

DANCE and CAREER

Why Major In Dance?

You should consider majoring in dance at St. Olaf College if:

1. You want to continue dancing or studying dance while pursuing another field of study, because the dance major curriculum is well-suited to integrate with a large range of other majors.
2. You have previously studied one or two forms of dance, and you would like to broaden and deepen your experience.
3. You want to be involved in a close-knit, nurturing and rigorous field of study that prepares you for a range of valuable life skills.
4. You are curious and/or passionate about new modes of learning.
5. You saw a dance performance or took a dance class and something just clicked for you.

The St. Olaf College Dance Department prepares students for careers rich in thought, movement and emotion. The department has a strong commitment to educating young people, so they can move out into life with a multiplicity of skills and confidences that enable them to succeed in a world that changes at every turn. Using the body in motion as the primary foundation for exploration, discovery, and learning, the dance department cultivates a student-centered learning community that is both nurturing and rigorous. The thoughtful blend of studio work (physical movement techniques), theory (movement analysis, dance history, ethnography, experiential anatomy, etc.) and company work (performance and choreographic opportunities) provide multiple engaging learning experiences for the evolving interests, needs and abilities of a broad spectrum of students. Regardless of how long you've been dancing, why you dance, or what you plan to do with dance in your future, the St. Olaf dance department is well equipped and eager to assist you in charting your educational journey toward your career goal.

What Do I Do With A Dance Major?

Many prospective students and their parents wonder about what a St. Olaf graduate might do with a BA in dance. The quick answer is that, in addition to pursuing a variety of career options in the dance field (performance, choreography, dance education, arts administration, physical therapy, etc.), you can also do just about anything you could do with a BA in English or History. In addition to enjoying careers as professional dance performers, teachers, choreographers and other movement specialties, St. Olaf dance alumni are also doctors, pharmacists, pastors, administrators for higher education, English teachers, and a wide range of other fields.

Learning “Transferable Skills”

The idea of a liberal arts education is to gain both breadth and depth in a course of study that leads to a well-rounded understanding of self and the world. Although the idea of liberal arts is not necessarily to make a one-to-one connection between study and future jobs, there are certain skills and abilities, which career-services advisors call the “transferable skills” that are necessary for any vocation. According to data obtained from *Job Outlook 2008*, an annual survey of college recruiters, communication skills (both written and verbal), strong work ethic, initiative, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving and analytic skills top the list of skills and qualities that current employers look for in job candidates.

Gaining Those Skills in the Dance Major

The dance major at St. Olaf provides students with four years of opportunities to develop these important skills needed for success in today's job market. Here is a sample of how those abilities are developed in some of our dance classes:

Classroom Courses:

Dance in America – Written communication skills and research

Movement Analysis - Written communication skills, research and oral communication skills through oral presentation project

Introduction to Dance - oral communication skills and teamwork skills through oral presentation project

Senior Dance Seminar - oral communication skills and teamwork skills through oral presentation project.
leadership, interpersonal, time management, teamwork skills and initiative as choreographer/director of senior project

Studio Courses:

Ability to communicate, ability to work with people developing teamwork abilities and interpersonal skills, listening effectively

Public performance in the studio in front of instructor and classmates

Dance Companies:

Time management skills honed through balancing class work, rehearsals, performance and touring

Leadership skills and initiative as choreographer/director, rehearsal director or assistant

Ability to work with people refined in rehearsals as well as in times of stress getting ready for performances

Teamwork abilities learned when performing and rehearsing with several dancers for someone else's choreography

Effective speaking and listening developed through creating a public performance

Public performance in theater and other spaces both off and on campus

Wellness Through Awareness and Action

In addition to acquiring the necessary "transferable skills" for successful entry into the job market, the on-going bottom line for success is to maintain health and well-being. Because dancing is both physically demanding and intellectually and emotionally complex, the St. Olaf student dance major acquires a thorough awareness and understanding of self from the standpoint of physical structure and functioning, diet, performance, relaxation and stress management. In an increasingly complex world, these skills are assets in any field.

Specific Career Opportunities

Many people think of dance majors as prepared only for performance and/or teaching. The field of opportunity is actually much broader. Here is a sampling of career options:

Established Dance Fields

- Performing and touring as a professional dancer
- Choreographing for others who perform your dances
- Teaching others to dance and about dance
 - public schools; community education or recreation programs; private studios; college and university settings
- Managing or administering dance or other arts companies or programs
 - public Agency; private agency or company; school settings; college and university settings
- Dance Therapist
 - private practice; hospital staff; clinic staff; educational setting
- Movement Analyst
 - action profiling in business or industry; dance notator and/or reconstructor of dances; consultant in private practice
- Dance Writer or Journalist
 - dance history writer and/or biographer; dance critic or reviewer for newspaper or journals
- Dance Musician
 - accompanying for dance; composing for dance; teaching music for dancers
- Dance Technical Director
 - lighting designer; sound technician and designer

Emerging Dance Fields

- Dance Medicine and Science
 - kinesiologist specializing in dance; trainer specializing in prevention and/or rehabilitation of dance injuries
- Dance for the Camera
 - Choreographer; director; videographer; post production; dance photographer
- Dance and New Technologies
 - motion capture; character animation; interactive technologies