LEAP
A BACHELOR’S DEGREE PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL DANCERS
For Dancers

EMPOWERING MORE THAN 300 CURRENT AND FORMER PROFESSIONAL DANCERS FROM LEADING BALLET, MODERN, AND ETHNIC DANCE COMPANIES AS WELL AS MUSICAL THEATER, TV, AND FILM.

Traditional, the realities of a dancer’s rigorous training and a full-time career didn’t allow for an academic education beyond secondary school. It was very difficult to prepare for the inevitable career transition that most dancers face because of the extreme physical demands of their profession.

LEAP changed all that. Founded in 1999 at Saint Mary’s College of California, the program makes it possible for professional dancers to achieve their academic dreams. LEAP offers:

- A Bachelor of Arts degree (Performing Arts Major) in three to four years of part-time study.
- A comprehensive liberal arts education at a nationally recognized college.
- The tools for career advancement or career transition upon retirement from dance.
- A highly individualized curriculum.
- Class locations and schedules that are compatible with the performance and touring calendars of professional dancers.
- Options to earn college credit for professional dance experience as well as for prior learning in other subject areas.
- Resources, counseling, financial aid, and moral support.

“The result of this hard work and self-discovery is the most beautiful dancer of all: an educated, accomplished artist with the skills and self-confidence to enjoy the present and welcome the future.”

DANCE MAGAZINE
For Dancers

Empowering more than current and former professional dancers from leading ballet, modern, and ethnic dance companies as well as musical theater, TV, and film.

300 Liberal Education for Arts Professionals

Clockwise from bottom left: Gennadi Nedvigin by Erik Tomasson; Yuan Yuan Tan by Erik Tomasson; Keelan Whitlemore by Marty Sohl

Leap is an internationally recognized Bachelor's degree program specifically designed for current and former professional dancers.

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Leap works, and it has changed the world of dance.

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Dance Magazine

"Bringing all these dancers together for class every week is a remarkable piece of choreography."

CBS NEWS SUNDAY MORNING

"CBS NEWS SUNDAY MORNING"

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"The result of this hard work accomplished artist with the"

"Dancers know that they're probably going to dance until 35 at the latest, and they don't want to go into the world unprepared. (The) biggest gift that LEAP can give dancers is that they can enjoy those last years of their career, knowing that there's something wonderful when it's over."

The New York Times

"The New York Times"
LEAP students receive a broad education that provides a durable foundation for critical and independent thinking, effective communication and life-long learning. The key component of the program is the 10-course core curriculum, which is offered over a three-year period. Classes are held near studios and theatres, meeting once a week for four hours, usually on Sunday or Monday evenings (when professional theatres are dark).

An individualized course of study is created for each student, so that personal academic goals and new career objectives can be reached. For information about LEAP courses and how the program works, please see pages 8–9.

“The LEAP program has given me a completely new outlook on my life and the lives of others. I believe it is never too late to set goals, achieve dreams, or get one’s degree!”

ANNIE COLBECK, LEAP SF
LEAP serves the San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles dance communities. Both current and retired professional dancers may apply for admission, and the program can accommodate students entering with diverse dance backgrounds and varying levels of academic experience.

With an average cohort size of 18, students enjoy the ongoing support of their group and an exceptionally high level of personal attention by the faculty and staff. The program’s founder, director, and key administrators are all former professional dancers, and LEAP professors are highly qualified teachers of adult learners.

The LEAP student community is composed of dancers from outstanding companies and productions, including:

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Merce Cunningham
CEDAR LAKE
SMuin BALLET
DANCE THEATER OF HARLEM
MORPHOSES
ALONZO KING LINES BALLET
MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET
AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER
ROYAL BALLET OF FLANDERS
PENNSYLVANIA BALLET

FILM: RENT, CHICAGO
TELEVISION: ACADEMY AWARDS, EMMY AWARDS
MUSIC VIDEOS
DISNEY PRODUCTIONS
BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS: MOVIN’ OUT, BILLY ELLIOT, PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, WEST SIDE STORY

“Even after an exhausting week, I find myself looking forward to Sunday nights when I can meet with my LEAP classmates and professors. We all want to be there, we want to succeed, and we want to see everyone else succeed too.”

