

**THE SANTA MONICA COLLEGE
COMMERCIAL DANCE CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 21, 2024 MEETING**

The second annual Commercial Dance Certificate of Achievement Advisory Board meeting was held on October, 21, 2024 on Zoom. Mark Tomasic, Department Chair at 6:00pm PST called the meeting to order. Mark Tomasic welcomed the nine members who were in attendance.

- I. **ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cherice Barton, Colette Brandenburg, Karen Chuang, Diana Delcambre, Monica Moe Mulvany, Joel Smith, Jessica Trachtenberg, Emily Wanserski, Dana Wilson

- II. **INTERESTED PARTIES PRESENT:** Marissa Osato Moreno (Faculty), Mark Tomasic (*Chair*)

- III. **PROGRAM REPORTS:**
 - A. Mark Tomasic shared that the SMC Dance Department class fill rate in Fall 2024 is up to 77% which is an increase from previous years, and our overall enrollments are about the same as prior years (~630 students).
 - B. Marissa Osato Moreno reported that in our first year offering the Commercial Dance Certificate of Achievement, we had 3 graduates in Spring 2024 who completed industry internships with prominent dance companies and non-profit organizations LA Follies, Versastyle LA, Culture Shock LA.
 - C. Moreno shared that she received the SMC Foundation Chairs of Excellence \$15,000 grant to support our Commercial Dance program, including guest artist workshops, industry auditions, field trips to performances, and artist-in-residence programs.

- IV. **DISCUSSION: Expanding outreach and recruitment for our commercial dance programs**
 - A. Tomasic and Moreno shared information about the Dance Department's High School Dance Days and on campus workshops. They asked the Board for outreach and recruitment suggestions to expand the program's visibility.
 1. Colette Brandenburg suggested they connect with Boston Conservatory's Commercial Dance program which does student tours to LA. Cherice Barton had set a piece at Boston Conservatory which will premiere in LA January 2025 with agents present.
 2. Emily Wanserski suggested that the Certificate/A.S. could serve the population that used to do the EDGE PAC Scholarship program and that amping up social media outreach and visibility is key.
 3. Dee Delcambre suggested sending posters to all local high schools with performing arts programs, and publishing an advertisement page in Dance Magazine's "Guide for College" issue. She also suggested getting involved with Steps on Broadway's Q&A college night.
 4. Cherice Barton shared that her 2016 Axis Connect program was created to connect recent grads to industry leaders. She had 70 dancers participate because of social media marketing with well known names attached to it along with career attachment opportunities. She suggested paying to increase the Department's social media marketing and especially highlighting internship opportunities.

5. Karen Chuang suggested advertising at local and national dance conventions like Hollywood Vibe who often have college Q&A panels at their events.
6. Joel Smith suggested using guest artist funds from Moreno's Chairs of Excellence grant for dance filmmaker workshops in which students could garner Dance Department content that teaches them practical skills *and* promotes our program. He suggested Nathan Kim as a videographer. A follow-up suggestion was made to invite social media influencers to collaborate on a master class and create content to promote the department. Another class assignment suggestion was for current students to create video content from a first person SMC student perspective, such as vlogging "a day in the life at SMC" to increase digital engagement with our program.
7. Monica Mulvaney emphasized advertising the low cost of SMC classes, such as including "\$3/class" on printed promotional materials to capture the local LA/OC dance community and international dancer community.
8. Delcambre encouraged more frequent high school visits with classes/Q&As not just to local SMMUSD schools, but performing arts high schools across the greater LA/OC region. She suggested targeting charter performing arts high schools with dance conservatories, which are mostly populated with first generation students often in lower income neighborhoods such as [Renaissance Arts](#) in Eagle Rock or [CHAMPS Charter High School of the Arts](#) in Van Nuys. She underscored that in the LA area, these middle and high school students are attracted to the low cost and accessibility of community college as opposed to four-year universities. Another suggestion was made to reach out to pre-professional non-profit dance companies found here: <https://regionaldanceamerica.org/pacific/>. Cherice Barton who recently choreographed for OCSA volunteered to connect our department with the new director Nicole Berger.
9. Joel Smith shared that UC Riverside Dance majors enrollment has dropped 30% since the pandemic without showing signs of increases.
10. Delcambre suggested we look into the CA Dept. of Education's Hip Hop Education and Equity Initiative funding. She shared they have an internships grant for \$500,000 but it could potentially be only available for K-12 grades.

V. PROPOSED DEGREE DISCUSSION: A.S. in Commercial Dance

- A. Marissa Moreno shared that Career Education (CE) degrees provide direct college-to-career pathways which appeal to today's high school students who are questioning the value of higher education/four-year institutions. Moreno explained the equity focus behind this pathway.
- B. Discussion on required courses for proposed degree:
 1. Joel Smith underscored that the syllabi for the required courses should reflect the program that they are under i.e. Technique classes derived from Africanist aesthetics should de-center white European dance forms, authors, and choreographers. Smith also brought up the issue of appropriation and monetization of work by Black dancers/choreographers, and encouraged the Dance Dept. faculty to expose these commercial dance students to this discourse and criticality.
 2. The board discussed if Dance 5 Dance History should be a required course like it is for the current AA in Dance, or if there were other ways in which historical knowledge could be embedded in the proposed degree. They agreed that all technique, choreography and performance courses should intentionally embed history into the curriculum. Jessica Trachtenberg suggested inquiring if Dance 5 Dance History could be a recommended course for SMC's History GE requirement.

3. Dana Wilson suggested extracurricular mentorships and observerships with working professionals to allow students to engage with people working on real commercial projects. This would afford students real world knowledge and experience that could not be replicated in a classroom. Wilson gave an example of the observerships that Stage Directors & Choreographers Foundation (SDCF) gives musical theater students. Moreno mentioned that the Dance 90A Dance Internship course requirement does already provide students with these opportunities.
 4. Joel Smith suggested that requiring Modern and Ballet perpetuates the fact that those have historically been the privileged dance forms in higher education. Board members agreed that Ballet and Modern are not key technical forms needed to be successful in commercial dance jobs, and should be optional electives so that students can choose what techniques would be most necessary for their specific artistic focus. The board suggested that there should be six units of required electives in the program that range from Dance 5 (Dance History), Dance 17-29 (Tap and World Dance), Dance 31-34 (Ballet), and Dance 41-44 (Contemporary Modern).
 5. Dee Delcambre offered that the language of the mission in the program narrative should match the requirements in an authentic way i.e. centering Africanist aesthetic forms
 6. Dana Wilson underscored that the key skills for a successful commercial dance career are resiliency, self direction, curiosity and confidence.
- C. Mark Tomasic proposed bringing these revised required courses and electives to be voted on and approved by the Dance Department full-time faculty, and then coming back to the board for an official vote to approve and move this degree proposal forward. All board members unanimously agreed to Mark Tomasic's proposal.

VI. ACTION ITEMS:

- A. Approval of the SMC Dance Department's revised A.S. in Commercial Dance degree proposal:
 1. YEA votes via email on November 16, 2024: Diana Delcambre, Jessica Trachtenberg, Colette Brandenburg, Dana Wilson, Emily Wanserski, Monica Mulvany, Karen Chuang
 2. ABSTENTIONS: Cherice Barton, Joel Smith
- B. **Revised A.S. in Commercial Dance proposal was approved to move forward by seven members of the advisory board.**

Minutes recorded and submitted by Marissa Osato Moreno pending approval.

Meeting adjourned at 7:53pm PST.