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Project Title: Community Outreach in the Performing Arts: A Case Study of the *Dance Africa Detroit* Touring Program

Student(s): Colleen Laules
Faculty Mentor: Doug Risner, Ph.D.
Maggie Allesee Department of Dance

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Research Problem

Community outreach strives for a purpose of making students interested in topics that may not be learned in any other way. For the university students, community outreach teaches them how to adapt the information they have learned into a unique and creative way that will make the children learn and enjoy learning at the same time.

This research project's central questions ask: What is the status of community outreach touring programs in dance? How does Wayne State University's *Dance Africa Detroit* compare to other universities across the nation? Along with this case study, I created a documentary DVD of *Dance Africa Detroit* by putting together a great amount of interviews from people involved in the production and performance.

Project Description

This creative research study looked at the purpose, intent, development, and production of the Wayne State University's Maggie Allesee Department of Dance touring program. The production of *Dance Africa Detroit* was originally produced in 2005 and presented the program to 19 schools in the Detroit, the metro area and Canada from 2006-2008. This program reached nearly 15,000 K-12 students. The study documented the program's development and dissected the main components of successful performing arts outreach programs.

Literature Review

Dance education is one way to reduce inequalities in the education of students from different economic and racial backgrounds (Di Maggio, 1980). Programs have been developed to give equal opportunities to schools in urban communities (Di Maggio, 1980). The community dance movement is characterized as developing and delivering dance-based programs by reaching a variety of populations, communities, and individuals (Risner, 2007). This formal education can provide children of all classes and backgrounds with the skills and credentials needed to compete on an even basis for jobs and income and to participate fully in the opportunities and responsibilities of American society (Di Maggio, 1980).

These programs create cognitive and non-cognitive skills that involvement in aesthetic education and the arts may develop in students and young people (Di Maggio, 1980). The arts develop characteristics in children such as creativity, flexibility, and the capacity for abstract thought that are necessary for success in many professional and managerial roles may prove to be developed through experiences in aesthetic education, the arts, and cultural activities (Di Maggio, 1980).

Dance projects look for social inclusion by empowering students who are excluded from the mainstream like at-risk children, core city populations, individuals who are physically or mentally challenged (Risner, 2007). Students who are involved in these dance programs experience growth in confidence, tolerance, and persistence through these opportunities (Risner, 2007).

There is a lack of a common language in many arts disciplines which limits the ability to talk about what has changed in an arts experience, whether an assessment is qualitative or quantitative (Bradley, 2003). Relevance must be interpreted and comparisons made with other elements of evidence (Bradley, 2003). There must also be common definitions of what constitutes as progress (Bradley, 2003). Dance skills include building words based on sounds for another language vocabulary; dance skills are taught through a discovery process that includes explorations of movement vocabulary and manipulation of content into meaningful phrases (Bradley, 2003). Lack of attention can be a problem for most dance classes in schools, since the class is often taught by a physical education teacher as a unit of study (Bradley, 2003). Schools, museums, and performing arts organizations are thought of as an educational collective that provides lifelong learning opportunities for students, visitors, and audiences (Soren, 1993). Their priority is to present to the public performances and productions that build on outstanding technical and interpretive strengths (Soren, 1993). Students and teachers attend drama, music, and dance performances; performing and visual artists are brought into classrooms to help students understand creative processes and promote appreciation of artworks (Soren, 1993). These educational programs also are attempting to nurture lifelong interest in attending museums and arts performances (Soren, 1993). Partnerships among schools, museums, and performing arts organizations may be far more powerful for promoting arts and science education than singular efforts by individual institutions (Soren, 1993). Schools and cultural organizations, together, can work towards advancing the self-interests of each (Soren, 1993). They can discuss successes and common problems, as a collective, and work towards promoting literacy in the arts and sciences (Soren, 1993). As a result, more students may choose courses and careers in the arts and sciences, and more individuals may decide to attend museums and arts performances (Soren, 1993).

