

## Dancers Connect Interactive: Distributed Dance Using Social Media

Dr. Mila Parrish (faculty mentor)  
Mabel Magalli Morana (student researcher)  
Yahira Robinson (student researcher)  
Mandi Taylor (Graduate student researcher)

This statement certifies that both the students (Mabel Magalli Morana, Yahira Robinson, and Mandi Taylor) and faculty mentor (Dr. Mila Parrish) were involved in the development of this OUR URCA award application.

## **1. Dancers Connect Interactive (DCI) Project goals:**

Imagine parents moving the coffee table to create living room dance studios that encourage both playful, creative problem solving and togetherness through dance. Guided by a distance dance teacher, these families solve movement challenges such as traveling around their home using three different pathways or creating a “wobble it” dance with their loved ones. This initiative, led by UNCG faculty Mila Parrish and supported by researchers Mabel Magalli Morana, Yahira Robinson and Mandi Taylor, aims to examine how social media can be used to teach dance and how such applications can be used to create community, and support family collaboration through movement.

Social media has transformed the way we think, the way we interact, and the way we learn. Statista reports that as of January 2019, Instagram had one billion monthly users, and Facebook had more than double that amount. Social media capitalizes on the enormous potential created by connecting communities and linking individuals with shared interests and expertise (Alt, D. 2015; Waters & Jamal, 2011). The wide range of benefits in education include improvement of communication and motivation (Lehman & Richardson, 2007) more independent learning and heightened responsibility in students regarding their education and community (Parrish, 2007-2010).

Partnering with the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (UNCG), this newly proposed initiative, Dancers Connect Interactive (DCI) is a natural extension of the university’s longstanding community dance program, Dancers Connect (DC), and examines how instruction distributed via social media informs participants’ engagement in dance experiences and in DCI teachers’ instructional practice. DCI aims to assess and address the following questions:

- (a) What are the advantages and limitations of using social media-distributed dance instruction?
- (b) How will dance activities such as movement challenges, improvisation, and dance sharing be supported and challenged in the social media environment?
- (c) How will the university dance students’ perceptions of teaching, collaboration, and community evolve in the process?

The research team will develop and implement 16 short age-based dance activities to be distributed by DCI among the families of the more than 80 students participating in the program per semester. We are interested in how we can support interest in dance beyond performance preparation and encourage families to dance together. As described above, participating families will receive a short movement challenges through social media, complete the challenge, and then post solution to DC social media.

DCI is the extension of previous research and extends scholarly research in the application of distributed technologies for K-12 students and teachers. Mila Parrish’s publications have established that interactive distributed instruction can support creative teaching and participation in dance (Parrish, 2006). Parrish’s research into the pedagogy of play (Parrish, 2018) and the use of distributed instruction to reach students in rural communities revealed the potential of such applications to increase student-teacher connections, heighten access to resources, and reduce any sense of isolation (Parrish, 2008). Additionally, Parrish’s research considers the distributed lessons’ effectiveness as a practicum opportunity for pre-service dance students for content skills assessment, collaborative problem solving, reflective practice, and dance making (Parrish, 2009; Parrish, 2016).

Understanding the implications of DCI will advance Parrish’s current research program. Morana, Robinson, and Taylor’s research will provide valuable and specific information on the potential impact that social media can have on dance teaching, creating, and distributing through a large community of collaborators in the arts in the future. By increasing creative and artistic opportunities with DC families, DCI will expand students’ awareness of the world of dance.

## **2. Methods the student will use to achieve goals:**

DCI involves case study research and uses two primary approaches: (a) distributed teaching and reflection on the process using reflective journaling in a data notebook (Blankstein, 2004, 2008); and

(b) statistical analysis of technology engagement, including time within the technology and exchange rates using Pixlee analytics software (Turban, et al., 2018). The research team will create and lead distributed instruction activities that will be shared with parents and their children using social media. In the process, Morana, Robinson, and Taylor will hone their pedagogical skills of curricula planning, content delivery, assessment and evaluation, all essential skills required for dance educators. Data will be collected through Morana, Robinson, and Taylor's journals and then statistically analyzed to assess participant engagement with the technology in order to gain deep understanding of the effectiveness of the distributed teaching from the participants' experience.

Successful partnerships are dynamic responsive collaborations, in DCI, content selection will be open and reactive to participants questions, interests and ideas. Culturally responsive pedagogical principles guide DCI's instructional selection and teaching methods. The research team has identified a few thematic activities and topics that we feel would be both beneficial in forming relationships between parents and children and support a growing knowledge of dance. They include: (a) The Legacy of African American ballerina Misty Copeland's career and, mirroring her movements; (b) Combating ageism in, "Yes. Grandma can groove"; (c) Understanding healthy muscles and bodies; understanding the importance of keeping the resource dynamic and highly responsive, DCI will evolve based upon to the interests of participants. Further, we feel that participants will be more engaged if new teachers appear as the process evolves. DCI has selected guest teachers in the areas of African Dance, Hip hop, and Intergenerational dance, however guests will be adapted in response to community interest.

