

Online Presentation of American Higher Education Dance Programs

Offering African Dance Techniques Courses

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In a journal article entitled “I Don’t Want to Do African . . . What about My Technique?:”¹ Transforming Dancing Places into Spaces in the Academy,” Raquel Monroe (2011) prompts dance educators to think about how they regard *technique* and how they practice their ideas within their classrooms. She indicates that African diaspora dance is often relegated to elective courses in American dance curricula, where modern and ballet are considered foundational techniques for the dance student. Accepting Monroe’s ideas that “good technique” is not only limited to dance styles valued by the dominant culture, but can also be considered more broadly as a way for students to learn diverse and unfamiliar cultural values through their bodies, I assert that African dance techniques² can be vital techniques within higher education. As Monroe states, “All dance forms have technique” (51). She continues,

1. The colon placement is the same as in the original title.

2. Throughout most of this paper, I use the terms “African” and “African diaspora dance forms” (or “techniques”), as opposed to “African dance”, to avoid the implication

Modern dance and ballet are forms of dance with their own specific techniques. They are not the only “technical” dance forms. Dance administrators are certainly allowed to shape their programs how they see fit, but semantics are important. What we qualify as appropriate dance technique, often reifies the not so subtle racist infrastructure of American colleges and universities. (51)

Further, due to racism evident in American society, the role of African people and influence of African aesthetics in dance are often left out of the mainstream of American dance history. Instead, how African culture has influenced American popular culture, dance history, and dance performance is relegated to the margins rather than being interwoven throughout an American cultural landscape. In the following, dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) reminds us about this exclusion when she states:

Of course, American culture includes important, significant influences from many other cultures as well. But it is rooted in and defined by the pervasive cultural manifestations of peoples of (Central and West) African and European lineage. The cultural constructs of these broad but divergent groupings form the matrix, the scaffolding of American culture. (4)

I hope, then, to begin to correct this historical omission by positing important discussion in this paper about integrating African cultures in future higher education dance curricula, which will broaden an understanding of an American heritage. To that end, the purpose of this paper is to present an overview of how the study of African dance techniques is currently being implemented in various dance programs across the

that all dance from African countries and ethnic groups are alike. In the few cases I use “African dance”, I do so simply for a smooth sentence flow.

United States. An analysis of the online presentation of a sample of dance programs will offer insights into what is taking place presently and highlight possible directions for the future.

Data Collection Methods and Limitations

I conducted Internet research to examine the curricula within several American colleges and universities. I focused on dance programs that listed technique courses in African dance forms as part of their curricula, whether for the dance major or the general college student.³ I relied heavily on web searches and word-of-mouth suggestions from colleagues when identifying which dance programs to examine. This research does not include every dance program that offers African dance techniques courses; however, I included programs that offer courses in African dance forms in differing formats and within differing types of dance programs and institutions. The Internet data are not meant to give a complete picture of how courses in African dance forms are offered nationwide; instead, they provide a basic context for a larger research project involving interviews with instructors of African dance technique courses. The data does provide insights into how many dance programs are attempting to integrate study of African dance forms into the curricula.

3. Courses I qualified as technique courses were primarily studio-based courses. However, as evidenced by data from several instructors I interviewed as part of this research project, technique for each instructor signified more than the ability to perform movement but included learning concepts of community, human connection, global citizenship, and self-discovery, to name a few.

As I browsed the Web, noting web pages with information that I needed to access again, I bookmarked them using Diigo, an online bookmarking site. Diigo enabled me to organize bookmarked pages into groups, highlight passages, and make notes on the information. I created Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to analyze the data collected.

Useful as the World Wide Web was for searching and gathering information, there were indeed a few limitations. My data collection relied upon the amount and detail of information about their dance programs and course offerings that each university chose to publish on the Web. Some web pages were easier to navigate than others. Also, I conducted most of the research in 2014 and early 2015. I cached the bookmarked pages in 2015, so my research is based on the information that was available on the web at that time. Moreover, whether or not the information was up-to-date even at that time is a question that poses another limitation. In one disturbing case, I searched for an African-intense dance program previewed in 2013 only to find that the dance program had been dismantled and no longer existed.⁴

Another limitation is that five of the dance programs identified in the northeast region of the United States share dance faculty and resources for African dance techniques classes in a consortium called The Five College Dance Department. I treated them as separate colleges and programs because the course titles and levels varied according to the information provided by the respective colleges. The sharing of

4. The bachelor's and master's degree dance programs at Florida International University in Miami, FL were cut during the fall semester of 2013 along with 17 other programs due to "declining state revenues and a poor economy" (Florida 2015).

one instructor of African dance forms among five schools distorts some aspects of the data (e.g. data on full-time vs. part-time faculty positions). The analysis of these data is presented in detail later.