If it is taught in an arts school and by a professional dancer, it is usually presented as a repertory process rather than a creative study and a journey of art (Bradley, 2003). Dance works on a larger canvas than that of a singular and ratified art discipline (Bradley, 2003). As embodied knowledge, as a container for human expression and as a moving history, dance fosters deep and experiential learning (Bradley, 2003). Dance has inquiry processes similar to science (Bradley, 2003). Scientists identify patterns that they analyze and metaphorize as dance or choreography (Bradley, 2003). The dance students of public schools benefit from finding the math in dance, the dance in poetry, and the scientific inquiry in all of the creative arts (Bradley, 2003).

Community outreach helps build new audiences for dance through partnerships with local presenters (Callahan, 2005). A dance company's education and outreach program enriches a community by making dance an accessible art form and sharing it with new audiences (Edens, 2004). Such a program is also vital for the artistic growth and economic survival of the company itself (Edens, 2004). The community outreach program is used as both a developmental and marketing tool and provides potential growth which is limitless (Edens, 2004).

Research Methods

For this research study, researched methods included a literature study, interviews with

members, directors, and school administrators involved with *Dance Africa Detroit*, and also created an Internet survey which was sent to a variety of dance departments across the nation.

Research Data Findings

The purpose of the program was to inspire and educate children of different cultures and ages in a unique and engaging way.

From the collection of interviews gathered in this research, students at the K-12 schools, their staff, and university students all learned from the *Dance Africa Detroit* process. K-12 students and staff were exposed to history and culture they may not have experienced any other way. University students were taught how to create, choreograph, and tour with a successful show in order to provide the service of community outreach.

Children learned and were inspired by the program which was apparent in the questions they asked the director and students after the show.

A survey was electronically sent out to university dance departments across the nation. With this survey, there was a 52 percent response rate which effects the data shown below. On average, Wayne State University better compares to larger departments than departments of their own size with the type of community outreach, importance of community outreach, and the size of individuals reached by the program.

Analysis

Through the interviews, participants of the program had many positive remarks to extend towards dance education and the success of *Dance Africa Detroit*.

As previously discussed in the purpose and description of the research project, the learning experience is extended through the staff, the audience of the program and also the university students experiencing the production and choreographic process. Director of the program, Karen Prall, said in an interview, "I think that is the best way to learn is to something right in front of you and I think that also seeing this type of a show with dance in it, it helps them with their dreams of the future, I think it helped them to dream more and I think it helped them with that- to say "I can do this" and it helped them go further"

Another extension of that learning is through masterclasses that some students in the past two years had the advantage of taking in order to better enhance their educational experience through the *Dance Africa Detroit* Touring Program. Aaron Smith, a member of the 2007 Company One touring group said, "I think the masterclass got the kids out of the ballet or modern style and introduced them to a new style of dance. I think the class helped because some people learn differently rather than just seeing, but by actually doing it I feel that it adds a new level to education."

