

# Kelly Ferris Lester, Ed.D., M.F.A.

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## EDUCATION

### **Doctor of Education, Higher Education Administration**

The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS | August 2022

Dissertation: *Faculty Leadership Institute: A Case Study in Leadership Development in Higher Education* [10.13140/RG.2.2.16501.55526](#)

### **Master of Fine Arts, Dance Performance and Choreography**

State University of New York, College at Brockport, NY | May 2007

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theatre with concentration in dance**

University of Memphis, TN | May 2000

## CERTIFICATIONS

**Becoming A Provost Academy** | American Academic Leadership Institute | 2025-26

**Data Equity Fellow** | Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities | 2022

**Emerging Leaders Program** | American Association of State Colleges and Universities | 2022

**Advanced Certificate in Effective College Instruction** | Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), endorsed by American Council on Education. | 2021

## RECENT EXPERIENCE

### CURRENT INSTITUTION

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The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) is an R1 institution with the Carnegie Community Engaged designation and one of only 43 institutions accredited in all four areas of the arts. The institution hosts four academic colleges, a Graduate School, and an Honors College. Enrollment numbers consistently represent 13,000+ students. USM prioritizes student success, excellence in teaching, research, and creative activities, and community partnerships. Its student demographics mimic the state, with 30% Black, 60% White, and less than 4% Asian American, Mixed Race, and Native American students. More than half the student body is Pell-grant eligible, and approximately 30% first-generation students. As an R1 institution, USM serves regional needs, including blue economy, business and industry partnerships, health professions, teacher preparation, and more.

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## KEY SKILLS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Strong organizational and interpersonal communication
- Collaborative leadership style with evidence across disciplines, units, and shared governance bodies
- Change agent through the development of shared vision and strategic planning
- Facilitation of conflict management to resolve issues and recommend workable solutions
- Budget management across multiple units and budget types
- Experience in facilitation of teaching development and leadership development
- Ability to leverage professional expertise and understanding of higher education trends to assess areas of opportunity, identify solutions, and implement plans
- Aptitude for fundraising and building relationships with external stakeholders
- Experienced in faculty recruitment, onboarding, and promotion and tenure process
- Skilled in assessment, program review, and accreditation review
- Demonstrated record of facilitating and implementing student success initiatives, with results in retention, persistence, and graduation rates

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### POSITIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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#### **Associate Provost for Faculty Success** | July 2024-present

*\*Due to restructuring in the Office of the Provost, title was updated from previous title of AVP of Teaching and Learning with updated distribution of duties and direct reports.*

- **Responsibilities**
  - Providing strategic leadership for all matters related to faculty affairs
  - Collaborating with deans, school directors, faculty, and other internal and external stakeholders to ensure faculty members have the resources, support, and opportunities to excel in their teaching, research, and service
  - Coordinating faculty human resources, centralized onboarding, and orientation services for new full-time and adjunct faculty
- **Area Supervision**
  - Center for Faculty Development
  - Learning Assistants Program
  - Center for Community Engagement
  - Academic Integrity Director
  - Academic Affairs Web Designer
  - Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) partnership
  - Grade Review Council
- **Administrative Oversight**
  - promotion and tenure
  - faculty recruitment and retention
  - faculty awards
  - new faculty onboarding
  - faculty development
  - faculty handbook
  - community engagement

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## ▪ **Key Accomplishments**

- Facilitating Provost Faculty Fellows program with development of tracks to support institutional initiatives and guiding implementation of recommendations from fellows
- Established and facilitated Workload Policy Task Force. Led to updates in Faculty Handbook for workload allocation and annual evaluation procedures
- Overseeing the use of artificial intelligence at the institution through policy, teaching and workforce development, and establishment of MAIN AI Lab
- Establishing and overseeing process for school level Policies and Procedures documents inclusive of promotion and tenure, workload allocation, and annual evaluation criteria
- Institutionalizing Fall First Week through continuous improvement actions and collaboration across units

## **Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning | August 2022-June 2024**

### ▪ **Responsibilities**

- Cultivating a transformative, innovative environment for effective teaching and engaged student learning
- Fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and developing targeted strategies to enhance pedagogical practices and address areas of challenge in student learning outcomes
- Analyzing data related to teaching effectiveness and student outcomes
- Developing evidence-based initiatives for continuous improvement of teaching and learning efforts.

### ▪ **Area Supervision**

- Center for Faculty Development
- Learning Assistants Program
- Center for Community Engagement
- Speaking Center, Writing Center
- Academic Integrity Director
- Grade Appeal Council

### ▪ **Administrative Oversight**

- faculty searches and recruitment
- faculty awards
- new faculty onboarding
- faculty development
- faculty retention
- student success resources

### ▪ **Key Accomplishments**

- Facilitated institutional task force to review general education course success data and establish strategic plan for effective teaching to decrease success gaps.
- Analysis of faculty retention data to support faculty recruitment efforts
- Development of student resources webpage through collaboration across institutional units
- Revision of Fall First Week events to meet the needs of internal stakeholder

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## **Director, Center for Faculty Development | 2018-2022**

Inaugural Director: CFD established 2016 with Director role named in 2018

- **Responsibilities:**
  - Developing strategic plan for CFD and Center for Community Engagements
  - Collaborating with institutional units to provide professional development for faculty and staff
  - Overseeing Association of College Educators (ACUE) Faculty Development Institute
  - Creating and facilitating Faculty Leadership Institute
  - Establishing and facilitating CFD Advisory Board
- **Area Supervision**
  - Center for Faculty Development
  - Learning Assistants Program
  - Center for Community Engagement
  - Academic Integrity
- **Key accomplishments**
  - Increased participation and completion of ACUE Faculty Development Institute from 30 to 125 credentialed educators and from serving 30 faculty per year to 90+
  - Designed and facilitated Faculty Leadership Institute with 43% growth in applications and 50% acceptance rate over 3-year period
  - Increased participation from approximately 350 attendees across CFD workshops in year one to over 1200 in year four
  - Facilitated programming to enhance career guidance and retention strategies into courses and degree programs.

