

## RECOMMENDATION TO CREATE A DEPARTMENT OF DANCE IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### Dance as a Discipline

Dance began to emerge as a distinct artistic field during the 1920s in conjunction with the development of American modern dance, which built upon the innovations of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis during the first twenty years of the century and was driven by the artistic and pedagogical advances of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Ted Shawn, and Charles Weidman. By the 1960s, dance was fully recognized as a field in the arts: when the National Endowment for the Arts was founded in 1965, dance was among the six active programs first established. Within institutions of higher education, it then began to develop as an arts performance discipline and was housed within arts divisions of universities and colleges.

At present among Big Ten institutions, dance is an independent arts department in four: University of Illinois, University of Iowa, University of Michigan, and Ohio State University. These represent some of the strongest dance departments within the United States. The University of Minnesota has a Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, and Purdue includes dance as one of the four divisions in its School of Visual and Performing Arts. Michigan State University and Northwestern University house dance within their respective departments of theatre. At Indiana University, the Contemporary Dance Program resides in the Department of Kinesiology, and Penn State University offers only a minor in dance through the Department of Exercise and Sport Science.

### History of UW Madison Dance Program

Margaret H'Doubler, as an instructor in the UW-Madison's Department of Physical Education for Women starting in the 1910s, had the progressive vision to recognize the value of dance as a cultural, artistic, and physical activity. Emphasizing dance as both emotional expression and scientific description, H'Doubler worked with the UW School of Education to establish not only the first dance classes on campus but also in 1926 the first degree-granting academic program of dance within an American institution of higher learning. Since that time, alumni of the UW-Madison Dance Program have gone on to establish and chair some of the best dance departments in America. Most notably, in 1940 Betty Hayes became the first director of modern dance at the University of Utah, currently the nation's premiere dance department. Dance at Utah has proven so strong that it has established both a Department of Modern Dance and a Department of Ballet.

During its first forty years within the Department of Physical Education for Women, the dance curriculum at UW-Madison concentrated on dance education. In the 1960s, however, its emphasis gradually shifted from training teachers to training artists. In order to underscore and support this development, a performance and choreography option was established for undergraduates. Similarly, a master of fine arts degree was added in 1964 to complement the education-focused master's program that had been in existence since the 1920s. Finally, a doctorate program in dance was developed.

In the 1970s, the Department of Physical Education for Women and the Department of Physical Education for Men were joined to create the Department of Physical Education and Dance. This department and the Department of Therapeutic Science merged into the newly established Department of Kinesiology in 1992. In the years leading up to this restructuring, the Dance Program faced a number of difficult challenges including decline in enrollments and the complexity of breaking up the Department of Physical Education. In 1988, a moratorium was placed on the admission of new students to the Dance Program. In the 1990s, the Dance Program reinstated its bachelor of science curriculum and successfully initiated a bachelor of fine arts curriculum. Following these developments, dance has effectively achieved a new sense of purpose and promise which honor the program's long unique history at UW-Madison while focusing forcefully on the future of dance education and particularly contemporary movement-based art.

(continued)

In 1992 when the University Academic Planning Council, Faculty Senate, and board of regents approved the placement of the Dance Program within kinesiology, they conceived of the arrangement as transitional; they approved the placement with the explicit understanding that dance would become an independent department over the next few years. However, the Dance Program today continues to be housed within kinesiology. The dance faculty who were hired prior to 1992 experienced strong historical ties to earlier incarnations of the program; the last of these faculty members retired in 2006.

The Dance Program underwent a ten-year outside review in 2005. One of the committee's primary recommendations was that dance establish itself as a department in order to secure proper national recognition and thorough control over its growth. Status as an independent department will bring dance's formal position in line with its current function as an academic entity of creative practice and scholarship with emphasis on modern or contemporary dance art. As suggested by the university's understanding when the Department of Kinesiology was established, the recommendation from the review committee joined a chorus of results from internal or self studies, campus-wide evaluations, and national reviews, all of which promote the creation of a dance department at the UW-Madison. The current senior faculty concur wholeheartedly. In a 22 September 2009 meeting, the dance executive committee unanimously supported a motion to pursue departmental status for dance. The executive committee seeks departmental status at present in part because dance has recently acquired four new faculty members, all of whom—like the current senior faculty—have developed within dance either as a field of arts performance or arts scholarship. Importantly, the new members of the dance faculty are working as a strong team both amongst themselves and in combination with existing senior faculty.

The Dance Program at UW-Madison is larger and stronger than many other dance departments within American higher education. Nevertheless, its status as a program marks it as somehow inferior and mitigates the quality of its performance and accomplishments, including its historical importance as the first degree-granting program in the country. Establishment of dance as a department will more accurately reflect its strength, thereby promoting healthy growth through recruitment of strong new students and retention of existing faculty.

In addition to advocating a shift to departmental status, the Dance Program's ten-year review in 2005 recommended that it pursue accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Negotiating the NASD evaluation process as a department will substantially increase the likelihood of successful accreditation, which will further strengthen recruitment of new faculty and students as well as retention of existing faculty.

### **Dance Program within Kinesiology**

Throughout most of the twentieth century, a significant overlap existed between dance and physical education, with regards not only to the respective disciplines but also to their administration, structural needs, and facility requirements. This has changed dramatically over the last 25 to 30 years. As noted above, when the Department of Kinesiology was established in 1992, the university expected that dance soon would break off as an independent department. This expectation primarily grew out of the ever-widening gap between dance as a discipline of the arts and kinesiology as an increasingly scientific and quantitative field with specializations such as exercise physiology, biomechanics, epidemiology, and motor control. Although that separation has not yet been effected formally, since the early 1990s the Dance Program has functioned as an independent "department-like body" exerting full control over its facilities, budget, administrative structure, operations, and curriculum. At present, the only function in which dance and kinesiology interact is voting on the promotion of faculty. The shared faculty governance between kinesiology and dance results in organizational inefficiency, and faculty members from both

(continued)

disciplines have expressed discomfort about the process. The expertise and professional experience of individuals in one discipline are not immediately pertinent to the other, making it difficult for faculty members of one discipline to review or evaluate promotions in the other. The discrepancy is best demonstrated by the fact that the two disciplines reside in different faculty divisions within the university: dance is evaluated through the arts and humanities division whereas faculty in kinesiology are evaluated through the divisions of social studies, physical sciences, and biology—every division except arts and humanities. Additionally, dance and kinesiology are housed on opposite ends of campus.

At its 16 October 2009 faculty meeting, the Department of Kinesiology moved unanimously to support the establishment of dance as an independent department. The separation of dance and kinesiology involves only one primary change: each department will gain full control over faculty governance. The faculties of both dance and kinesiology agree that this is a change very much for the better. The separation of these two entities, then, will have a small but beneficial practical impact within the university. However, the symbolic impact for dance will be tremendous. Its residence within kinesiology associates it with a thoroughly outmoded conception of the discipline as a subset of physical education. Formal recognition as an independent department of creative practice and arts scholarship will significantly improve recruitment, retention, and the national status of dance at UW-Madison.

### **Other Campus Endorsements**

The Arts Institute approved the proposal to create a new Department of Dance on 25 January 2010; the School of Education Academic Planning Council approved it on 3 March 2010; and finally the University Academic Planning Council approved it on 18 March 2010. The proposal has also received favorable reaction from the arts and humanities divisional committee. It is now presented to the Faculty Senate for discussion.