

**Approaches to Evaluating Faculty Outreach, Part II:  
Demonstration Project—Evaluation of CU Contemporary Dance Works**

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**1 Introduction**

1.1 Overview of the Evaluation Study

In 2011 the University of Colorado Boulder Office of University Outreach (OUO) commissioned our research unit to explore the evaluation needs, opportunities, and interests of faculty who have been awarded Faculty Outreach awards. These awards, typically \$5000-8000 per year, support faculty to carry their research and creative work and teaching expertise to a wide variety of local and state public audiences. While each grant is modest, many of the projects develop into sizable and sustained efforts that may, for example, provide high visibility to CU programs, yield scholarly products, enhance the experiences of CU students, and attract external funding. Moreover, with a significant university investment overall, there is merit in documenting the value of this investment to the community and state. At the same time, the OUO seeks to encourage faculty to think in a scholarly, evidence-based way about their outreach work and how they might optimize its value to external audiences in ways that are consistent with faculty's own needs, capacities and values.

To study these issues, we developed a two-pronged approach:

- 1) A qualitative study based on interviews with faculty award holders around campus, to explore their interest in evaluation, and the needs and opportunities offered by their projects
- 2) Three “demonstration projects” evaluating Faculty Outreach projects, to provide practical examples and bring evaluation-related concerns, challenges, and possibilities to the fore.

The demonstration projects were chosen using several criteria. We selected multi-year projects that were well established and offered evidence of prior success, and whose leaders were willing to work with us. We sought a portfolio of demonstration projects that included variety across disciplines, outreach audiences and outreach methods yet offered examples of major outreach approaches used by other projects, such as youth experiences, public performances, and K-12 teacher professional development. Here we report on one of these demonstration projects.

While participating in outreach projects clearly offers benefits to CU students and faculty, our work centers on the challenge of documenting benefit to the external audiences targeted by outreach. A separate study by Ken Howe and Chad Nash focuses on the professional outcomes for faculty of conducting outreach, especially as related to their professional advancement.

1.2 Overview of the Dance Outreach Project and Evaluation Questions

Each spring for the past four years, CU Contemporary Dance Works (CUCDW) has visited Trinidad and other communities in Las Animas County, CO, for a week-long residency. In this and previous residencies, dancers have worked with young people in schools and dance studios, led classes and demonstrations at community centers, given impromptu performances in businesses and public spaces, and perform their own work in a public dance concert. The 2012 residency took place May 14-18.

The CUCDW residency program seeks to offer novel, meaningful, and personal experiences of the arts to people in communities throughout Colorado. Compared to a traditional tour with stops in a different town each day, the residency model—an extended visit of one week, repeated for several years in a row—was designed to offer more depth. Community members can participate in more than one event, or in multiple events over time, and the company has potential to reach a wider and more diverse audience than might otherwise learn about and attend a single event. Our study thus sought to probe how members of this community perceived the value of these experiences, including potential enhancements due to the residency model. Moreover, the Theatre and Dance (THDA) Department believes that the intensive residency experience is important for the professional development of its students as dancers, choreographers, teachers and company leaders. While the residency model differs in interesting ways from single performance formats, it shares many general issues with other performance-based outreach efforts on campus, thus providing the potential to serve as a model for others.

In collaboration with Peg Posnick, coordinator of CUCDW and other dance outreach activities, and Nada Diachenko, CUCDW's faculty advisor, we developed the following questions about the dance outreach program:

1. What outcomes are reported by individual community members and their families from participating in dance events during the residency?
2. What, if any, community impact do participants perceive from the residency?
3. What added value—if any—may be offered by the residency model, in comparison with a single show or classroom visit?
4. What outcomes are reported by the graduate student dancers who plan, rehearse and carry out the tour?

A second layer of evaluation questions grows out of the broader effort to examine the needs, interests and opportunities for more robust evaluation of Faculty Outreach projects.

5. What methods may be used to probe these questions, and what considerations enter into selection of methods for a particular study?
6. How do the selected methods work in practice to gather information, with what results, what investment of resources and what potential for sustained independent use in the dance program?
7. What can be learned from the pilot project that is useful to the OUO and to faculty in setting expectations and implementing evaluation appropriate for funded Faculty Outreach projects?

These questions were developed in collaboration with the outreach project leaders and OUO staff, and with awareness of recent scholarly work on university outreach and engagement (e.g., Fitzgerald, Burack & Seifer, 2010).

## **2 Selection of Study Methods**

In this section we identify how the evaluation questions and data collection approaches emerged. We provided some detail about the process, not just our ultimate design choices, to guide future projects in assessing whether or not similar methods would work for them. For the same

reasons, we include as appendices our study instruments and some working documents that may help others see how they evolved and adapt similar approaches for their own outreach work.

The study design emerged from initial conversations with dance educators Diachenko and Posnick. Posnick continued to work closely with us throughout the year to develop the study approach, design study instruments, and interpret results, and served as the liaison to Diachenko. They described the history of CUCDW, their reasons for choosing the residency model over a traditional tour that visits a different town each day, and their observations and hypotheses about the outcomes of the residency for both dancers and audiences. Through these conversations (which we audio-recorded for reference), the opportunities and challenges for evaluation became increasingly clear. Ultimately, we pursued two component studies, detailed below.

### 2.1 Component study 1: Dancer outcomes and advice

The project leaders offered numerous observations of how graduate students benefited personally and professionally from participation, as future performers, dance educators, and company leaders. These observations were grounded in their rich observations and experiences with many graduate students over time. Therefore it was straightforward to identify the company members as a target for study, pursuing both summative evaluation of the outcomes for students as an educational experience, and their formative feedback about how to improve future residencies.