## **Professor of Dance | 2008- present**

Promotion to Professor 2019 | Tenured and Promotion to Associate Professor

2014 | Assistant Professor 2009-2014 | Visiting Assistant Professor 2008-2009

### COURSES TAUGHT

- |                                  |                              |                                 |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ▪ All levels of Modern technique | ▪ Junior and Senior projects | ▪ Beginning Jazz                |
| ▪ Somatics and Dance             | ▪ Thesis in Dance            | ▪ Beginning Ballet              |
| ▪ Dance Appreciation             | ▪ Music Resources for Dance  | ▪ Honors College Thesis Writing |
| ▪ Composition                    |                              |                                 |

### PREVIOUS POSITIONS

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**Adjunct Lecturer**, SUNY Brockport | Summer 2007-Summer 2008

**Graduate Teaching Assistant** | Spring 2006-Spring 2007

**Adjunct Lecturer**, University of Rochester, NY | Spring 2008

**Adjunct Instructor**, University of Memphis, TN | Fall 2001-Spring 2004

**Instructor**, University of Mississippi | Fall 2000-Spring 2001

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## SELECTED INITIATIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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**Initiative Lead | Artificial Intelligence-Responsible Use | Institutional Success** | Ongoing Facilitation of multi-layered approach to engage faculty, staff, and students in choice-making in use of artificial intelligence (AI). Strategies include establishing an AI taskforce, ongoing professional development for faculty and students, gaining input from faculty on the why (or why not) artificial intelligence is allowable in courses, and partnering with the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN). Current work is based on a Presidential charge to the AI Taskforce to incorporate AI literacy into the curriculum and recommend infrastructure support.

**Initiative Lead | Workload Policy Revision and Updated Promotion and Tenure Guidelines | Faculty Success** | 2024-present

Facilitation of shared governance process to revise workload allocation and its connection to annual evaluation within the Faculty Handbook. Through a representative taskforce, recommendations were based on feedback collected from stakeholders. The approach included a review to increase clarity, communication with stakeholders, and consistent implementation across colleges and schools. Phase 2 focuses on updates to School Policies and Procedures, inclusive of promotion and tenure guidelines.

**Initiative Lead | Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI) | Faculty Success** | 2019-2022

Designed and facilitated the initial three years of the FLI program, which aims to build an interdisciplinary community that cares about leading and professional development. The program is open to faculty at all ranks with a focus on skills, knowledge, and resources that are transferable to varied dimensions of their faculty careers, from research productivity to involvement in their professional discipline to formal leadership opportunities on campus. The program is its seventh year with continued interest and transformation of leadership culture on campus.

**Initiative Lead | Fall First Week | Faculty Success** | 2019- present

Annual organization, facilitation, and refinement of Fall First Week as an annual in-house conference focused on preparation and community building the week before classes begin each fall. This program includes New Faculty Orientation, professional development sessions, university and college-level convocations, school meetings, and social events. Each year, the program evolves through collaboration with college deans, school directors, and student affairs directors to ensure needs, scheduling, and objectives are met. Key updates established in 2025 to facilitate an earlier hire date for new faculty as a step for faculty retention and support.

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## **Initiative Lead | Student Resources Website | Student Success | 2021**

A collaborative project established to showcase student resources at the institution in an accessible website. Key collaborator, Danielle Sypher-Haley, Academic Affairs web designer. The design emphasizes answering typical student questions: Need Academic Help? Need Financial Aid Help? Need Mental or Emotional Help?, etc. As an additional element of student web resources, Sypher-Haley and Lester collaborated to build and design Seymour's GEC, to provide descriptions of GEC courses in a student-friendly way. Both web projects incorporated collaboration across many units and schools.

## **Program Lead, Facilitator, and Institutional Contact | ACUE Faculty Development Institute | Faculty and Student Success | 2018-present**

Partnership established with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) in fall 2016, with Lester's oversight beginning in 2018. The program led to cultural change and deeper institutional valuing of teaching, with approximately 1/3 of USM faculty earning a credential in *Effective College Instruction*, *Effective Online College Instruction*, and an *Advanced Certificate* by 2025.

## **Chair (Provost Appointed) | USM Vision 2020-Faculty Governance and Representation Committee and Implementation Committee | Faculty Success | 2017-2019**

This multi-year initiative reorganized the university from six to four colleges and from departments to a school structure. The Faculty Governance and Representation (FGR) committee was one of three major tiers, and its charge centered on re-envisioning all governance bodies from schools to colleges to university levels through the lens of the "Vision 2020" USM Reorganization Plan. Initiatives guided the implementation of the plan.

## **Chair | QEP Research and Design | Student Success | 2014-2016**

The Quality Enhancement Plan research and design committee concluded with the final selected topic of *Gateways and Pathways*, with attention to DFW rates in gateway courses and pathways guidance for internships and careers. The committee defined learning outcomes, reviewed literature and best practices, and developed implementation and assessment plans.

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## SELECTED SERVICE CONTRIBUTIONS

### UNIVERSITY

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**Committee member | Committee on Federal Guidance | Office of Provost | 2025-present**  
Committee monitors the guidance and directives from federal agencies and develops contingency plans related to federal research funding and state legislation.

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**Committee member | Institutional Planning Committee** | President appointed | 2023  
The committee designed the process for institutional planning for AY 2023-24.

**Committee member | Institutional Continuity Committee** | Vice Provost appointed | 2020  
Committee oversaw course planning across Academic Affairs during the pandemic.

