

Crean Lutheran dance department and school to grow with campus expansion

By **KAITLIN WRIGHT** | kwright@scng.com | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: September 6, 2017 at 4:21 pm | UPDATED: September 6, 2017 at 9:36 pm



Crean Lutheran High School's dance program continues to grow under Alyssa Jones. The dancers will soon occupy new studios that are being built as part of the school's North Campus Expansion Program. (Photo courtesy of Alyssa Jones)

Dance students at Crean Lutheran High School returned to the Irvine campus this year to find some changes in the dance class offerings. There are now four dance teachers on the schedule instead of two, and longtime dance instructor **Alyssa Jones** has taken on a new role as director of performing arts for the entire school.

"The changes mean the department is growing, which is pretty cool," said senior **Tivoli Treloar**. "We're not just this small group of girls who sometimes dance in the gym anymore. We're more recognized."

The students say they are excited to learn from the new teachers and look forward to advancing the dance program's reputation.

"It's time for dance, it's time for the arts to come in and take our spot," said junior **Hannah Kelly**. "More teachers mean more variety and we can be more well-rounded. It gives us a chance to feel good about the program and go out and be ambassadors to the world."

Currently, around 10 percent of students at Crean Lutheran High School take a dance class. Jones thinks that number would be higher if not for the small size of the classroom.

The dance department's growth is not an isolated occurrence at Crean, where increasing enrollment overall has outpaced the size of the campus.

Enter the North Campus Expansion Project.

Set to be completed during the 2017-18 school year, this development will add 25,000 square feet to the campus across 1.5 acres. It will provide two academic buildings, an athletic facility and a practice field, two collegiate-level fine arts classrooms and four studios dedicated to dance, drama and music.

Executive Director **Brian Underwood** said that because Crean Lutheran now has 800 students, the facility can no longer provide the best student experience possible.

"These facilities will provide state-of-the-art spaces for our highly regarded staff to better serve the county's top students and artists," said Underwood. "What is particularly exciting about this project is that it will have something for all students to enjoy. Our visual and performing arts programs will most certainly be eager beneficiaries of these impressive new facilities, as will various academic entities, the school's Servant Leadership Team, the school's Learning Success Program, athletics and many others."

Although the project is little more than a dirt lot at the moment, students are excited about what it means.

"This is important because we have space for science and English and math, so to have space specifically for dance is great," said senior Rachel Chamberlain. "I think dance will become more a part of the school instead of something on the side."

The new development will allow dance and the arts to expand their programs and do more within their curriculum. Jones hopes the new facilities and the support she can give in her new position will encourage more collaboration and unique opportunities for Crean arts students.

"I am excited to see the performing arts grow and work together," said Jones. "This shows the students that they are valued and that we want them to have a space to create and to own as their home. Senior **Lauren O'Brien** is looking forward to the new development because of the message it will send to the community about Crean.

"Having a successful and prospering arts program is a testament to a successful school as a whole," she said. "At Crean, arts and sports are both rising, and it's clear that the students are going to be prepared for whatever comes next."