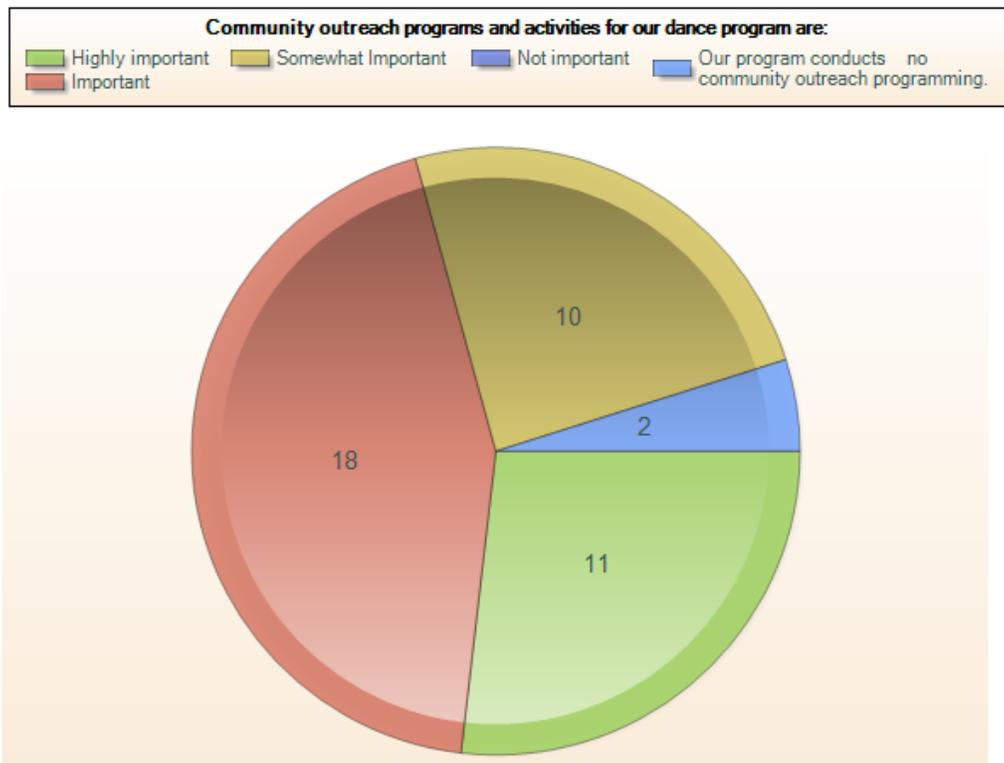
This was not only a program to educate students of all ages, but also to serve as a beacon of inspiration. Director Karen Prall said, "*Dance Africa Detroit* was all about bringing to the beautiful young people a situation where they could understand where many of our dances came from; hip hop dancing, tap dancing, swing. A lot of young people didn't even know what swing was until we did this presentation of *Dance Africa Detroit*, but a lot of the children do know what hip hop is, they know what

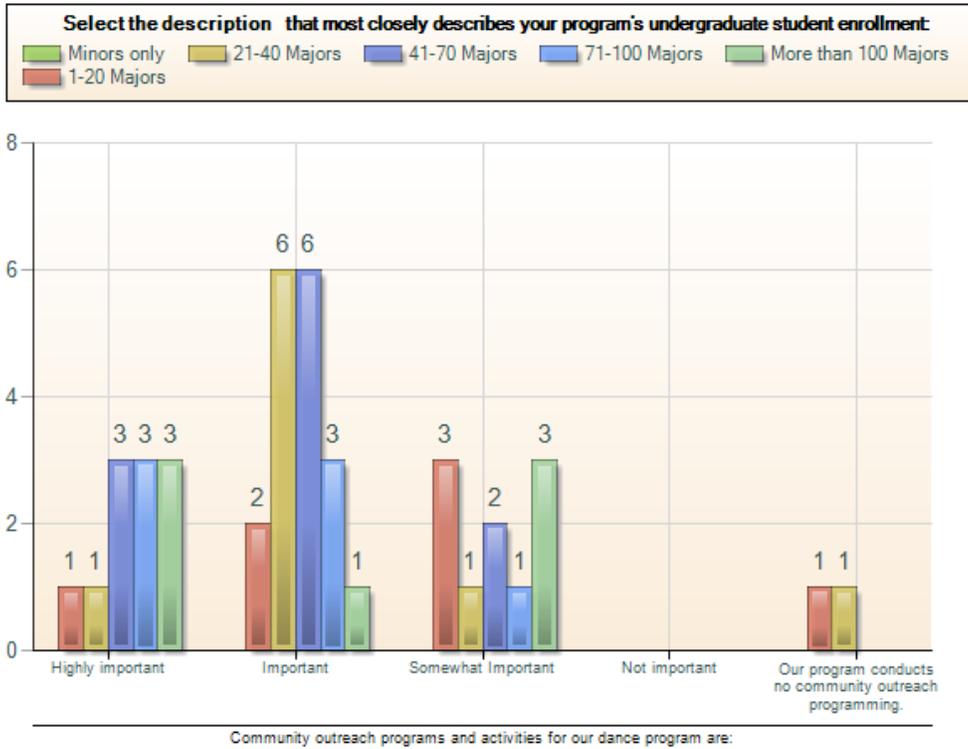
hip hop is but they don't know where it came from, so thats what *Dance Africa Detroit* was for me: to show them *where* it came from, *how* that happened, and *when* that happened.”

