



# DANCE

## Full Steam Ahead

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The first time I walked on the Central Connecticut State University campus eighteen years ago as a guest teaching artist and dance professional, I did not realize the turn of events that would lead to calling this place my home. I have covered the globe during my thirty circles around the sun as a performing artist, and I'm happy to have finally found my tribe.

As a new Associate Professor at CCSU, I'm delighted to have the support from the School of Education & Professional Studies, the Department of Physical Education & Human Performance, as well as Dance Education Director and Coordinator, Professor Catherine Fellows. In the early 90's, she took the first steps towards realizing Dance Teacher Certification in Connecticut. This past April, her dream was finally actualized, and I'm honored to bring my experience as a dancer, choreographer, festival producer, and K-12 educator to the table, increasing and enhancing dance education opportunities for future generations by her side.

As Associate Artistic Director with Jennifer Muller/ The Works, a contemporary dance company that has toured 39 countries on four continents and has appeared in theaters from Hong Kong and Tel Aviv to American performances at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and the Museum of Modern Art, I have assisted with the creation of choreographies on New York City Opera and concerts at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. In my own right, I have choreographed for New York Fashion Week and Motorola, and helped update NYC Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance, a set of Art Standards comparable to the National Core Arts Standards. Although these experiences have been magical, nothing has been more exhilarating than standing in a room with 350 dance-certified NYC public school teachers exchanging ideas for measuring student success, lesson plans, and best practices. It's estimated that NYC also has approximate 150 more full-time educators working in the private and charter school programs, outside afterschool dance programming endeavors. Now that New York's prototype for K-12 arts education has proven to be successful, it is time for Connecticut to step to the plate and offer every child the opportunity to engage in a kinesthetic curriculum in which they can express their knowledge through dance. I aim to be standing in a room surrounded by minimally 350 Connecticut certified K-12 dance teachers ten years from now, and I hope you will be in the room to witness it.

William Bennet, former U.S. Secretary of Education, said: "The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic...music, dance, painting, and theater are all keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment." What is stopping us from implementing the STEM into STEAM model and forging ahead on the innovation of education in our state, offering dance an equal place to core content?

As a proponent of education reform, I have a profound understanding of the impact technology can have on students'

academic progress. The jobs of tomorrow will involve technology, and I have seen this value during my time as a secondary school teacher. I also believe it will significantly impact the CCSU dance education majors. Incorporating Digication e-portfolios will positively impact job placement but also enables students to upload their portfolio directly to Pearson's edTPA submission platform for assessment. CCSU's state of the art facilities match my drive for incorporating technology in education. The university's newly named Dr. Antone B. Capitulo Biomechanics Laboratory Classroom allows dance scholars to enhance their dance technique through motion capture technology. Additionally, the new E-Sport Center, where academics, research, and gaming meet, is proving to be the fountainhead of creativity and movement exploration for our dance history scholars and more.

The oldest university in the state is growing fast, and so is the Dance Education Program. CCSU currently offers various options for students interested in the field: a B.S. Ed. in Dance Education enabling teachers to receive PreK-12 certification, cross-endorsement for dance teacher certification, a minor in Dance, and a double major in Dance and Physical Education. The Dance Education program is also finalizing the Entrepreneurship in Dance major program. The two full-time dance faculty members and two adjunct professors are cognizant of our journey in offering the performing arts, and education through dance and movement to all students. As a researcher specializing in the experience of dancing adolescent men, I am eager to close the gender gap in theatrical dance styles, engaging more men in the future. You might recall the recent debate about USA Today's Lara Spencer who mocked 6-year old British Royal Prince George for taking ballet lessons or might be more cognizant of the gender pay gap discussion after the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team victory. As a male dance professional employed in a female-perceived profession, my interest leans towards decreasing the persistent binary thinking prevalent in American culture. We need more male dance educators so that our male teens have the role models they need and deserve to share their passion for the art form fearlessly. For the psychosocial and emotional benefits of dance to reach all of our students - including boys - we unanimously need to celebrate the diversity of our students. Dancing allows our students to go full steam ahead, dream big, and finish their academic journey with a strong future. I hope you can join us on campus this semester for any of our upcoming performances or events. Say hello if you do!

