

# TOWN HALL NOTECARD TRANSCRIPTION & RESPONSES

*The statements and questions written in bold below were submitted anonymously by people who attended the UW Department of Dance Town Hall on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion on April 24<sup>th</sup>2019.*

*The Diversity Committee composed of faculty, students and staff took time together to group the statements from these notecards into chunks of questions, ideas and requests that we thought might be able to be answered by the statements that follow in italics. We recommend that you read all the notecard submissions in each grouping before you read the answers composed below.*

*We wish that we had been able to post these responses immediately following the Town Hall, but were limited in composing responses by the time that we shared in the room together only every other week. We apologize for the delay in writing to your urgent, direct and invested inquiries.*

*These notecards were written in response to the prompt given by Dr. Anu Taranath:  
What does this department need?*

- 1. Conversation Topics: Misogyny/Sexism in Ballet; Language Usage; Conforming to Post-Modern (ties in w/ transparency)**
- 2. How can I teach Ballet inclusively?**
- 3. More Transparency; More Representation; Less Defensiveness; More Acceptance & Flexibility; More Outreach; More Town Halls; More Love.**
- 4. Open communication; faculty training; student research: self goals for learning, about their studies, history of dance; future of dance**
- 5. Conversations peer to peer regarding race/experience; conversation between faculty/dept. and students around transparency and opening decision making.**
- 6. Transparency and communication within the department**
- 7. History of the art form of dance being taught as the class progresses; More communication, more specifically explanations about changes as simple as the course title to problems and improvements the department makes. It opens discussion with students as well as teachers both staff and students that communication and respect can happen.**
- 8. Curriculum; managing challenging group discussions; space for students to share**

- 9. Open communications with respect with everyone, not just the majority.**
- 10. Race, class, gender, sexuality, bias, consequences for action, transparency**
- 11. We need more critical analyzing of what we want from this department and both for ourselves and the people we serve. We need more generosity and empathy for others. Thank you for starting the conversation today.**
- 12. Student Communication; Academic history classes/culture classes so students can learn about cultures w/o having to participate/appropriate; Jazz technique. We still want it!**
- 13. Transparency of actions: students who are being affected should be informed of decisions being made; Power dynamics: people in power need to recognize what they have and use it for positive & productive actions/outcomes.**
- 14. How to ensure students of color feel invited in the conversation and into the dance department?**

*We are in the process of planning the next town hall. We will ask for student input about what topics to address as we plan the next event (and into the future). The plan is to have town halls at the frequency of one per quarter. We think that these town halls are good spaces for engaging in challenging topics as a community, for practicing transparency, for developing and engaging in ongoing dialogue, and for practicing listening and generosity with one another, and are also a place for asking questions about how and when decisions are made.*

*These suggestions and needs are all possible topics for future town hall events. In addition to town hall, we encourage you to share suggestions or experiences with the department via Kelly Canaday, or any faculty member you feel comfortable approaching.*

*We hope we can have one or two focus groups per quarter that are open to anyone or specifically open to subsets of interested people in our department that can be additional spaces to discuss many of the topics suggested in the notecards from above.*

- 15. To continue offering chances to open up to world's dances; I came from a small dance community where majority of the dances are white and I didn't feel I fit in there. Here I think the department is already making efforts and I really appreciate it!**

*Thank you—and we know we have more work to do.*

- 16. How will the department include and be transparent w/ student voices for decision making processes?; How will topics be chosen for town halls?; How does the department make space for marginalized student groups?**
- 17. Focus on what students feel is lacking through direct communication to perhaps guide curriculum/course offerings. By doing proactive survey with a broad**

- range of students. Students and the minorities that are actually represented at this school (and could be in the future) could feel even more welcomed and seen.
18. We need a process in place for folks (esp students) to bring up their issues with curriculum and especially faculty/ or incidents. There needs to be a process that exists with a qualified and equipped council and/or outside mediator/consultant.
  19. Student-only town halls: discussion today was often faculty dominated; Divest real power to students: students should have real control over curriculum, not just “input.”
  20. The department needs a better way for students to voice their issues w/ faculty others and students; to actively look at their staff & what each person is bringing to the students
  21. Sensitivity and reactionary discussions on decisions and issues as they arise.
  22. Listen to students lived experiences (race, gender, class, sexuality, and how that plays into dynamics); introspection/reflection on what is not going well
  23. Better ways for the students’ ideas to be heard and able to speak about
- Every end-of-quarter student evaluation will now have a diversity and equity question included and we hope you share your experiences there. We are committed to listening to your reflections and experiences.*

*We are developing a structure for reporting student concerns as they come in. We are not yet sure if the faculty/staff/student Diversity Committee is the place for receiving these issues, but we are working on resolving that.*

*The Student Arts Diversity Council is currently one place to go with direct and immediate experiences and need for conversation in community with students, as it is a student-led group and space.*

*Additionally, there is going to be a university wide climate survey focused on student experiences of safety and inclusivity coming out next year, and so individual departments have been asked to wait to send out their own comprehensive surveys until spring of 2020. As a department, we will be working on a climate survey that the diversity committee distributes annually to the students. Climate surveys help us assess just that - how does the environment feel? What are perceptions and feelings about the department?*

24. Transparency of what is happening (e.g., why class like 250 is not longer, audition process, and etc.); What students can expect taking classes from the department?; What would you offer to us?; How to make a supportive community?

