

# Guest lecturer speaks on value of dance in daily life

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As part of Geneseo's celebration of 50 years of dance, students, faculty and staff eagerly gathered for "The University Dances: 50 Years in Motion" lecture in the MacVittie College Union on April 19. Excitement was high in the room as the audience heard Thomas DeFrantz from Duke University speak on the dance studies discipline.

Assistant professor of dance studies Mark Broomfield invited DeFrantz to Geneseo. DeFrantz is professor of African and African American Studies and in the Program of Dance. He is also a professor of Theater Studies and Women's Studies. Director of Student Life Chip Matthews, Assistant Dean of Students for Multicultural Programs and Services Fatima Rodriguez Johnson, chair of the history department Justin Behrand, Coordinator of Black Studies Emilye Crosby and Coordinator of Women and Gender Studies Melanie Blood helped bring DeFrantz to the college.

"I brought Dr. DeFrantz to campus because I think that dance studies is at a point where we need to hear these voices," Broomfield said. "His way of thinking about dance studies and how he's been

working in the field for almost 20 years is so important and critical to the directions that [dance studies] is going."

DeFrantz presented a history of teaching dance, beginning with an overview of important female dancers, primarily focusing on African American dancer Katherine Dunham. He believes that through the dance discipline, people can understand the ability to critique and question other aspects of life, which is what female dancers have helped encourage.

"Dance studies are a mode of academic inquiry that explores how the body resists and initiates," DeFrantz said. "It incorporates philosophy, gender studies, feminist studies, inquiry studies and social movement theory."

DeFrantz stressed the importance of learning the basis of studying dance to fully understand oneself.

"In these foundations are ways for us to understand our lives and the choices that we make so we can start trying to understand how we're related to the two young [black] men who were arrested in Starbucks in Philadelphia and how that has to do with critical race studies," DeFrantz said.

Broomfield stressed the importance that all parts of the art form should be investigated.

"I think it's important to study all aspects of dance because it's about how you integrate [components]," Broomfield said. "It allows us to be more expansive. While we integrate, we're also able to reach and think about so many interesting, diverse perspectives of what dance can be and does."

Based on DeFrantz's lecture, English major junior Samantha Schmeer understood the importance of learning about the dance discipline.

"I think it was really refreshing to have an academic talk that related to dance studies," Schmeer said. "To hear the history of how it came to universities, especially because 50 years at a small, public university like [Geneseo] is a pretty big deal."

Psychology major senior Mina Raj agreed with Schmeer and enjoyed learning about how dance is educated to students.

"I really appreciated the history of how dance has been taught in colleges because it's not really something we think about," Raj said. "Since all of the people in the dance program are just minors, we have more primary areas of study. It's nice to know that there's so many different ways to incorporate dance into what we're doing every day, which is kind of why we're doing it."

DeFrantz also emphasized how people need to understand



COURTESY OF MARK BROOMFIELD

Assistant professor of dance studies Mark Broomfield (pictured left) invited professor Thomas DeFrantz of Duke University (pictured right) for a presentation. DeFrantz gave a lecture entitled "The University Dances: 50 Years in Motion" in the MacVittie College Union Hunt Room on Thursday April 19, which discussed how dance relates to multiple subjects.

dance to use it in ways that benefit oneself and society.

"If we value our gestures, which are at the heart of dance, then we can value our actions and choice making," DeFrantz said. "When we participate in a civil

protest, we're moving our bodies literally into unexpected places because we believe in something, and that's what dance is. Dance is moving your body in unanticipated ways because you believe in something."♦