

# PILATES



Reading, writing and...the method? Indeed! Pilates teacher training is being offered on more and more university campuses.

by Anne Marie O'Connor



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PHOTO BY KAT CAMERON; SAN MATEO PHOTO BY COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO COMMUNITY RELATIONS & MARKETING; SUNY PURCHASE PHOTOS BY DERUVO PHOTOGRAPHY; FULLERTON COLLEGE PHOTO COURTESY OF ALIX PLUM-WIDNER

**W**hen Jennifer Morley moved to New York in 2001 with a dance degree from Hofstra University, trying to pursue a dance career while doing her Pilates teacher training at the same time was an incredible challenge. "I would wake up at 5:00 a.m. to get to Romana [Kryzanowska]'s studio by 7:00, stayed there until 11:30, then ran to dance class at noon, got to work at the YMCA by 3:00, and then commuted to rehearsal at Brooklyn Arts Exchange by 7:00 p.m.," says Morley, who now directs Drexel University's Pilates program in Philadelphia. "Had I completed my Pilates training during college, I would have been able to start my artistic life in New York on a much more even keel."

Sarah Artha Negara had a different challenge after she graduated with a dance degree from California's Long Beach State University. "I studied Pilates there with Karen Clippinger," says Artha Negara. "She really inspired me to become a Pilates instructor, but I couldn't afford the training right out of college." Eventually her family was able to come up with the money, and she took teacher training with Nora St. John. But the financial challenges she faced were at the forefront of her mind when she was hired to direct the Pilates program at the College of San Mateo in California a number of years later. "I wanted to offer students the opportunity to get Pilates training while in college." When funding for a teacher-training program became available

a couple of years ago, "it was a dream come true," she says.

College-based programs also allow students more time to absorb information and practice the method. "I've gone through several different programs and it was always a problem that you would do three days of intense work over a weekend and then were told to go and practice on your own," says Amelie Hunter, who runs the Pilates program at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, CA. "But our students have a lot more time to work on the apparatus, so they can integrate what they're learning more organically." (On almost every campus, students have almost unlimited access to Pilates equipment for free or a nominal fee.)

#### JOE'S AND ROMANA'S DREAM

"Romana Kryzanowska had the same vision as Joseph Pilates," explains Simona Cipriani, the director of The Art of Control studio, which is located on the State University of New York's Purchase campus. "She really wanted to get it into the school system." Kryzanowska, along with Sean Gallagher, first taught Pilates to dance students at Purchase College in the early 1990s. Cipriani, who studied Pilates with them while a student there (and who later worked for them), returned in 2006 to launch its teacher-training program. "I wanted to continue Romana and Joe's legacy and teach it in a university," she says.

While some university-based teacher-training programs have been around for a number of years, several new ones have been launched in the past couple.

#### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Many teacher-training programs are affiliated with a school's dance department. With so much more emphasis on finding a job after graduation for all majors, offering dance students an additional skill makes sense, especially since they have so few full-time job prospects. "Our faculty wanted to offer something to dance majors so that they could have a job—and deal with injuries," says Collette Stewart, who runs the teacher-training program at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Though the target is dance students, training programs at every school are open to all students.

#### MORE AFFORDABLE

In general, Pilates teacher programs in academic settings are less expensive than commercial ones. "I would say it's substantially cheaper—the total cost for our program is around \$1,200," says Hunter. Artha Negara estimates that her students save \$5,000 doing the College of San Mateo program versus Balanced Body's.

Drexel's program is free for dance majors and \$100 per semester for other students. Other schools, including Goucher and SUNY Purchase, offer scholarships.

But because college programs aren't viable options for working people, they aren't truly competing with standard ones. "Because the students must attend classes here on campus (requiring attendance during normal working hours) to earn their certificate, I don't believe that we are really competing with the commercial companies," says Alix Plum-Widner, director of the Pilates training program at Fullerton College in California.

#### MORE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

At Rutgers, "students teach from the first day they take Pilates, so they can develop teaching skills from day one," says Kim Gibilisco, director of the Pilates program at Rutgers, State University of New Jersey in New Brunswick. "With other programs, you spend so long absorbing information before you begin to teach." Most other universities offer numerous opportunities for students to teach.

#### CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS

"At a large research institute, there are so many resources to take advantage of," says Stewart. "When Pilates students here take first-year anatomy courses, they're already working on cadavers."

Being in a university setting also allows students to pursue cross-disciplinary studies to discover a deeper understanding of the method.

"I just got a thesis from one of my students who was also enrolled in the science department called 'The Effects of Pilates on Cognition and Wellness,'" says Purchase College's Cipriani.

At Drexel, a partnership between the dance and physical therapy departments is conducting a long-term study on dance injury, says Morley.



