RHYTHM & RECOVERY: DANCE THERAPY FOR MENTAL HEALTH

BY: JACQUELINE FINLEY

Policy Tracks: Public Health & Medicine and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

Mission Statement

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders. Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills. This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAP Goal Statement &amp; Project Inspiration</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual &amp; Conceptual Foundations</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology, Timeline, &amp; Partners</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Leadership &amp; Project Impacts</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements &amp; Bibliography</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WE DANCE FOR LAUGHTER,
WE DANCE FOR TEARS,
WE DANCE FOR MADNESS,
WE DANCE FOR FEARS,
WE DANCE FOR HOPES,
WE DANCE FOR SCREAMS,
WE ARE THE DANCERS,
WE CREATE THE DREAMS.

- ALBERT EINSTEIN
WHY DANCE THERAPY?
SAP Goal Statement & Project Inspiration

Goal Statement: Rhythm & Recovery: Dance Therapy for Mental Health is an innovative and inclusive workshop series that offers improvisational dance classes to all students at Rutgers University. With the aim of improving mental health, the classes provide a safe and supportive space for students to express themselves through movement and connect with others.
MENTAL HEALTH IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

“60.1% of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety, 40.1% reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function, and 10.6% reported seriously considering suicide.”

DANCE AS A FORM OF HEALING

Dance, as a third-party medium, has the remarkable ability to transcend the constraints of verbal communication, often making it easier to approach sensitive and complex emotions.

YOUTH ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

Art can be transformative for both the audience and the artist. For audiences, art can appeal to the listener or viewer on a sensory level and for the artist, the creative process can help heal hurt or channel rage around an issue in a way that promotes healing.
METHODOLOGY

• Research: Current Status of On-Campus Resources
• Media: A Tool for Activism
• Collaboration: Shared Vision
• Build Community: Make a Lasting Impact
APRIL & MAY
- Met with Jeff Friedman over Zoom
- Spoke with dance teachers of mine
- Met with Media Team

AUGUST
- Continued research
- Began to brainstorm project advisors
- Check in with Laura Transue

SEPTEMBER
- Met with Jeff Friedman over Zoom
- Spoke with dance teachers of mine
- Met with Media Team

OCTOBER
- Created Instagram & designed flyers
- Booked Corwin Lodge
- Put together self-care basket
- Club & individual outreach
- Develop class plan & music

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER
- Held workshops
- Sent follow-up surveys to collect feedback
- Maintained Instagram
Rhythm & Recovery Video
Feminist Leadership

Starting the Conversation
Initiating change is not merely a choice; it is a commitment to growth and a pledge to transcend the boundaries of the status quo.

Enhancing the Mind-Body Connection
At its core, feminist leadership recognizes the interconnectedness of mental and physical well-being, understanding that true empowerment goes beyond traditional leadership paradigms. Feminist leadership acknowledges the importance of self-care as a radical act of self-love and preservation.

Ethics of Care in a College Environment
Central to the ethics of care is the recognition of the interconnectedness of individuals and the significance of relationships. I sought to create a community built on empowerment and diversity, regardless of individuals’ background or experience with dance and movement.

Systemic Change: Small is the Way to Go
it is the subtle, seemingly small changes that possess an extraordinary power to shape our world.
What I Learned

- Be Adaptable
- Be Open to New Ideas
- Prioritize Self-Care & Recognize Burnout
- Collaboration Can Change the Trajectory of Your Project
- Remind Yourself of Why You Do What You Do
How Beneficial Do You Think This Program Would be for Rutgers Students?

- Not at All Beneficial
- Somewhat Beneficial
- Extremely Beneficial
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

“People think that dancing is for dancers and artists, but dancing is such an innate part of being human. We do it as a form of expression, community building, storytelling.”

“It is inclusive of all communities and anyone of any dance level can participate. I had a friend who struggled with her mental health, and this could’ve benefited her so much.”

“It could foster a community of those seeking support and care from a non-traditional source. I hope this program finds its way to Rutgers so that those in need can benefit from it.”
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Institute for Women’s Leadership
Dr. Mary Trigg, Dr. Sasha Taner, Professor Julie Rajan, Professor Charlotte Bunch, Elizabeth O’Brien, Institute for Women’s Leadership Scholars & Staff

Scarlet Media Team
Joseph Morales, Xin(Cecilia) Du, Yini Zhou, Zakeerah Cooper, Zenaya Brito

SAP Advisor
Jeff Friedman, Professor of Dance Studies, Mason Gross School of the Arts

Teachers
Bobbie Ellis, Danielle Schindledecker Wright

Attendees / Participants
WORKS CITED