In the literature that was researched it was said that the particular art form of dance creates lifelong qualities that are not created by other forms of education. By being educated about art at an early age, as they grow older, the students are more likely to support other arts later on. “Dance as an art form is something that is enjoyable when done well and that maybe they would want to go see more dance in their lifetime and not only dance in general but be interested in diverse forms of art like African dance as a performance form which is mostly what it is now in America,” said co-director of *Dance Africa Detroit*, Stephen Stone. Stone continues, “I think they learned, you can go to college, you can make something of yourself, you can achieve whatever it is you want to achieve.” It is this kind of support and inspiration that programs like *Dance Africa Detroit* offer to underprivileged students.

Results from the interview accentuate was was said in the literature review, however some things were still left unclear on the department's side of community outreach. With the departments who responded, the following is the information gathered from the electronic survey.

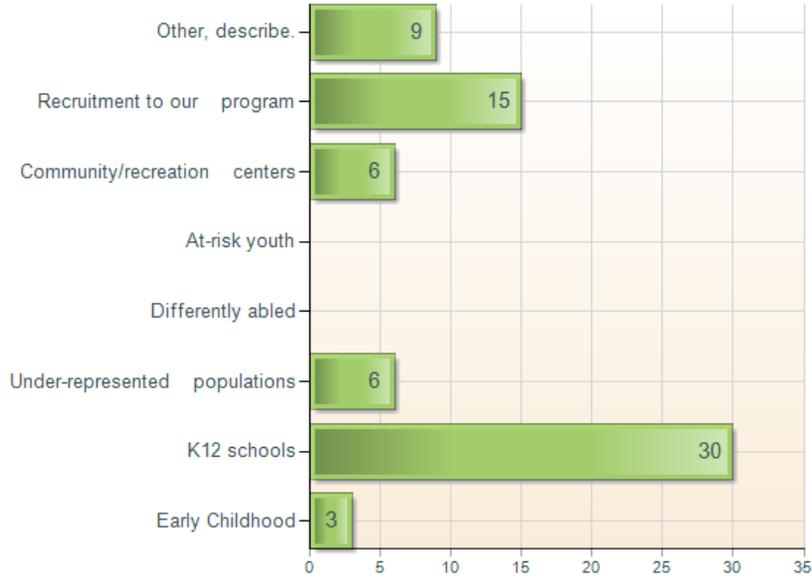
When asked the importance of community outreach programs in the department, 26.8 percent viewed community outreach as highly important, 43.9 percent viewed community outreach as important, 24.4 percent reported it was somewhat important, zero percent said community outreach was not important, and 4.9 of departments do not conduct community outreach. Wayne State University's community outreach is viewed as important.





