The following is a response to specific concerns raised by the Task Force on Graduate Education Program Ratings and Rationale regarding the MFA in Dance. We ask the committee to reconsider the program's rating given the details provided here.

1. The report characterizes the applicant pool as "selective" but not "diverse." In fact, our applicant pool is not a good representation of the graduate students we admit, who are highly diverse. Of the 12 graduate students currently enrolled, 4 are international students (one on a Fulbright) and another is Asian-American (with a Dean's Fellowship Award). Minority students comprise 42% of our graduate population. In the past 3 out of 4 admissions cycles a minority candidate has received Graduate Dean's Fellowship Award. Diversity is the rule rather than the exception.

2. The fact that some Dance students return for further training after completing professional work is a strength, not a weakness. Because of the physical demands of the art, nearly all dancers enter the profession when they are young and cease performing in their thirties. Those who return for graduate study bring exceptional experience and dedication; they are usually our finest students. After completing their degree with us they are well positioned to seek teaching positions because experience as a professional dancer is not merely desirable but required; and dancers who return to the professional dance world after obtaining an MFA are highly valued as teachers, choreographers, artistic directors and administrators.

3. The program's performance TTD, completion and placement is exemplary, not adequate. Our time-to-degree record is two to three years and we enjoy a near 100% completion rate since 2000. All recent alumni who sought positions in higher education are employed as tenure track or full-time faculty members. Appointments since 2007 include: North Carolina School of the Arts; University of North Carolina, Charlotte; University of New Mexico; Richard Stockton College; Mesa State College; St. Cloud State College; Luther College. Recent graduates are or have been members of major dance companies (Trisha Brown Dance Company, David Dorfman Dance, ODC Dance), are working at important dance institutions or direct their own companies.

4. Not highlighted in the ratings report are the program's special strengths, which set it apart from peer institutions. These include (1) a commitment to interdisciplinary work, with equal emphasis on Ballet and Modern Dance, studio and theory courses, and collaboration with other arts units; (2) teaching opportunities and mentoring (required pedagogy courses, ongoing faculty mentoring, teaching workshops); (3) plentiful opportunities to present choreography and/or perform in fully produced concerts on an annual basis, including 10 concerts in which to perform, 3 in which to produce choreography, and a thesis concert.

5. Plan of Action. Enormous improvements will take place as we upgrade our facilities, and plans have begun. We are currently investigating the former UI Museum of Art as a future home for Dance, and, with it, additional and improved studio, teaching, and administrative spaces. We anticipate that new facilities will bring new national visibility for the department and its graduate program, and will help us attract an even more qualified and diverse pool of applicants.