



### The pulse of the industry

If you teach Pilates, own a Pilates studio or want to become a Pilates instructor, this site is for you.

## Pilates Goes to College



Just a few years ago, **Kim Gibilisco**, a choreographer, dancer and Polestar- and Stott Pilates-trained instructor, was teaching private Pilates sessions in her Manhattan studio. Today, she is an Assistant Professor of Dance at **Shenandoah University** in Winchester, Virginia, and the woman responsible for bringing a Pilates mat certification program to the school. Here she discusses how she came to be SU's Pilates Program Coordinator and where Pilates fits in the university setting.

**PP: How did the idea of a collegiate Pilates program come about, and what did it take to convince school officials?**

*KG: When I accepted my position in the Dance Department at SU, my chairperson, Erica Helm, and I discussed the possibility of offering a Mat Teacher Training course to our students. I designed the curriculum in the summer of 2005 then applied for **Pilates Method Alliance (PMA)** approval as an Educational Member. Applying to the PMA was an important part of the process, as I wanted to be sure that*

*our program was properly sanctioned. I also wanted to ensure that our graduates could apply for PMA membership and be accepted into Apparatus programs in the future if they wanted to pursue more. The Mat program was approved and we began running the program in Fall 2005. The program was embraced from the very beginning by our university.*

**PP: How did you design the curriculum and what are the requirements?**

*KG: I designed the curriculum specifically for a student population (ages 19-25) who may not have had any experience with the method. One semester of college level anatomy is required to enroll. Since our students are in a four-year program (versus typical weekend-based training seminars), I wanted to capitalize on the available time I had to teach the material. I determined that a two-semester sequence was the most effective way to teach the material to this population. Students must earn at least an 84% in the first semester to advance to the second semester.*

*The first semester entails 2 hour of Mat experiential and 1 hour of lecture per week. In the second semester, students take Mat once a week with me. Then students rotate in teaching the whole group a Mat class once a week. Following a student Mat class, participants offer feedback on the effectiveness and teaching style of the student instructor. In the second semester, the lectures focus on teaching methods and class design. Using their understanding of the Trilogy, the 6 Pilates Principles (control, centering, concentration, flowing movement, precision and breath) and the 5 Pilates Lab Principles (use of inhalation and exhalation, pelvic floor, restorative poses, visual gaze and neutral spine) students design a class with a theme or concept they want to address. Written and practical midterms and finals are also administered.*

*Using some of the Mat Teacher Training models I researched, I designed the curriculum to include lectures and practicums that I believe are important in becoming a well-rounded teacher of the method. For example, our students are tested in physical practicums where they must demonstrate their mastery of the 34 exercises as well as in teaching practicums where they must demonstrate their ability to teach confidently and effectively. I also wanted to offer students course work on the various props used in the Mat work, (e.g.: magic circle, foam roller and thera-bands and thera-ball) so that they did not need to attend continuing education courses outside of the university setting to develop their breadth of knowledge. In addition, I teach contra-indications for diabetes, orthopedic issues and pregnancy so that our graduates feel comfortable with*

*teaching a variety of populations. What I stress the most is the importance of "knowing what you don't know and to teach ONLY what you know." For example, if a client asks them about an orthopedic issue that is out of their scope of practice, they know to refer them to a medical professional. Our students are taught how to self-assess and where to look for more information if they are unclear.*

**PP: Are you the only instructor involved with the Pilates program?**

*KG: Yes, as per the PMA, all teachers must have at least 5 years of teaching experience to instruct teacher trainers.*

**PP: What type of students does the program attract?**

*KG: Up until 2007, we have had primarily dance majors enrolled in the program. However, this academic year our Music Theatre majors and staff have also enrolled and successfully completed the program. For the 2008-2009 academic year, we have dance majors, music theatre majors, SU alumni and community members enrolled.*

**PP: Are students who complete all the requirements considered certified Pilates instructors?**

*KG: Only the PMA can "certify" teachers in the method. As an Educational Member of the PMA, our teacher trainers are given a certificate of completion with the SU and PMA logos on it.*

**PP: Is Pilates an actual major, and if not, how does it work into a student's graduation plan?**

*KG: Our Teacher Training Program is an elective course that can fulfill a dance elective requirement.*

**PP: How many students have been through the program, and are they actively teaching now?**

*KG: We have had 26 students complete the Mat Teacher Training course of which 14 students are actively teaching Pilates Mat.*



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As a member of the first graduating class of Pilates Teacher

Trainers at SU (2006) I was so pleased to see this article! When I moved out west to pursue my dance career I was able to find work as a Mat instructor almost immediately. I have worked for private studios, community centers, and dance programs with a clientele ranging from 12-year old dance students to recent mothers to senior citizens. The comprehensive training I received through this program has made me comfortable and confident enough in my knowledge to handle a wide variety of clients and settings. I have found my work as a Mat instructor extremely rewarding and am excited to hear that the program at SU growing to include other majors and community members. Congratulations!

July 23, 2008 | **Erica Gionfriddo**

I was also a member of the first graduating class of for the Pilates Teacher Training program at SU, and it really helped me get my career going in New York City. It got me an interview and then a full-time job at the fitness studio I work at now, Physique 57, where the knowledge of the human body and the fundamentals concepts of Pilates earned me respect and confidence as a teacher with their studio. It also allowed earned me jobs at various yoga/pilates studios as a substitute when I first arrived in NYC. I love my job, and I couldn't have gotten here without the lessons from Kim and the Pilates course at SU!

July 27, 2008 | **Amanda Selgrath**

Congrats SU for incorporating cross conditioning into the dance program and making it a practical tool that will continue to benefit the graduate of the certification program. I managed to squeeze in my Pilates certification the summer prior to graduating through Pilates on Fifth -- then the NYC Stott Pilates certification center. Thankfully, I lived in NY at the time. Having a certification program on campus must be great -- and having such an experienced instructor that combines her own knowledge and experience with Stott and Polestar methods must be dynamite!

August 1, 2008 | **Karyn Reim**