A Summary of the Sampling of Dance Programs

In choosing dance programs to include in my research, I searched for BA or BFA programs in dance at four-year colleges. I began by searching dance programs with which I was familiar, including Duke University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C.A&T), Texas Woman's University (TWU), and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). Next, I extended my search beyond the schools with which I had some regional familiarity to schools in different geographic regions. I also sought to make the data representative of public schools, private schools, historically black schools, historically women's schools, and schools of varying sizes.

Along my web-based journey, I found a website, UnivSource.com, that publishes an "index of links to many of the schools and university departments that offer dance as a program in the US" (UnivSource 2015). I used the list to expand my search, which resulted in the inclusion of several schools I had not considered. I settled on analyzing data from 29 schools. Twelve of them were private schools, three were women's colleges, and six were historically black colleges or universities. The rest were predominantly white, public, state universities.

Given that I did not choose to collect data on all schools in the United States with dance programs, I do not wish to draw conclusions about African dance techniques offerings at private versus public colleges and universities. Similarly, drawing

conclusions based on the geographic locations of the schools is also limited with the present sample. I will note that I included data from three schools in the West, four in the Southwest, three in the Midwest, nine in the Northeast, and ten in the Southeast. Schools from 15 states and the District of Columbia were represented in the data, but I found it interesting that 11 of the 29 schools were located in only two states, Massachusetts and North Carolina.

Five colleges in Massachusetts offering African dance techniques courses (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) are part of the Five College Consortium and thus the Five College Dance Department. This configuration helps explain why there seems to be a high concentration of dance programs offering African dance techniques courses in Massachusetts. “Each campus offers its own distinctive program of dance and collaborates as a uniquely rich inter-campus department. The department pools the offerings of these five different programs of dance, making it one of the largest in the nation” (Five 2014). One instructor teaches the West African dance techniques courses for all five colleges in the department.

I identified six schools in North Carolina that offer African dance techniques courses: Appalachian State University in Boone, Duke University in Durham, University of North Carolina at Greensboro and N.C. A&T in Greensboro, and University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte. None of the schools share instructors. It is interesting to speculate whether the concentration of dance programs that offer African techniques in North Carolina is due to Chuck Davis’s presence in Durham. Davis is the founder and artistic director of the African American

Dance Ensemble. Since 1984, he has been entertaining and educating audiences all over the world with stagings of traditional African music and dance forms (African 2015). Based in North Carolina, his company performs regularly and conducts workshops for all ages in public schools and community settings of all types in the state. He is considered a living legend particularly in the contemporary African dance world; therefore, I imagine his programming has influenced many post-secondary dance educators in the state of North Carolina.

The colleges and universities included in the web research data set vary in size, the smallest enrollment being 1,375 at Johnson C. Smith University and the largest enrollment of 69,551 at Arizona State University. Enrollment at 11 of the schools ranged from 1,375 to just under 5,000. Six schools enrolled just over 9,000 to just under 19,000 students. Enrollment at eight of the 29 schools ranged from approximately 25,000 to nearly 38,000, and three of the largest schools enrolled over 40,000 students.

I chose to focus on schools with dance programs that offered BFA or BA degrees in dance or related areas such as performance and movement, theater and dance, drama and dance, and dance education. However, two schools included in this research offered BS degrees in dance education as well as minors in dance. Further, two schools, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T) and Spelman College, offered only dance concentrations and not dance majors. N.C. A&T's degree is a BA in Liberal Studies⁵ and Spelman's degree is a BA in Drama. Although

5. As of January 2017, N.C. A&T no longer offers a BA in Liberal Studies (Dance Concentration). Instead, only the dance minor is offered. However, the program focus remains African and African-derived based.

several of the dance schools offered graduate degrees, I excluded data on technique courses for graduate programs.

An analysis of the data follows in the next sections. It examines the variety of courses offered, the number of levels offered for differing courses, where the courses are placed within the curricula, and the faculty status of the instructors teaching them.

