Looking ahead, how do you foresee the future growth of the new and improved Master of Fine Arts program?

I really see that this program will be a competitive program of choice for dancers and choreographers. In addition to what I discussed previously, we have altered some of the prerequisites for the degree in order to allow us to accept candidates beyond the classic modern dance background that most MFA candidates possess. We are still looking for educated and experienced dancers and choreographers for our program, but we can now consider dancers from any idiom or genre, as long as one of the movement practices we offer in our department supports their research and/or technical growth. I think that by opening our program up to a wider pool of dancers/choreographers and guaranteeing them teaching experiences while they are working toward their MFA, we will see our new MFA program thrive beyond our capacity!

What information do dancers need to know in order to apply and prepare for upcoming deadlines?

For the MFA program, dancers should scan the QR code below for all of the information about applying. Dancers need to apply to CSULB via CSU Mentor by Dec. 1, 2015 and send a package of supporting materials to the department. They will be contacted regarding the live audition in January. Interested people should contact Grad Advisor Colleen Dunagan at colleen.dunagan@csulb.edu. For undergraduates and transfer students, auditioning also begins with applying to CSULB through CSU Mentor and then auditioning for the department. Our undergrad auditions in February consist of a ballet/modern dance class plus solo for transfer students, but students must gain admittance to the University first. Interested students should contact Undergraduate Advisor Ashley Garcia at Ashley.garcia@csulb.edu and scan the QR code below for more information.

Keeping up with the background of the program over the past decade and into this new year of additions.

The CSULB Department of Dance is actually over 40 years old, but most people think of us as 21 years old, which is how old our amazing facility is. In the past decade, our department has had four Department Chairs, and we lived through some trying economic times. I am so excited that our department is on an upward momentum again, having survived the worst of California’s economic crisis in education. In the past five years, we have added two new tenure-track faculty members who have brought new energy and ideas to the department, we collaborated with the Bill T. Jones/Anne Zane Dance Company in presenting one of Mr. Jones’ seminal pieces of concert dance and theater, we have quadrupled the number of students in our Bachelor of Arts—Option in Dance Science program, and we are debuting a new MFA program and a new Dance Minor in Fall 2016 that will bring added diversity and experiences to our department culture.

CSULB is well known for producing professionals in our field. Take a moment to bring on those graduates and how they are currently giving back.

Wow, there are so many graduates doing so many amazing things. Katrina Amato, one of our BFA alums, is making a name for herself not only as a commercial performer (she was most recently seen in national commercials doing yoga for Citib Pay and with the Aflac duck), but also as a choreographer having recently choreographed Zac Efron’s movie We Are Your Friends. BFA alum Patrick McCollum is paving his way on Broadway as an Associate Choreographer and Motifnet Associate on Peter and the Starcatcher. Rocky and The Last Ship. Giving back is really what so many of our grads do in their teaching positions. We have MFA grads in college teaching positions throughout California, Utah, New York, Texas, Mississippi, Florida and across the U.S. Thanks to our alums teaching in high schools, community colleges and middle schools throughout California and the U.S. We have had dancers with Shen Wei Dance Arts, Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, Thodos Dance Chicago, Faye Driscoll Group, Invertigo, Keith Johnson/Dancers, Donna Sternberg and Dancers, Rhett/Olacs Dance, Strange Fruit, and dancers who are directing their own companies throughout the U.S. Also, thanks to our amazing dance science program and Professor Karen Clippinger, they are scores of Pilates practitioners throughout California and the U.S. who are our alums.