5. Program Effectiveness – Outcomes Assessment

5.1 Learning outcomes assessment procedures

The School of Dance being in its third year, we have just started developing learning outcomes assessments. We have met with the Office of Undergraduate Studies -- Learning Outcomes Assessment. We started the process of redesigning our overall Learning Outcome Assessment Plan. You can find our outdated and cumbersome Expected Learning Outcomes here. We currently did not have enough time as a faculty to update them, decide on what evidence to collect, identify the collection and analysis process of the evidence collected and establish a timeline for assessment and reporting.

We got as far as having a conversation about Expected Learning Outcomes for each program. Below is what the Executive Committee came up with as a starting place for a discussion with the whole faculty:

Ballet MFA Program

End Goal: Define a personal refined point of view as an artist/scholar
1. Develop the skills necessary for a career in dance (technique, choreography, teaching)
2. Gain knowledge about the breadth of the dance field and one’s place within it
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills around aesthetics, dance science, and history

Modern Dance MFA Program

End goal: Prepares the artists/scholars for self-defined careers as leaders in the field
1. Develop the skills necessary for a career in dance (technique, choreography, teaching)
2. Gain knowledge about the breadth of the dance field and one’s place within it
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills around aesthetics, dance science, and history

Ballet BFA Program

End goal: Create an informed Professional Dancer capable of changing the field
1. Develop the skills necessary for a career in dance (technique, choreography, teaching)
2. Gain knowledge about the breadth of the dance field and one’s place within it
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills around aesthetics, dance science, and history
Modern Dance BFA Program

End goal: Create an artist

1. Develop the skills necessary for a career in dance (technique, choreography, teaching)
2. Gain knowledge about the breadth of the dance field and one’s place within it
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills around aesthetics, dance science, and history

The next step for us is to create a list of all our classes and outline their connections to these ELOs. We have still to do the work of deciding on what we will collect and how (and when) we will analyze the evidence. We also have to decide on an organizational pathway in terms of who (or what committee) is responsible for conducting the assessment and then writing the report to direct possible change in the future.

We keep in mind that both programs are always involved in a process of self-reflection and change. The School of Dance is looking to honor the balance between honoring traditions and a willingness to change and adapt to the times. The School regularly assesses its effectiveness in preparing students for future careers in the profession, and this includes careful examination of the curriculum in terms of sequence, content and delivery of information. The School uses multiple means to assess effectiveness which include: weekly faculty meetings, bi-annual faculty retreats, an annual graduate survey by the Associate Director for Graduate Studies (new this academic year), student course evaluations, exit interviews between the Director and graduating students (undergraduate and graduate), one-on-one faculty/student conferences, and dialogue between SAC representatives and the Director.

Exit interviews happen in person and online through Survey Monkey and include student feedback on:

1. What expectations and interests brought you to join the School of Dance and how did what we offer meet or not meet those expectations?
2. Do we do what we say, and say what we do as a School of Dance in your specific program:
   a. Modern Dance Mission: “The mission of the Modern Dance Program is to promote student and faculty growth as professional dance artists, critical inquirers, and community members. The program is dedicated to contributing to the growth of the discipline of dance through research, teaching, and service of the highest caliber. Igniting the imagination of this dance community propels the Modern Dance Program toward excellence, creativity, collaboration, and innovation.”
b. Ballet Program Mission: "The Mission of the Department of Ballet is to prepare students for a variety of professional opportunities in the field of Ballet and related dance forms. The Department provides a comprehensive curriculum with training in technique, pedagogy, critical thinking, creative process, and creative and scholarly research culminating in a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) Degree. The School also offers a wide array of performance opportunities for our students.