**Faculty Liaison | JUMP Scholars Program** | 2012-2018

Bridge program for incoming freshmen, which includes a cohort structure in 2 general education courses and a university skills course. Included collaborative approach to develop curriculum, review of applications, and design of a 4-week program.

**Chair | Academic Council** | 2016-17

University-level curriculum committee that provides general supervision over undergraduate academic affairs, such as curricula, retention requirements, degree requirements, General Education Curriculum, and assessments, major, minor, and emphasis area requirements. **Chair Elect** | 2015-16, **Member** | 2014-15

**Member | Academic Leadership Council** | 2016-17

An advisory council to the Provost.

**Institutional Leadership Team | SACSCOC re-accreditation visit** | 2016

Primary role focused on sharing the process of QEP development and the role of shared governance input through the Academic Council.

**Chair | University Assessment Committee** | 2012-2014

Committee reviews degree program assessment reports for the institution.

**Committee Member** | 2011-2012; 2016-17

## COLLEGE

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**Faculty Affiliate** | Visiting New Zealand Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Karen Barbour | 2022

As Faculty Affiliate, Dr. Barbour and Dr. Lester collaborated on creative and scholarly research related to somatic movement education and environmental studies.

**Committee member | Faculty Evaluation Committee** | 2021, 2017, 2016

A committee of three peers who conduct school and program-level reviews for faculty teaching, research, and service for the academic year.

**Committee member | College Advisory Committee** | 2017-18

Committee of department representatives who review tenure and promotion dossiers for the College of Arts and Letters.

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## SCHOOL

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### **Director of Assessment** | 2017-2018

Planning and oversight of assessment for the new School of Performing and Visual Arts, including GEC 04 Aesthetic Values courses and program level.

### **Conference Coordinator | American College Dance Association South Region** | 2014-16

Planning and implementation for ACDA South Regional Conference at USM. Included budget, event schedules, registration, and alignment with the national office.

### **Committee Member | Promotion and Tenure Committee** | 2013-2021

### **Publicity Coordinator** | 2012-13

Oversight of the department of dance promotional materials for recruitment. Partnered creative services. Included brand development for print and website promotion.

### **Dance Appreciation Coordinator** | 2009-2018

Development of assessment report and continuous improvement plan for Dance Appreciation (DAN 130) and mentorship of new course instructors.

## GRANTS

### STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL SUCCESS FOCUSED

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### **Congressional Ask, USM AI Innovation and Learning Hub** | 2026 submission | pending

Tran, J. (PI), Lester, K. (Co-PI). \$3,500,000.

### **Department of Education, FIPSE Special Projects Program** | 2025 | not funded

Tran, J. (PI), Willis, R. (co-PI), Lester, K. (Co-PI) "Advancing Student Learning Through AI: An Accessible Model for Improving Postsecondary Outcomes. \$3,590,065

### **Department of Education Strengthening the Institution Program** | 2025-30 | \$2,155,600

Lester, K. F. (PI), Masterson, D. (Co-PI), Willis, R. (Co-PI). "Improving Student Degree Attainment: A Comprehensive Institutional Approach."

### **Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) grant** | 2023-2025 | \$41,517

Sub-awardee through Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College | S. McLendon (Co-PI), Lester, K.F. (Co-PI), Leuty, M. (Co-PI). Funds were used to recruit, market, and facilitate artificial intelligence courses from Intel/Dell and establish an artificial intelligence lab at USM.

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## ARTS FOCUSED

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### **Partners for the Arts** | 2013-2023

- Lester, K. F., & Smith, L. S., "Mary Roberts: Connecting Students to a Commercial Dance Career" | 2023 | \$2,000.
- Lester, K. F., "Hub Dance Collective Summer Concert Series" | 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 | \$1,250-\$3,500.
- Lester, K.F., "Bill Evans: Master Dance Teacher Guest Residency | 2022 | \$2,300.
- Lester, K. F., "'Jazz is.... Dance Project" with Melanie George (guest artist)" | 2018 | \$2,500.

### **Mississippi Arts Commission** | 2020 | \$3,700

Individual Artist Fellowship-Choreography

### **ClancyWorks Guest Artist Residency** | 2013 | \$10,000

- Sponsored by Partners for the Arts, Foundation, \$3,000
- Sponsored by Mississippi Arts Commission, State, \$4,000
- Sponsored by Partners for the Arts, Foundation, \$3,000

## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI-INTERNAL GRANTS-SELECTED

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### **University of Southern Mississippi Foundation** | 2020 | \$10,000

Stengrim, L. A. (Co-PI), Lester, K. F. (Co-PI), Broome, J. H. (Co-PI), "Creating Synergy Among Peer-to-Peer Programs."

### **USM Office of the Provost** | 2019 | \$1,500

Lester, K. F., Kinnell, A. M., Dorman, E. L., "Applied Learning Opportunities Going Beyond the Classroom."

### **USM College of Arts and Letters-Interdisciplinary Investigations** | 2016 | \$5,000

Lester, K. F. (PI), Lentz-Hill, E. (COPI), Yaoyuneyong, G. (COPI), Kinnell, A. M. (COPI), Hrostowski, S. (COPI), Stanback, E. B. (COPI), Tuuri, R. A. (COPI), "Fleshed Out: The Body Politic."

### **Peggy Jean Connor Research Award** | 2016 | \$1,500

Lester, K. F. (PI), Lentz-Hill, E. (COPI), Sponsored by Committee on Services and Resources for Women.

### **Audrey Keith Lucas & Ella Ginn Lucas Endowment for Faculty Excellence** | 2012 | \$2,600

Lester, K.F. (PI) "Exploring Somatic Principles in Relationship to Teaching Dance"

### **College of Arts and Letters** | 2012 | \$3,000

Lester, K. F. (PI), Early, M. (COPI), "Investigating the Duet Form"

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## FUNDRAISING

### **National Dance Education Organization | 2018-2024**

Established Development Committee with donations increase by 170% over a 6-year period, including major gift of \$500,000.