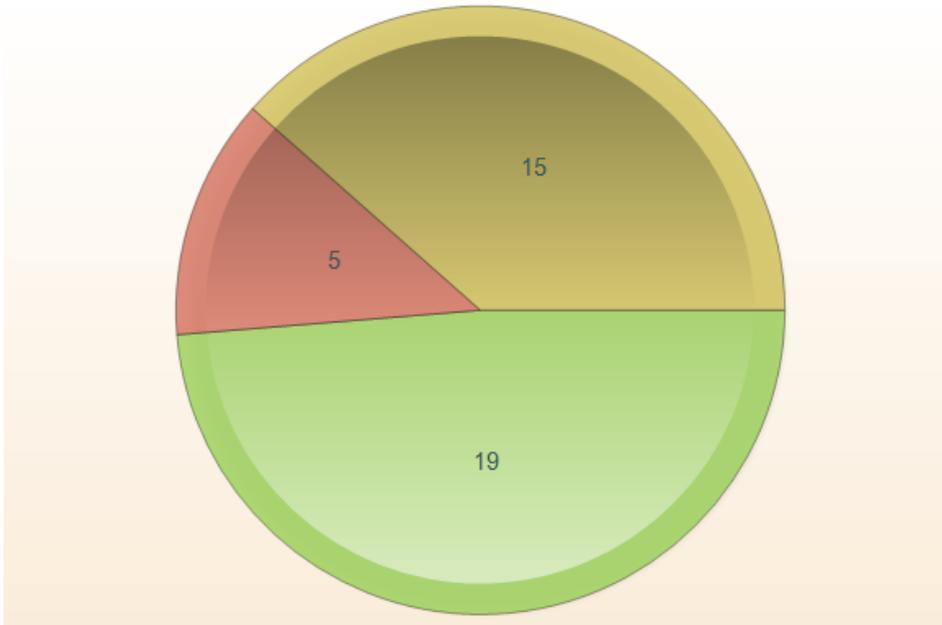
When asked who the department's community outreach program is targeted for, 7.7 percent reported it was for early childhood audiences, 76.9 percent said it was for K12 schools, 15.4 percent said it was for an under-represented population, 15.4 percent said it was for community and recreation centers, and 38.5 percent said their program was used for recruitment to the dance program. Wayne State University's department is targeted for K12 schools and as recruitment to the dance program.

Our program's community outreach is primarily targeted for: (select two only)



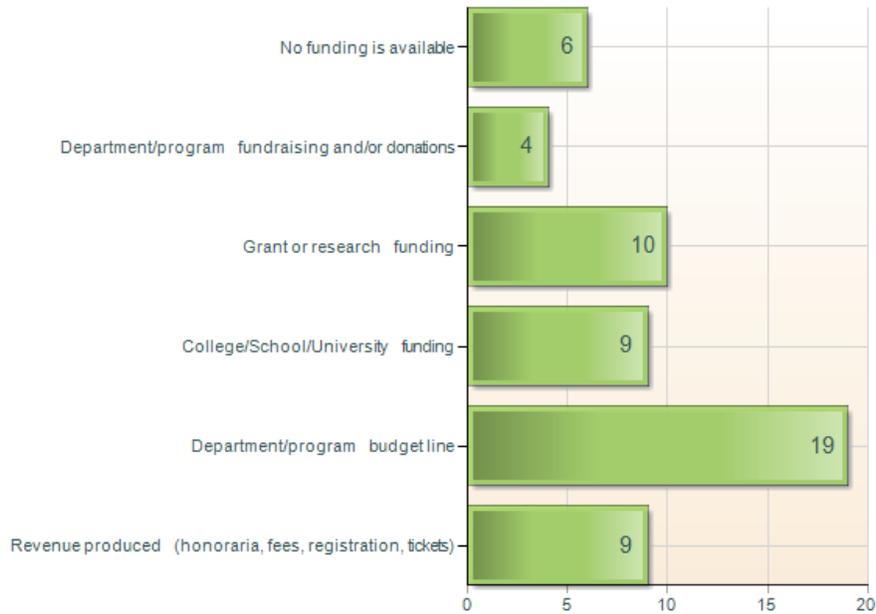
Community outreach occurs off campus for 48.7 percent of the departments surveyed, 12.8 percent on campus, and 38.5 percent equally on and off campus. Wayne State University fell into the category of 41-70 majors which conducts outreach primarily off campus, and in comparison to other department of that size, 45.5 percent of their community outreach is off campus, 9.1 percent is on campus, and 45.5 percent is equally on and off campus.

