

November 29, 2022

Dear Syed Ali-Zaidi Award for Academic Excellence Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Grace Larson for this prestigious award. As this honor recognizes a graduating senior who exemplifies academic excellence and involvement, I can't recommend Grace Larson highly enough. I have worked with Grace every semester since she was a freshman, and observing her determination, grit, commitment to excellence, and growth has been incredibly rewarding. She is one of those students who makes teaching rewarding; her attendance is immaculate, she continually works on class material outside of the classroom, and she is impeccably organized. It is no surprise that I have seen such tremendous growth in her as a dancer, artist, and scholar.

Her achievements are impressive. She has been on the Dean's List every semester and has maintained a 4.0 cumulative GPA. In 2022, she was awarded with a Presidential Scholar Award, which represents the top twenty students in each class based on meeting rigorous credit hours and overall GPA. Within the Department of Dance, she auditioned for and was selected to perform in two guest artist residencies. One was when she was a Freshman with renowned rhythm tapper, Bill Evans, and the other was with a Hip Hop Dance Theatre artist Teena Marie Custer. These residencies were not only performed multiple times within our department, but they were both also selected to represent SRU at the Mid-Atlantic North American College Dance Association Conference (ACDA). Once the Custer piece was performed at the conference, it was adjudicated by a panel of dance artists who then selected this work to be performed on the Gala Performance Event (only ten pieces from the concert are selected for this honor). As SRU hosted the ACDA conference, she also volunteered her time over spring break of 2022 to help organize and successfully run the first conference post-Covid. In addition to performing in guest artist's works, she has also created her own choreographic works through our Slippery Rock University Dance Theatre (SRUDT) program. Upper classmen are eligible to choreograph their own pieces for SRUDT which are adjudicated similarly to ACDA; this year, Grace's solo was selected for the Fresh Moves Dance Showcase which will premiere Dec. 2nd-3rd in our Studio Theater. Only fifteen works (out of over forty dances) were selected for this concert.

In addition to her excellent dancing work, Grace also shows drive in her commitment to her involvement within our department. Every other summer, there is a Yoga Teacher Training Certification opportunity for SRU dance majors. Grace completed the teacher training, and is currently teaching a regular yoga class through campus recreation. This exemplifies her impeccable organizational skills as our dance majors rarely have time for such jobs. She was also invited to be an assistant to the instructor of this program for her upcoming teacher training in Mexico this coming February. This shows how respected Grace is by not only her SRU faculty, but also by the broader professional community. In addition, she is a student worker within the Department of Dance. Her duties include Archiving concert footage to SRU Bailey Library and logging into archiving Metadata and serving as the Costume Closet Manager. Both of these jobs are incredibly detail oriented; her archival duties require her to edit video footage of each concert which can take many hours, and her job as costume manager requires her to communicate with both faculty and students and adhere to a strict sign-out/return policy.

As you can see, Grace is an excellent student who goes above and beyond what is expected of her. She is compassionate, kind, hardworking, and reliable. Her organization and professionalism are impressive. I think she is an excellent candidate for this honor. Should you have any additional questions from me, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am always happy to share my thoughts on our incredible students.

Sincerely,



Lindsay Viatori