high-quality student mentoring	X		
Engage enthusiastically with annual Academic Excellence Showcase and PURE	X		
Continue emphasis on continual improvement in all areas	X		

Continue to work on developing smooth transfer pathways and building community college partnerships	X		
Monitor success of new curriculum and engage in programmatic assessment and improvement	X		
Continue to engage in robust recruitment efforts	X		
LAS Dean Recommendations	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Emphasize and articulate the value of the Dance degree in advising and marketing documents, web site and other relevant venues		X (Will be ongoing)	
Track post-graduation outcomes more closely and engage more robustly with successful Dance alumni, publicizing alumni successes and potentially using alumni as mentors		X (Will be ongoing)	
Improve web site as well as marketing materials; engage in more robust publicity and marketing efforts		X (Will be ongoing)	
Continue to develop courses that may be of interest to non-dancers, including hybrid, online and Salem delivery modes		X (Will be ongoing)	

The Dance Program is pleased to report that, as the above matrix demonstrates, almost all of the identified opportunities for improvement are already in place or substantially underway. As she enters retirement, we would like to acknowledge and publicly appreciate the considerable contributions of Sharon Oberst to building, developing and continually improving this innovative program. The addition of Timothy Cowart to the tenure-track Dance faculty will allow the program to continue to build on the excellent foundation that already exists, and provides an excellent opportunity to take the program in new and exciting directions.