

New Brunswick Strategic Planning Proposal

Proposal Title: "Creation of a Biometric Dance Studio within the new Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health Building"

Proposal Initiator: Julia Ritter, Chair and Artistic Director, Department of Dance

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Primary Strategic Priority/Foundational Element/Integrating Theme Addressed:

- ☒ Envision Tomorrow's University
- ☐ Build Faculty Excellence
- ☐ Transform the Student Experience
- ☐ Enhance Our Public Prominence
- ☐ Strong Core of Sciences and Humanities
- ☐ Inclusive, Diverse, and Cohesive Culture
- ☐ Effective and Efficient Infrastructure and Staff
- ☐ Financial Resources Sufficient to Fund Our Aspirations
- ☐ Robust Shared Governance, Academic Freedom, and Effective Communication
- ☐ Cultures, Diversity, and Inequality—Local and Global
- ☐ Improving the Health and Wellness of Individuals and Populations
- ☐ Creating a Sustainable World through Innovation, Engineering, and Technology
- ☐ Educating Involved Citizens and Effective Leaders for a Dynamic World
- ☐ Creative Expression and the Human Experience
- ☐ Measuring Progress and Defining Success

Proposal Abstract

The Dance Department of the Mason Gross School of the Arts, in conjunction with the Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health, would like to create a high-tech, cutting-edge Biometric Dance Studio within the new Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health building. Modeled after the Biometric Dance Studio of the Trinity Laban School in Greenwich, England (with which Mason Gross has an academic exchange), the Studio would be the first of its kind in the United States. It would be outfitted with a sprung floor, motion-capture and respiration-measuring equipment, and other technological tools to serve the needs of dance and physical-training research. It would be a creative hub bridging the arts and sciences.

The Biometric Dance Studio would be used in conjunction with the creation of a new, five-year interdisciplinary degree program that would prepare students to enter the

emerging field of Dance Medicine. The program would bridge the fields of dance and movement-science, with students entering Mason Gross as BFA dance majors before tracking into the MS program in movement-science in SEBS. The program would promote the cross-pollination of students and faculty in the two schools, thus breaking the traditional paradigm of isolated training and research.

A team of administrators and faculty from Mason Gross and SEBS have fleshed out plans for the Biometric Dance Studio. The Studio would serve not only the students of the Dance Medicine Program through biometric research but also children and adults from the surrounding community through group experiments, movement classes, and creative projects.

Full Proposal

The Dance Department of the Mason Gross School of the Arts, in conjunction with the Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, proposes to create a high-tech, cutting-edge Biometric Dance Studio within the new Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health building. Modeled after the Biometric Dance Studio of the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance and Music in Greenwich, England (with which Mason Gross has an exchange), the Studio would be the first of its kind in the United States. It would be outfitted with a sprung floor, motion-capture and respiration-measuring equipment, and other technological tools to serve the needs of dance and physical-training research.

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Dean George B. Stauffer and Professors Julia Ritter and John Evans of Mason Gross have been working closely with Dean Robert Goodman and Professors Peter Gilles and Shawn Arent of SEBS to plan the new facility and new program. The idea is to create a vibrant movement hub, where researchers, educators, scholars, and creative artists join forces to advance our collective knowledge of nutrition, health, and wellness. As a collaborative project, it would embody the aspirations and hopes for the “university of tomorrow.”

The present proposal seeks start-up funding for the Biometric Studio. Once launched, it is anticipated that the Studio can be self-supporting within two years, operating on revenues from the Dance Medicine program and community movement programs, which will be overseen by the profit-making Extension Division of the Mason Gross School. The proposed start-up budget for the project is as follows:

Purchase and installation of sprung floor:	\$50,000
Purchase and installation of biometric equipment:	\$100,000
Staffing for first two years of the program:	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$250,000

The Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health promises to be one of the most important research centers in the country. With the ever-increasing concern about childhood obesity, the work carried out by the Center will be of importance not only to New Jersey citizens but to the entire nation. The Institute is in the forefront of cutting-edge research on health and well-being. It has been unusually successful in attracting grant funding.

The Dance Program of the Mason Gross School was recently ranked in the top five university dance programs in the country by *Backstage* magazine, which placed it in an elite group of schools that includes Juilliard, Oberlin, Berkeley, and Skidmore. The Program has not only been highly successful in placing dancers in the professional world (Doug Verone Dance Company, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Rockettes, and other distinguished troupes), but it has also played a leading role in integrating pilates, yoga, and other therapeutic techniques into the curriculum.

Strengthening the ties between these two vital units of Rutgers – the Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health and the Dance Program – will create new synergies with multiple rewards. The Dance Program already has established connections with SEBS, through its Polestar Pilates Teacher Training Program and its new SOMA Center. The Institute has already worked with Dance through its movement-science studies and collaborations with Hollie Palmsiano, trainer for Athletics and Mason Gross.

The Biometric Dance Studio and Dance Medicine Program would serve broad constituencies within the university and the community, including:

- physicians, physical therapists, and athletic trainers
- researchers of motor-specific diseases and disorders, including Parkinson's disease and cerebral palsy
- students and faculty in the Mason Gross Dance Program
- students and faculty in the Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health
- children (adolescents, especially) involved in dance or athletics
- individuals involved in recreational dance activities

In sum, the creation of a Biometric Dance Studio would place Rutgers in the forefront of research in a field that is growing rapidly. It would have important applications in Dance and Nutrition, and it would raise the profile of the University in the world of science as well as arts circles. It is a cutting-edge, visionary undertaking – the type of project that will carry Rutgers into the future as a leader in arts and science collaborations.