### **Fall First Week Sponsorship | 2018-present**

Annual sponsorship for events for new and returning faculty and staff. Total funds over 6-year period \$35,000.

### **USM Foundation | 2022-present**

- Partner for promoting endowed professors and chairs through marketing and overseeing annual awards | 2022-present
- Faculty Liaison for internal giving | 2012-2015

### **Community | 2023-2025**

- Oak Gove Elementary Parent Teacher Organization Board, annual funds raised \$40,000-50,000 per year
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### **Eagle Fever Projects | 2017-2018**

Online fundraising tool used to generate support for Southern Miss by connecting the power of social media, peer-to-peer relationships, and collective giving

- Center for Faculty Development Foundation established | 2018
- Dance Major support for attending the American College Dance Association South Conference | 2017

## LEADERSHIP TO THE PROFESSION

### **American Council on Education Women's Network Executive Council | 2024-2027**

The WNEC contributes to state networks through mentorship, leadership development and as a liaison between the network and the American Council on Education (ACE). The Council advises ACE on issues pertaining to the overall functioning of the ACE Women's Network and women's leadership needs in higher education.

### **President | National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) | 2021-2022**

NDEO is a membership organization that supports and advocates for dance education across all sectors. Lester served in various roles over 14 years at NDEO. Key initiatives and priorities of Presidency: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JDEI) Audit of NDEO with consultant Maryland Nonprofits, with 90 board members, staff, and members serving as workgroup auditors, Incorporation of Action and Accountability Committee to ensure continued alignment of JDEI priorities, and Strategic Planning to align with JDEI initiative.

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Additional contributions: **Past-President** | 2023-25, **President-Elect** | 2019-2020, **Treasurer** | 2016-2019, **Policy Board of Directors** | 2011-2016

**Chair | Dance 2050: Think Tank for the Future of Dance** | 2017-2020

NDEO initiative included a written vision statement and collection of work in the field; current initiatives connecting private, public, K-12, and higher education sectors.

**Co-Founder, Performer, and Choreographer | Hub Dance Collective** | 2012-2022

The only professional modern dance company in Hattiesburg, MS. My role included publicity, writing grants, managing budgets, and overseeing production elements.

**Board of Directors | International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association** | 2012-2015

ISMETA is a membership organization which offers services to support somatic movement therapists and educators. ISMETA maintains a professional registry of qualified practitioners and ensures that Somatic Movement Training Programs uphold high standards of education and practice. <https://ismeta.org/about-ismeta>

**Co-Director | Eastwest Somatics Institute** | 2017-present

Role includes facilitating certification workshops and conferences, maintaining approved training program status with ISMETA, and outreach to current students and program graduates. **Conference Chair and Program Coordinator** | 2006-2016

**Board of Directors | New York State Dance Education Association** | 2008-2010

**Student Representative** | 2007-2008

## HONORS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

**Fulbright U.S. International Education Administrator (IEA) Award** | France | 2025-2026

Two-week funded seminar in October 2025 with a focus on France's higher education and research system.

**Outstanding Service, SUNY Brockport Alumni Association Award** | 2024

Recognizes outstanding contributions to your career and/or your community and/or alma mater.

**NDEO Presidential Award** | 2024, 2020, 2019, 2014

Recognition of service contributions to the organization by the NDEO President.

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## **Movement Maker (for University of Southern Mississippi) | 2023**

Inaugural recognition at the National Higher Education Teaching Conference for investment in faculty development, demonstrated student impact, and vocal advocacy for great teaching in higher education.

## **Distinguished Friend of Student Affairs, University of Southern Mississippi | 2022**

The annual award recognizes a university member outside of student affairs who has served as a partner with significant impact.

## **Dean's Award for Exemplary Leadership and Service | 2020**

Inaugural award recognizing leadership and service, specifically Lester's contributions during the global pandemic to support faculty and staff in transitioning to remote work.

## **Higher Education Appreciation Day Working for Academic Excellence | 2018**

Mississippi Legislature's recognition of a faculty member at each institution for exceptional contributions to teaching, research, and service

## **Innovation in Teaching Award | 2015**

University of Southern Mississippi Learning Enhancement Center recognition for innovation in online teaching for dance appreciation courses.

## **Dean's Creative Achievement Award | 2000**

University of Memphis undergraduate recognition for creative research merit

## **National Merit Scholar | recognized 1996**

## PUBLICATIONS

Lester, K. (2026) "**Toward Integrated Faculty Success: Facilitators, Connectors, and Culture Builders**". *Journal of Faculty Development*. (to be published in May 2026).

Chessman, H., Churchill, M., Corella, A., Gaine, C., Krotseng, M., Lee, K., Lester, K., Stempel, E., White, M. (2025). "**Preparing for a Presidential or Executive-Level Search: A Guide for Women in Leadership.**" American Council on Education. [Preparing-for-Presidential-Search-Guide.pdf](#)

Lester, K. F. (2017). **Somatics: A Buzzword Defined**. *Journal of Dance Education*, 17(1), 31-33. [10.1080/15290824.2016.1117615](#)

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Lester, K. F. (2015). *Moving Consciously: Somatic Transformations through Dance, Yoga, and Touch*. (ed. S. Fraleigh & R. Way. **Environments for Self-Learning**. University of Illinois Press. [9780252039409.003.0005](#)

McGreevy-Nichols, S., Lester, K. F., Smith, M. P. (2014). **DANCE 2050: The Future of Dance in Higher Education**. *Journal of Dance Education*, 14(1), 41-42.  
[10.1080/15290824.2014.881189](#)

## PRESENTATIONS

### STUDENT AND FACULTY SUCCESS

#### INVITED

MacCormick, P., Zande, C., Gibson, S. Cantor, N., Lester, K.F.(2026) "**Our Most Significant Investment Deserves a Strategy: Rethinking Faculty Development for Measurable Impact.**" Panel. ACE Experience 2026, Washington, D.C.