**25. Reasons why certain courses are taught. Clarifications. Not only online but in class so that the students understand the content and the teachers understands the students**

**26. Knowing/understanding course requirements and why they are required.**

*Faculty, guests and grad students can do a lot in our individual classes to explain how and why we are doing what we are doing.*

*Advisor Kelly Canaday is a great resource for inquiring about what individual course content is or will be for any given class or professor. Kelly is also a great resource for questions about the larger shape of the major, course requirements and how to schedule your experience here through the years of your study.*

*Faculty and grads can also do more to explain what we are looking for in audition processes.*

**27. We need better system for determining what class level students are placed in, cause I'm tired of not really being wanted and then placed in 200 for "safety."**

**28. Diversity of staff; diversity of classes offered; less of a focus on "we are moving you down a level" with no discussion of placement with student move down- not acceptable- not willing to even give a reason why :(**

*Because of the volume of students taking classes here, we really can't give individual feedback to every student after placement day. We wish we could. If you desire personal feedback following placement day, we encourage you to talk with your professor or the faculty who were a part of your placement day about how and why you were placed.*

*When we do talk with students who inquire we try to be as clear as possible about the reasons for moving people, including actual skills that we aren't seeing but that can be tangibly worked on.*

*We do placement to facilitate grouping students in the class where they will do their best learning with peers that are working on the same skills. Like an audition, placement is an imperfect process, and we will never see all of who you are or how you dance in that one class. We will also try to do better about framing what placement is before it happens on the first day of class.*

**29. I think the department needs to (as they say they currently are) take some serious action in bringing in more POC faculty full-time, and students also need to be understanding of the time and money that change often requires.**

**30. Appreciation & Representation**

- 31. Euro-centric ideals taught in the ACADEMIC Courses (Dance 166, 250, 251); Will these courses continue to be taught with a solely modern approach?; Will the course schedule reflect itself with the equality and integration of African Diasporic Dance?**
- 32. Make more marketable dancers.; We need more than ballet, modern... African diasporic please.; Why do we have 5 full time white teachers?**
- 33. Creating a program with faculty that reflects the diversity of our community and being transparent about these conversations, changes and ideas.**
- 34. Full time faculty of color; Diversity training for faculty & students; levels for classes that are from people of color**
- 35. Full-time faculty v. part-time lectures?; Who is valued and how are we viewing these styles and instructors?**
- 36. Course offerings/curriculum including not only technique (inc. somatic, yoga, mechanics, rep. etc.)**
- 37. More discussions about culture by people who know the culture; There needs to be extreme care given to everything that is said, especially to students, in all context.**
- 38. How do we incorporate diverse bodies into full-time staff?; How to shift the curriculum to be more inclusive of diversity?**

*We are a liberal arts program supporting learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity and change. We are not a conservatory or a commercial dance program. We provide students with broad knowledge of the wider world (eg: science, society, culture) as well as in-depth study in dance practices specifically. This relates to our branding as a B.A. program, which is different than a B.F.A..*

*We are actively working on changing our full-time faculty composition. We are in the process of doing a national/international faculty search prioritizing a full-time faculty hire with performance and academic practices in a(n) African Diasporic form(s). In this process, we are actively trying to recruit a diverse pool of candidates, but of course we cannot predict who will apply. We anticipate this faculty member contributing to dance technique offerings, as well as to one or more of (a) Dance History, (b) Composition, (c) Improvisation, (d) Creative Practices. We have been working on this for over a year, but unfortunately because of the functions of the university system you will not see this person on faculty until fall of 2020.*

*Finally, we do offer Pilates, Yoga and Alexander Technique classes in the summer, when our studios are not being actively used for other techniques at all times. The courses taught by the graduate students offered every spring quarter (DANCE 490) also often*

*offer different perspectives on/practices in movement, history, performance, creative practices and more.*

*Pilates, yoga and other somatic practices are also offered to students year round via programming at the IMA, and we encourage you to use the resources (and additional studio space!) available to you on campus at this location.*

