



NATIONAL DANCE COACHES CONFERENCE 2020

Our instructors specialize in everything from choreography and technique to teambuilding and have led some of the most successful dance programs in history. Read about our Guest Speakers below:

Keynote Speaker: Jenny Schneider



Jenna Schneider has coached dance teams for the past 16 years. To Jenna, it has always been about serving those that she has coached. Jenna has a master's degree in public health, and recently became accredited as a Professional Life Coach through the University of Wisconsin. Jenna created Dance Coach Academy in 2016 to offer a yearly online course to dance coaches. To date, DCA has had over 275 coaches go through their yearly trainings. Jenna is now excited to use her training as a Professional Life Coach, to help others become the best versions of themselves through coaching sessions and speaking engagements. When she's not working with clients, she is spending time with her two daughters, husband, and their rescue dog Zoey.

Anastasia Miller Burns



Anastasia is a former graduate and dance captain from The Ohio State University. After graduation, Anastasia became a talent agent booking choreographers, dancers, actors, athletes, and models in feature films, television, commercials, music videos, Broadway productions, and world artist tours. She was a senior agent and department director at BLOC Talent Agency LA, BLOC NYC and Clear Talent Group NYC for nearly 16 years. For the past 6 years, she has joined the team at Inside Publications as Executive Vice President and Co-Publisher of the all-access dance magazine, ***INSIDE DANCE***. Other titles within the Inside Publications family include; Inside Cheerleading Magazine, Cheer Biz News, Inside Gymnastics Magazine and finally, Inside Action Sports Magazine launching this year in 2020. Anastasia has been the Hip Hop Panel Director for USASF Dance and Dance Worlds since 2013 (and Jazz Panel Director from 2010- 2012) and, as of 2019, is also the Hip Hop Panel Director for IASF divisions at the Dance World Championship. You can find her speaking and judging at numerous dance & talent conventions across the US and internationally.

Elizabeth Thomas – Gammill



Elizabeth Thomas-Gammill is an Oklahoma native. She has 30 years of dance and cheer background from studio training, college athlete and experience with Tremaine Dance Company. Elizabeth also competed with the Miss Oklahoma/Miss America organization and recently judged Miss Oklahoma's Outstanding Teen competition. She began her coaching career in Oklahoma where she established a strong cheer program for grades 5th-12th. Her teams in Oklahoma were the first to qualify for the State Cheer Competition in school history. After her nine years of coaching in Oklahoma, Elizabeth pursued a coaching position in Arkansas. She is currently the Head Cheer & Dance Coach for Fayetteville High School located near the University of Arkansas. She won the first State Title in school history for dance in 2016. She has placed state champion or runner-up for the past 4 years in dance. She recently won the 2019 Dance State Championship in November. Elizabeth's dance team recently attend NDTA for the first time in school history and made it to semi-finals in Pom and finals in Hip Hop. Her team was named 10th in the Nation in Hip Hop.

Elizabeth also won the 2019 6A All-Girl State Cheer Championship in December. Her cheer team also attended the National Cheer Competition for the first time in school history.

She has an extensive background in building championship programs and focusing on holistic coaching. Elizabeth is modeling a new era of spirit by leading both cheer and dance programs inside a district. She has a staff of 8 coaches and teams that range from junior high, freshman, junior varsity and varsity levels.

Elizabeth is the first coach in school history to win both Cheer and Dance State Championships in the same year. She is also the first spirit coach in Arkansas to win two State Championships in the same semester.

Elizabeth is currently an Assistant Athletic Director and Director of Spirit and Student Affairs for the Fayetteville School District. Elizabeth is passionate about empowering spirit coaches to rise in leadership positions and athletic administration.

Toya Renee Ambrose



Toya Renee Ambrose is a former NBA dancer, for both the Chicago Luvabulls and the Memphis Grizzlies. She is also a graduate of the University of Memphis and was a scholarship member of the award-winning University of Memphis Pom Squad. Toya is the former Spirit Coordinator of the University of Connecticut (UCONN) Dance, Cheerleading, and Mascot Teams, and the former Head Coach of the 2-time National Champion University of Illinois at Chicago Dancing Flames. In addition, through her company T.R.A. Choreography LLC, she and her staff choreograph for competitive dance teams, studios, and all-star teams all over the world - most recently in Slovenia, Finland, and Mexico. Since its inception, T.R.A. has produced over 200 dynamic routines, trained 8 associate choreographers, created an internship program to teach dancers about the business side of dance, and has become a strong voice in the dance team industry. T.R.A. is currently developing training programs for dance team choreographers. In addition to be a seasoned judge on the local and national scene, Toya resides in Chicago, IL, and is married to attorney Garvin G. Ambrose.

