

## **Bridgewater State College Dance Organizational Background**

**Mission/purpose:** Bridgewater State College, founded in 1840, has a dual mission: To educate the residents of Southeastern Massachusetts, and to use its intellectual, scientific, and technological resources to support and advance the cultural and economic life of Massachusetts. The Dance Program serves to train our students to be excellent teachers of dance in the public and private sectors and to broaden our students' and the area's exposure and understanding of dance as an art form.

### **Organization Overview:**

**a. Overview of Organization's Activities:** BSC enrolls over 10,000 full and part time students in more than 100 degree programs. The BSC Dance Program is housed in the Department of Theater and Dance but works closely with the department of Movement Arts, where technique is taught. The dance major has approximately 70 students. Our BA is the only venue for licensing teachers of dance for Massachusetts schools.

**b. Previous Activities:** The dance program produces two major concerts a year. *Winterdance*, open to all interested students taking a technique class, gives 60 to 90 college students an opportunity to perform. *Dance Kaleidoscope* in the spring is a showcase for advanced dancers to shine. Some years, the choreography is created by advanced student choreographers; other years, students work with professional choreographers, performing works from the professional repertoires, with the professional dance companies performing alongside (companies such as The Danny Sloan Dance Company, Fusionworks, and Weber Works). In Spring 2009, we successfully staged three works in a concert with the Sokolow Now! Dance Company.

**c. Community/Region/Audience:** Southeastern Massachusetts is home to 51 cities and towns and approximately 1.5 million residents. The region has the highest unemployment rates and lowest educational attainment rates in the state. Reflecting the demographics of the area, Bridgewater students tend to come from modest and low-income backgrounds; around 40% of BSC students receive needs-based financial aid. The residents of southeastern Massachusetts are 89% non-Hispanic White; currently Bridgewater's minority enrollment consists of 12% of first-time, full-time freshmen. The ethnic mix is Irish, Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and African American, and increasingly, Asian. This project will contribute to the cultural life of southeastern Massachusetts with a total audience projected of around 600 community members.

**d. Special Efforts:** Southeastern Massachusetts, a largely rural area, is geographically close to the cultural center of Boston, but psychologically distant. While students have access to dance studio performances, there is little experience of concert modern dance as an art form. In our last collaboration with the Sokolow Foundation, our students performed Sokolow's work at three schools in the area and taught dance to area children through a variety of service-learning projects. The proposed project will build on the successes of the last project.

### Details of the Project

**a. Major project activities:** In spring 2011, The Bridgewater State College (BSC) Dance Program will stage a reconstruction of Anna Sokolow's *Ellis Island* for our annual spring dance concert, Dance Kaleidoscope 2011. The dance was created in 1976 on Julliard Dance Majors. BSC collaborated with Sokolow Now! In Spring 2009, when *Dreams* and *Everything Must Go* were restaged on our students. Lorry May and Suellen Haag of the Sokolow Dance Foundation will reconstruct *Ellis Island* and teach it to a select group of our students. May and Haag will teach two (two hour) classes per week for 10 weeks in order to stage the work. The concert will be performed on our main stage in the BSC Rondileau Campus Center Auditorium in the first week of April 2011. The performance will be professionally videotaped for documentation.

Study of the dance will be integrated into a group of five History and Sociology Classes where students are studying immigration. Students in these classes will be invited to attend the performance at a reduced admission. BSC Dance Program Coordinator Dr. Jane Doe will attend a follow-up class with each group to discuss how the dance impacted their understanding of immigration, for a total of 10 appearances. The student dancers will perform in three public and private schools to increase the exposure of this dance to various underserved populations in Southeastern Massachusetts who do not have opportunities to experience concert modern dance. They will conduct service-learning projects, teaching dance to youth through programs such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs.

**b. Goals of Project:** The proposed staging of the Anna Sokolow performance *Ellis Island* expresses the following outcome priority established by the NEA: *Artists and arts organizations have opportunities to create, interpret, present, and perform artistic work.* This goal will be realized in three ways:

- Our dance students will have the opportunity to dance in a piece of master choreography by a famous modern dance artist;
- By working with professional artist on professional choreography, our students will grow as artists in their skills and discipline;
- Our general student body will experience the richness of learning through the arts about issues they are studying and discovering a new way to investigate and understand subject matter.

In addition to achieving this main outcome in line with the goals of "Access to Artistic Excellence," the *Ellis Island* performance will also achieve the additional following outcomes:

*Artistic works and cultural traditions are preserved.*

- Reconstructing a work of Anna Sokolow's brings a piece of dance history into our students' lives, giving them a greater appreciation of the art of modern dance and the giants of the post-war era.
- Performing a work of Anna Sokolow's keeps her work alive and accessible to the public and keeps a dance treasure from being lost.

*Organizations enhance their ability to realize their artistic and public service goals.*

- BSC students will perform and conduct outreach and service at three schools and with young people at a variety of venues such as Boys and Girls Clubs.

*Audiences throughout the nation have opportunities to experience a wide range of art forms and activities.*

- Bring a master work in dance to the residents Southeastern Massachusetts, who have little access to such performances.