Lester, K.F. (2025). Jefferson Davis School District. "**Incorporating AI tools into the K-12 Learning Environment**" Flowood, MS.

Lester, K.F., Bridenbaugh, S., Grey, A., Smith, A. (2025) Smith Education Associates and Association of College and University Educators. "**Increasing Student Retention through Great Teaching.**" Webinar. [Increasing Student Retention Through Great Teaching Webinar | ACUE](#)

Lester, K. F. (2025) Women in Higher Education Mississippi Network. Panel "**Leadership, Mentorship, and Sponsorship: Empowering Women in Higher Ed.**" Oxford, MS.

Lester, K. F., Napier, K., Pittman J., Tollison, S., Zuehkle, J. (2024) Delta State University "**The Effects of AI in Higher Education in the State of Mississippi**", Cleveland, MS.  
<https://www.deltastate.edu/news-and-events/2024/10/dsu-to-host-panel-discussion-on-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-in-higher-education/>

Lester, K. F., (2024), National Higher Education Teaching Conference "**From Belonging to Mattering: Centering Classroom Interactions and Connections,**" Minneapolis, MN.

Lester, K. F., (2023) National Higher Education Teachers Conference, "**Creative Practice: Evidence-Based Teaching Demonstration,**" New York City, NY.

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Lester, K. F., Dunnivant, S. Pendelton, L. (2020) SACSCOC Annual Meeting, "**What will it take for the student success agenda to succeed?**," virtual meeting.

Lester, K.F., Pendelton, L., Happel, H., (2020) California Community College Association of Occupational Education, "**Myth #2: Hands on and Active Learning Can't Be Used Online**," virtual conference.

Lester, K. F., MacCormack, P., Burgess, L. (2020), American Teacher's Federation-COVID-19 Response, "**From Arts to Sciences: How can I teach this class online?**" virtual webinar.

Lester, K. F., Blackwell, C. S., Henderson, T.-N., Bless, M. (2019), POD Network Annual Conference, "**Investing in Our Core Student Success Asset—The Faculty**," Pittsburgh, PA.

## PEER REVIEWED

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Lester, K.F. (2026) Women's Network Leadership Conference, American Council on Education. "**Building Capacity for Creativity in Your Leadership**," Washington, D.C.

Lester, K. F., (2025) American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) 2025 Summer Meeting. "**Leveraging Stakeholder Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence**," Indianapolis, ID.

Lester, K. F., (2024) South Regional Faculty and Instructional Development Consortium "**From Belonging to Mattering: Centering Classroom Interactions and Connections**," Long Beach, MS.

Leuty, M. E., Lester, K. F., (2024) National Higher Education Teaching Conference, "**Promoting Student Well-being Through Course Design**," Minneapolis, MN.

Lester, K. F., Pendelton, L. (2022) POD Network National Conference, "**Fostering Belonging and Motivation for Students and Faculty**," Seattle, WA. (November 2022).

Pippins, T., Chasteen, A. C., K. Lester, Lawner, E., Snow, M., (2021) American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, "**Can Faculty Development Improve Student Course Outcomes? Evaluating the Impact of Association of College and University Educators–Trained Faculty at the University of Southern Mississippi**," San Diego, CA.

Lawner, E. Lester, K. F., Chasteen, A. C., Pippins, T., Snow, M., (2021) American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, "**Cumulative Academic Impact of Multiple Course Experiences with Instructors Who Have Received Faculty Development Training**," San Diego, CA

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Lester, K. F., (2022) Southern Regional Faculty & Instructional Development Consortium, "**Building Community Through Leadership Development**," Southern Regional Faculty & Instructional Development Consortium, Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

Lester, K. F., Kinnell, A. M., (2017) Association of American Colleges and Universities, "**Jump Start to General Education Experience: A Co-Curricular Model**," Phoenix, AR.

Lester, K. F., (2015) LEC Connects, "**Self-Learning in Diverse Environments**," University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS.

Lester, K. F., (2013) LEC Connects, "**Thinking Outside of the Box in Online Education**," University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS.

## DANCE EDUCATION

### INVITED

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Lester, K.F. (2025), Mississippi Whole Schools Summer Institute. "**Dancing with Leadership Skills in the Classroom**," 3-day workshop track, Tupelo, MS.

Lester, K. F. (2024), SUNY Brockport Department of Dance "**Dancing through Leadership: How Dance Prepared Me for Multiple Roles**," Brockport, NY.

Lester, K.F., Marshall, C., Ng, N., Curry, F., Curran, T. (2022) National Dance Education Organization "**Connecting to NDEO through Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**," Atlanta, GA.

Lester, K. F., Nichols, S. M., Arts Education Partnership Meeting, "**A JDEI Journey: A Collaboration with the National Dance Education Organization and Maryland Nonprofits**," virtual webinar.

Lester, K. F., Davenport, D., Kahlich, L., Ursprung, S., Levey, J., (2020) National Dance Education Organization Webinar Series, "**Widening the Circle: Envisioning a Collaborative Future**," virtual webinar.

Lester, K. F., Barry, S., Jones, C., Guigere, M., Erkert, J., (2020) National Dance Education Organization Webinar Series, "**College Dance and The Fall Semester: Administrative Challenges Due to Covid - Q&A, Part 2**," virtual webinar.

Lester, K. F., Schupp, K., Curry, F., Flinn, N., Hathaway, R., Robey, J. (2020), National Dance Education Organization Webinar Series, "**College Dance and The Fall Semester: Administrative Challenges Due to Covid - Q&A, Part 1**," virtual webinar.

