

**USF Dance Program: Creating a Career in Dance**

When people think about careers in dance, they usually think only about being a performer, choreographer, or a teacher. Dance as an employment possibility (and as a field of academic study) includes many other exciting options as well. While dance is an art form, it is also a field of knowledge with its own history, a study of the body and how it works, a study of how people move and make sense of their lives, and a way for people to relate to and enhance their communities as well as their understanding of their own culture and that of others. In thinking about careers, you don´t need to be making a decision for the rest of your life, and you don´t need to prepare for every possibility while at USF. You can keep learning for the rest of your life, and most people change careers multiple times before they retire. You might end up in a career that doesn´t even exist now, or you might create your own. When you are thinking about career choices, consider what you are good at and also what you love. Don´t forget the resources on campus, including dance faculty advisors and the USF Career Services Center.

Very few dance artists, even the most talented, support themselves full-time, year-round, year-after-year, through their art. Yet, if this is what you feel called to do, we encourage you to pursue your dreams. Free-lance dance artists may work in smaller communities as well larger ones, where they may create their own dance companies, choreograph for a variety of local activities ranging from after school programs, to community theater, and/or work as a community dance artist partially supported by grants. If you choose the life of a free-lance artist, we encourage you to make sure that you maintain some kind of major medical health-care coverage, through an independent agency, or a part-time job that offers this benefit.

A number of our alumni have found that being a Pilates instructor or doing some other form of somatic practice or body work such as massage therapy, helps them develop their body knowledge as well as financial status. Some of our students choose to pursue other training in the summers or immediately after graduation, so they are prepared to earn an income while maintaining the kind of flexible schedule their dance career demands.

Some alumni have found that working in some area of dance administration offers career potential as well as some degree of schedule flexibility, depending on the position. The Department subscribes to *In Dance*, a monthly publication, that lists many dance administrative jobs, and Career Services at USF can be helpful as well. Some positions require specific skills (such as web design and other computer skills), which you can learn while at USF. Some students interested in a long-term career in dance administration (running a dance company or a dance theater, working for an arts council, marketing dance products, public relations for dance, etc.) choose to double major or minor in Business or in Communication Studies at USF. If you are considering this, look at major and minor requirements early in your undergraduate career.

Teaching is a frequent career choice for dance majors. Many students think first about teaching in the kind of studio where they first learned dance. To teach in a studio, it is important to have the appropriate dance skills (including the highest level of technique possible), skills in teaching dance, and knowledge about the needs of children and adolescents (and adult learners, if you plan to teach adults). We highly recommend taking Dance In the Community (CORE F, SL) while at USF.  This pedagogy course will give you the skills to teach people of all ages. Most new alumni initially work for commercial or community-based studios (such as those at Recreation Centers or Y´s) first. Many of these positions are part-time, but there are some full-time positions available as Dance Director of large programs, and these may offer benefits. Students who wish to own their own studios will be running a small business; community colleges offer very low-cost, non-credit courses for owners of small businesses. It often makes the most sense to take these courses close to the time one will be opening a small business, since legal requirements do change over time.

Think that university-level teaching sounds perfect? Such positions are far more competitive, and they require a graduate degree. We recommend an MFA for those who wish to teach studio courses such as technique and choreography, and PhD for those who wish to teach theory courses such as dance history or dance education. Some dancers who continue to study dance at the doctoral level do so not only in dance programs, but also in areas such as American Studies, Performance Studies, Anthropology and Ethnography, and Women´s Studies. These offer expanded employment possibilities, while allowing for continued academic research in dance. We recommend professional experience prior to graduate school, to give you an opportunity to be sure of your area of specialization and to give you the kind of experience to help you become more competitive in a very tight job market.

An increasingly popular career choice for dancers is being a physical therapist for dancers. All of these careers require graduate degrees. If this is your plan, you should take as many of the courses below as possible (selecting the BA degree to have the most room for free electives) and be sure to keep up your grades! (Admission to graduate programs in physical therapy is highly competitive, and most programs require a g.p.a. very close to a 4.0.) All graduate programs in physical therapy require these courses for admission; they are also recommended for graduate programs in athletic training:

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| * General Biology 1 | * Human Anatomy |
| * Human Physiology | * General Chemistry 1 |
| * General Physics 1 | * General Physics 2 |
| * Basic Statistics | * General Psychology |
| * Human Growth & Development |  |

Another career you may have heard about is dance therapy, which is a form of psychotherapy. Dance therapists may work in hospitals, mental health clinics, or in private practices. If you want to learn more, check out the web site of the American Dance Therapy Association at [www.adta.org/](http://www.adta.org/). A dance therapist in San Francisco also may provide opportunities for you to learn more.  Dance therapy also requires a graduate degree; we encourage you to think about having a second major or minor in psychology to prepare for admission to a graduate program in dance therapy, although you should look up requirements of specific programs.

