

Dance MFA

Develop Professional Level Of Expertise In Dance

Goal Description:

MFA in Dance candidates will demonstrate knowledge base and skills commensurate with professional careers in dance.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Breadth Of Knowledge In The Field

Learning Objective Description:

MFA graduates will have a solid understanding of dance technique, choreography, production, and history, and will be able to write and speak from that informed perspective.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Comprehensive Exam

Indicator Description:

Students will be given a choice of topics to research relevant to all aspects of study that the student has experienced in the program. A passing grade on the comprehensive examination will serve as an indicator that a Dance MFA candidate has acquired a breadth of knowledge in the field of dance. Additionally, the students' ability to express themselves critically and at a standard commensurate to the profession will be demonstrated.

Criterion Description:

As demonstration that the Dance graduate program is successful in preparing students for the written comprehensive examination, at least 90% of students will pass the exam at the first sitting or upon retaking it. We observed last year that students were not as comfortable expressing themselves orally as they are with dance. Thus, we believe this exercise is beneficial to develop and extend oral expression.

Findings Description:

All students were required to do oral rather than written comps. As expected, most were not articulate in their responses. Initial responses were lacking in detail and did not adequately address the topic. Faculty coached responses.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

increase opportunities for oral expression

Action Description:

Several ideas for giving students more opportunities to develop competence in oral expression include:

--Identify courses in which more oral discussion can occur, and require oral participation as a grade component.

--In already scheduled end of semester oral reviews with the MFA candidates, increase focus on student responding to questions raised by faculty. Encourage students to expand on responses, or to restate.

--Set a higher standard in feedback sessions and other meetings for the student to articulate better.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Choreographic Skill

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate excellence in creating extended choreographic works, employing effective tools of composition to create well-crafted original statements in movement.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Evaluation Of Required Choreographic Work

Indicator Description:

Required Choreographic Work is evaluated on common standards of choreographic effectiveness as shown in attached rubric. These choreographic evaluations take place within the three required MFA choreography courses in (DNC 5676,5378, and 5380). Instructors judge student work as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory or Excellent. Extensive, qualitative, face-to-face feedback is also given.

Criterion Description:

100% of students will be judged to have at least Satisfactory proficiency in choreography, indicated by a final grade of B for a course.
75% will be judged to have Excellent profficiency.

Findings Description:

100% of students produced work deemed "acceptable" or "outstanding".

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Bridge competency in choreography classes to higher level of achievement in thesis concert

Action Description:

Our students' body of choreographic works developed in courses is generally stronger than that which is presented in the thesis concerts. For the thesis, students develop a longer, cohesive evening that both answers the thesis proposal as well as stands alone as a concert for public performance. Realizing the need for more frequent feedback within the creative process, the department scheduled thesis showings throughout the semester this year. These scheduled showings ensured for the first time that the full committee could be present. They should have ensured as well that students had progressed more with their choreography, but that did not happen as much as it should have. In the fall, thesis committee chairs will emphasize strongly to their students a timeline for completion of drafts of their concert.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Presentation & Evaluation Of Thesis Concert

Indicator Description:

As the culmination of the creative thesis, students develop and present an extended original choreographic work. The process, from proposal through performance, is mentored by members of the thesis committee. The thesis presentation will be assessed on the following points: the choreography is informed by student's research; the choreography stands on its own as a work of art; the performance reflects effective directing by the student.

Criterion Description:

100% of MFA Thesis projects will be assessed by Thesis Committee to meet standards for choreographic effectiveness. (In addition, Students who meet the standard for acceptable choreographic production will receive a passing score for that portion of DANC 6099, Thesis II.)

Findings Description:

In 2015-16, all four MFA candidates successfully passed the choreographic element of their thesis projects.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

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Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Having received approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies, the department will require the oral presentation as part of the thesis project, and eliminate the bound thesis. The new model will provide more authentic preparation for the careers our students will likely pursue.

Creative elements our students are increasingly interested in are the incorporation of technologies including video and lighting design embedded in the choreograhic process. The department ran a Collaborative Process course as a special topic in the spring of 2014. The course will be proposed in the next curriculum cycle. As our students gain experience in these technologies, we anticipate a shift in the creative projects our students create, and a related opportunity for the curriculum to shift.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

The new thesis process was implemented as planned. Four students completed the thesis, submitting a review of literature and reflection paper along with presentations of their theses in an oral public forum, with power point presentations. The faculty were very pleased with many aspects of this new process. Students remain responsible for a thesis proposal and significant academic writing in the literature review and reflection papers. The added elements of the lecture and power point presentation demonstrated skills needed as potential college faculty; students' performance in this presentation gave them "rehearsal" for the kind of lecture/presentation they would likely need for an interview for a college position, and gave the committee the chance to give feedback. A large bonus for us was that the process is no longer tied to the university's deadlines for the traditional thesis, which did not coordinate well with the creative and production schedules needed for our students' projects. With more time at the end of the term to prepare the reflection papers and oral presentation, students were able to produce more substantial work; similarly, thesis chairs and committee members were able to mentor more effectively. As faculty become more accustomed to the new process, we are confident that we have created a multi-faceted final project that serves our students well, and reflects well on the master of fine arts education they have completed.

As anticipated, more of our graduate students are incorporating technology in their choreography. Another special topics course in dance and film was taught this year. We have not yet submitted course proposals for additional technology and dance, or dance and film. Our ability to offer these courses is contingent on faculty. The graduate courses, as well as undergraduate courses in dance and technology, have been taught by a visiting assistant professor whose three year contract ends in spring of 2017. Continuing these courses, let alone successful expansion and implementation of dance technology in the curriculum, requires continuity of this position in some form, whether that be renewal of that contract or a new tenure track position. Consensus of the faculty that potential new faculty lines should be allotted towards this goal is necessary as well.

Plan for AY17

Closing Summary:

[Actions to Guide AY17](#)

1. Bridge competency in choreography classes to higher level of achievement in thesis concert

Enforce schedule already designated in the dance calendar for regular showings of work in progress, as done in 2015-16. Graduate faculty may discuss whether it is appropriate to define guidelines for each showing, such as having minimum of 50% choreographed for first showing; second showing reflecting feedback from the committee; third showing should be complete. There should also be a discussion of the potential that the committee may decide that additional showings are required, and that a concert date may be re-scheduled if it is determined that the choreography is not ready for performance.

2. Increase opportunities for oral expression

--Identify courses in which more oral discussion can occur, and require oral participation as a grade component.

--In already scheduled end of semester oral reviews with the MFA candidates, increase focus on student responding to questions raised by faculty. Encourage students to expand on responses, or to restate when their responses are not adequate.

--Set a higher standard in feedback sessions and other meetings for the student to verbally articulate better.

3. Consider recommendation from external review of the MFA program conducted in spring 2016:

more research and academic writing. Academic writing is occurring within classes, but is not comprehensively formalized in either the course description nor in syllabi. we will consider whether we need to make our research expectations more explicit, and whether we are providing sufficient opportunities for students to strengthen their writing skills.