For simplicity, we chose to survey the dancers. Since their number was small, we could gather and analyze open-ended text responses. A high response rate was expected because responses could be required before stipend checks were issued. We also decided to conduct a focus group, asking the dancers to expand on their answers and react to others' comments. This structured conversation was added to the wrap-up session when dancers return equipment and sign forms immediately upon their return from the residency. To develop the questionnaire, the evaluator extracted the project leaders' observations and hypotheses from the transcript and notes, and supplied a list of possible topics and questions to Posnick (working document attached as Appendix A), who finalized and administered the questionnaire (attached as Appendix B). We did not promise anonymity; responses were identifiable to Posnick but not the evaluator. Posnick conducted the post-tour focus group, asking dancers to share and elaborate on their answers to the questionnaire, and providing her the opportunity to follow up in real time.

We received seven dancer surveys (100% response) and analyzed their text responses using thematic analysis. Posnick's notes and impressions were used as a starting point in developing these themes. Results are presented in Section 3 below.

### 2.2 Component study 2: Community impact

In contrast to their first-hand observations of the dancers, the project leaders' ideas about the value of the residency to local people were more hypothetical. They believed that the residency model exposed members of rural Colorado communities to the arts, especially new or unfamiliar art forms that they might not otherwise encounter. They believed that engagement across multiple years and through multiple community venues yielded deeper value than a one-shot visit. They mentioned the opportunity for spontaneous interactions, such as a performance in a local coffee shop that one group invented. We decided to include an evaluation component to address these very interesting ideas, focusing on the response of community members and whether we could detect "value added" by the residency model over a traditional tour.

Selecting methods for this part of the study was complex. A quick search of the literature yielded little help. One challenge for gathering audience responses is that the performers interact only briefly with individuals. Thus the audience has little opportunity and feels little obligation to provide feedback. We considered a short audience survey, such as a postcard on every seat. While this method is useful for gathering (e.g.) basic demographic data from audiences, it does not afford the opportunity to get at deeper meanings of greater interest. The project leaders were familiar with the possibilities and limitations of audience survey data from surveying young people in schools, and did not feel that this kind of information would be helpful.

We decided instead to gather data using short interviews with community leaders, choosing well-placed individuals who could offer informed perspectives on the value of the residency to local people, and on the value added by the extended, multi-year format. We developed a list of possible interviewees—teachers, dance studio leaders, community leaders and contacts at the community venues used by the company—who could also provide additional contacts through “snowball” sampling. We e-mailed them a one-page invitation (Appendix C) and also provided hard copies to distribute during the company’s visit to Trinidad in February (an extra outreach activity arranged by OUO). However, we received no responses to this invitation, and concluded that an interview was asking too much of potential informants.

Instead, we developed a one-page community questionnaire that could go to a wide range of participants and attendees of all residency events in both hard-copy and online formats (Appendix D). We planned to reach respondents by handing out hard copies at CUCDW events, printing a URL in the program for the public performance, providing a link on the Trinidad Junior College web site (TJC hosts the public performance), and running a small ad soliciting responses to the online questionnaire in the local newspaper for two weeks following the residency. The outreach office volunteered to coordinate this ad with their other publicity efforts for the tour.

Posnick asked graduate student Cristina Goletti, the assistant tour director, to gather hard-copy surveys on site. We met with Goletti to clarify her role and incorporate her ideas, finalize the wording of the community survey, and develop handouts. She took the lead on developing interactive questions to ask youth during the school visits, and gathered extensive video footage while in Trinidad.

Ultimately, we acquired 40 hard-copy surveys and 4 online surveys; in all 42 were useable. The newspaper ad fell through for unknown reasons, which limited data-gathering mainly to Goletti’s real-time efforts. While this is a small sample relative to the overall attendance, it is large enough to analyze, and we present those results in Section 4 below. Short text responses were analyzed for themes, again using Posnick’s comments about the raw data as a starting point.

### 2.3 Other activities

The evaluation team reviewed prior survey questions used by the CUCDW (and by the undergraduate touring group, the CU Moving Company) for school-based outreach. We suggested some wording changes, considered age appropriateness, and discussed questions that might be more or less useful for evaluative purposes. We also brainstormed ways that the company could support teachers in building on their pupils’ dance experience, such as a packet of follow-up activities and ideas for connections to other curricular topics. Such activities could be used to gather data about outcomes for schoolchildren in the future.

### 3 Results: Dancer Questionnaire

Dancer comments were coded using open-ended coding. Because responses ranged widely in content, we coded all themes across all the questionnaire items, rather than separately coding each item. Fifteen main themes emerged, which were further grouped into three main categories—one gathering all formative feedback, and two describing outcomes. Table 1 shows these themes, the numbers of responses under each theme and category, and the percentages of all comments.

**Table 1: Themes Identified in Dancer Questionnaires: Feedback and Outcomes**

THEMES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONSES
<b>Formative feedback &amp; advice</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>49%</b>
Advice: Preparing & scheduling	13	19%
Success: Dancers got along well	6	9%
Problem: PR, advertising	5	7%
Advice: Be flexible and open-minded	4	6%
Success: Watershed Festival	4	6%
Advice: Work with the same group for a longer time	2	3%
<b>Benefits to the dancers</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22%</b>
Preparation for the profession	6	9%
Gained teaching skills	3	4%
Appreciated students' growth	3	4%
Learned new style or movement	2	3%
Fun & enjoyment	1	1%
<b>Benefits to the community</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20%</b>
General community engagement and impact	5	7%
New experiences and opportunities	5	7%
New perspectives on dance	4	6%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

We discuss each of the three main categories below. About half of all comments offered formative feedback to improve the program, and the rest were split between observations about outcomes of the program for dancers themselves, and benefits they perceived for the community.