Most of our program's community outreach programming occurs:
 Off campus On campus Equally on and off campus



The majority of the funding was provided by a department or program budget line at 50 percent, 26.3 percent had grant or research funding, 23.7 were revenue produced, 23.7 percent had college or university funding, 15.8 percent said no funding was available, and 10.5 percent had department/program fundraising or donations. For the 41-70 majors size that Wayne State compares to, 50 percent said their funds were from revenue and 40 percent said funding was in the department's budget. Wayne State University falls into a higher majority with funding from the department's budget.

Most of our program's community outreach programming is funded by (select no more than two)



The primary forms of community outreach were individual workshops or masterclasses at 60.5 percent, 44.7 percent said they had a formal touring or performance group, 26.3 percent said they had an informal form of touring, 26.3 percent said they have a educational or recruitment event, and 13.2 percent said they had a specially designed program which lasted from week-long to semester-long. Wayne State University's dance department conducts a formalized tour and performance along with individual masterclasses which is better compared to the departments of over 100 majors (71.4 percent formalized touring and 71.4 percent masterclasses) rather than the 41-70 majors group where 40 percent was a class and 30 percent was formalized touring.

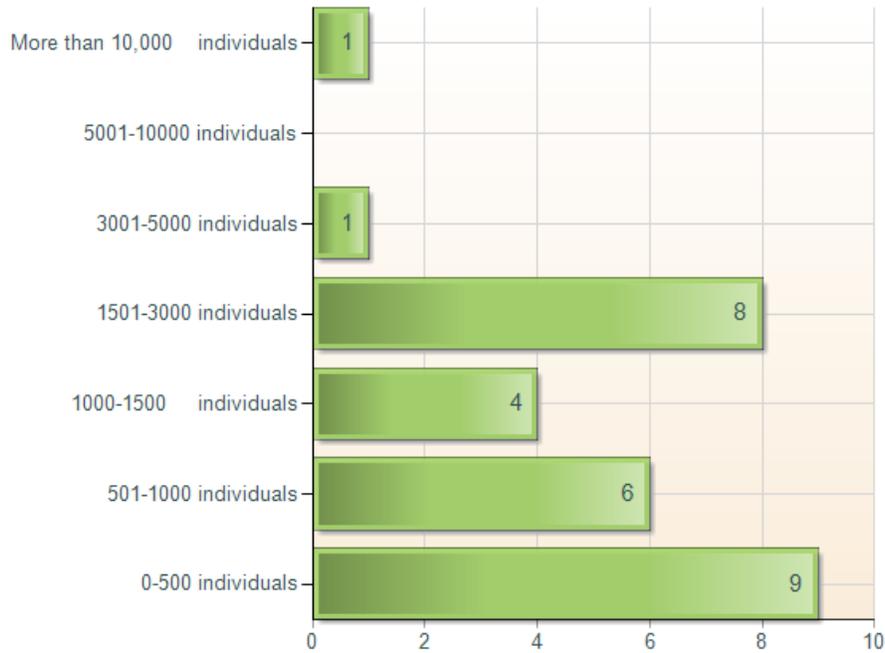
The primary focus of the community outreach program was educational programing delivered in a performance or lecture demonstration format (58.6 percent), performance programing delivered in a concert-like format (20.7 percent), workshop or masterclass format delivered in an interactive teaching format (6.9 percent), and recruitment programing delivered in various formats (3.4 percent). Wayne State University compares to its' own 41-70 majors group with having 80 percent of focus on educational programing delivered in a performance or lecture demonstration format.