**39. More transparency; less ballet classes; more full time POC; cut music in relation class (it doesn't benefit)**

*(For the first three points, see answers above).*

*Thank you for your feedback about the Music in Relation course. We will take your concerns about the requirement and content of this course to the Department Chair and to the professor. We would love to learn more about why you feel this course should not be offered. Please contact the Chair, Jen Salk ([jsalk@uw.edu](mailto:jsalk@uw.edu)) if you would like to be involved in a discussion about the content and relevance of this class.*

**40. If you're not from the culture don't teach about it.**

*This is a very direct statement addressing a complex and nuanced facet of institutionalized learning. This could be the subject of a doctoral thesis, of a full quarter course, or of a focused departmental conversation.*

*Setting up the space (classroom space, community space, research space) with clear statements about the positionality and bias, subjectivity and fluidity of all parties-- professor, students, guests--is one tool for engaging in this conversation.*

**41. Faculty AND MFA/Adjunct trainings for implicit bias, colonization in institutional practices & classroom norms; diversity of creation process: concerts, comp. courses, IMPROV; new hire: FT non-euro-centric identity and practice.**

*There is a three-campus-wide Diversity Blueprint that is beginning to make funds available to departments for exactly these types of trainings. The department is actively working to access and utilize these funds for all-faculty and guest trainings. We had one training for Classroom Norms scheduled for all grad students, adjuncts and full-time faculty prior to the start of this quarter, though it was unfortunately cancelled due to a sudden illness from the facilitator. It will be rescheduled. We have a two part training coming up entitled "Building Equitable Classrooms," part one in June (taught once live and once via Zoom to include all part time people too who may not want to come to campus) and part 2 in September. Individual faculty members are also doing individualized trainings, readings, and course redevelopment projects.*

*We also recognize the need for including statements, trainings and language about inclusion, equity and diversity for all of our teaching and mentoring staff. In fall quarter we will begin to have all faculty--full time, part-time and graduate teachers--and staff look at our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Toolkit which will include articles, films, syllabus construction, and other important information.*

*Link directly to the UW Diversity Blueprint:*

*[https://www.washington.edu/diversity/files/2017/01/17\\_DiversityBlueprint-010917.pdf](https://www.washington.edu/diversity/files/2017/01/17_DiversityBlueprint-010917.pdf)*

**42. I appreciate having so many opportunities to take ballet and modern classes but since our department is not like Juilliard or competitive, I think more styles should be taught. I think we should have more classes in jazz, tap, contemporary, hip-hop, and lyrical. I believe more students would be invested in this department if we did have those classes because not everyone loves ballet and modern, but they do love dance.**

**43. Using class fee budget to bring in guests from the community or UW to teach/lecture; more time for listening; volunteer work in community for anyone interested in learning dance who maybe cannot afford it.**

*We are a very small department with a very limited budget and limited studio space, and we are trying our best to diversify our course offerings, but there are real financial, space, and faculty constraints. We do already bring guests into many of our classes to provide exposure to different dance styles and viewpoints. There are many student groups on campus that offer classes and community in a rich and varied range of dance styles. We post local community events, including ongoing community classes, master classes and national intensives, on the bulletin boards around the department and encourage all to take advantage of these resources. To make these outside resources more accessible to students, we have an annual call for applications for summer scholarship money to attend summer dance workshops.*

*The Dance Student Association is also a resource for bringing guest teachers and master classes to campus. We encourage you to get involved with this group in order to help facilitate and advocate for these types of student offerings.*

**44. I am not a dance major student so I couldn't say much about the courses. But one thing I know is that dance is like a language. There are ones that have to be taught in order for ppl to communicate confidently. Ppl also have freedom to choose what to learn when they master one of the languages.**

45. While jumping right into the physical side of all techniques at the outset of the quarter is important, a day of discussing the historical/societal/political implications as a class should be a priority. I think this should go for all dance techniques and not just when most convenient.
46. More information/background on the specific dance style being taught, for example contemporary ballet vs. ballet or modern vs. contemporary ballet/lyrical.
47. I really like the idea of reforming or refining the intro to dance classes and having those be a place where people's stereotypes or ideas of what "dance" is are broken and acknowledge that ballet and modern are not remotely the "roots" of dance — also, that these acknowledgments be continued into the higher levels, as people in upper level ballet & modern for example often still have these ideas about what dance is.
48. History needs to always be discussed. Race, equity, sex, gender, sexuality, ability/disability; We need to value people automatically and actively, not based on what they look like and what they can do.
49. Be transparent: When you title "Contemporary Ballet" address the alternatives in the course description students should know exactly what they're signing up for. Explain things a little; Encourage discussions in technique/movement classes. These courses reach the most students.
50. The Dance Department should focus on implementing/discussing the history of whatever style of dance is being taught in technique class as well as being transparent in explaining its culture.
51. History of Dance; How we can define "dance"; Specific Style of Dances (?)
52. Recognizing Ballet history in ballet classes: emphasizing 'new' ballet culture; more platforms for discussion
53. More education-based courses going into the history as well as technique
54. More history taught behind each class (technique)