#### 3.1 Formative feedback useful to the program

An important feature of the CUCDW is that graduate students plan, prepare and carry out the tour themselves. Diachenko and Posnick advise the student director and assistant director and

helps to keep things moving so that key deadlines are not missed (e.g. publicity, reservations), but a premise of the program is that much of the educational value for graduate students comes from taking responsibility themselves. Therefore formative feedback is useful for future tour leaders, and for Diachenko and Posnick in guiding them—yet each year is a learning experience for a new group of students.

The most common suggestion by far, across all categories and raised by every dancer, was that the group should practice and train more. Some dancing and teaching techniques could improve if they took more time to practice with each other, and they would be able to anticipate and fill in “holes” in the program: “Plan plan plan, but be ready to adapt,” suggested one. Different members brought different strengths, and several advised future company members to “prepare sooner than later” so that everyone was comfortable with the choreography and could contribute across the week’s varied activities. Two people suggested a pre-tour training session to share “tips for teaching large groups and ... creative movement games, exercises and strategies.” Others made specific suggestions about scheduling, sequencing, and themes and activities for future tours, which Diachenko and Posnick will pass along to future company leaders.

Stresses in last-minute planning did raise some interpersonal tensions, and one grad student suggested that every company member should be able to work under the 3 Bs: “Breathe, Be flexible, and Be open-minded.” Nonetheless, respondents were generally content with their fellow company members; all mentioned in their surveys that they all got along well and appreciated the diverse contributions and personalities of their peers. While overall they considered that the tour went well, they recognized a need for strong advance organization and communication among company members. According to Posnick, this is a perennial “aha” for the dancers, part of the learning curve for each group—therefore the questionnaire serves as a reflective exercise for the dancers as well as a data source for the outreach project. Dancers’ advice to future company members can be summed up by this comment: “Be flexible, bring medicine, listen, observe, participate, and be prepared to have fun!”

In addition to school- and studio-based classes and the public performance, which are typical events for the tour, this year’s residency included a new kind of event, the Trinidad Water Festival. According to Eric Carpenter from CU’s Science Discovery program, which also participated, the festival provided an opportunity for some 1500 students to learn about the local water supply, water conservation and watershed protection. Held at Trinidad State Junior College, participating organizations included state parks, wildlife agencies, tribal groups, companies, nonprofits, and higher education, including a large contingent from CU Boulder.

CUCDW worked with younger learners on concepts about the water cycle. Participating in the Water Festival was a highlight for many dancers. They saw it as a high-leverage chance to reach many children across grade levels, and enjoyed making cross-disciplinary connections such as this one: “I talked about the human body being comprised of mostly water. Cerebrospinal fluid became a way in for the undulating movement exercises I taught in warm-up.” Preparing for the festival was also useful: “All of us planning a lesson plan for the water festival was a good way to learn about teaching big groups in an outreach/ educational setting.” While other comments reflected dancers’ enjoyment, we treat these comments on the festival as feedback to the program about the types of events and collaborations to pursue in the future.

One problem surfaced in the formative feedback, as several dancers felt the program should have more advertising within the community. They believed that if the program were better known,

they could be more successful. They noticed that their audience is growing but they wanted to see it grow even more. We understand that the OUO generally helps with publicity, but this year all of the planned publicity did not take place, which likely affected audience sizes, particularly for the public performance. This is a place where clear lines of communication between the project and the outreach office about responsibilities and timelines would be beneficial.

### 3.2 Benefits to dancers

Across the dancer questionnaires, several benefits were commonly reported. Nearly all the dancers felt that they gained useful professional experience. Learning how to organize and plan outreach programs made them feel more confident about their ability to accomplish similar goals in the future. “Spending time teaching, advocating for dance and performing is always a valuable experience,” said one. Another commented, “This experience is very much in line with my outreach and youth arts work. However, because this is a university-driven initiative, I believe it could be a good asset as I enter the job market.” A third remarked, “By being more on the inside and helping plan and organize, I’m getting more experience for the admin/directing side of things.” We highlight these comments as examples of the pre-professional benefits that dancers reported, suggesting mutual benefit to the university dance program and the community.

Many mentioned growth in their skills and understanding of teaching dance, especially from collaborating—for example, learning techniques that other dancers used to teach and engage their students. “I’m developing my ability to ‘feel’ a group of people and a ‘a way in’ to engaging that particular group in a shared movement experience,” wrote one. They took pleasure in seeing their students develop, appreciating students’ learning and the movements they invented. Others cited learning new movement themselves, and other examples of personal and social growth. Overall, their comments suggested that participating in the tour had helped them to grow not only as dancers but also as people.

### 3.3 Dancer perceptions of community benefit

Dancers’ perceptions of the value to the community raised similar themes to those mentioned by outreach project leaders. Most often emphasized was exposure: the opportunity to see and try something new, and thus to come to appreciate it. Commented one dancer,

I think students have a greater respect and curiosity for dance as audience members and as participants. Overall the community has a better grasp of the diversity of forms found in dance and that it is a valuable communicative tool to connect communities and inform audiences.

Some dancers highlighted positive outcomes for individual youth, including opportunities to be creative, express themselves, and understand ideas in multiple ways: “Kids were learning the concept of water filtration through movement, which was a way to inspire and teach the kinesthetic learners especially.” Dancers’ appreciation for young people’s effort and creativity shows in the videos, as they were attentive to and encouraging of the students, seeking to help them feel comfortable and learn something completely new without being afraid. School audiences were not always easy to engage: “Teachers from Trinidad Middle School ... were amazed at our abilities to get kids moving who would otherwise stand against the wall with their arms crossed,” noted one.