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Lester, K. F., Megill, B. (2020), National Dance Education Organization-COVID-19 response, "**Identifying our Synergy: Ideas for Online Dance in Higher Ed**," virtual webinar.

## PEER-REVIEWED

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Lester K. F., Jones, C., Ursprung, S., Rapoza, A. (2024) National Dance Education Organization, "**Dance 2050**," Seattle, WA.

Lester, K. F., Cooper-Ashirifi, M., Casel, G., Ebright, W. (2023) National Dance Education Organization, "**From Dance Educator to Higher Education Administrator**," Denver, CO.

Lester, K. F., Davenport, D., Lakes, R., Morgan, I. (2019), National Dance Education Organization Annual Conference, "**Dance 2050: Changed Contexts, Media, and Mentoring in Dance**," Miami, FL.

Lester, K. F., Davenport, D., Ursprung, S. (2018) National Dance Education Organization, "**Building Pathways of Leadership Through NDEO's Dance 2050 Initiative**," San Diego, CA.

Lester, K. F., Lentz-Hill (2017) National Dance Education Organization, "**Fleshed Out: The Body Politic**," San Antonio, TX.

Lester, K. F., Frichtel, M., Henley, M., Wilcox, A. (2016), National Dance Education Organization, "**Putting Dance 2050's Vision Statement into the Classroom**," Washington, DC.

Lester, K.F., Kaddar, Y., Megill, B., Vissicaro, P. (2012) National Dance Education Organization, "**Approaches to Teaching Dance Online**," Los Angeles, CA

- World Dance Alliance Conference, Vancouver, BC. | 2013
- **Part 2:** National Dance Education Organization, Miami, FL. | 2013

Lester, K.F. (2012) Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) Connects, "**Teaching Dance Online?**" Hattiesburg, MS.

Lester, K. F. (2011) National Dance Education Organization, "**Teaching Dance Appreciation Online**" Minneapolis, MN.

Lester, K.F. (2009) National Dance Education Organization "**3 Models for Teaching Dance Appreciation**" New York City, NY.

Lester, K.F. (2006) National Dance Education Organization, "**The Individual and the Community: Looking at the Creative Approaches of Anna Halprin and Liz Lerman**," Long Beach, CA.

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## SOMATIC MOVEMENT EDUCATION

### PEER REVIEWED

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Lester, K. F., (2022) International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association, "**Unwinding the Dance of Somatic Pedagogy,**" virtual conference.

Aronson, R. L., Lester, K. F. (2022), Lessac Research and Training Institute, "**Shin Somatics and Lessac Kinesensic Body Work Crossovers and Connections,**" virtual conference.

Lester, K. F., Aronson, R. L. (2020) The Lessac Training and Research Institute, "**Crossovers and Connections of Shin Somatics and Lessac Kinesensic Training,**" Kent, OH.

Lester, K. F., Controneo, E., Eddy, M., Taylor, M., Davis, C. (2019), National Dance Education Organization, "**The Role of Somatic Movement in the Creative Process of Dance Making,**" Miami, FL.

Lester, K. F., Lee, S., Davis, C. (2019) Emerging Pathways within Somatic Movement and Dance Education, "**Charting Our Future: Somatic Practices and Higher Education,**" National Dance Education Organization and International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association, New York City, NY.

Lester, K. F., Ikle, M., Schaeffer, C., Bush, A., Purvis, D. (2019) National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) and International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA), "**Dancing Transformations: Empowering, Healing and Honoring Diversity through Shin Somatics®,**" New York City, NY.

Lester, K. F., (2015) 2nd Annual Somatics-Based Dance Conference, "**Self-Learning in Somatically Diverse Environments,**" Bill Evans Somatic Dance Institute, Dean College, Franklin, MA.

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

### FEATURED FACULTY

#### **Association of College and University Educators**

In the ACUE modules, videos feature Lester's pedagogical approaches and impact in the learning environment. Interviews and sample course materials are integrated throughout the 25-module certification programs. The expert teachers in the modules share evidence-based teaching practices that prioritize active and engaged learning, critical thinking skills, lifelong learning, and course design. Lester's features highlight transparent assignment guidelines, incorporating active and reflective experiences into

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the online environment, alignment of activities with student learning outcomes, and assessment for group work.

- **Designing Learner-Centered and Equitable modules** | 2022
- **Inclusive Teaching for Equitable Learning** | 2021
- **Effective Online Teaching Practices** | 2021

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### **New Faculty Orientation** | 2018-present

New Faculty Orientation begins with communication and development opportunities throughout the summer for incoming faculty members. The required 4-day orientation includes welcomes from upper administrators, HR benefits overview, a Campus Connections Fair, essential policy overviews, teaching development, introduction to software used in daily work, peer-mentor luncheon, and community building.

### **ACUE Faculty Development Institute** | University of Southern Mississippi | 2018-present

The signature program at USM includes weekly online modules and meetings with a facilitator. Faculty and staff are introduced to evidence-based teaching practices and then incorporate a strategy into a learning environment and submit a final reflection. Weekly meetings are essential to the program to develop a culture and community of teaching excellence, to experience teaching strategies, and to problem solve how to apply to diverse disciplines. Lester regularly facilitates microcredentials.

- Promoting Active and Engaged Learning
- Fostering Lifelong Learning
- Designing Learner-Centered and Inclusive Courses
- Embedding Career Guidance into Courses
- Fostering a Culture of Belonging
  - For faculty and staff
  - For administrators

## STAND-ALONE WORKSHOPS

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The workshops below are offered regularly through the Center for Faculty Development, Orientation Programs, Office of the Provost, and by invitation.