**c. Schedule of key project dates:**

<b>January 2011- April 2011</b>	Lorry May and Suellen Haag of Sokolow Now! start reconstructing the dance on selected students, Outreach planning begins.
<b>February 2011</b>	Begin publicizing performance through newspapers and mailers.
<b>March 2011</b>	Dr. Doe meets with five History and Sociology classes to prepare the classes for the performance.
<b>April 2011</b>	Dr. Doe revisits the five classes to debrief them on their experience
<b>April-May 2011</b>	The cast of <i>Ellis Island</i> performs outreach concerts in Southeastern Massachusetts at schools such as Bridgewater Middle, Sage School for Exceptional Students, and the Massachusetts Hospital School.

**d. Key Individuals, Organizations and Works of Art:** *Ellis Island* is a major work by Anna Sokolow, master choreographer of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, who passed away in 2000. Sokolow’s work has been entrusted to Lorry May, Director of the Sokolow Dance Foundation. Ms. May will be the primary reconstructor of the work and will stage the dance on our students, with assistance from Suellen Haag, Managing Director of the Sokolow Dance Foundation and reconstruction assistant. As the attached letter indicates, the Sokolow Foundation has been involved in the development of the proposed project and has committed their participation.

BSC has previously and successfully worked with these artists during a reconstruction of *Dreams*, *Everything Must Go*, and *Sessions for Nine* in Spring 2009. Student enthusiasm and demand for further work in this area led us to select Sokolow’s *Ellis Island*, a piece that deals with the search for a socially just society and economic opportunities. This theme coincides with the college’s mission of social justice and resonates with our students, representing Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Cape Verdean populations, many of them only a generation or two away from immigration experiences themselves. Dr. Jane Doe, Professor of Dance and Coordinator of BSC Dance Program, will be the concert producer and managing director of the project.

Other key personnel will include faculty of the History and Sociology departments, several of whom have indicated they would welcome collaboration. Dr. Doe will contact

the chairs of the departments for suggestions of classes to contact. She will then individually approach the faculty members for collaboration, with a goal of conducting outreach in five classes—one visit preparing students for the performance; a second visit debriefing their experience.

Outreach sites will be contacted in January 2011 with a goal of staging performances in three venues. We anticipate enthusiastic responses from the schools that we performed in for our last outreach project, having received welcome from Bridgewater Public Schools and the Sage School for Exceptional Children, serving gifted and talented children in Foxboro. We hope to add the Massachusetts Hospital School, serving severely handicapped children, to our efforts.

**e. Target Population:** The primary beneficiaries for this project are BSC dance students, the general students at the college, and students in area public and private schools. Approximately 30 dance students will grow from exposure to the master works of a famous choreographer and will learn professional skills and discipline from Sokolow Foundation professionals. An additional 100 students from the general BSC student population will learn about immigration and dance from discussions of the work and viewing of the concert and also the richness of addressing social issues through the arts. We anticipate increasing the impact of our project by sharing it with a total of 200 area school children, exposing them to the exploration of important issues through the arts. We especially want to target public schools in our outreach, as funding cuts have led to arts programs being reduced and sometimes eliminated, and these students have a very limited understanding of the art of dance. These audiences were very connected to the development of this project, as their evaluation and feedback of last year's project shaped the currently proposed project. Six hundred community members who attend the performance will be exposed to professional-level choreography not normally available in this underserved region.

**f. Plans for promoting, publicizing, and/or disseminating the project:** Publicity will be handled by the Management Office of the Department of Theater and Dance. Press releases are generated and disseminated throughout southeastern Massachusetts to local daily and weekly newspapers including the *Patriot Ledger* and the *Brockton Enterprise*. Flyers will be mailed to our Theater and Dance audience list which consists of approximately 500 local households. One hundred flyers will be posted throughout the community.

**g. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the project:** Dr. Doe will monitor the reconstruction project and the performance of the students, who will be evaluated on standard dance performance criteria and graded for their participation in the concert and outreach activities. Students will also provide evaluative feedback through written reflection. Faculty of collaborating classes will evaluate the impact of the project on their students through written reflection and class discussion. Cooperating faculty in outreach venues will monitor the effectiveness of the efforts from written and discussion feedback from colleagues and students. The project will be documented for the archives by a

professional video. These methods were used to evaluate the previous grant and have been adjusted for optimal effectiveness.

**h. Plans for making the project accessible:** The Rondileau Campus Center Auditorium is an accessible space with facilities for wheelchairs—especially important for students of the Massachusetts Hospital School. Written programs will be available for all audience members.. We will follow up with an outreach performance and follow-up discussion session for the students, helping them relate the subject matter of the dance to issues of immigration. The visual nature of the performance makes interpreters unnecessary.

**i. Budget :** The costs for this special project exceed the normal budget for Theater and Dance department performances; however, because of the success of the previous collaboration with the Sokolow Foundation and the projected impact of the currently proposed project, it is a top priority of the department. If the full DanceUSA request is not received, we may be able to petition the Provost for permission to use accumulated funds from the Performing Arts Reserve Fund—accrued from admission fees from previous concerts, and will modify the project plan accordingly to reflect the proportionally reduced project.