One dancer highlighted the importance of sharing diverse dance forms:

We visibly inspired so many kids, cheered up their days, helped give them confidence, demonstrated their own abilities to do things they didn't think they could do. We validated the most practiced dance forms in these communities as worthy of pursuing careers in (Hip Hop, Folklorico, Cumbia). We got people of all ages and backgrounds engaged in embodied creative processes, whether it was improvising or enacting water treatment processes, or learning movement sequences. We also gave them history and contextual information for all of the dance forms, so that connections are made to other aspects of life.

This dancer and others felt it was important to connect to local cultures and traditions, suggesting that better understanding about the community would help them to be even more effective.

#### **4 Results: Community Impact**

The community questionnaire included a few questions about respondents' participation in the dance residency, and two demographic questions about their age and residential ZIP code. We characterize respondents in Section 4.1.

Four questions asked for open-ended text responses:

- a) How did YOU benefit from participating in dance residency events?
- b) How have you seen YOUNG PEOPLE benefit from participating in dance residency events?
- c) What difference does it make that the dance company visits your community?
- d) What difference does it make that the dance company visits for several years in a row?

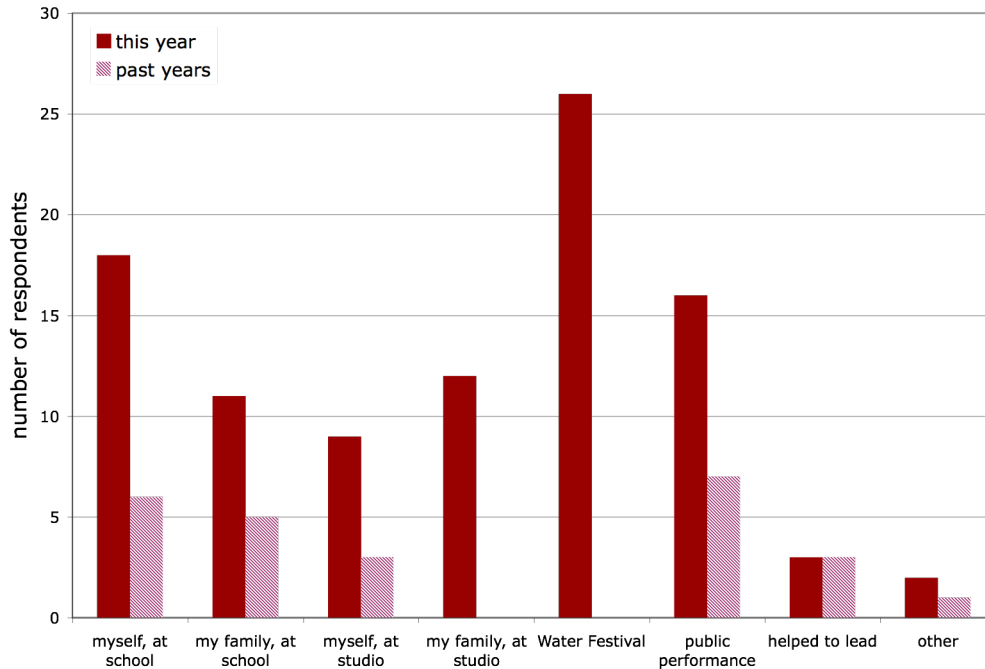
Questions (a) and (b) solicited information about personal or observed benefits to individuals who participated (questions were skipped if not relevant). These individual benefits are discussed in Section 4.2. Questions (c) and (d) address the broader community impact of the residency; responses are discussed in Section 4.3. We augment findings from the community questionnaire with observations from video clips of the dance classes and workshops, and brief video interviews with participants. The video material is useful in triangulating the questionnaire data and yields insights about the processes that generate the observed outcomes.

##### 4.1 Information about respondents

Figure 1 shows the specific activities in which respondents participated, separating responses for "myself" and a member of "my family" (e.g. parents responding about their child). Seventy percent of all respondents participated in more than one event (average 2.1 events each). For 2012, the Water Festival was a popular event, offering our best chance to gather data, with 63% of respondents participating in this event.



**Figure 1: Nature of participation in the dance residency**

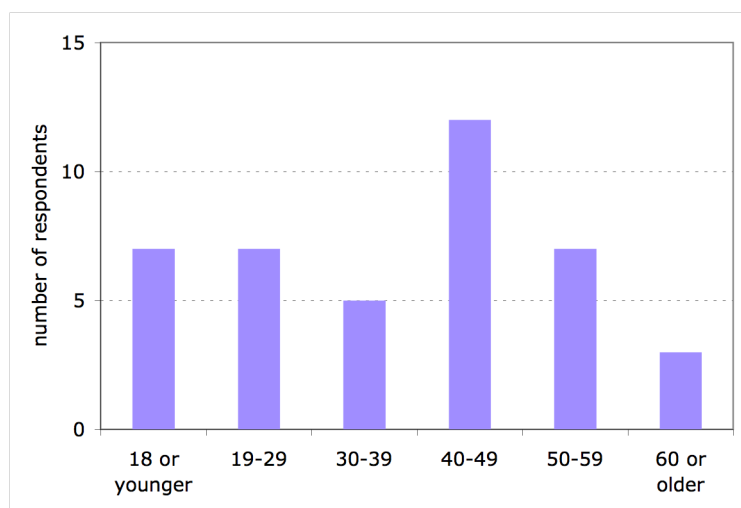


These data do not reflect actual participation in events, as those filling out the survey early in the week could not indicate their participation in a class or public performance at the end of the week. However, they do tell us what experiences the survey respondents are reacting to. They also offer evidence that the residency model encourages people to participate in multiple events, and that it encourages multi-year participation. Out of 41 respondents to this question, 73% had participated in residency activities in past years as well as in 2012. For any single type of event (e.g. a school class, public performance) 30-45% had participated in the *same* type of event in multiple years. This implies that many also participated in different types of events year to year.