Data Analysis

Course Variety, Nomenclature, and Insights into Content for Select Courses

A variety of titles were used for technique courses in African dance forms (see Table 1). Some courses employed broad titles (e.g. *Dance and Globalization*, *Cultural Dance Forms*, and *Contemporary Dance Techniques* with subtitles of *West African Dance* and *West African*) allowing for a variety of course content since curricular offerings for some schools are dependent on the changing expertise of available adjunct or graduate teaching assistant faculty. These broad course titles allow content change without necessitating continual approval from curriculum committees when a different dance form was to be taught. Also, general titles, considering how varied dance within each country in Africa is, were included in 15 schools to include *African Dance*, *African Dance Forms*, *Dances of Africa*, and *West African I* and *II*, to name a few. Only one of the schools, University of Colorado, indicated a more specific *African Culture (Ghanaian)*. Other dance programs offered courses that appeared to include a combined content of African dance forms as well as dance forms from the African Diaspora, such as Caribbean forms. A few such courses were entitled *African/Diasporan Dance I* and *II*, *Dances of Africa and the Caribbean*, and *World Dance Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and Diaspora*.

Table 1. Titles for African Dance Techniques Courses

Course Title	School
GENERAL	
African Dance	Appalachian State University Johnson C. Smith University University of Colorado
African Dance I-II	Howard University Temple University
African Dance I-III	UNC at Greensboro
African Dance I - IV	Alabama State University
African Dance II	Wayne State University
African Dance (Ghanaian) ⁶	University of Colorado

6. Parenthetical information in this chart has not been inserted by the researcher but appears as course titles are listed on respective dance program websites.

African Dance Forms	Spelman College
African Dance & Culture	Muhlenberg College
African Movement Aesthetics	Denison University
Dances of Africa I	Arizona State University
Dance Technique: African I - II	Swarthmore College
Introduction to African Dance	Wayne State University
Techniques in African Dance I - II	Duke University
AFRICAN DIASPORA	
African/Diasporan Dance I – III	Denison University
African-Caribbean Dance	Savannah State University
African Dance & Diaspora Technique I – VI	University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee
Dances of Africa and the	N.C. A&T

Caribbean	
Beginning/Intermediate/Advanced World Arts Practices in Sub- Saharan Africa and Diaspora	UCLA
WEST AFRICAN	
West African Dance	Hampshire College UNC at Charlotte
West African I/II	Smith College
West African Dance I-II	Wesleyan University
Cultural Dance Forms: West African Dance	Hampshire College
DANCE AND MUSIC	
West African Dance and Music	University of Florida
West African Drumming and Dance	Mount Holyoke College

African Music and Movement	University of Utah
Dance and the African Diaspora - Merging of Rhythm, Music and Dance	University of Utah
WORLD DANCE	
Dance and Globalization ⁷	Texas Woman's University
CONTEMPORARY	
Contemporary Dance Techniques: West African	Amherst College Hampshire College
PERFORMANCE/REPERTORY	
African Dance Repertory	Temple University
Performance: African/Diasporan Dance	Denison University

7. Course syllabus indicates instruction in African dance forms.

Performance Dance: Repertory (Spr. section 3: African)	Swarthmore College
African Performance Workshop	Howard University
Repertory: African Dance	Duke University

Four of the 26 titles encountered during data collection clearly indicated study in dance as well as music, to include *West African Dance and Music*, *West African Drumming and Dance*, *African Music and Movement*, and *Dance and the African Diaspora – Merging of Rhythm, Music and Dance*. These titles imply that there is focus in the course on music and dance rather than just dance; however, I cannot assume that the courses which do not include music in the titles do not have this combined focus, given that African dance and music are so deeply intertwined. Finally, I also included repertory courses in African techniques. A few of those titles were *Performance: African/Diasporan Dance*, *African Performance Workshop*, and *Repertory: African Dance*. Such courses were offered at five of the universities included in this study (see Table 1).

To describe the content of some of these African dance techniques courses included in this study, I will share data from interviews I conducted with a few of the instructors. First, each of them described beginning the class with a “warm-up” that not

only served to physically prepare the body for dancing but also to introduce or reinforce concepts relevant to the dance forms they are teaching. Sherone Price described and demonstrated movements that were examples of exercises he used to “get the energy up” to the high level he expects for his *African Dance* class at Appalachian State University. Within the warm-up, he said he also included exercises meant to teach performance skills such as “present[ing] movement” to another dancer. He demonstrated this by making hand gestures from his chest towards an imaginary person in front of him as his upper body contracted away from his hands. In a personal communication, Price mentioned he did this kind of work in the warm-up because he wanted to help the students learn that they had to be “real people on stage”. Therefore, Price is clear about taking an opportunity during warm-up to work on performance quality.