Another way to think about a possible dance career is to think about what else you like to do. If you like to write, you might be interested in being a dance critic or a writer for a dance publication. A second major in English or Communication Studies would be a good choice. Like costuming? Costume design for dancers might interest you; there are opportunities at USF which will help support this career path.  If you find yourself more interested in being offstage than onstage, you might want to take speak with the technical staff, Gabe Maxson, Josh McDermott or David Pangaro, and consider a career as a lighting designer or production manager for dance, or take additional courses in Media Studies to prepare for work in videography for dance. If you love photography, dance photography might be your goal. As technology continues to change the face of dance and the other arts, new careers are likely to develop. And you can add on to this list, thinking about where your skills and your passions lie.

**Jobs in the Field of Dance**

Following is a growing list of jobs many dancers pursue that are in or closely related to the field.

Professional Dancer/Performer

Choreographer

Artistic Director

Arts Administrator

Teacher/ Professor/Educator

Body Worker/Trainer

Movement Analyst

Pilates/Yoga Instructor

Physical Therapist

Writer/Critic

Scholar

Rehearsal Director

Production Assistant/ Stagehand

Designer (Costume, Lighting, Set)

Dance Filmmaker

Dance Videographer/Photographer

Arts Advocate/Organizer

Graphic & Web Designer

Theater Director/ Presenter

Archivist

Many, though not all, of these jobs would require additional schooling, training, or certification after the receipt of your undergraduate degree. Some jobs however, like teaching, arts administration, writing or choreographing can be started either through assistantships, apprenticeships, internships or just by starting on your own. Many students at USF have been connected to these entry level opportunities while still in school, thereby building basic skills and building the solid, and critical relationships necessary to help move forward in their careers.

**Skills You Acquire Through The Receipt Of A Dance Degree**

**At USF That Make You A Desirable Employee**

Dance is a complex and holistically demanding course of study that develops sophisticated skills in many areas. These skills are applicable in dance and non-dance related fields.

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| Discipline | Creativity |
| A strong work ethic | Problem-Solving Skills |
| The ability to follow instruction and take criticism | The ability to work with others |
| Motivation, stamina and well-preserved health | A developed visual and aesthetic point-of-view |
| The ability to connect language with artistic meaning | Critical thinking skills |
| An understanding of anatomy and the relationship between body and mind | The ability to have a vision for a project and realize it to completion |
| The ability to lead and direct | The ability to collaborate |
| The desire for growth and improvement | Resilience |
| Time management | Curiosity and a comfort with process and the unknown |
| An understanding of the relationship between the arts, community and social activism |  |

**Career Support Within The USF Dance Program**

At USF we provide our dance majors and minors with targeted, one-on-one mentorship designed to prepare students for satisfying and successful careers. Following is a list of resources and opportunities we offer students on a yearly basis:

**PROFESSIONALISM SEMINAR**

Every year we offer an intensive **Professionalism Seminar** for our dance juniors and seniors. This workshop provides students with comprehensive and practical information about the range of options available to them after they graduate. Content covered includes:

* + **Graduate School**: To go or not to go? What are the difference between an MA, an MFA, and a PhD? What do these different degrees prepare you for?
  + **Teaching Dance**: What options exist? What additional training might you need?
  + **Dancing Professionally**: What are the realities of dancing professionally? How to audition, prepare a performer’s resume, and care for yourself as a professional performer.
  + **Jobs in the Field of Dance**: What are the possibilities? What does your USF degree prepare you for? What might require additional education?
  + **Resumes vs. CVs**: What’s the difference? How do you create one? When do you use which format?
  + **Self Producing**: Writing grants, artists statements, and press releases/press kits. What skills do you need to produce your own or others’ work?
  + **Relationship-Building:**  An important part of a thriving career in any field is the quality and reach of your professional relationships. How can you cultivate strong, supportive connections that help you grow and thrive?

**INTERNSHIPS/APPRENTICESHIPS/EMPLOYMENT**

Our position within the city of San Francisco enables us to connect students directly to a number of diverse Bay Area artists and arts organizations in the form of internships, apprenticeships, and even employment before they graduate. Our long-standing history of providing local non-profits with smart, effective interns and employees has made our program a desirable pool for recruitment. Following is a short list of local dance companies and organizations our students have worked with as a result of connections made during their four years in the dance program.

CounterPULSE – counterpulse.org

Dancers’ Group – dancersgroup.org

Fresh Meat Productions – freshmeatproductions.org

Shan Yee Poon Ballet School – poonballet.com

The Jewish Community Center, Arts Program – jccsf.org

Rehabilitation Through the Arts, NYC – rta-arts.org

Les Productions Haut-Vol, Montreal, Canada – productionshautvol.com

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts – ybca.org

Flyaway Productions – flyawayproductions.com

Roco Dance and Fitness – rocodance.com

The Garage, Resident Artist Workshop – 715bryant.org

Center for Youth and Elders in the Arts – ceya.ioaging.org

Oregon Shakespeare Festival – osfashland.org

Detour Dance – detourdance.com

**INDEPENDENT STUDY**

Interested juniors and seniors can receive course credit for an independent study dedicated to researching, pursuing, and preparing for career options after graduation. In partnership with their professor/advisor, students will receive attentive mentorship that supports students in developing the skill sets and connections needed to prepare them for their post-graduation transition.