

PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

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In this narrative, I reflect on how my work over the past four years has met the criteria for tenure and promotion to Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance. In short, I have received excellent evaluations from students and administrators for my teaching that is focused on aesthetics, history, criticism, technique, dance-making and mentoring dance minors; have actively produced publications; performed and presented in the field of Dance Studies; and have been involved in service both on campus and in my field.

My CEC mid-course letter indicates that my accomplishments in the area of scholarship were less lucid than in the areas of teaching and service. Dean Cavanaugh addresses this in her letter encouraging the department to recognize the scholarship of a dance artist, and research standards of scholarship for dance at benchmark institutions. At the request of my CEC I researched and presented standards of scholarship at my 2020-2021 CEC meeting; also, I presented an analysis of my performance and choreographic work to advise CEC members of the rigor involved with dance performance and choreography (addressing the question of lucidity). At mid-course, the FEC recommended I incorporate more rigor in my courses. In the short time since my Mid-Course Evaluation, I have addressed and implemented all recommendations from both the CEC and the FEC. At my most recent evaluation meeting, my CEC voted unanimously that I have achieved the expectations of a candidate for promotion and tenure.

Rollins hired me in the summer of 2017 at the rank of Associate Professor. My contractual agreement was such that I would apply for tenure and promotion to Professor during the 2019-2020 academic year. As with any move to a new location, regardless of my teaching in higher education for twenty-five years, I experienced a natural interruption of my research and an adjustment to a different environment of students when I began at Rollins. COVID-19 also proved to be somewhat of an interference with performance opportunities no longer available and delays in publication reviews. Despite this, I am pleased with my research, teaching and service over the past four years and with the support of my CEC I am confident that I have met and at times exceeded expectations of one who applies for tenure and promotion to professor.

TEACHING

Primarily, my teaching occurs in the Theatre and Dance Department, specifically in the Dance Program, teaching nine different courses and teaching RCC and rFLA courses within the College's general education strand. As coordinator of the curriculum for the Dance Minor I teach the program's core requirements, Dance Composition, Dance History, and Dance Teaching Methods, as well as Modern and Jazz technique classes. Choreographing the main stage musical and mentoring student choreographers for production are also under my teaching purview. Adjuncts teach the remaining courses within the dance strand of the Theatre and Dance Department. As the Dance Program Director, I monitor and evaluate the adjunct teaching in the program. Moreover, I support the five adjunct dance faculty in their courses to develop assessments for their core objectives, review syllabi and observe their teaching each semester.

Modern I and Jazz I are taught as traditional dance technique classes that incorporate one written exam and several small papers throughout the semester. Dance History, a lecture course, covers content from Antiquity through the socio-political climate of the 21st century. This course requires oral presentations and written papers as well as critical discourse of assigned readings. Dance Teaching Methods and Dance Composition are hybrids, incorporating lecture, discussion and movement labs. Dance Production and Advanced Dance Production are upper-level experiences of production, both movement-choreographic lab courses.

I consistently receive high ratings for teaching in my Annual Reviews. During my mid-course, my CEC mentioned my “openness to explore new pedagogies” and noted that there is “strong evidence that Professor Gerchman is already a highly effective and appreciated teacher and mentor”. My CIEs reflect high scores, of which I explore in detail in the section that includes my course materials. My FEC mid-course letter, however, indicated an area of concern regarding the rigor of my courses. Given the FEC comment, I reached out to Nancy Chick for advice regarding professional development, and proceeded to review and update all of my course materials. Over my 25 years of teaching in higher education, I have found that assessing a student on their talent to be an inaccurate evaluation of their work in the class. I feel very strongly that each student be evaluated independently on their progression, not their level of ability. Given this, the FEC recommended that I incorporate rigor in other ways, outside of technique. Per Nancy Chick’s recommendation, I read (and re-read) *Meaningful Grading: a Guide for Faculty in the Arts* by Haugnes, Holmgren and Springborg. This book is an invaluable tool for ideas on balancing art and critical thinking in the classroom. Most helpful for applying rigor in the dance technique class, it also gives insight into increasing student engagement in all classes. In my dance technique classes, I now have terminology exams and writing assignments to broaden student assessment. In addition to this, I also increased the rigor in my dance history course by requiring the students to lead discussions of the reading assignments to boost their engagement and contribution to their learning; and I have lengthened the research paper requirement from 4 pages to 8 pages. As I shared with my CEC, a couple of my CIE’s indicate that I do not leave enough room for conversation. I continue to work on navigating the pause that occurs when asking questions of the students. Rather than being quick to answer for them I am learning to incorporate self-restraint and being okay with the silence until someone is prepared to speak. While I do not commonly experience this in dance-focused courses, it seems my general education courses are where I am traversing silence. Taking a sip of water, referring to my notes, and incorporating moments of group dialogue, are examples of tools that I have applied for these pauses. I have always considered myself a life-long learner. No better example than this and the application of changes of my pedagogical method after so many years of teaching.