Consistent with her goal to teach students about her native Ghanaian culture in her *Dance and Globalization* course at TWU, Beatrice Ayi described in the following an example of how she integrates discussion of culture when students are warming up to dance. She explained in a personal communication,

I’m not doing warm-up just so that they just warm their bodies. I’m doing warm-ups so they can understand why when we are doing our dance forms, we don’t stand up straight [sits upright] like immigration officers, but we stand as African dancers [inclines her torso forward, hands on knees as she sits] down there because we want to respect [touches her chest with both hands and gestures towards the floor] this earth that sustains us. We want to feel our weight as we dance.

Bea continued with examples of daily life activities that for Ghanaians typically require a forward-inclined posture. Her examples included cooking, washing clothes, and sweeping. So Bea's warm-up sequence addresses posture and stance as physicalizing the needs of the Ghanaian dance forms she teaches.

When it comes to movement sequences, Bea draws material from the traditional dances she learned growing up in Ghana. In a personal communication, Bea mentions that she rearranges the dances so that the choreography is set and students can learn them in order to be assessed on specific elements of the dances taught during the semester. She explained that for the theory section of the class, she discusses dance and culture across the African continent, but for the practical sessions, she limits instruction to select countries in West Africa, which is her expertise. She covers several dance forms during the semester, but she assesses her students on only two Ghanaian dances in the semester. In a personal communication, Bea summarized,

So I teach Ghanaian dance forms. At least they would have three or four per semester. Even though they would just be examined on one . . . One for midterm and one for finals, but I teach a couple of them, so they just have a feel of the variety of dance forms.

Similar to Bea, when teaching *African Dance* at UNC-G, Robin Gee may teach four or five dances during a semester depending on the course level. For Ava Vinesett who teaches *Techniques in African Dance* at Duke University, "anywhere between five or six dance forms are covered over the course," and "depending on who's in the class I

would say sometimes that might dictate how much time we spend on a particular form”, explains Vinesett in a personal communication .

In addition to dances, the instructors incorporate other cultural expressions into the technique classes. Bea teaches songs and games that she sang and played as a child in Ghana. She explained in a personal communication, “I include the games because I want them [the students] to experience the fun that the kids experience at home as they participate in music making and dance”. The games also reinforce values and skills such as trust, rhythm, and focus. Using dance as a touchstone, Bea shares with her students the cultural values of her native Ghana and helps students learn about their own cultures by asking how certain values might have been taught to them when they were children.

As for music, having live accompaniment for classes in African dance forms facilitates the dancer/musician relationship important for most African dance techniques. Stafford Berry, Jr. teaches *African/Diasporan Dance* at Denison University. Stafford says, in a personal communication, that his class is “blessed” to have live accompaniment and he likes to “work back and forth” with the accompaniment and is sometimes “creative with the music” during warm-up: having musicians makes that creative exchange possible. Robin Gee communicated that he integrates music, singing, and working with musicians in her classes as well. Instrumentalists for Bea’s class are there once a week, so she makes sure to use that day for dancing instead of lecturing.

Beyond the integration of music and dance, the participants mentioned the inclusion of several other traditional African practices when describing what takes place on a usual day in class. For example, Bea requires female students to wear a traditionally styled wrap skirt called a *lapa* when dancing in class because it is traditional attire for dance in Ghanaian culture. Also, both Bea and Sherone practice the call and response (ago/ame) when addressing the class. As Bea demonstrated, “Agooooo” is calling out loudly, and “Ameeeee” is how students’ respond. “That is the way the class begins” for Bea.

Additionally, Bea and Robin both talked about making use of the circle. The circle is a common organizational structure especially for the gathering of people in many African cultures. Bea asks her students to sit in a circle, a significant practice in African oral tradition, during class discussions. Robin, when discussing challenges with teaching African dance forms in a Western dance studio, said she uses different approaches, which include African traditional practices. The use of a circle is one. She stated during a personal communication,

I do find a challenge being in a Western dance space. Sometimes I’m with the mirror and then away from it. I try to move around. Dancing in different directions, dancing in a circle, incorporating the musicians.

I consider Robin’s use of different spatial orientations that closely resemble what takes place in the context of a dancing event in African culture to be a way of presenting content for the course, in addition to the actual steps for the dance forms, which are course content.