- Ready for a Career in \_\_\_\_\_?
- Smart Tools, Smarter Choices: Navigating AI
- Faculty Search Committee Chair Training
- Using A.I. (or Not Using A.I.) in the College Classroom
- Unleashing Potential: Agile Leadership for Growth, Resilience, Inclusion, and Transformation
- Building a Sense of Belonging in Your Classroom
- Building Relationships to Help Students Persist

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- Creating Transparent Assignment Guidelines
- Developing a Hybrid Course
- Effective Teaching Practices in Online Classes
- Promoting Self-Directed Learning
- Transitioning Your Class Online

## CREATIVE RESEARCH

### CHOREOGRAPHY

#### TOUR

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**The Body Politic** (tour 2017-18) An evening length performance with Elizabeth Lentz-Hill—includes Lentz-Hill's solo *My Body Performs*, Lester's solo *In Her Clothes*, and duet *People Issues* with an interdisciplinary response.

- Mississippi Dance Festival, Hattiesburg, MS, September 2017
- Big River Dance Festival, Huntington, WV, September 2017
- Fall Dance Festival, Ocean Springs, MS, September 2017
- The University of the South, January 2018
- Middle Tennessee State University, January 2018
- Austin Peay State University, January 2018
- University of Memphis, January 2018
- Auburn University, March 2018
- Mobile, Alabama K-12 School district, April 2018
- Chicago, IL self-produced concert, May 2018
- Chicago public and private K-12 schools, May 2018

#### HUB DANCE COLLECTIVE

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**Relative Triptych** Music: Meredith Monk, February 2010, 3 dancers, as part of guest artist residency at the University of Memphis

- ❖ Restaged for Hub Dance Collective, August 2019
- ❖ Restaged for USM Repertory Dance Company, November 2011
- ❖ Restaged for Southeast Regional ACDFA for Informal Concert Series, Albany, GA, March 2012
- ❖ [https://youtu.be/WBvwGssnGGQ?si=OgHRJO\\_XkU472Pwm](https://youtu.be/WBvwGssnGGQ?si=OgHRJO_XkU472Pwm)

**Prò ·gress/Pro ·gress'**, Music: Valgeir Sigurðsson, Lemm Sissay and Henry Torgue, June 2017, trio

- ❖ Restaged Fall Dance Concert, Ocean Springs, MS, September 2017
- ❖ [https://youtu.be/WBvwGssnGGQ?si=OgHRJO\\_XkU472Pwm](https://youtu.be/WBvwGssnGGQ?si=OgHRJO_XkU472Pwm)

**People Issues**, collaboration with Elizabeth Lentz-Hill, Music: Ninja Tuna, Daniel Bernard and Jami Sieber, text: Kelly Ferris Lester and Elizabeth Lentz-Hill, August 2016, duet

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- ❖ Restaged *How Do Bodies Perform?* As part of *Fleshed Out: The Body Politic*, an Interdisciplinary Investigations Series, October 2016
- ❖ [https://youtu.be/fWWLQ\\_Klwhs?si=Up6-d1ML39SL-u4G](https://youtu.be/fWWLQ_Klwhs?si=Up6-d1ML39SL-u4G)

***In Her Clothes***, Music: Gustav Santaola, Nadia Sirota, June and August 2015, solo

- ❖ Restaged Social Justice and Dance Series, Rochester Fringe Festival, September 2015
- ❖ [https://youtu.be/xJ\\_RVpv5aRY?si=xefwLMSBhLKvxqva](https://youtu.be/xJ_RVpv5aRY?si=xefwLMSBhLKvxqva)

***Shared Bond*** Music: Nico Muhly and Kim Scharnberg, August 2013, duet

- ❖ Restaged Dumbo Dance Festival, New York City, NY, September 2014
- ❖ Restaged Brockport Alumni Showcase, New York City, NY, June 2014
- ❖ Restaged RAD Festival, Kalamazoo, MI, March 2014
- ❖ Restaged for Repertory Dance Company, December 2013, AC DFA informal 2014

***Shifting Boundaries*** co-choreographed and performed with Meredith Early, Elizabeth Lentz, and Rebecca McArthur, music: Joby Talbot, December 2012, quartet

- ❖ Restaged for Barefoot Brigade Festival, Dallas, TX, January 2013

***If Black Were Skyblue*** Music: Vitamin String Quartet, November 2010, Self-choreographed and performed solo

- ❖ Restaged 2<sup>nd</sup> International Somatics and Dance Conference, 2015, Franklin, MA
- ❖ Restaged for Hub Dance Collective Summer Concert Preview at Oddfellows Gallery, Hattiesburg, MS April 2013
- ❖ Restaged for Eastwest Somatics Symposium at The University of Otago, New Zealand, January 2013
- ❖ Restaged for Project: Motion Dance Collective, Memphis, TN June 2010

REPERTORY DANCE COMPANY-UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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***Reveal*** Music: Felix Rösch, March 2025, trio

- ❖ Restaged Repertory Dance Company performance, April 2025

***Of Remembrance*** Music; David Lang, Nico Muhly, November 2019, ensemble

- ❖ Restaged for USM Dance Gala, March 2024
- ❖ [https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D\\_s?si=XssmvH2jt\\_dht-cO](https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D_s?si=XssmvH2jt_dht-cO)

***Empathy Migrations*** Music: Ezra Rose, Laurie Anderson, David Lang, March 2019, ensemble

- ❖ Restaged for USM Dance Gala, February 2020:  
<https://youtu.be/BjTCMMrgv9o?si=R8h1Q4pnmkf9oQ0M>

***Trajectory*** Music: Poppy Ackroyd, Pete Sweeny, Patsy Cline, October 2017, solo and ensemble

- ❖ Restaged for Snap Dance for Tempos Dance Festival, Auckland, NZ Oct 2017

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- ❖ Restaged for Dance for Film
- ❖ Restaged for Eastwest Somatics Symposium 2017
- ❖ <https://youtu.be/vn1Dv8tfwHE?si=l2VnVfN3XMhr1Sn>