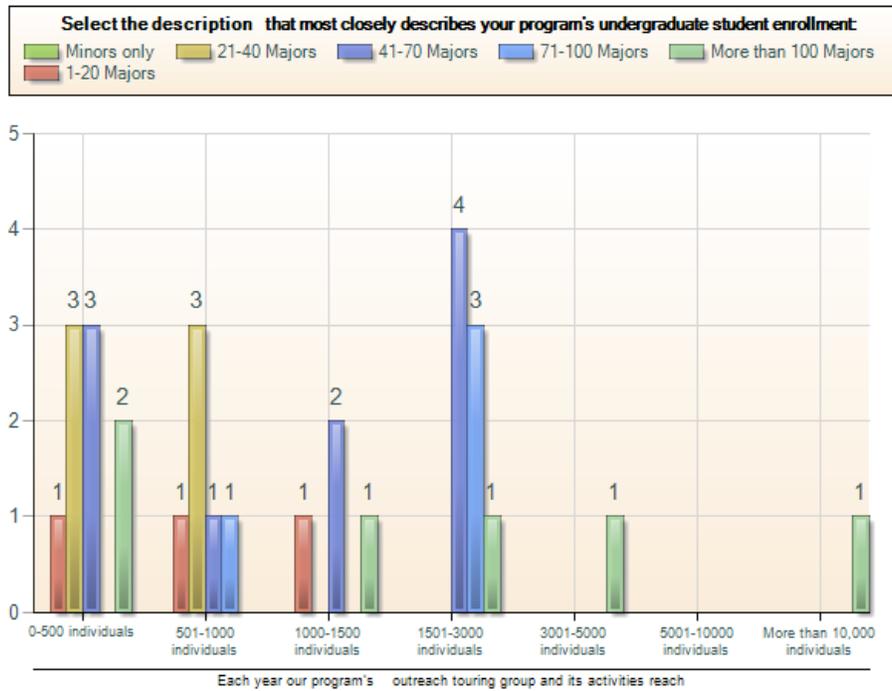
The primary forms of dance style or genre were modern at 28.1 percent, a combination of modern and ballet at 15.6 percent, and a combination of jazz and modern at 15.6 percent. Although *Dance Africa Detroit* was primarily focused on African dance, previous years were heavily focused on modern dance. This therefore ties Wayne State University into the majority of departments when focusing on the dance style or genre.

Each year the department's program reaches 0-500 individuals (31 percent), 501-1,000 individuals (20.7 percent), 1,001-1,500 individuals (13.8 percent), 1,5001-3,000 individuals (27.6 percent), 3,001-5,000 individuals (3.4 percent), 5,001-10,000 individuals (zero percent), and more than 10,000 individuals (3.4 percent). Wayne State University's *Dance Africa Detroit* reached on average

7,500 individuals each year of its two year existence. Although no one reported to be in the 5,001-10,000 range, this number puts us closer to departments of over 100 majors since 16.7 percent reported reaching 3,001-5,000 individuals and 16.7 percent reported reaching over 10,000 individuals where departments of 41-70 reported not having reached any number over 3,000.

Each year our program's outreach touring group and its activities reach





Conclusions

On average Wayne State University better compares to larger departments than departments of their own size in the audiences reached, the targeted audience, and the way community outreach is conducted and funded. *Dance Africa Detroit* was a unique approach to community outreach by encompassing the idea of culture, history and dance all as one performance by providing the education of African dance, swing dance, tap dance, and hip hop along with finding the correlation between all the forms of dance.

Community outreach is an important form of education for underprivileged children, especially like those in the Detroit area who may not be exposed to the arts in any other way. Dance provides many positives like changing of characteristics, cognitive thinking skills, and an approach to thinking that will be useful in other subjects like math or science. These traits also influence the child to pursue education and careers in the arts and sciences.

By engaging children in the arts at an early age, they learn to appreciate art and are therefore more likely to support the arts as well. Although some departments may find funding from various sources, it is apparent in this study that community outreach benefits not only the community who is viewing or engaged in the program but also university students who learn from the experience as well.

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