*Thank you for reminding us that you value and want to engage in conversations about the context and history of technique styles when you are enrolled in these classes. This is a good reminder for us to hear/read.*

*We are going to bring an official advisory statement to the Department Chair about encouraging all full-time faculty, teaching graduate students, and adjunct professors to offer this kind of historical context within each class.*

55. This is an institution of learning, so people eager to learn and embrace new cultures (maybe seen standing in the front of the group first) shouldn't be ridiculed for doing what's best for their learning. If there is a more respectful way to embrace the culture they are learning about, can that please be discussed



**at the first class so that no one is offended or hurt by someone's eagerness to learn.**

*As stated above, as a group of teachers, we are working on getting training for how to set up classroom norms that might help to facilitate collaborative student and faculty-student practices.*

*Generally, there is generosity in sharing space with colleagues in dance class. We always encourage you to stand in a new place and to surround yourself with different dancers each class. You might learn something new from dancing next to a different colleague, or by standing in a new place in the room. Some people might not feel safe or confident or "worth" standing in the front of the room, and to generously make space for new voices/bodies to be leaders in the classroom is powerful and important.*

**56. Maintaining smaller class sizes and not having too many students in one class.**

*Many or most of our classes are full or overfull every quarter, and we have a fixed number of studios (3), a fixed number of hours in the day that we can schedule classes, and a fixed number of faculty and adjuncts. Given these limited resources and the popularity of our classes, if we make our class sizes smaller, then we have to exclude even more students from the experience of taking classes in this department. We understand there is a tipping point where your educational experience is being curtailed when there are too many people in the room. We try to be sensitive to that.*

*Additionally, our departmental funding is directly connected to the numbers of students in our classes. We are trying to walk a balancing act of keeping class sizes small and being respectful of student needs for space and attention, and making sure the university allows us to vary sizes. Big numbers in some classes allow smaller numbers in others.*

**57. How do you make written language transparent to a community who is steeped in the language of movement?; Do we need to verbally explain stuff that is occurring in movement conversation/language?**

*Many of our faculty are working towards incorporating more verbal discussion into technique classes, and many of our academic classes incorporate movement. We are striving to balance many different styles of communication and means of understanding dance from different approaches.*

**58. An explanation of why Ballet and Modern are upheld as the pillars of many Dance Departments and an active decision about if we want to be part of continuing that tradition.**

*Since dance entered higher education in the US (and indeed internationally), academia has reflected the long history of valuing western dance forms as "high art." This means*

*that ballet and modern dance were the pillars of academic dance practice. There are many complex reasons why this priority has persisted for so long, including the tenure system, accreditation bodies, and institutional structures. In 2015, the Department of Dance did a curriculum overview and rewrite to attempt to shift this trend in history and in our community at the University of Washington. In response to student voices and changing aesthetics in the performance world, we shifted the core required technique courses from requiring achievements in ballet and modern exclusively to requiring achievements in four different styles of dance beyond the 100-level. We were excited about this change, but it also came before we had the finances and faculty to be able to fully support this shift in technique offerings. For the past four years, we have hired adjuncts and guest lecturers to help us expand beyond the modern and ballet courses that we are shifting away from as a central or exclusive tenant of dance practice.*

*Given the continued voices of students over the past four years, and the increased request for more diversity of faculty and core course offerings, we are attempting to continue to respond with our upcoming core faculty hire (see the answer to questions 29-38). We intend to have student voices involved in the process of this hire.*

*We are also planning to reassess our core departmental values at a faculty retreat in June where we will also reexamine and rewrite our departmental mission.*

**59. Newsletters to encourage transparency from staff to students. not only here's what we're doing... but WHY and WHY is it important.**

**60. Tell people in classes what happened at meetings like this because there is privilege in being able to attend.**

*This is a great reminder. Thank you. This posting is one attempt to include more people in the happenings of the last Town Hall.*

*On the Diversity Committee made up of faculty, staff and students have talked about how, when, and in what format to share information with you all in exactly this way. We are considering periodic videos from various staff and faculty, periodic email newsletters, posts on public billboard spaces.*

**61. These performances in the meany hall, why aren't there any performance about ballet (traditional one).**

*The Meany Center for the Performing Arts is a separate entity from our department, and even though we share a building, we are two independently operating units. Questions and suggestions about Meany Center programming can be directed to their staff. They are gracious enough to facilitate master classes for our students with their guests and offer discounted student tickets.*

**62. Multiple levels and quarters of capoeira.**

*We are investigating this possibility, and hope it is coming. We are not able to offer two levels in one quarter at this time but we hope to in the future.*