ACS Dance Consortium
Collaborative Curriculum grant
Final Report

The ACS Dance Consortium was formed in 2019 with the support of a *Collaborative Curriculum* grant from the Associated Colleges of the South. Closely linked with *Diversity and Inclusion*, the *Collaborative Curriculum*-themed proposal was intended to bring professors from six of the eight ACS dance departments together to create a model for shared teaching wherein each professor, in her own unique voice, would engage with new students, and expose them to fresh, specialty-specific, pedagogy through master classes, lectures and workshops. As a result, students would come to understand and experience the richness of a pan-cultural dance program with a diversity of styles and forms. Led by Jenefer Davies, professor of dance at Washington and Lee University, the ACS Dance Consortium also includes Davidson, College, University of Richmond, Rollins College, the University of the South, and Spelman College.

Dance programs at each of these institutions are run by a small number of faculty who are responsible for an enormous amount of work: teaching full loads, advising students, directing student performances, and writing, performing professionally and sometimes both. Bringing artists to campus is limited due to calendar challenges, and lack of funding and administrative power. For these reasons, the ACS Dance Consortium was intended to diversify the offerings for students at the six participating institutions, and help departments attract and retain a broader range of students to their courses and majors and minors. The collaborators also expected this project would lead to collaboration on a larger scale and that students might one day visit one another's campuses to share work, delve into critical analysis and make new dance works together. This project also was seen as a step toward member institutions' goals of attracting more diverse student bodies and faculty members.

In September 2019, dance consortium members gathered at W&L both in person and virtually to refine the larger goals for the project, to build a master plan for the ACS Dance Consortium website, share information about dance styles and scheduling availability, and to develop a mechanism for student evaluations. Each member representative shared information on her institution's space, technical capabilities, size and availability. With the help of W&L's then director of corporate and foundation relations, a budget for the project was determined and an MOU was developed. W&L's registrar at the time provided guidance on how to responsibly share student information. Each participating member left the meeting with a specific set of tasks.

Davies worked with a colleague at Washington and Lee University to design a website for the project to promote participating artists and educators and the opportunities they offered on the campuses they visited:
https://acsdanceconsortium.academic.wlu.edu

ACS Dance Consortium members then began scheduling campus visits that were to occur between February and May 2020. Courtney World of Sewanee and Robin Gerschman of Rollins visited each other's campuses in early March with Gerschman teaching the Limone technique and a class entitled "Writing for Dance," and World taught rhythm tap and a Bartineff Somatics class. Alison Bory of

Davidson planned to teach classes on critical writing for dance and choreographic feedback at Spelman, and Kathleen Wessel of Spelman planned classes on improvisation and contemporary dance techniques at Davidson. With the shut down of all campuses due to COVID-19 in mid-March, the last pairing was postponed and no more were scheduled until October 2021 when Anne Van Gelder of the University of Richmond visited W&L to teach a Baroque class.

Consortium members planned to regroup in fall 2020; however, differing COVID protocols limited how students and faculty gathered, and travel was prohibited, greatly limiting the ability of the consortium to effectively plan. Due to these challenges, the project continued to be on hold in 2020-21.

Davies attempted to resurrect the project in fall 2021; however, while collaborators were greatly invested in the project's goals, they did not have the bandwidth to follow the original plan. The rigors of shifting how to teach during COVID and the continued impact COVID restrictions were having on their programs made resuming the project difficult. Some felt unsafe traveling to other campuses and many expressed the need to focus internally. Although a collaborative venture such as the ACS Dance Consortium is deeply needed, it is the lack of time and demands on participants at their own institutions that has prevented this project from moving forward. As the lead investigator, Davies is interested in reinitiating this program in the future, possibly with different partners. Davies recognizes that although small programs are in great need of aid to support the diversification of technique and teaching, targeting those very same programs to aid one another can be taxing. Including institutions with larger departments might involve faculty with time to participate in this project and the administrative power to facilitate their campus' portion of the program.

Davies and her colleagues found that sharing resources and facilities can diversify what can be offered to students. The members of the ACS Dance Consortium agreed that during the early part of the project, they felt the beginnings of a new and interesting collaborative experience. The number of ideas generated and the creative decisions they made aided in their interpersonal collaboration, created a basis for a future working group, and the start of the formation of professional and personal bonds. As a group, they acknowledged that new and interesting inter-campus artistic, teaching, and research-based collaborations were initiated, and they were delighted in how they aided one another in previously unforeseen ways that relate to their current teaching and research.

Given the constraints on the project, W&L is returning the balance of the grant funds to be used for other projects.