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#### RESPECT FROM LOCAL EMPLOYERS

"Because it's a college program, it's very clear to people that our students are coming from an academic program rather than a certification program per se," says Orange Coast College's Hunter. "Most get hired when they leave, teaching at studios or developing businesses of their own."

"Most of our students get work even before they leave," says Artha Negara of the College of San Mateo. "I have employers emailing me all the time."

"When I receive feedback from employers who have hired one of our former students and the employer has only glowing remarks about the student, it literally bring tears to my eyes, as I see my dream coming true!" exclaims Plum-Widner of Fullerton College.

#### THE ABCs OF UNIVERSITY-BASED TEACHER-TRAINING PROGRAMS

**SCHOOL:** State University of New York at Purchase

**DIRECTOR:** Simona Cipriani, BFA, studied with Romana Kryzanowska and Sean Gallagher.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** A mat certification program is offered through the SUNY Purchase's School of Liberal Studies and Continuing Education. Cipriani also offers a comprehensive certification program through her Art of Control studio, located on the Purchase campus. Students are required

#### OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

COLLEEN STEWART (AT LEFT) SHOWS PILATES STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT MADISON PROPER FORM ON THE REFORMER; SARAH ARTHA NEGARA ASSISTS A STUDENT AT THE COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO; SIMONA CIPRIANI TEACHING A MAT CLASS AT SUNY PURCHASE.

**THIS PAGE:** AT FULLERTON COLLEGE, THE REFORMER COURSE REQUIRES 108 HOURS OF TRAINING.

to accumulate a total of 100 apprentice (observation/practice) hours at instructor-approved studios around the world. Scholarships are available.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** early 1990s; restarted in 2006  
**HOW IT BEGAN:** "I was so grateful that I got Pilates in my life when I was a college student," says Cipriani. "It really changed my dance career and it really changed my life, so I wanted to teach that to the students."

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** "It usually takes eight months to get a diploma," she says.



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mat and apparatus classes, kinesiology, teaching methodology and Pilates as a profession class. They also complete two 62-hour internships. For the first, they observe different classes in different studios in the area. For the second, they do teaching and assisting hours at local studios and at the college. Students receive a Pilates/Dance Conditioning Instructor Certificate of Specialization in mat and equipment.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 1995

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "Karen Shanley, a former professional dancer who studied with Ron Fletcher, started the program," explains Hunter. "She was a really forward-thinking person who thought we needed a Pilates program for our dance students."

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** About one-third of students finish in a year; some take a lot longer

**SCHOOL:** University of Nevada at Las Vegas

**DIRECTOR:** Dolly Kelepecz trained with Eve Gentry and Elizabeth Larkam. She also owns three branches of DK Body Balancing Method in Las Vegas.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** "It is run both through the continuing-education and the dance department," she says. "Students pay me for certification and the university for credit.

**SCHOOL:** Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, CA

**DIRECTOR:** Amelie Hunter, MA, MFA, studied with Kathy Grant at NYU; did PhysicalMind Institute's mat and Reformer program with Jillian Hessel; studied the Allegro Reformer with Elizabeth Larkam; and is certified in Polestar post-rehabilitation Pilates.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:**

Students get academic credit for

UNLV dance students get a scholarship to take the certification through DK Body Balancing Method."

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 1997

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "I saw a need in the market and the university was progressive enough to see its value," she says.

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** A year and a half, or an intense three-week course

**SCHOOL:** College of San Mateo

**DIRECTOR:** Balanced Body Faculty Member Sarah Artha Negara, BFA, MFA, studied with Karen Clippinger and Nora St. John.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** CSM offers Pilates Mat Instructor, Pilates Mat and Reformer Instructor, a full Pilates Instructor and a more advanced Specialized Pilates Instructor certificates. The Specialized Pilates instructor certificate requires 18 to 22 units of classes (versus seven to 14 units for the others), but is covered by financial aid, unlike the other programs, says Artha Negara. Students can also pay a nominal fee (\$150) for their Balanced Body certificate and be listed on their site and are encouraged to sit for the PMA exam.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2011

**HOW IT BEGAN:** Funding for a teacher-training program became available in 2010. Artha Negara reached out to her former teacher, Nora St. John, who gave her the option of offering Balanced Body's program at CSM.

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** One to four semesters, depending on program

**SCHOOL:** Fullerton College

**DIRECTOR:** Alix Plum-Widner has bachelor's and master's degrees in physical education and completed the Balanced Body Master Training program.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** "The program is run through our physical ed department and all of the training, observing and practice teaching hours are included," says Plum-Widner. "Completing our Reformer class requires 108 hours of training/observing/teaching and more than 620 for the whole program. This means less out-of-pocket costs for the students. Total cost at this time is \$828." Students receive a Comprehensive Vocational Certificate in Pilates. They can also receive a Balanced Body certificate for \$150 and are encouraged to sit for the PMA exam.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2011

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "I really wanted to start a teacher-training program that was comparable to the commercial programs, but affordable for community college students," she says.