Figure 2 shows the broad age distribution of respondents to the community questionnaire.

Comparing respondent ages to participation (not shown), most types of activities involved persons across all age ranges. No youth 18 or younger reported attending the public performance, and no persons 60 or older reported participating in a studio class, but in general, participation cut across age groups, suggesting that the residency activities reach a broad range of local residents.

**Figure 2: Age distribution of community respondents**



Finally, three fourths of respondents came from Trinidad, but other respondents indicated home ZIP codes in Pueblo, Lamar and Colorado Springs. This suggests that the residency approach does at some level reach out to the region generally, not just a single town.

#### 4.2 Benefits to individuals

The open-ended questions allowed participants to give details on what they saw or felt as they were part of the dance program. Two of the questions (a and b) asked about benefits to individuals: benefits to the respondents themselves personally, and those respondents noticed in the children who participated (e.g. parents speaking of their own children, or teachers of their students). Eighteen people wrote answers to question (a) on benefits of their own participation, and 34 wrote responses to question (b) on benefits they observed to children. However, the responses to these two items were combined because most of the answers were very similar, and respondents did not always separate their own experience from their observations of others. Because some responses contained multiple ideas, the total number of coded comments was 65.

**Table 2: Benefits to Individuals and to the Community At Large**

THEMES	Benefits to individuals		Benefits to the community	
	Number of responses	% of all responses	Number of responses	% of all responses
<i>New ideas and experiences</i>	14	22%	38	40%
Exposure to or experience of something new	7	11%	28	29%
Learning about forms of dance, history of dance, other cultures	7	11%	10	10%
<i>Affective or emotional gains</i>	28	43%	22	23%
Fun, enjoyment	12	18%	5	5%
Opportunity for self-expression	10	15%	3	3%
Motivation to continue dance, improve as a dancer	4	6%	13	14%
Change of pace (in school day)	2	3%	1	1%
<i>Benefits to other areas of life</i>	9	14%	3	3%
Teamwork, participation as a group	4	6%	Not used	
Fitness and health	3	5%	1	1%
Making mind-body connections	2	3%	2	2%
<i>Added value of residency model</i>	1	2%	28	29%
People look forward to participating	1	2%	13	14%
Repeat visits involve more people	Not used		9	9%
Individuals develop over time	Not used		6	6%
<i>General statements of benefit; miscellaneous benefits</i>	13	20%	5	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

Within these answers, certain themes were commonly discussed. Table 2 shows how we categorized the answers to arrange the data and better understand what individuals gained from their experience of the dance tour. Students and adults who participated in the dance experience were generally delighted with their experience. Of all comments coded, none were negative (the analysis did omit comments with no evaluative content, such as statements of fact).

As shown on the left side of Table 2, 22% of comments emphasized new awareness and learning. Many comments mentioned the value of being exposed to and/or experiencing something new, as people had the opportunity to see, participate, and continue learning about contemporary dance. One respondent said, “It expands horizons and shows students that there is life beyond their neighborhoods.” Seeing graduate students who were “invested in their education” encouraged students to “think outside the box” and achieve other goals in their lives. Another group of comments addressed growth in knowledge and perspectives, such as learning about varied forms of dance and their history, learning about other cultures through dance, and experiencing art as a means to “discover ourselves.”

Affective or emotional gains were the largest group of benefits reported for individual community members, at 40% in all. People reported having fun and enjoying their dance experience as participants or spectators. Parents and teachers valued the opportunity for children to express themselves creatively, the “freedom of loose but constructive dance movements,” as one put it. Others noted that seeing and working with the dancers gave them motivation or inspiration to learn to dance or to work hard at their dance studies.

A smaller number of comments (14%) addressed transferable gains: physical fitness, drawing upon the mind-body connection in learning, and building skills in working with others. Miscellaneous benefits included pride from watching a child or grandchild perform, gaining teaching ideas from watching a dance class, and general statements that the experience was positive or beneficial, without explanation.

Video recordings of the company in action provide some evidence of how these benefits accrued. The videos show examples of how children were learning to express their feelings throughout movement, and how they were exposed to a brief history of each type of dance and its meaning in different cultures. Video interviews with children reinforce these outcomes: “I felt weird at first but then I felt better at it,” said one boy. “I feel great! I feel like I can do anything” agreed his friend. Both participants felt insecure and shy at the beginning of the exercise, but as they were encouraged to take part, they gained confidence. Leaders were reported to be “friendly and positive”; whether children had prior dance experience or not, the dancers recognized each student and let them know that their movements were interesting to watch. Feeling welcomed and joyful may also make children look forward to the program’s return each year.

#### 4.3 Benefits to the community and value added by the residency model

We analyzed responses to the two questions (c and d) about benefits to the community together, because the responses were similar. Thirty-nine people wrote a response to question (c) on the value of the company visiting their community, and 35 wrote a response to question (d) on the value of the multi-year residency model in particular. Because comments often contained multiple ideas, coding yielded 96 separate statements about community outcomes.

The right side of Table 2 shows the benefits to the community that were reported by community respondents. Many of the benefits identified were similar to the benefits reported for individuals,

suggesting a “sum of parts” view: because the activity benefits many community members, it benefits the community as a whole. Statements here again emphasize the affective benefits (23%)—fun, self-expression, inspiration and motivation to continue.

