



Dancing Into Who I'm Becoming: My Loyola Story

By Madelyn Resta

First Steps

Stepping onto the court at Reitz Arena for the first time, I felt nervous excitement. My teammates next to me, the crowd steady, and as a new student, in this moment I realized what Loyola is all about—a place where people show up for one another and where every student can find their rhythm. At the start, I didn't yet understand what being part of the [Loyola Maryland Dance Team](#) would mean, only that I was part of something that mattered. I soon realized how deeply this team and campus would shape me. Being on the Loyola Dance Team has shown me the heart of Loyola culture: a community built on connection, growth, and success, helping me shape my identity as a student, teammate, and person.

Finding My Place

From the first time I toured Loyola, something felt right. I knew this was where I wanted to spend my next four years, and dance played a huge role. When trying out for the dance team, I spent countless hours videotaping and redoing each video until it was perfect. I waited weeks to hear back, extremely nervous, until the notification came: *"We are pleased to offer you a spot on the 2025–2026 team. Welcome to the Loyola University Maryland Dance Team!"* The next week, I committed and was officially a greyhound. Even with my excitement, I still worried about finding my place and making friends. The Dance Team became the answer. Quickly became my first "home" on campus. From the first summer practice, I felt a sense of belonging and community, illustrating the team's emphasis on *cura personalis*—caring for the whole person. They welcomed me with open arms, excited for us to be part of their family. The sense of belonging came from the small moments we shared—the laughter, the struggles, and growing together. As an incoming freshman, I had wondered where I would find my people. Now I can confidently say that the Loyola community and the Dance Team helped me find them. The Dance Team was the first place at Loyola where I truly felt like I belonged.



Loyola Values

The Loyola Dance team deeply reflects the culture of Loyola University Maryland. Every day, I see the values that our program holds in the way we support each other during long practices, late nights, and the encouragement during a full-out. We have built discipline through balancing academics and our sport, while staying committed to [Loyola's values](#). The creativity we bring to our choreography and performances reflects the expressive spirit that runs all throughout campus. Being able to perform at basketball games has made me feel connected to the Loyola community in ways I never expected. Hearing the energy in Reitz Arena has made me realize we're part of something bigger than just our team. Through spirit and shared purpose, the dance team is one of the clearest examples of what Loyola stands for.



Gaining Confidence

As the year went on, I began to truly see how big a role the dance team was playing in shaping the person I was becoming. Mary Kate, a senior on the dance team, was one of the



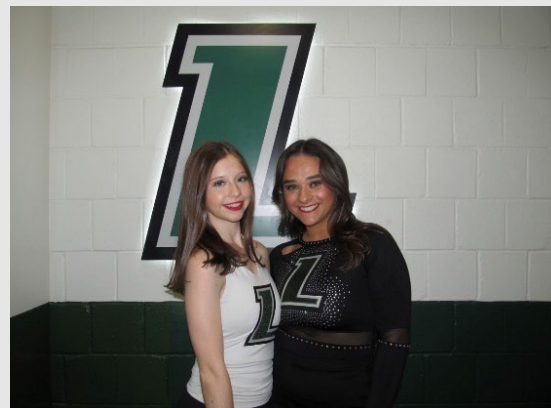
first people I connected with on the dance team, and she's someone I've always looked up to. She told me, *"I didn't know Maddie before she joined the dance team, but I have seen how she has grown throughout her college journey. When I first met Maddie, it was over the summer during our pre-camp. She was a very shy and guarded person."* Hearing this from someone made me realize how far I've come in such a short time. Performing throughout my life has helped me become more confident, which is something I struggle with when in a new place or surrounded by new people. Practices taught me how to push through and build resilience. This team has shaped me as a dancer but also as a person. MK noticed, *"...Her first year in other areas hasn't been the nicest to her, but dance has always been a way for her to*

compartmentalize and kind of debrief and allowed her to be herself." This truly captured the huge role dance plays in my life and what it means to me. Dance is a place where I can be myself, breathe, and grow, no matter what I have going on outside. As MK put it, *"...In the beginning, our team brought her a lot of trials and tribulations when it came to finding her group and her groove in college, since then, she's come into her own and found a way to thrive on Loyola's campus, and now she's not a quiet person at practice anymore, but she is a very well respected, valued and talented team member."* Her words meant a lot and really showed me how Loyola's biggest thing is supporting students' growth. The professors, coaches, and staff here at Loyola believe in you before you believe in yourself. With the

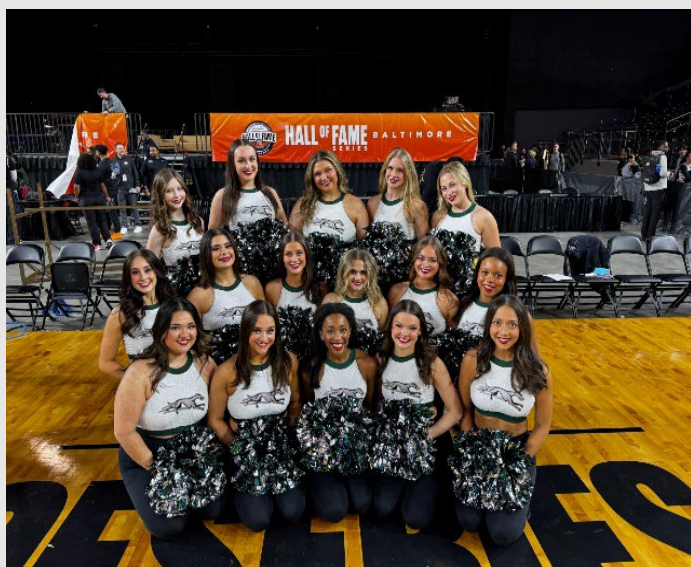
dance team's help, I've learned to believe in myself, my teammates, and allow myself to try things and become a version of myself that I didn't know was possible.

Feeling Connected

When I take the time to reflect on what has made me feel connected to Loyola as a whole, I always come back and think about the dance team. It opened a door for me that I did not think I would find at Loyola. Madison Betsill, class of '26, explains, *"As a senior, being a part of this program for four years has taught me a lot about the importance of being on a team and its ability to help you adapt and cope with change."* Her perspective helped me understand Loyola's culture. She also expressed how big a role the dance team played in her transition into college, *"Freshman year is such an evolving time that being able to have a group of people who share the same bond as you can make the process a lot more bearable and rewarding."* This was exactly what the team had been becoming for me, a community that made Loyola feel like home. Madison reminded me how involvement shapes your experiences: *"Taking an interest in both clubs and activities that Loyola has to offer can truly shape the outcome of your freshman year and the connections you make."* Through our dance team traditions, gamedays, and the friendships I've made, I've noticed Loyola becoming not just a campus to me but a community I'm a part of.



Looking Back



The overwhelming feeling that I once had of stepping onto the court now feels completely different. I now see it as a place where I'm surrounded by people who have shaped my Loyola experiences. Loyola has shown me that belonging comes from the connections you make and showing up for the people around you. I know the dance team will continue to influence my experiences here and remind me of who I'm becoming. And for anyone beginning their Loyola journey, you're in a place where you can grow, be supported, and discover where you belong, especially when on the dance team.