What Skills Does a Degree in Dance Provide?

Dance majors will develop a variety of skills that are attractive to employers across all fields. Some of the top skills a Dance major will develop include:

- Effective writing and oral communication skills
- Finding solutions to intricate problems
- Perceiving the world from multiple points of view
- Creating persuasive messages
- Influencing and persuading
- Gathering information
- Ability to read, reflect, and critique
- Using original sources
- Working with others
- Interpreting data
- Meeting deadlines and managing time
- Summarizing and presenting information
- Understanding components of complex problems
- Evaluating results
- Analyzing texts and information
- Perceiving patterns/structures
- Creativity
- Comparing/contrasting
- Synthesizing information
- Managing a project from conception to completion
- Writing creatively

In the National Association of Colleges & Employers' (NACE) 2011 Job Outlook, the skills and abilities such employers are seeking were listed in order of importance. The top ten skills were:

- Communication (verbal)
- Communication (written)
- Strong work ethic
- Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
- Teamwork
- Computer skills
- Analytical skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Initiative
- Problem-solving skills

Organizations consistently seek candidates who possess a collection of “transferable skills” - skills acquired through your classes, extracurricular involvement, experience, and hobbies that are applicable to virtually any position. The skills listed above all fit into this category and students in the Arts & Humanities, as noted by professionals and academics alike, participate in a rich curriculum that develops their skills in many, if not all, of these areas and beyond, making them extremely marketable and valuable to potential employers. In the current Recruiting Trends report put out by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute, nearly 40% of employers indicate that they will seek candidates across “all majors,” focusing more on the skills and abilities needed in the organization than on a specific academic discipline.

Why Dance?

The Dance major offers a balanced, liberal arts education that integrates production, performance, and scholarship. Comprehensive studio and theory courses provide a foundation for a range of careers in the field. Students may choose to study a particular aspect of dance in depth, such as performance, choreography, or production, by taking advantage of the wide range of elective offerings and the many performance opportunities that exist; or they may choose to merge their interest in dance with an interest in another field of study.

Graduates of the program go on to careers as professional dancers and choreographers, university and secondary school teachers, arts managers, dance administrators, and dance critics. They also work in the fields of dance medicine, anthropology, and dance movement therapy.
What Can I Do With a Dance Degree?

A Dance degree can be shaped to fit a variety of disciplines and the broad skill set you acquire allows you to apply your knowledge in many exciting areas. From the University Career Center’s most recent graduate survey, upon graduation ARHU students entered into a range of dynamic industries including:

- Arts
- Government
- Academia/Education
- Non-Profit/Philanthropy
- Health Services/Healthcare
- Communications/Media
- Advertising
- Technology
- Food & Hospitality Services
- Entertainment
- Social Services

Sample job titles include:

- Dance Critic
- Actor/Actress
- Dancer/Performer
- Communications Manager
- Congressional Aide
- Editor
- Talent Scout
- Research Assistant
- Booking Manager
- Professor
- Director
- Teacher
- Public Affairs Officer
- Journalist
- Special Effects Coordinator
- Labor Relations Specialist
- Choreographer
- Arts Manager
- Social Worker
- Attorney
- Sales Representative
- Retail Sales
- Entertainment Agent
- Casting Director
- Market Research
- Fundraiser
- Paralegal
- Special Events Coordinator
- Theater Arts Instructor
- Human Resource Specialist
- Ticket Sales Coordinator
- Producer
- Costume Designer
- Program Assistant
- Art Administrator
- Dance Therapist
- Media Planner
- Stage Manager
- Tour Guide
- Lobbyist

Gaining Experience With Your Degree

It’s never too early to start your search for experience. Ideally, you should begin at least one semester in advance. Make an appointment to talk with the University Career Center & The President’s Promise and/or your department internship coordinator and faculty advisor. Research shows that having an internship (or multiple internships) drastically increases your ability to obtain a full-time position upon graduation, especially since most employers use their intern pool as a direct talent pipeline. The most recent NACE Internship & Co-op Survey reported that 44.6% of employers’ hires came from their internship programs. The College of Arts & Humanities ensures that students can have an internship experience prior to graduating, offering numerous credit-granting courses for experiential education at the college and departmental level.

Internships enable students to gain a sense of what it would be like to work in a particular field as they develop marketable skills and establish contacts that may lead to a job offer upon graduation. To get started, visit the University Career Center & The President’s Promise website (www.Careers.umd.edu) and sign up for a Careers4Terps account, a free web-based job posting service, to search for internships and employment.