Comments about exposure to new ideas and experiences (40%) as a community benefit likewise overlap with statements about individual benefits, but give special emphasis to the fact that students in this part of Colorado may be immersed in “their own little worlds.” Opportunities to participate in the dance residency thus went beyond what was “normally offered” and exposed students to “something bigger than Trinidad.” Wrote one respondent, “It’s great for the community’s youth to see what possibilities are out there!” Several of these comments also link these ideas to learning about other cultures through dance, again suggesting some particular value of a broadened perspective for people from a community with more limited arts opportunities or less cultural diversity than a large urban center. Thus, while we treat this category as parallel to observations made about individual benefit, we note some differences in the flavor of comments that suggest particular value from working with this kind of community.

The benefits discussed above cannot be easily distinguished from those that might also be realized from a more traditional tour format, or from a single week rather than several visits over time. But a sizable number of comments (29% of all observations) address the value added by the residency model. Three distinct points were made:

- People look forward to participating: Several respondents noticed that children and adults look forward to CUCDW’s return each year.
- Repeat visits get more people involved: Return visits enable more people to participate as word gets around (and spreading the word can take time, as some noted).
- Individuals continue to develop over time: Schoolchildren and dance students gain more by participating repeatedly; their skills and interest grow and develop over time.

These benefits come about only with repeat visits. Their presence in the body of data offers some support for the project leaders’ hypotheses about the specific benefits of the residency model in comparison to a traditional tour.

## **5 Lessons Learned**

Here we summarize three kinds of learning that emerged from this study:

- Findings about the CUCDW outreach project itself
- Specific insights into the kinds of evaluation approaches that appealed to project leaders and that worked in practice (and that did not), and thoughts on how these approaches will continue to inform this project and/or serve as useful models to others
- General insights that may inform other outreach projects and strategies of the Office of University Outreach.

Section 5.1 addresses our evaluation questions about the CUCDW project specifically, while Sections 5.2 and 5.3 address our evaluation questions about evaluating faculty outreach.

### 5.1 Findings about the CUCDW outreach project

Overall, the data provide evidence of the value of the CUCDW’s work in Trinidad. Community members reported several kinds of benefits to individuals that are magnified when they accrue to

many members of the community. Dancers' perceptions of the community were consistent with community members' self-report, and both community members' comments and video data showed that dancers were well-prepared, enthusiastic, and encouraging in their work. The dancers themselves reported a positive and collaborative learning experience and identified several outcomes that they expect to be valuable in their future professional lives. While the overall experience was quite successful, they offered thoughtful comments about how to improve details of future residencies.

It is not surprising that the project is well executed and well received, but it is noteworthy that we can in fact detect some evidence of value added by the residency model. Community members cite several types of benefits that derive from the focus on a particular, rural community for multiple years, and these respondents (at least) participated in multiple events and across multiple years.

The main limitation of this study is the small sample size. We know little about whether the community sample is representative in any respect. Indeed, it is likely that the respondents to the community questionnaire were more engaged than the average participant. Their responses may thus be biased—but may also be especially insightful, as they may be better placed than a typical audience member to comment on these issues.

## 5.2 Evaluation capacity-building for CUCDW and the dance program

Much of our conversation with the dance program centered on establishing the value of text (e.g. written comments) as data, when it is systematically gathered, and identifying ways to analyze text data. Qualitative approaches to evaluation can be under-valued, but they are highly appropriate when the outcomes are personal and subjective, and when the evaluation is exploratory because prior work does not establish what outcomes are both likely and measurable. Open-ended items are often particularly effective in eliciting formative feedback. Overall, our choice to focus on qualitative data proved suitable.

However, our ideas about how to gather data from audience members had to be recalibrated more than once. We had hoped to interview a group of key witnesses who could offer a perspective based on multi-year participation. These key individuals are busy people (the junior college dean, school teachers, studio directors), and this was asking too much. Instead, we developed a short questionnaire to solicit short answers from a wider range of participants. With a gregarious person physically present who could invite people to participate, the level of response to the on-site questionnaire was reasonable. Adults could complete the questionnaire while watching children; some young people also completed it as they finished a class. Response to the online questionnaire was very poor, but logistical problems with the newspaper ad we had planned as a means of disseminating the questionnaire meant that this instance was not a good test of that approach. While we would not give up on that idea as a way to reach community members, the success of the in-person solicitation makes that our preferred approach for the future, if person-power can be committed to approaching people and collecting data.

When we did reach audience members, the items in the short community questionnaire seemed to work reasonably well. Future versions might further simplify the items that distinguish first-hand experiences from observed experiences (items a-b), although we do think that this format helped to encourage observers such as teachers, parents and grandparents to contribute. While responses to the community-related items (c-d) overlapped, these prompts did elicit the information we sought about value added by the residency model, so the best approach may be to

leave them alone and continue to combine responses during analysis. This questionnaire could be used again in the future after the residency has moved to a new region in Colorado.

The longer questionnaire given to graduate students appropriately probed their experiences in more depth as well as providing a chance for them to reflect. It could be made slightly shorter, based on the repetition seen in some answers. Posnick expects to gather these data and do a simple coding and compilation each year, using the current categories as a basis, and expanding where new ideas emerge. These provide feedback for next year's tour leaders, but also generate a larger data set over time that will be more robust than any one year's sample.