To end his classes, Stafford forms a circle and performs a salutation that is referred to as a *collective dobale* by Kariamuw Welsh (2015). Stafford adapted the practice of *dobale* from Welsh, his mentor. He said in a personal communication, “We usually close out in a circle, [with] *dobale* paying homage to all the forces that allow us to be there”. Ava, who also performs *dobale* in her class, further described a similar practice in her communication, which she later referred to as an opening meditation. She said,

So we begin and end with a salutation. Salute to the four elements, if you will, which also parallels then the four directions. It’s also an honoring to whatever our ancestral lineage is, and so we begin the class that way, and we end the class that way as well.

I sense that the inclusion of African traditions enumerated in this section is an attempt for these instructors to provide contextual experiences while teaching African dance techniques. For these instructors, the donning of fabric wrapped around the waist when dancing, the response of *ago* to *ame*, the sitting and dancing in a circle, and the salutation practice are all purposefully included by the instructors as a way to enmesh the students in the course content regardless of the course level taught.

Levels for Course Offerings

Of the 29 dance programs in this study, over half of them offer only one level of African techniques (see Figure 1). Of those, about a third *requires* the dance major to take a single level in African techniques for the dance degree or concentration. Two-

thirds of the dance programs, therefore, offer single-level African-based courses as optional or elective courses for dance majors or the general college student. Although the majority of the schools in this study offer only one level of African techniques, as indicated in the chart in Figure 1, there are several schools in the data set offering two or more levels of technique. Further, schools, such as the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with six levels of African techniques and Alabama State University with four levels, have tracks or concentrations in their programs providing more intensive study of African techniques for dance majors. Denison University, UCLA, and UNC-G also have program offerings that enable students to extend their study of African dance forms with multiple course levels. The following section describes a few of these programs in more detail.