Jenny Sweet



Jenny Sweet is the coach of the Holy Angels Dance Team, 4-time UDA National Champions in Small Varsity Hip Hop. She has her Masters in Dance from New York University and is on the dance faculty at the Cicely Tyson Community School of Performing and Fine Arts in New Jersey. Jenny has choreographed and worked with a variety of dance teams, on the high school, college and international levels, traveling to Norway, Colombia, Ecuador, and Scotland. She also has judged for the Universal Dance Association regional and national events as well as ICU championship. Jenny is excited to be returning as a speaker for the Varsity Dance National Coaches Conference.

Sarah Garcia



Sarah Garcia is in her 9th season as the Dance Coach at Sam Houston State University. In 2010, Sarah led the Orange Pride Dance Team to a National title for the first time in 5 years in the D1 Jazz Division at NDA College Nationals. Orange Pride won 4 consecutive National Titles from that point on bringing home 1st place and choreography awards 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Sarah began her High School coaching career at Killeen High School in 2014 where they also became National Champions. Sarah came back to Sam Houston in 2016 to take on the position of Spirit Program Coach. Sarah led the team to a 3rd, 2nd and most recently (2019) a Double National Championship title in D1 Jazz and D1 Team Performance for the first time in University history. Sarah is also a Senior Coach and Choreographer at the Dancin Bluebonnets Dance Studio. The Seniors at Dancin Bluebonnets have the privilege to compete against the top All Star Studios at the USASF Dance Worlds Competition. Ranking amongst the top 3 in multiple division bringing home Bronze, Silver and Gold placement and the title of World Champions in 2018!

Melissa McGee



A native of Toledo, Ohio, Melissa McGee is a graduate of The Ohio State University where she obtained a B.S. in Business Administration. She is the current Head Coach of The Ohio State University Dance Team. Under her direction, the team has consistently placed in the top five in Jazz and Pom at the UDA Collegiate National Championship. The team won the program's first ever National Championship in 2018 and has four total to date. After sixteen years of studio training, she now choreographs and consults for dance studios and teams nationally and judges for numerous dance competitions including NDA, UDA, AmeriDance, Showcase America, OASSA, and the USASF Dance Worlds. Melissa has been a speaker at the Varsity Dance Coaches Conference, National Dance Coaches Association Conference, taught master classes at UDA High School Camps and provided coaches education classes for CLI Studios.

Jenny Durbin Smith



Jenny Durbin Smith is one of Dallas's most sought after award-winning choreographers. Her resume reads like a "who's who" list in the dance industry! She trained in jazz and hip hop during her college years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill while obtaining a double degree in journalism and communication studies. During her time at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill she was a member of the national award-winning cheer and dance teams. Jenny has been a member of the NBA Dallas Mavericks Dancers where she served as a captain her second year. She has also been a principal dancer and actor for many national industrials, commercial, and films. Jenny's dynamic choreography has been featured on many national television commercial, industrials, films, reality television shows, and international stages incusing Hasbro, Mary Kay, 'America's Got Talent,' MTVs 'TRL' and Monday Night Football. In addition to being the proud director of the NFLs first and only co-ed hip hop crew, the Dallas Cowboys Rhythm and Blue, she is a choreographers for the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, a master instructor for Professional NFL and NBA Cheerleading & Dance Conventions including All Pro and Choreography Pros, a contributing choreographer for the NFL's Pro Bowl, and travels the country choreographing for numerous high school, collegiate, and professional dance teams and dance studios. Jenny was recently featured in Dance Track Magazine, Dance Team Magazine and Inside Dance!

Taylor Ritchey



Taylor Ritchey is a clinical mental health counselor from the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. She received her Masters of Counselor Education with an emphasis in clinical mental health from Mississippi State University where she developed a passion for helping student-athletes achieve mental and emotional wellness on and off the field. She provides mental health resources for athletes at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and established the Athletic Wellness Enhancement Program focusing on holistic wellbeing for student-athletes and support for coaching staff. She also assists in coaching the college dance team, the MGCCC Perkettes. As a former dancer herself, she is well versed in the physical, mental, and emotional toll performance arts have on an athlete's body, mind, and spirit. In her work with dancers, she focuses specifically on emotional regulation, body image issues, and confidence. "I feel that my most important work as a mental skills coach is building strong minded, confident athletes who realize that the only person who determines their potential is themselves."