The RCC and rFLA courses I teach embed interdisciplarity and seminar-based learning. My teaching goal for both courses is to bring awareness of how to incorporate and make applicable the expectations of the class to the students’ major courses of discipline. I challenge the students to think about how to connect the hidden curriculum of creative problem solving and critical thinking to their respective majors. I share my experience with this in a manuscript published in, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, which I discuss in the section on scholarship. Through activities, assignments, and readings I build upon the connections between dance and the liberal arts. This offers students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and make a connection between the course material and their own career path. The environment of my classroom is interactive and collaborative; encouraging individual thinking (journal writing, research papers) and the importance of collaboration (group projects and presentations). Flexibility for spontaneous discovery as well as directives toward specific goals are in my lesson plans.

I taught an Intersession course, *The Body Keeps the Score*, titled after the book of the same name by Bessel van der Kolk. I was fortunate to receive a TPJ grant to bring in choreographer Sarah Carlson to collaborate on a work that involved the stories and experiences of student participants. Working with the students to write this new work, Sarah and I framed the stories and movement to create a cohesive composition. This work was performed on campus twice during spring 2019; once in front of the Annie Russell Theatre as an open-campus performance, and again at the Title IX rally.

Course development

In my four years of teaching at Rollins, I implemented twelve new courses for the dance program, two new general education courses, and changed the existing syllabi of four courses. In addition to creating new courses for the program, I also re-numbered the courses of the dance program in a format that qualified curricular progression. Highlights include the following:

- New Courses
 - DAN 155 Musical Theatre Dance
 - DAN 225 Dance Improvisation
 - DAN 320 Dance Teaching Methods (core course for dance minor)
 - DAN 421 Advanced Dance Production
 - Intermediate and Upper level movement courses in ballet, modern, tap and jazz
- Changed syllabi
 - Incorporated more rigor (for assessment purposes) in Modern I and Jazz I, Dance History and Dance Composition
- New General Education Courses
 - RCC 100 Winging It and rFLA 100 Moving Stories and Conversations

Finally, as my role of Director of the Dance Program I annually prepare the Demonstration of Learning Assessment report on the program. This report helps me to evaluate the effectiveness of the dance courses in relation to the program curriculum.

Notes on teaching

My goal in designing my syllabi is to ensure that students learn foundations and current trends of the field. Some of the ways that I have revised syllabi to include this are:

- Updating content and learning activities in Dance History to include several weeks addressing political climate, social change and racism in dance and their effects on dance.
- Adding the Dance Teaching Methods course, soon to propose as a CE course, to include modules of history, hands-on and online teaching to help students build skills that better prepare them for the current job market
- Modifying the Dance Composition course to eliminate the requirement to produce choreography for the main stage and add a separate informal showing specific to this class of new choreographers.

ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE SCHOLARSHIP

I am a choreographer, performer and dance scholar with an active and ongoing program of scholarly inquiry. Broadly speaking, my written research examines the interdisciplinary efficacy between dance

and general education; the research and dramaturgy completed for choreographic works; and the personal insight into current trends of teaching in higher education and the private sector. My choreographic compositions represent current socio-political trends or scripted themes depending on the commission. Over my years as a professional choreographer, I have composed 26 original concert works and original choreography for 30 musicals. Each work I create requires hours of research, lab time, and rehearsals. All of the classes I teach are synergy of my scholarship and pedagogy.

In addition to my recent publications, my current projects include: working as the dance dramaturg for a newly established improvisational dance company entitled Benevolent Instruction; and writing a dance-theatre piece based on the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. These creative and academic research projects are ongoing and I am only just preparing to share them as I begin to document my work in written manuscripts.