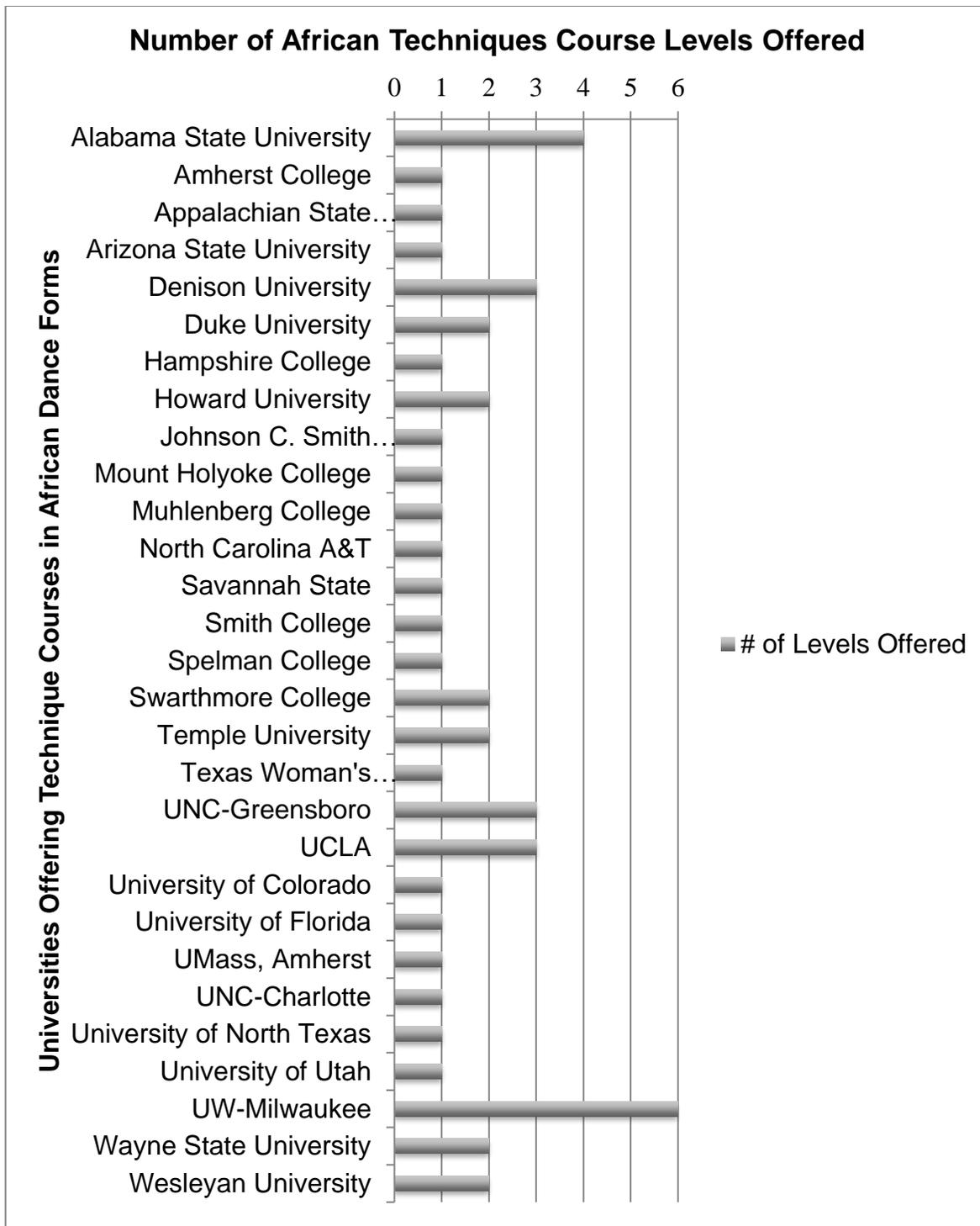


Figure 1. Number of African Techniques Course Levels Offered

African Tracks/Concentrations

A few schools in this study have dance programs with tracks/concentrations designed for African dance study. These programs offer at least three but as many as six levels of African techniques courses. Each program as described online is implemented differently requiring varying courses and course credits.

The BFA program in dance at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) offers two tracks for performance and choreography, the contemporary dance track and the Africa and the Diaspora track. The Africa and the Diaspora track is described as “a rigorous technical and creative curriculum with a foundation in Africa and the Diaspora techniques with cross training in ballet and modern” (University 2013). Specific dance forms are not indicated in the *African Dance and Diaspora Technique* course titles, however six levels are offered, and sixteen credits are required. Levels one and two each carry two credits, and levels three through six carry three credits each. Description of the curriculum on the dance program website indicates that students will experience dance forms from Central and South America, the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa taught by master teachers (University 2013). Additional opportunities to broaden student experience include study abroad in countries like Brazil and Ghana, and participation in Ko-Thi Dance Company, the in-residence African dance company (University 2013).

This BFA track at UWM clearly develops a very strong program of study for African dance techniques, not only because of the required six levels in African techniques, but also since the balance of coursework supports the stated goal of providing technical rigor and a creative curriculum. *African Dance and Diaspora Technique* courses comprise half of the total techniques requirement. Close to equal credits are allotted for creative courses, academic courses, and technique courses. The options available for University Core Courses enable an even stronger foundation for study of Africa and the Diaspora.

Alabama State University began a BFA degree program in dance in 2013. According to the 2012-2014 General Undergraduate Catalog online, the program offered classes in ballet, modern, hip hop, tap, jazz, and world dance when only a dance minor was available. Now, according to the Alabama State University BFA/Dance Program Course Listing and Curriculum Checksheet, the nomenclature of world dance has been replaced with the more specific African Dance. Ballet and modern are required courses with dance majors choosing further study of African or hip hop dance forms. Majors also choose either tap or jazz courses. The program offers four levels of each dance technique course, and majors are expected to take all four levels of the techniques that they choose. These four dance techniques are referred to as “focused electives” rather than “tracks” or “concentrations” (Alabama 2015).

At Denison University, dance majors must fulfill the minimum 12-credit movement practices requirement with any combination of courses from the African/Diasporan, Modern/Postmodern, Ballet dance forms (when offered), and required performance courses in each of the chosen techniques (Denison 2015a). If dance majors choose the African/Diasporan track, they must complete three levels of African/Diasporan dance, the first of which does not count towards movement practices requirements for majors, along with the required performance courses in African/Diasporan dance. This required curriculum is structured to help students meet the stated goal of being able to “achieve, minimally, an intermediate level of proficiency in a combination of various aspects of embodied movement practices” (Denison 2015a).

UCLA’s dance program is housed in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance (WACD), a merger, as of 2001, of the World Arts and Cultures Program, the Dance Department, and Folklore and Mythology. In 2011, both the BA in dance degree and the BA degree in World Arts and Cultures were approved (UCLA 2013a). A unique program by design, WACD is “defined by a dynamic interdisciplinary approach that encourages intercultural literacies and repertoires, including and transcending geography ethnicity, class, and other distinctions of identity” (UCLA 2013b). The required courses and electives for dance majors are a combination of dance courses and world arts and cultures courses (UCLA 2015a). Three levels (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced) of technique courses from several regions of the world are offered including three levels of World Arts Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and Diaspora (UCLA 2015b).