3. How was your experience in the School in terms of the following: Advising
4. How was your experience in the School of Dance in terms of the following: Interactions with Faculty
5. How was your experience in the School of Dance in terms of the following: Interactions with Office Staff
6. Please rate the quality of the facilities: Studios
7. Please rate the quality of the facilities: Classrooms
8. Please rate the quality of the facilities: Theatre
9. Please rate the quality of the facilities: AV Support
10. Please rate the quality of the facilities: Building in General
11. Academic/Curricular Life: What was your most valuable experience?
12. Academic/Curricular Life: What was your least valuable experience?
13. Academic/Curricular Life: Was the curriculum balanced and integrated enough for your interests?
14. Academic/Curricular Life: What was missing in your experience in your program, or what would you have liked more of?
15. Academic/Curricular Life: Was there too much emphasis or time spent in a particular area?
16. Academic/Curricular Life: Was the curriculum too prescribed for you?
17. Academic/Curricular Life: What would you change in the curriculum?
18. Academic/Curricular Life: What feedback do you have for us as far as the sequence of the curriculum?
19. Academic/Curricular Life: What feedback do you have about the content of the curriculum?
20. In your opinion, do you feel prepared for the profession in how you wish to identify yourself?
21. Did you have ample performance opportunities?
22. Did you have ample choreographic opportunities?
23. What are your suggestions for improving the program?
24. What was the prime reason for choosing to come to the University of Utah School of Dance?
25. How integrated was your experience within the School of Dance, the College of Fine Arts and the University?
26. Please give us a general grade

Faculty retreats deal with all areas of assessment including recruitment (quality and profile of current and targeted students), retention of students, diversity, currency of curriculum, strategic goals and related concerns. Retreats result in both the development of philosophical beliefs, strategic plans and concrete actionable items.
5.2 Outcomes assessment feedback

Unfortunately, we do not yet have a complete feedback loop (from ELO to Report) established to allow such feedback to be implemented.

The online Exit Survey tool is relatively new. Students are much more open talking to the Director one on one than filling out a survey. Making sure the students can trust the process has been an uphill climb. Those who answered (too few statistically) hinted at issues the faculty were sometimes aware of, but sometimes not. Hopefully, a proper learning outcomes feedback system will help with this.

In the past couple of years, with the School being so new student-driven change has mostly come from discussions with the Student Advisory Committee, where issues are brought up either in the group or with the leaders and change is then initiated. Such changes have included a new attendance policy, the reworking of public events such as Halloween and Pau Hana, tweaks to the audition process, the creation of a trigger warning procedure (in process), the reworking of the mentoring process for freshmen into the Freshmen Seminar class, reworking of the schedule to adapt to student needs, rehearsal scheduling process update, etc.

We are also surveying all graduate students yearly in the Fall semester to monitor their experience and allow for change during their academic careers. In the last survey it became apparent that our advertising of the funding model for Teaching Assistantships was not matching the new reality of having only three Modern Dance graduate students. It also became apparent that while our grads are okay working in the theater, they feel a strong divided culture between their graduate classes and their experience in working in the theater. This is something we plan on addressing in the near future.

Faculty also have kept an eye on independent study requests as a way of noticing what students are interested in learning that is not covered in the curriculum. The advance music design class was created through this way and so was the Screendance II class.

Learning Outcomes are included in Appendix R.

5.3 Degree completion data

We just recently changed our budget model from an SCH model to an Incentive model where number of Majors (60%), Retention (40%) and Graduation (20%) are now considered in our funding. This new budget model only considers majors and does not count graduate students or minors.
The School of Dance has benefitted from the new Incentive Model funding. In the past, under the SCH model, the Department of Modern Dance was always under pressure to let in more students, develop a minor program and bring in more graduate students. With the new Incentive model, funding for both programs has stabilized, especially as we started to truly count the numbers of Majors, Retention, and Graduation. What you are seeing in the tables below reflects this pressure, the destabilization of the Ballet Department (loss of graduate students) and a sudden bulge increase of students in 2013-14, where all students decided to accept the invitation to join. Once the new model came into effect, the graduate students were no longer considered in the SCH -- only primary undergraduate majors were. This followed a trend from the Graduate School and upper administration to support bringing in graduate teaching assistants at 1FTE.

