

UNCSA School of Dance, High School

Winston-Salem, NC, United States



At the nation's first public arts conservatory, teenage dancers train daily alongside college company members bound for professional stages.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	55/100
Academic outcomes	55/100
University placement	45/100
Prestige & heritage	53/100
Alumni network	72/100
Facilities	53/100
Transparency	53/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

UNCSA School of Dance, High School occupies a narrow and serious niche: pre-professional dance training inside a public arts conservatory, for students aged ****14-18****, with boarding and day options. That matters. This is not a conventional American high school with a strong dance department bolted on. It is a conservatoire environment where teenagers train in either classical ballet or contemporary dance, while completing a US High School Diploma in English. The distinctive draw is proximity to the higher levels of the same institution: high school dancers work in a setting that also houses undergraduate performers, specialist faculty and a live performance culture. For families who want ***total immersion*** rather than after-school enrichment, that is the point.

What sets UNCSA apart is the structure of the training. Students can concentrate in classical ballet or contemporary dance, with scope to perform and train across both. That dual-track model suits dancers who need technical discipline without artistic narrowness. The school also trades on professional alignment: repertory, guest artists, choreography and performance sit at the centre of the offer, not at the edges. The institution's first obligation is to dance education, and the standard market signal here is strong enough: accreditation by NASAD, a specialist dean with senior ballet credentials, and an alumni pipeline that reaches Broadway, independent film and major companies including Alvin Ailey. Parents should still note the limits. UNCSA publishes plenty about opportunities and artistic culture, but no aggregate academic outcomes for the high school are in public view. This is a place for **serious young dancers**, not for families who want broad co-curricular balance or a conventional campus adolescence.

Why shortlist it? Because few schools in the US offer this degree of conservatory focus before college, and fewer still do it in a public institution with both high school and undergraduate dance under one roof. The payoff is **daily technical rigour**, **stage-facing training** and a peer group built around the same ambition. The risk is equally clear: intensity cuts both ways. Students who need a wide academic menu, a big-school social scene or room to treat dance as one passion among many will find the model constricting. Students who thrive on repetition, correction, rehearsal and physical discipline will find **a demanding artistic life**.

The right student for UNCSA School of Dance, High School is not merely talented. They are already committed, resilient and ready to organise life around studio hours. They want conservatory habits at ***high-school*** age, and they want teachers who treat promise as a starting point rather than an achievement. Classical ballet students who need clean technical grounding, and contemporary dancers who want **creative range** without losing technical backbone, both fit. So do boarders who are prepared to leave home early for specialist training. This school belongs on a shortlist for families seeking **professional-calibre preparation** in dance; it does not belong on a shortlist for anyone still deciding whether dance is a hobby or a vocation.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1965 as the first state-supported public high school arts conservatory in the United States, giving it a long institutional track record.
- Operates as part of the University of North Carolina system, which keeps tuition for North Carolina residents markedly lower than at most private boarding arts schools.
- Dance students choose between Ballet and Contemporary concentrations and train alongside a full residential high school population on a shared campus with UNCSA's college conservatory.
- Faculty include instructors with professional performance backgrounds in companies such as American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet, giving students exposure to working professionals.

TRADE-OFFS

- Out-of-state and international tuition and fees are significantly higher than the in-state rate, a common structural issue at public university-affiliated schools.
- Admission is audition-based and competitive; there is limited public data on acceptance rates, making it hard for families to gauge odds in advance.
- As a specialized arts conservatory, academic breadth outside the arts is narrower than at a comprehensive private day or boarding school.
- Boarding life is built around a demanding daily training schedule, which may leave less flexibility for students still deciding between dance and other pursuits.

- Combines a full US high school diploma curriculum with daily conservatory-level dance training, so students graduate with both an academic credential and intensive technical hours.

ADMISSIONS

Entry is by audition, either in person at regional audition dates or via video submission, typically for grades 9 through 12. Applicants submit academic transcripts alongside the dance audition, which assesses technique, placement level and potential. As a public conservatory with limited high school dance seats, competition is real though exact acceptance rates are not published. Prospective boarding students should confirm current audition calendars and video submission requirements directly with the admissions office, since dates and formats can change year to year.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_46aed267e1.