Ideally, data-gathering for evaluation purposes will be integral or at least natural to the activity, and not a tedious add-on. We made use of this principle as much as possible. For example, video interviews with children are fun for kids; with appropriate questions, they can be analyzed for content and also be used for PR. We also had footage of the dance classes themselves. While we did not analyze these in detail, they did illustrate how company members worked with young people and thus provide triangulation and explanation to support respondents' comments. Video transcription is tedious, but this method could be adapted to capture both video and text data in real time: one person could run the camera and a second could record the answers in writing. Likewise, the graduate student focus group offered some natural closure for the company and enabled the coordinator to address final logistical and financial arrangements with company members, thus accomplishing multiple goals at once. Finally, while we did not focus evaluation activity on the outcomes for school pupils, we did brainstorm ways to run follow-up activities that would be informative to the company, enhance learning for the students, and support teachers in making connections across their curriculum. These ideas may be useful in enhancing the effects of school-based outreach in the future.

Overall, we believe that these approaches could be adapted to other outreach projects of this type, especially in the arts and perhaps in some other domains where community engagement is a goal. It is less clear that the approach would work for a one-time performance or event. The graduate student survey in particular should be adaptable to other projects that engage graduate students in working with community members.

### 5.3 Implications for OUO practice

As our other reports will highlight, time is a significant factor for teams who run an outreach project. Evaluation is viewed as an add-on, not a primary activity in accomplishing the outreach objectives. Significant time was invested in the project—not just by the evaluators, but by the project leaders and dancers. While we do feel that the approaches and instruments can be used again, we do not expect that ongoing use of all these approaches should be expected as part of the routine monitoring of the project, though some may be simplified for monitoring purposes.

Issues of time and workload also raise the question of “Whose time?” In this case, we drew upon faculty assistance and ideas, but the primary liaison for the project was a staff member whose job focuses on outreach. She could prioritize this work in ways that faculty cannot, and she saw this demonstration project as an opportunity to learn new skills that she could apply in her other outreach activities. We do not expect that all outreach projects will have these capacities on the team—but the best opportunities for thoughtful evaluation processes may arise for teams that do include someone who can play this role.

## **6 Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to Peg Posnick for her enthusiasm for this work, her clear vision for making use of the information, and her thoughtful inputs of time and ideas. This has been a highly collaborative effort. Nada Diachenko contributed important perspectives on the design of the program and its role in graduate education. Cristina Goletti was a creative contributor and effective data-gatherer. Deb Ulibarri, dean at Trinidad Junior College, provided helpful assistance. Rebecca Crane assisted in early design stages of the project.

## **7 References Cited**

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## **8 List of Appendices**

- Appendix A Working document to define graduate student outcomes
- Appendix B Dancer survey
- Appendix C Community invitation letter
- Appendix D Community survey

## Appendix A: Working document to define graduate student outcomes

The goal of this component of the evaluation are to:

- (1) collect data in a systematic manner about
  - a. the benefits of participating for the grad tour participants (in evaluation lingo, this is summative data on the outcomes for this key group of participants)
  - b. ideas and improvements for next year's grad tour planners (in evaluation lingo, this is formative feedback, used to improve the program)
- (2) provide a reflection opportunity and some closure on the tour to the students themselves
- (3) get students to show up to put gear away, inform them about paychecks, practical stuff
- (4) set up a process that can become part of the tour experience, gathering data in a manner that is sustainable yet results in a growing body of data over time that can be mined for evaluative insights and publicity purposes.

The approach is qualitative and the data will come from dancers' written individual responses to an open-ended questionnaire and a group debriefing session that will serve as a focus group (if someone takes notes). By building into the tour experience, the evaluation data are gathered in a natural way that is also useful or beneficial to the participants themselves.

Benefits to grad students –identified by Peg and Nada in interview as what they observe or believe grad students gain from participating in the tour. These observations thus form a basis for the questions to ask students.

- Exposure to what they can do after graduation in a community. Multiple ways to be and work in a cmtly.
  - Kids here are “very thirsty” – this is motivating. The GS realize benefit of working with those who do not have it.
- Expose GS to cmties that do not have much access to the arts.
  - “Again, that comes into the whole civic engagement part of not even being aware (because maybe their community where they were raised had a rich cultural background for them). Then to reach out to these communities where there really isn't anything, maybe rich farming and ranching, but it doesn't have this whole aspect. I think it's a two-way learning thing too. They learn different things about what their lives are like.”
- Teamwork skills, learn about each other; how to work in collaboration even when you're tired.
- Teaching skills: learn by doing, but also learn teaching skills from observing each other
- Logistics and planning of a tour– how this works. If you run a company someday you need to know this. Be flexible and adapt to challenges – e.g. no power, bad sound quality, weird spaces.
- Learn by creating or adapting work. (growth as dancers, I think is what is meant here) Learn to create in the moment, go with the flow.



- Learn how people respond to it – are people getting what I intended to give? (from Q&A, kid responses, questions). Learn how to talk about dance on a level that is accessible to regular folks. They are “ambassadors for the university” – visible in the cmt. “They go into coffee shops and restaurants, and after a while people in these small towns get to know them, ‘There are [the] dancers again.’ They’re asked questions, so they really have to learn to articulate what dance is, what they do, who they are to lots of different groups of people.”

### Questions for the students

I suggest soliciting short answers (a few sentences) on several open-ended items, constructed so that you can count and categorize what students write (the ‘bucket’ approach we discussed).

You don’t want this to be a big ordeal for them, but you do want some reflection. I think you’ll want to specifically probe the following as likely categories of gains for the dancers:

- Your own growth as a performer and teacher
- The experience of working as a group
- Your understanding of audience responses to dance as an art form
- Your understanding of dance as a profession (and/or yourself as a future professional)
- Your understanding of the specific community we visited

Good general purpose questions:

What was the best aspect of the tour for you?