Figure 6 Modern Dance Major Awarded Count 2008-2018
Figure 7 -- Ballet Major Awarded Count 2008-2018

In 2013-14, the Ballet Program let in too many Freshmen and a “bulge” of students was created that ended with 2017-18 Graduation. The Ballet MFA went on receivership for 5 years while it was being reorganized.
Figure 8 – School of Dance Major Awarded Count 2008-2018

Graduate Student numbers have been reduced so we could offer them 1FTE Teaching Assistantships. No Ballet MFA Students are recorded here as their program cycles every two years. The "bulge" is easily seen here.

Figure 8 shows how graduate student numbers have leveled down to reflect fully funding our TAs. Both MFA programs have equivalent funding to support 3 students. The Ballet MFA Program rotates every two years while the Modern Dance MFA Program recruits graduate students annually. The sharp decrease in numbers on the Modern Dance side since the last Graduate Council review is in line with upper administration’s request to see graduate students be offered 1 FTE Teaching Assistantships and is rippling through our curriculum and graduation rates. The lower numbers are requiring integrated planning between both graduate programs so faculty are not teaching classes
of three students where a lack of critical mass might not foster a sense of community in the classes. A larger class we feel allows for a lively dialogue and exchange of ideas, while still providing individual attention to each student.

See Table 5.1 for graduate degree completion/attrition data.

Table 5.1: Graduate Degree Completion/Attrition Data
School of Dance - 2011-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entering Student Cohort Academic Year</th>
<th>Number of students newly enrolled in master’s program</th>
<th>Number of students in cohort who left before completing master’s degree</th>
<th>Number of students in cohort who completed master’s degree</th>
<th>Average time to complete master’s degree</th>
<th>Number of students in cohort remaining in graduate programs</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2011-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2012-13</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Employment

We saw a lot of confusion in the joining of both former departments into a School of Dance. One of these issues was the accidental deletion of a webpage that contained a list of former students and their dance employment records. This list was compiled over years by a faculty member and is now lost to us. In something as ephemeral as dance employment, where graduates may frequently move from job to job and location to location, and the lack of staff resources to track this
information, such efforts continue to prove difficult. It remains a goal of the School to improve its tracking efforts.

Graduates from the School have found employment throughout the profession on the regional, national and international level as teachers in the public schools and universities, performers in dance companies, choreographers, arts administrators, and dance scholars, to name a few. Populations served include a broad spectrum, from dance professionals to those with special needs, at-risk children and underserved communities. The diversity of careers pursued by our graduates speaks well of the depth and breadth of their education in the School. Graduates are highly marketable and prepared for multiple areas of employment in the profession and beyond. Students who have received BFAs from the University of Utah frequently go on to receive MFAs in dance or advanced degrees in other fields. We encourage our BFA graduates to get their MFAs at other institutions in order to widen their educational experience. BFA graduates are also encouraged to garner professional experience before returning to school to begin their MFA studies and even more so with the Ballet MFA Program, where we are looking to attract a returning professional wishing to gain significant experience teaching in academia.

The School increasingly relies on email and social media to stay in touch with our alumni; however, e-mail addresses constantly change. The School also uses its email newsletter to stay in touch. Since its creation, the School has hosted one major alumni event (Professor Lane retirement) to celebrate a beloved faculty member and also bring alumni back to campus. We are about to do the same during Spring 2019 for Professor Koester. The College of Fine Arts annually honors distinguished alumni to be honored in a College-wide event. All alumni are always welcome to visit the School, perhaps to take a class, teach a class or meet with current students.

Some of our graduates become medical doctors, while others have gone on to become certified yoga instructors, social workers, physical therapists, arts advocates, and lighting/theater designers, to name but a few. They bring to these other professions valuable assets gained through their dance studies, such as physical and social empathy, discipline, self-motivation, creative and critical thinking, etc., which allow them to excel.

See Appendix S for more information about Graduate Employment.