**Concentric Kaleidoscope{Version A}** Music: Rene Aubry, December 2016, 4 dancers

**Concentric Kaleidoscope {Version B}** March 2017, 12 dancers

- ❖ [https://youtu.be/C4C7nxNYL4A?si=cNz9QQ8\\_jVcWwpGo](https://youtu.be/C4C7nxNYL4A?si=cNz9QQ8_jVcWwpGo)

**Etched Breath** Music: Roomful of Teeth, November 2015, 6 dancers

❖ Restaged for Alabama Dance Festival, January 2016

- ❖ [https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D\\_s?si=XssmvH2jt\\_dht-cO](https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D_s?si=XssmvH2jt_dht-cO)

**(Re) Forming Collective** Music: Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Todd Reynolds, sound engineer: Kelly Ferris Lester, April 2015, 10 dancers

❖ Restaged for the South American College Dance Association(ACDA) Adjudicated Concert Series, Hattiesburg, MS; selected for the **Gala Performance**

- ❖ [https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D\\_s?si=XssmvH2jt\\_dht-cO](https://youtu.be/nhe-WcY1D_s?si=XssmvH2jt_dht-cO)

**Ode to Dolly** Music: Dolly Parton, Text: Kelly Ferris Lester, December 2012, 7 dancers

**Submerge** Music: Hildur Gudnadottir, Max Richter, April 2012, 6 dancers

**Clutching For** Music: Nico Muhly, October 2010, 4 dancers

❖ Restaged for Southeast Regional ACDFA for Adjudicated Concert Series, Tallahassee, FL March 2011; selected for the **Gala Performance**

- ❖ Restaged for Dance on the Coast concert Ocean Springs, MS, February 2011

**Space in Between** Choreographed and performed with Meredith R. Early, Music: Zoe Keating, October 2010, duet

❖ Restaged for mini-guest artist residencies at Sarah Lawrence College, The College at Brockport (SUNY), and The University of Rochester, September 2011

- ❖ Restaged for USM Fall Dance Concert November 2011

**Spiraled Tides** Music: Osvaldo Golijov, April 2010, 5 dancers

- ❖ Restaged for Project: Motion Dance Collective, Memphis, TN June 2010

**Turvy-Topsy** Music: Tom Zé, November 2009, 11 dancers

- ❖ Restaged for Southeast Regional ACDFA for Informal Concert Series, Murfreesboro, TN, March 2010

**Seeping Through** Music: Gretchen Yanover, April 2009, 3 dancers

**Outside the Frame** (Structured Improvisation) Collaborative project with choreographer Erin Leigh, photographer Danny Rawls, and art professor David Wilkinson and class, April 2009

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**Constrained Embrace** Music: Philip Glass, November 2008, 7 dancers

- ❖ Restaged at Southeast Regional ACDFAs for Adjudicated Concert Series, Murfreesboro, TN, March 2009
- ❖ Restaged for Dance on the Coast concert, Gulfport, MS, January 2009

## SELECTED COLLABORATIONS WITH THEATRE, ART, AND MUSIC

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### **Bicicleta de Baiano,**

Collaborator: Nicholas Ciraldo, musician

music composer: Roberto Velasco, February 2022, duet dance and guitar

- ❖ Dance Gala, USM, March 2024
- ❖ Research Showcase, USM, November 2023

### **Two Colours**

Collaborator: Nicholas Ciraldo, musician

June and August 2014, duet dance and guitar

- ❖ Restaged Dumbo Dance Festival, New York City, NY September 2015
- ❖ Restaged RAD Festival, Kalamazzo, MI, March 2015
- ❖ Restaged Repertory Dance Company, May 2014

**Assassins** | USM Theatre | April 2013

Director: Robin Carr

**Ragtime: The Musical**, USM Theatre and Dance collaboration with the School of Music for Centennial Celebration | 2010

Director: Robin Carr, Conductor: Michael Miles, March 2010

**The Cherry Orchard** | USM Theatre | November 2008

ACT III, quadrille and waltz,

Director: Lou Rackoff

**Fractured** | ImageMovementSound Festival | 2007

Collaborators: Elizabeth Kelly (Eastman School of Music)

**Awen** | ImageMovementSound Festival | 2007

Collaborators: Michaela Eremiasova (Eastman School of Music), Matt Costanza (Rochester Institute of Technology)

**the alley** | ImageMovementSound Festival | 2006

Collaborator: Suzannah Newman (SUNY Brockport)

Based on Lester original solo choreography **Grasped** Music: De Capo Players | 2006

- ❖ Best of IMS, Rochester, NY | 2007
- ❖ New Jersey State Film Festival | 2006

**Wrapped Inside** | ImageMovementSound Festival | 2005

Collaborators: Jonathan Graybill (Eastman School of Music), Mark Zuniga (Rochester Institute of Technology)

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## PERFORMANCE

### PROFESSIONAL

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**Co-founder and Company Member**, Hub Dance Collective, Hattiesburg, MS | 2013-2022

**Company Member**, BIODANCE, Rochester, NY | 2005-2007

**Company Member**, Kista Tucker Dance, Rochester, NY | 2004-2007

**Co-Founder and Company Member**, Metal Velvet Dance Project, Memphis, TN | 2000-2004

**Company Member**, Project: Motion | 2000-2004

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING

**Trainer** | Eastwest Somatics Institute of Yoga, Dance, and Movement Studies | 2007-present

**Registered Somatic Movement Therapist (RSMT)** | International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA) | 2008-present

**Certified Evans Teacher**, Bill Evans Method of Teaching Modern Dance | 2012