KATIE PIVARNIK, LEAP NY
BECAUSE THE CURRICULUM IS INDIVIDUALIZED, LEAP GRADUATES have taken a number of different paths. Many have been accepted into prestigious graduate school programs and are enjoying new careers in the fields of physical therapy, law, theatre, college administration, art history, music composition, education, medicine, and international relations. Others are finding fulfilling new jobs in business, public relations, social work, or in the dance world. And some LEAP graduates are still dancing professionally, but with a secure sense of the future and the knowledge that with the degree they will experience a much easier career transition upon retirement from the stage.

"Not knowing where to go after dance, and not having a clear vision of where my future would take me, the LEAP program gave me hope. After the first day of class, I felt rejuvenated; the energy in the room was refreshing. It almost felt like I was starting to rehearse for a new show."

PATRICK GARCIA, LEAP LA
The LEAP program offers a Bachelor of Arts degree from Saint Mary’s College with a major in Performing Arts. 120 units are needed to graduate. They are earned by taking:

**LEAP Core Curriculum**
All LEAP students are required to take ten liberal arts courses from Saint Mary’s (see Core Curriculum, next page). Designed and selected with the dancer’s academic needs and interests in mind, these courses challenge, inspire, and equip professional dancers for lifelong learning and success.

- Writing for the Liberal Arts: Enhances the academic skills of critical thinking, reading, writing and research.
- Personal & Professional Assessment: The exploration of adult development and the experiential learning cycle, from reflection on experience to construction and application of knowledge.
- Kinesiology & Human Performance: An introduction to the anatomical structures and physiological mechanisms pertinent to the study of the athletic body.
- Critical Perspectives I: An exploration of great writings that have shaped Western culture.
- Critical Perspectives II: A study of the life stories of people who experienced a transformation of their lives when confronted with injustice.
- Multicultural Thought: Examines a range of authors from the Americas as well as works from non-European traditions.
- Performing Arts Course
- General Education Courses
- Prior Learning Assessment

**Prior Learning Assessment**
In the context of the exploration of theories of adult development, the main product of the Personal and Professional Assessment course is the Experiential Learning Portfolio, a collection of essays and supporting documentation that may be further evaluated for academic credit toward the degree.

**Courses for the Major**
Students entering the LEAP program are qualified to challenge by examination several of the required dance courses for the major at Saint Mary’s. This significantly reduces the amount of time needed to earn the Bachelor’s degree.

- up to 30 units

**General Education Courses**
LEAP creates an individualized course of study for each student that satisfies general education and unit requirements for the degree and prepares students for their chosen new careers or graduate school.

- at least 30 units

**Examples of Elective and Senior Project Topics**
- COPYRIGHT LAW IN THE DANCE WORLD
- GAGA: IMPROVISATION IN ISRAEL
- INTRO TO MARKETING
- DANCE PHOTOGRAPHY
- BEGINNING ITALIAN
- HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
- MEDICAL ETHICS
- MONTESSORI EDUCATION
- INTERMEDIATE PIANO
- CREATIVE WRITING
- TEACHING IN JAPAN
- THE ART AND PRACTICE OF MATH

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE LEAP CALENDAR, ADMISSIONS, DEGREE REQUIREMENTS, TUITION, AND FINANCIAL AID, PLEASE VISIT THE LEAP WEBSITE: WWW.STMARYS-CA.EDU/LEAP
The LEAP Program
P.O. Box 4700
Moraga, CA 94575
(866) 306-0395
Email: leap@stmarys-ca.edu
Website: www.stmarys-ca.edu/leap

SAINT MARY’S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA is one of the oldest and most distinguished colleges in the West. Enrolling more than 3800 students, Saint Mary’s offers undergraduate and graduate programs integrating liberal and professional education. The College’s reputation for excellence, innovation and responsiveness in education comes from its heritage as a Catholic, Lasallian, Liberal Arts institution.

Visit Saint Mary’s College at www.stmarys-ca.edu.

Mark Baird, LEAP Program Director
Megan Low, Program Coordinator/Core Faculty
Coni Donnelly, Program Assistant
Heather McFadden, New York Assistant
Claire Sheridan, LEAP Founder