Evidence of scholarship

The Rollins College Bylaws and the Department of Theatre and Dance criteria list various ways in which candidates can demonstrate scholarship. My CV specifies my level of scholarship and engagement in my field since 2017. Through publications and performances, I have fulfilled the expectations of my department. These include:

- “Scholarly writing and peer-reviewed publications”: I have published two peer-reviewed publications.
- “Public performance”: I performed as a paid-contract dancer with the Elle Vie Dance Company
- “Creation of art or performance”: I created original choreography for guest director Tony Simotes
- “Reviewer for professional journal”: I have served as a reviewer for the journal *Cultural Trends*, writing a peer-reviewed book review
- “Session organizer or discussant at conferences”: I served as a panelist at the Association of Theatre in Higher Education Conference
- “The receipt of grants”: Since coming to Rollins I have received an ACS grant to pilot a dance consortium of ACS members; two Professional Development Grants (Rollins); one Thomas P. Johnson grant (Rollins); one diversity grant (Rollins)
- “Commitment to ongoing campus productions”: choreographer of annual mainstage musical

The department also expects candidates to demonstrate a pattern of continuing scholarly activity. I have served as a book reviewer for *Cultural Trends*; worked as a movement consultant for various productions; served as a commissioned artist for an arts magnet school; attended and presented at conferences. I have one publication currently under review and two projects scheduled to begin this summer. As the only full-time dance faculty at Rollins it is difficult to find time to attend conferences, hence my low conference attendance. If anything positive came from COVID it was being able to attend conferences and professional development opportunities virtually. I participated in workshops hosted by the Movement Research Center; attended a web panel discussion on Dramaturgy in Dance, hosted by the Gibney Center; and attended the Arts + Change Conference hosted by the University of Rochester.

I believe that this provides substantial evidence of active scholarly engagement during the four-year period that I have been at Rollins College. Per Rollins College Bylaws, “These activities must

represent a pattern of professional development, suggesting intellectual and scholarly life that will continue after the awarding of tenure or promotion.” I believe that my commitment to scholarship is apparent through my continued and relevant research in the dance field and my dedication to educating the students at Rollins College.

SERVICE

Since coming to Rollins in 2017, I have had the opportunity to serve the college in a variety of roles, most notably as the Director of the Dance Program. I am proud to be an advisor, having advised 40 freshman (with another incoming cohort this fall) and all of the declared and prospective dance minors. I am a former member of both the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the newly formed Faculty Research and Development Committee. I will be joining the Curriculum Committee this fall. I was on the TPJ selection committee, a discussion leader for the AY20-21 Faculty Retreat, and served as an outside member for two Visiting Assistant Professor searches in the Business Department.

As the only full-time dance faculty in the Department of Theatre and Dance, service to the department has not only been required but necessary. My role as the Director of Dance encompasses much more than overseeing the curriculum. I mentor, evaluate, and coordinate the teaching assignments of five dance adjuncts; manage the dance studio facility; review dance studio reservation requests; review scholarship candidates; serve as the DOL dance liaison; and attend admissions events on and off campus (such as the Florida Theatre Conference). I worked as a movement consultant for the Annie Russell Theatre Productions of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Women of Lockerbie*. I am a member of the group involved with the logistical planning of the new Theatre and Dance Complex; the Department Diversity and Inclusion Committee; and the Play Reading Selection Committee. I also advise the Rollins Dance Association and Rollins Tap Club.

My primary service to the students, department, and college, most notably exemplifies my professional service where I proudly represent Rollins. A member of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), I was invited to be a part of the Dance 2050 think tank. Dance 2050 is a document that re-envision the future of dance in higher education. I am also a scholarship adjudicator for NDEO and a peer reviewer for the American College Dance Association. Having served as a founding member of the American College of the South newly formed Southern Dance Consortium I was also a recipient of an ACS grant to fund the project. This summer I was a member of a talk back panel for *Conscious Voices*, directed by Marianne DiQuattro.

Summary

These past four years at Rollins have been incredibly fulfilling. This document summarizes evidence of my growth as a teacher, researcher and commitment to service. Rollins College sets high standards for those applying for tenure and promotion to Professor and recognizes the various ways in which one can meet that criterion. I believe I have provided confirmation of excellence in teaching, scholarship and service. I look forward to further advancing and developing as a professor, scholar, and community member. Detailed and highlighted documents of information are included in the body of my Canvas portfolio.