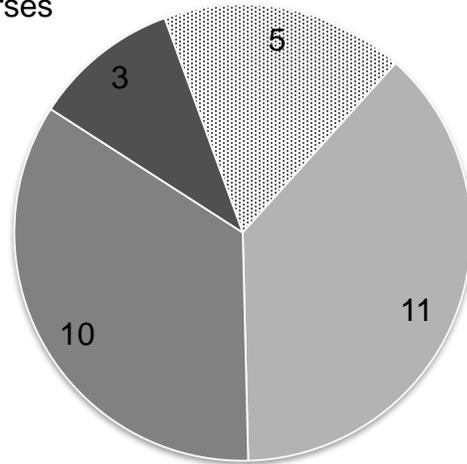
The four dance programs highlighted here have African-based dance components that afford students significant study of African and African Diasporan culture and dance forms. Perhaps these programs may be examples for others seeking to begin integrating African dance study into their own programs.

Courses in African Dance Forms as Electives

The existence of elective African techniques courses in the curricula of primarily ballet and modern-based dance programs may be a step towards diversifying the coursework for dance students. However, fully integrating African dance study by requiring multi-level courses is necessary to educate American dance students on African influence in American dance and cultural heritage. As illustrated in Figure 2, five of the 29 dance programs included in this study offer courses in African dance techniques that are not *required* for dance majors but may be taken as elective courses to enrich dance study. Eleven of the 29 dance programs indicated African dance techniques courses as options for fulfilling requirements for world dance or technique electives. Ten schools require one level of an African dance techniques course for dance majors, and only three schools required dance majors to take more than one level. In conclusion, 16 of the 29 dance programs (55%) offer courses in African dance forms as electives as opposed to requirements for dance majors.

Distribution of Elective and Required Courses among the Dance Programs Sample

Amherst College
Appalachian State University
Denison University
Duke University
Hampshire College
Savannah State
Smith College
Spelman College
Swarthmore College
UCLA
Wesleyan University
Johnson C. Smith University
North Carolina A&T
Temple University
Texas Woman's University
University of Colorado
University of Florida
UNC-Greensboro
UNC-Charlotte
University of Utah
Wayne State University
Alabama State University
Howard University
UW-Milwaukee
Arizona State University
Mount Holyoke College
Muhlenberg College
U Mass Amherst
University of North Texas



- ⦿ Not Required
- World Dance or Technique Elective
- One Level Required Only
- More Than One Level Required

Figure 2. Distribution of Elective and Required Courses among the Dance Programs Sample

Modern and/or ballet are required courses for most of the dance programs included in this study since the majority of them are modern-based. One exception is at Spelman College where the degree is primarily focused on drama, having dance as a concentration or minor. In many programs, a student may choose to fulfill requirements for technique classes by taking multiple levels of either modern or ballet without needing to study both techniques. This study focuses specifically on course offerings in African dance techniques, the major impetus for this research being the desire to correct the marginalization of African influence in American dance and history within dance curricula. Although African technique courses are not required at many of the schools in

this study, most schools require at least one course in other world dance forms of some kind. I found that many schools offered courses in world dance forms, such as Flamenco, Bharata Natyam, Caribbean forms, and even movement forms such as Tai Chi. Future research regarding how and why these particular world dance forms were chosen as course offerings at these American universities could inform other programs developing or revising curriculum.

Faculty for African Techniques Courses

The following pie chart (see Figure 3) represents the faculty ranks of the African techniques instructors for the schools included in this data set. Although I reviewed a total of 29 schools, 5 of the schools are part of the Five College Dance Department consortium that shared the same lecturer. Therefore, I counted those five schools as one, creating a total of 25 schools.

