

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 04/06/2016

Ashley H Pollock, Public Relations & Information Coordinator
College of Performing and Visual Arts
Southern Utah University

Office: (435) 865-8667
Cell: (435) 590-0961
pollocka@suu.edu

CPVA Valedictorian, Danikka Johnson, Leaps for the Stars

Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah: With graduation just around the corner, we asked SUU's College of Performing and Visual Arts Valedictorian, Danikka Johnson, to share the story of her life and the time she spent at Southern Utah University.

Johnson was raised in Tooele, Utah being the oldest of three children. As she watched her mother raise a family on her own, she looked to her mother, Shanna Cook, as a source of strength and inspiration. Of her mother, Johnson said, "Although she was raising three rambunctious children on her own, she never let anything stop her from achieving her own goals or pushing us to do the same. She never took no for an answer." This prepared Johnson to pursue her toughest ambitions. "Her undying love and support really allowed me to shoot for the stars and live for the impossible; I knew she would be with me every step of the way."

When it came time to choose where to attend college, Southern Utah University presented an opportunity most other universities don't offer. "SUU awarded me a talent scholarship as a freshman dance major, and I took a leap of faith. SUU is unique in the fact that the University will allow you to double major in substantially difficult majors. I wanted to be a pediatrician, but I needed the financial support of my dance scholarship. I came to SUU as double major in Dance and Pre-medical studies (later switching to a major in Nursing)."

The faculty at SUU made it possible for Johnson to pursue both majors and stayed in contact with her throughout the years making sure she was able to accomplish all of the requirements that came with her majors, as well as keeping good grades. "The faculty members I worked with in the dance department, as well as the sciences, were nothing less than exceptional. They provided me with all of the tools I needed to succeed and challenged me to go above and beyond minimum expectations."

While working in the College of Performing and Visual Arts, Johnson fell in love with the dance department. She spent much of her time performing in each of the faculty and student dance concerts and representing SUU at the American College Dance Association every year.

Participating as a member of the Orchesis Modern Dance Company, a dance club on campus, Johnson's extracurricular activities were surrounded by her passion for dance. She even found time to teach modern, jazz, and hip-hop as a job, working with the Point Academy and All-star Cheer here in Cedar City and working with students in Tooele on competition solo routines.

Through her busy schedule, Johnson had one mentor who helped her succeed while juggling all that she was doing. She celebrated, "Kay Andersen really stuck his neck out to ensure I had all the support I needed to flourish and grow. Never for a second did he doubt what I was capable of and he provided me with so many opportunities to be a leader, to develop as a dancer and choreographer, and to showcase my talents."

Johnson is a bright light of positivity and lives her life by a great motto, "I am a firm believer that there are so many people in the world that will tell you no; you cannot be the first one.

Throughout my degree I adopted the motto 'She believed she could, and so she did.' There were several times I wanted to quit. I had reached my wits end and couldn't handle any more stress. The support of my friends, family, and mentors really gave me the strength to push through. Look for positivity in all situations and you will have a happy and successful future."

Of her future, Johnson has many more goals and aspirations to achieve. "As I leave SUU, I am planning on continuing my nursing studies: attaining my second Bachelors of Science in Nursing. I am continuing to teach dance, and I am also happy to announce I am starting a family of my own. There is so much in store for my future and I feel so blessed to have had my experiences at SUU to continue to mold and shape the person I am and who I will become."

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The **Southern Utah University College of Performing and Visual Arts** is comprised of nationally accredited departments of Art and Design, Music, Theatre Arts and Dance, as well as graduate programs in Arts Administration and Music and a Center for Shakespeare Studies.

The College offers 16 different degree areas, including liberal arts Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees; professional Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Fine Arts in art and theatre degrees; and Master of Fine Arts in Arts Administration, Master of Arts in Arts Administration, Master of Music Education and Master of Music in Music Technology graduate

degrees. More than 60 full- and part-time faculty and staff are engaged in teaching and mentoring over 550 majors in the College. Over 1100 students enroll each year in over 195 arts classes on the SUU campus. The College presents over 100 performances, lectures, presentations, and exhibitions each year. The College's affiliate organizations include the Southern Utah Museum of Art (SUMA), Utah Shakespeare Festival and SUU's Ballroom Dance Company. For more information about the College of Performing and Visual Arts, visit www.suu.edu/pva.

###