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** Approximately two years

**SCHOOL:** Drexel University in Philadelphia

**DIRECTOR:** Jennifer Morley, BA, MFA, got her first certification from Romana Kryzanowska and a second from Karen Carlson.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** The Drexel Pilates Apprentice 1 program allows students to serve as practice clients for more advanced students. Apprentice 2's take three separate modules—mat in the fall, mixed equipment in winter and Reformer in the spring. Apprentice 3's work on completing teaching requirements: The students take at least one private, one advanced class and two peer-taught sessions per week.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2010

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "We were able to start our program when the recreation department opened a new building and we took over the vacated space and were able to acquire \$40,000 in equipment," she says.

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** One to three school years

**COLLEGE:** University of Wisconsin at Madison

**DIRECTOR:** Collette Stewart, BA, MFA, studied at Pilates Center of Boulder. She's been doing teacher training at her studio, Blue Mounds Pilates Center in the Madison area, since 2007.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** The program requires 20 credits of classes, including Mat I and II; Equipment Lab I, II and III; teaching methodology; and anatomy. Apprenticeship hours are integrated into the courses. Students receive a Certificate in Pilates (which is the equivalent of a minor at the University). "We recommend they also get their PMA certification," says Stewart.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2013

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "I wanted to start a teacher-training program so students don't have to do another two years of Pilates training once they graduate from college."

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** Two-and-a-half years

**SCHOOL:** Goucher College

**FOUNDER:** Elizabeth Ahearn, BFA, MFA, received her certification from Romana Kryzanowska and Sari Mejia-Santo.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** Goucher offers academic credit for six levels of mat classes and two levels of apparatus classes that allow students to be considered for the Independent Instructor Training Program (IITP) through Romana's Pilates and True Pilates. A scholarship is available to students who want to do Romana's Pilates teacher training.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 1995

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "The Pilates Center began in order to provide our dancers, and both the Goucher and Baltimore communities, the opportunity to study the method with highly trained instructors," says Ahearn.

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** One to two years

**COLLEGE:** Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, State University of New Jersey

**DIRECTOR:** Kim Gibilisco, BFA, MA, MFA, trained with Polestar Pilates Education and STOTT PILATES®.



**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** The Polestar Pilates Teacher Training Program at MGSA includes a five-module sequence that includes Principles of Movement course, as well as six studio classes. "I adapted the Polestar Pilates curriculum to meet the standards of higher education along with the team at Polestar Pilates headquarters and under the leadership of Associate Professor Julia Ritter, the chairperson of the dance department." Students can do internships at any one of 50 Polestar host sites. Upon an 80 percent passing grade of each module, they receive a Completion Certificate from Polestar Pilates. They are also encouraged to sit for the PMA exam.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2013

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "Associate Professor Ritter is a maverick in higher education for dance and wanted to start a Pilates teacher-training program when SOMA Center, Rutgers' wellness, conditioning and Pilates center opened in September of 2012," says Gibilisco. She began brainstorming about the project with Polestar founder Brent Anderson. "The project quickly grew wings, especially when I was given \$120,000 to outfit the Pilates studio."

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** 13 months

**COLLEGE:** Arizona State University in Phoenix

**DIRECTOR:** Melissa Flynn, owner and instructor at Ocotillo Pilates Studio in Chandler, AZ, completed Balanced Body University and BASI's Comprehensive Pilates training program and Pilates Mentor and Master programs.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM:** Students enrolled in ASU's Health and Wellness program can intern at Flynn's studio and get course credit. They can study Pilates or other topics, such as studio management. There is no cost to intern at the studio, though students do pay to do Ocotillo's teacher-training program.

**YEAR IT STARTED:** 2011

**HOW IT BEGAN:** "There is a lack of quality fitness jobs for students who have a four-year degree," says Flynn. "Most make \$90 a week teaching group-exercise classes. Pilates offers a lucrative career."

**LENGTH OF PROGRAM:** One semester **PS**

**OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP:** STUDENTS AT ORANGE COAST COLLEGE TAKE A PILATES ARC CLASS; JENNIFER MORLEY HELPS A STUDENT WITH CRISS CROSS AT DREXEL UNIVERSITY.

**THIS PAGE:** RUTGERS UNIVERSITY'S KIM GIBILISCO WORKS WITH A STUDENT PERFORMING TEASER ON THE LONG BOX.



We'd love to include it in a future issue. Please email us at [editor@pilatesstyle.com](mailto:editor@pilatesstyle.com).

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