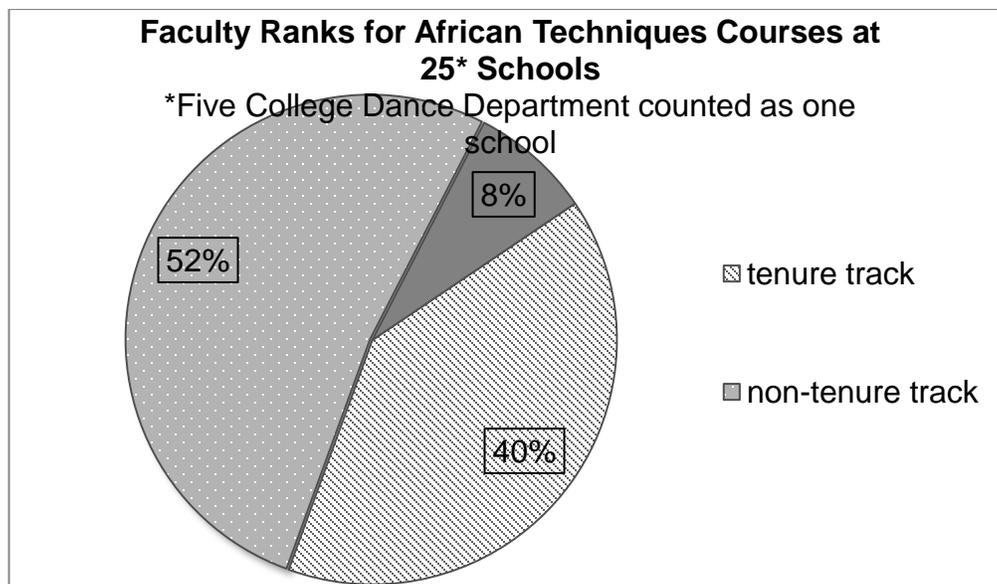


Figure 3. Faculty Ranks for African Techniques Courses at 25* Schools
 Figure 3 delineates the percentage of schools assigning tenure track versus non-tenure track

faculty to teach the African techniques courses. The tenure track positions were assistant and associate professorships. The non-tenure track positions included position titles such as adjunct, lecturer, instructor, visiting professors, faculty associates, and graduate assistants. At two of the schools (indicated as 8% on the chart), both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty taught the courses. Only non-tenure track faculty taught the African techniques courses at 52% of the schools, with only tenure track faculty teaching at 40% of the schools. Therefore, for this data set there is close to a 50/50 relationship between courses in African techniques being taught by tenured and non-tenured track faculty.

I wrongly suspected at the start of this project that a large majority of African techniques courses were primarily taught by faculty in non-tenure track positions, such as graduate assistants and adjunct lecturers. Also, I suspected that many of them were part-time faculty hailing from professional African dance companies. To my surprise, while reviewing faculty bios online, I learned that while my assumptions were true for several of the instructors, many were full-time tenure track faculty who had performance experience with African dance companies.

Relying solely on Internet research, I faced some difficulty determining who taught the African techniques courses and how frequently the courses were offered at a few of the universities. To get clarification, I contacted dance faculty at Muhlenberg College and Johnson C. Smith University and was informed that both schools had been in the process of searching for new instructors to teach their class offerings. I learned from the instructor at Savannah State University that she, in fact, is an assistant professor in a different department and has been teaching courses in dance to “help

out.” She planned to resume teaching *African-Caribbean Dance* and modern dance courses in Spring 2016 and to add a new course after her summer study in Ghana. I also found that at Texas Woman’s University, a graduating graduate assistant’s *Dance and Globalization* course, which focused on Ghanaian dance and culture, would be taken over by an MFA candidate who could keep the course focused on West African dance forms.

The preceding data leave me with the following questions: How many other schools are searching for instructors for courses in African dance forms? How many dance programs are interested in offering courses in African techniques but do not have open faculty positions to hire qualified instructors? Are the qualified instructors being educated in dance programs at American universities or outside of the United States? In the past several years, I have seen several open job searches specifically for instructors of African and African diaspora dance forms. However, schools seeking such instructors often desire applicants who are able to teach modern, ballet, or improvisation as well. Are American dance programs truly integrating African and African diaspora techniques courses in a manner that will support this new demand for qualified faculty?

Conclusion

This paper presented a variety of insights into the current statistics for how African dance forms are emerging in higher education settings at the undergraduate level in the United States. What is of interest from the analysis of these statistics is the number of schools that currently offer African and African Diaspora dance forms in various formats, with differing teaching methods, and in various depths of practice. The fact that two-thirds of the dance programs in this study’s sample offer single-level

African-based techniques being offered as optional or elective courses suggests room for much progress towards integrating a more substantial study of African dance forms and culture in American dance programs. The growing interest in relation to African and African Diaspora studies is becoming important to educators around the world and is evident within the various dance departments and programs highlighted in this paper, such as Alabama State University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. However, how these interests are emerging within institutions is clearly not systematic or organized by any governing body such as national accrediting organizations, etc. Basically, the data for this research seems to emphasize the somewhat haphazard but very lively manner in which dance curricula offering African and African Diaspora dance forms are being shaped for students of the twenty-first century. Hopefully, this research will not only motivate university dance faculties and administrators across the country to reevaluate the inclusion/exclusion of African dance techniques in their programs, but also reaffirm for them its importance for students in American dance programs.

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