What one or two things would make the tour better for future participants?

And perhaps one question to probe the issue of residency vs touring (and capture student insights about this) - something like:

What advantages or disadvantages do you see in the residency model as compared with a multi-city tour? Why?

You can add a question to get a ranking or numeric response (e.g. on a scale of 1-5 rate this experience...) if you like. You don’t have the numbers to make this very meaningful but it can be nice to say in a report, “All participants rated the experience as excellent or very good.” You can also add a general “Any other comments?” question.

It would be best to capture their answers in text rather than deal with hand-written answers—maybe send out a Word file with the questions ahead of time and they can type in answers to the length they please and return a copy to you by email. I’d suggest you ask for permission to quote them in public sources (e.g. web site or brochures for the program).

In the oral debrief, you can ask people to draw on their written answers but I would not go through each question one by one. Start with something very broad – your biggest insight or ‘aha’ from the tour. See what really stood out for them. Check for consensus or disagreement; make it clear that everyone does not have to agree, you’re interested in all perspectives. Keep on this line (“What else stood out for you?” “Any other benefits for you that we have not discussed yet?”) until the topic seems well explored. Then you can go to ideas for improvement. Some of these will probably be quite specific, so you may want to jump back out to big picture at some point: “Lots of good ideas for specifics here; any bigger issues that we will want to address for next time?” Asking their advice to next year’s participants is also a good closing question.

## **Appendix B: Dancer Survey**

### **CUCDW Post Tour Member Response 2012**

- What was the highlight of the tour this year?
- What was the most difficult aspect of the tour?
- What were your personal contributions to the tour?
- How was the group experience on tour?
- How was tour a learning or valuable experience for you?
- How do you foresee the tour influencing or supporting your professional career?
- How do you see the tour benefiting the communities you visited?
- What was your perception of audience response to tour performances/assemblies?
- What advantages/disadvantages do you see in the residency model?
- Two suggestions for next year's tour
- Advice for next year's participants

**Appendix C: Community invitation letter**

University of Colorado  
Boulder

Department of Theater and Dance  
Office for University Outreach  
Ethnography & Evaluation Research

Dear Friend of Dance,

Each spring for the past three years, CU Contemporary Dance Works (CUCDW) has visited Trinidad and other communities in Las Animas County for a week-long residency. CUCDW company members have danced with young people in schools and studios, led demonstrations and classes at community centers, given impromptu performances in local businesses and public spaces, and performed our repertory in a public dance concert. This year, we will be in town May 14-18, 2012, with a public performance at Trinidad State Junior College on Friday, May 18 at 7 PM.

The CUCDW residency program seeks to offer novel, meaningful, and personal dance experiences to people in communities throughout Colorado. We'd like to know how we're doing in meeting this goal! As we complete our fourth residency in Trinidad, we are asking you and other community members to offer reflections on the impact of the residency program on your community. We are collaborating with CU's Office of University Outreach and researchers at Ethnography & Evaluation Research, also at CU, to gather your ideas and better understand the impact of this program on Colorado communities. We'd like to know:

- What do you gain from attending a show, participating in a class, or hosting the dancers at your school or studio?
- What added value—if any—is offered by the residency model, in comparison with a single show or classroom visit?
- What difference—if any—does it make that CUCDW visits your town?

If you'd be willing to complete a brief questionnaire or participate in a 20-minute telephone interview in late May or early June after the residency this year, please let us know, and we'll get in touch. (Agreeing now to be contacted does not oblige you to participate.) Thanks very much for your willingness to share your thoughts!

Questions or comments? Want to volunteer to participate? Just return the slip below or contact: CUCDW coordinator Peg Posnick at [cumoving@colorado.edu](mailto:cumoving@colorado.edu), 303-492-4336  
Study director Sandra Laursen at [sandra.laursen@colorado.edu](mailto:sandra.laursen@colorado.edu), 303-735-2942

Yes! I'm willing to be contacted about the community impact of CUCDW's residency program.

Name:

Best way to reach me (email, phone):

You should also talk to (suggest other community members):

**Appendix D: Community Survey**

Each spring for the past four years, CU Contemporary Dance Works (CUCDW) has visited Trinidad and other communities in Las Animas County for a week-long residency. We invite you to reflect on your experiences with the CUCDW dance residency and its benefits to you, your family and your community.

The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. Your answers are completely anonymous. You may continue your answers on the back if you like. Thank you for contributing your thoughts!

*Peg Posnick & Cristina Goletti, Department of Theater and Dance, University of Colorado Boulder*

**1. Your participation** in CUCDW dance residency events (check the box for “yes”; leave blank for “no”)

Did you or your family members participate in CUCDW dance residency events? (check the box if yes)		THIS year	LAST year
(check the box for all that apply)	I attended a class or event at school (as a student, teacher, worker or parent).		
	My child(ren) or family member attended a class or event at school.		
	I attended a class or event at a dance studio.		
	My child(ren) or family member attended a class or event at a dance studio.		
	I attended the Water Festival.		
	I attended a public performance.		
	I helped to lead or organize a dance event.		
	Other – please specify		

2. How did YOU benefit from participating in dance residency events? (skip if you did not participate)

3. How have you seen YOUNG PEOPLE benefit from participating in dance residency events? (for example, your own children, the students you teach) (skip if you did not see young people participate)

4. What difference does it make that the dance company visits your community?

5. What difference does it make that the dance company visits for several years in a row?

6. Which category below includes your age? (check the space in front of your choice)

<input type="checkbox"/>	18 or younger	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-59
<input type="checkbox"/>	19-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	60 and over

7. In what ZIP code is your home located? \_\_\_\_\_