**The DCI research program is in three parts:**

Part A Summer 2019: If funded, the students will participate in Dr. Parrish's New Media in Dance education workshop in June that covers mediated interactive technology and other social media topics. Morana, Robinson, and Taylor will collect background information on distributed interactive instruction in dance, social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest) and their use within community arts organizations, like DC, to better understand the challenges of distributed instruction. The research team will meet periodically over Skype to share research discoveries.

Part B Fall 2019: In Fall 2019, The research team will create and implement DCI within UNCG CVPA's Dancers Connect community program. In August and September, 2019, before the DC community program begins, the research team will to create and test out DCI-distributed movement challenges to determine effectiveness and to sharpen instructional methods. A data notebook will be used to record questions and observations and to reflect on teaching practice during the DCI program. The data notebook can evolve over time to become ongoing collection of data to support critical inquiry and meaningful reflection during the project (Blankstein, 2004, 2008). Methods of reflection may be analytical, descriptive, or reflective and they may include individual perceptions, reflections on the instructional process, key questions and concerns, and evidence of student interactivity. In the process of using the data notebook it is anticipated that the UNCG students will step outside of their assumptions revealing students' needs more clearly (NCTA, 2005). Over the course of the DCI research cycle, the team will meet weekly to discuss pedagogy, curricula, and issues as they arise. They will also plan for special guests, share innovations and discoveries, and compare research accounts. DCI will complete curriculum instruction in December 2019.

Part C Spring 2020: In Spring 2020, Taylor, Morana and Robinson will assess and evaluate the outcomes of the project by looking at participant use and engagement. They will identify significant themes as they emerge and will also prepare a conference presentation describing the research model, findings, and conclusions from the research. They will also hopefully participate in the Spring 2020 Research & Creativity Expo and submit an electronic report of the study's findings by May 15, 2020.

**3. Role of the Faculty Mentor:**

Mila Parrish, the faculty mentor, will provide guidance throughout the research and oversee the DCI instructional movement activity development, dissemination of "activity episodes" on social media.

She will advise in curricular decisions and supervise assessment protocols. Interactive instruction requires clear pedagogical planning. It is probable that some parts of the technology or instruction will not be successful. Interactive distributed instruction while engaging, upbeat and seemingly effortless, must also be detailed, thoughtfully paced, and carefully articulated so that the families understand goals, verbal cues, and directions. Dr. Parrish will supervise instructional planning so that all activities connect to the goal for universal access to and education within the realm of social media. Parrish will provide support for all DCI distributed instruction as well as review data collection protocols to make sure they are well organized and methodical. Once the DCI program has been completed, Dr. Parrish will assist with data analysis and guide Morana, Robinson, and Taylor through the process of preparing a conference session for the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO).

#### **4. Role of the students:**

Taylor, Morana and Robinson are taking different yet distinctive leadership roles in DCI research program. Taylor will oversee planning, communication and production of the distributed dance activities. Robinson will take the lead on the interactive and technological aspects of the DCI research while Morana will work closely with Dr. Parrish on the development distributed movement challenge episodes. Taylor and Morana will coordinate planning and filming schedules as well as communicate with dance specialists as needed. Robinson meanwhile will delve into the possibilities for social media to increase collaboration during the distributed activity episodes, innovations in media applications, interfaces, modes of data retrieval as well as response and reposting rates.

#### **5. Benefits to the faculty member:**

The DCI program extends Dr. Parrish's research in distributed instruction for dance and might bear the potential of being hugely impactful for the more than 200 young dancers and their families she manages every year as Director of UNCG's DC community programming. The research creates intersectionality between pedagogy, modes of interactive distance instruction, and community engagement. The study expands one of Parrish's recent publication, "Toward transformation: Digital tools for online dance pedagogy and the outcomes," which could significantly inform interactive distributed dance pedagogy theory development.

#### **6. Benefits to the Students:**

The DCI research project will provide the students with invaluable insight into pedagogical practice, detailed teaching plans, and varied assessment strategies using technology supported delivery, all of which are critical skills in the development of highly effective educators. Morana and Robinson are seeking K-12 initial teacher licensure and Taylor is earning an MFA in dance. Being mentored by Parrish, who has extensive expertise in pedagogy, dance technology, and mediated dance instruction, the students will begin to see the complexities of the role of dance educator and dance scholars. The students will present their research and findings at the NDEO conference in Miami, Florida, and the NCDEO conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. Presenting DCI research at these national conferences offers a unique opportunity for them to network with individuals of similar research interests, to connect with the professional community as a student/scholar, and to potentially guide them toward future graduate study.

#### **7. Justification of the Award Amount:**

We request \$1250 for the project, \$2500 each for Morana and Robinson, and \$750 for Taylor for the funding cycle. These funds will support DCI research by: providing students focused time to create and design, create, implement and DCI instructional elements within the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 DC community dance program; to evaluate the DCI instructional elements and analyze the student response data; and finally to prepare presentations of this research at the NDEO and NCDEO conferences. All students pay for their living expenses and tuition. The requested award amount for the research will help them offset some of this cost and permit them to participate in the program rather than seeking employment elsewhere.

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