

DANCE CAREER GUIDE

**Fine Arts
Career Services**

The University of Texas at Austin

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FINE ARTS CAREER SERVICES OFFERS:

ONE-ON-ONE ADVISING

Resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, graduate school advising and general career exploration. Call us for appointments!

JOB BOARD

Fine Arts Works is exclusively for COFA students and alumni. Check it out at bit.ly/fawjobs

PROGRAMMING

Tips and Tiffs professional development workshops, *Creative Exchange* guest speaker series and info sessions on FACS-specific initiatives

FUNDING

Intern Scholarship, Professional Development Travel Initiative (PDTI), New York Seminar Scholarship and more. bit.ly/facsfuns

AND MORE

Online internship classes, New York Seminar spring break trip, Networking Night and more!

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on taking the next step in thinking about your career in dance! As a dance professional, you may work as an independent artist, company manager, educator, or administrator, or likely a combination of all four. Whether you are a freshman or nearing graduation, now is a good time to think about your future. This career guide is meant to give you broad information as you picture yourself working in different environments. You are welcome to meet with Fine Arts Career Services for further guidance! We are here to brainstorm different career paths, give guidance on professional documents or help you find the right job or internship for your goals.

DANCE PERFORMANCE

As you start your career in dance, it will be important to think about how you brand yourself. While you want to be open to a large multitude of performance opportunities, it is best to focus on the areas in which you excel and enjoy working.

Whether your pursuit is contemporary dance, ballet or dancing for musical theatre, branding yourself within your speciality is important. It is also important to think about your preferences for working as an independent artist, joining a dance company, or starting your own dance company.

Starting a dance company can be highly rewarding and create more job stability, but requires strong entrepreneurial skills in the areas of administration, operations, marketing and finance.

Very few dancers, especially outside of the larger metropolitan areas, have full-time positions with dance companies. Most professional dancers combine multiple performance, education and choreography opportunities for stable and gainful employment.

As with any arts professional who works as a freelancer, it is essential that you view your career as a small business. Luckily, both UT Austin and the surrounding community offer a variety of resources for individuals to learn business and entrepreneurial skills. See the “Let’s Talk about Money” section later in this guide for more information about how to manage your finances as an independent freelancer.

Danceusa.org maintains a well-curated job board, as well as Dance.nyc for New York-specific opportunities. These job boards have a wide array of great entry-level positions such as fellowships and apprenticeships.

DANCE EDUCATION

For the purpose of this guide, we are defining dance education as more than just jobs within a school district. Dance is taught in many places and dance professionals can become educators even if they did not elect to study dance studies.

To get a job as a *school dance teacher*, you will need to hold a state teaching certificate. If you are a dance studies major, this process will be laid out by your faculty, but usually involves student teaching, a criminal background check and the passing of licensing exams. If you do not earn a degree in dance studies but want to become a teacher after graduation, certification programs outside of universities exist. Through a combination of coursework, exams and student teaching, it is possible to become a credentialed teacher after you graduate.

Working as a school dance teacher is a highly rewarding career that combines live performance, pedagogy and advocacy. Dance teachers find great joy in sharing their passion for dance with young people as they learn about the various facets of performance. The experience of teaching dance at the middle and high school level varies widely, so it is essential that you explore your strengths and interests when it comes to teaching different populations. Many school districts interpret dance education in different ways, so it is important to do your research before applying.

If your goal is to work in schools, get in front of students while you are still in college. You could help with summer dance camps for young kids, or work at dance education programs put on by dance or theatre companies. Many of these opportunities pay and could be useful part-time jobs while you are still in school. Gaining these experiences early will strengthen your resume and prepare you for your first teaching jobs.

DANCE EDUCATION *(cont.)*

Private dance studios employ large amounts of dancers and choreographers for various types of dance classes. These are great positions for those interested in gaining teaching experience, or for those not interested in working for a public school system. These jobs tend to be flexible and can work well with those pursuing performance careers.

Becoming a *dance/movement therapist* is a way to help others while using your talents as a dancer. To become certified, you will need to earn a master's degree in Dance Therapy. Dance therapists work in settings that include psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, schools, nursing homes, drug treatment centers, counseling centers, medical facilities, crisis centers and wellness and alternative health care centers.

Choreography work is usually contracted by schools, dance or theater companies, and is another great way to build up your resume.

DANCE ADMINISTRATION

Dance companies large and small need strong administrators and entrepreneurial thinkers to function and thrive, and developing skills as an arts administrator is a great way to complement your skills as a dancer while you are in college.

If you are considering starting your own dance company, completing an internship in dance administration is highly recommended as it will teach you early some of the business skills necessary for this pursuit.

Check out our Arts Administration Career Guide for more information!

JOB TITLES

Arts Administrator

Choreographer

Commercial Industry Dancer

Community Dance Instructor

Dance Company Manager

Dance Outreach Coordinator

Dance Teacher - Schools

Dance Teacher - Studios

Dance/Movement Therapist

Dancer

Fitness and Wellness-Related Positions

Performance Artist

Professor

Talent Agent

VIEW YOURSELF MULTI-DIMENSIONALLY

In the modern arts world, the more you can see yourself as a multi-faceted professional, the better. If you are working as a dance teacher, that doesn't mean you cannot build a professional performance resume at the same time. If you are working in the marketing department of a performing arts center, you will be developing useful skills to help market yourself. Diversify your skill set! Every opportunity can be used as a chance to grow.

LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

Starting out as a dancer or choreographer often means freelancing. Financial stability as a freelancer is possible with careful management of funds and consistent research into upcoming opportunities. As a freelancer, it is wise to sit down with a Certified Financial Planner to develop a plan for how you will process payments from various performance companies and venues and how much you need to put aside for income tax. Individuals working as theatre administrators or educators are more likely to see full-time salaries including benefits.

FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION

A *Master of Fine Arts (MFA)* is a degree that students often use to gain more experience, build their resume, or prepare for a career in higher education. While an MFA is not necessary for many employment opportunities in dance, it is necessary to teach dance at the college level and to become a dance/movement therapist. Students should weigh the pros and cons of attending graduate school carefully and seek multiple opinions on how this could impact their career trajectory.

...NOW WHAT'S NEXT?

Maybe reading this guide has left you with questions, or feeling unsure about which career opportunities you want to explore.

That is okay!

Setting up an appointment with Fine Arts Career Services is a great way to brainstorm your next steps, whatever your goals may be!

