

Katherine Kim
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Feature story: REACH

Of all different dance groups and teams that exist on the Rutgers New Brunswick campus, one newbie stands out and “reaches” for a purpose beyond simply performing to showcase talent and win competitions. In fact, the members of the group, REACH, do not refer to what they do as dance, but rather as “worship,” for they aim to showcase their faith in God over all else. While the university has seen many dance groups perform at its student centers and compete against teams from other schools, REACH makes its mark as the first Christian-based one that focuses on its members’ faith and camaraderie above and through its performances.

As seen on the Facebook page, the official mission of REACH states that it is a “choreography based type of Body Worship, using the gifts that God has given us to reach out to others, ultimately glorifying and seeking His kingdom first.” This statement is followed by a verse from the Bible, Colossians 3:17, that reads, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” At first glance, this mission could seem somewhat vague to the average non-believer who does not know what “body worship,” what these “gifts” are, or where this “kingdom” is. In short, just as famous Christian worship bands use their musical talents to worship God and show His work in them to others, the members of REACH use their talents in dance to do the same.

The group was founded by graduating senior Brian Li, who was involved in other dance and Christian organizations on campus before developing one that combined the two together. As his time leading the group is ending, Li shared some of his early struggles as a leader.

“For me, bringing together REACH was probably the hardest phase in the history of the organization,” Li stated. “On my own, I had to find people with a similar vision as me, or people who would at least trust me to lead them with my vision. As it grew, I learned to be a better leader, dealing with a wide variety of people and building relationships with them.”

In a recent blog post, Li elaborated on these struggles while reflecting on his overall journey with REACH, from the origin of the idea to the passing of the torch to the rising leaders. Rising junior Kristin Song, one out of the four next leaders of REACH, shared her experience being a young member and transitioning into her new position.

“Freshmen year, I just enjoyed the dancing and fellowship at REACH,” Song stated. “This year, I had more responsibilities like choreographing or leading prayer circles. Honestly, it doesn’t even feel like responsibilities because I take so much joy in serving the team. It is daunting thinking about next year and how the new coordinators are going to lead. Because it’s the first time the main coordinators are stepping down, I’m sure it’ll be really different. But I trust that God will still do amazing things. Also, it’s nice to know that the main coordinators will always be there to help us.”

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Just as Song stated that her experience in REACH became more than just a fun time after her freshman year, this year's freshmen reflect on a fun year and look forward to future experiences as well. Rising sophomore Giyoung Lee shared her positive experience.

"REACH helped me find a passion in dance I never thought I had," Lee stated. "It opened doors of opportunities for me to perform for other people, and it gave me a community of people who keep me accountable. REACH is my second family."

Li is confident that the younger members will continue growing in faith and skill in the future.

"Our future goal is to continue furthering our mission, to glorify God in all that we do, whether it is practice, performance, or branching out to the community," he states. "As I step down from leadership, I have full trust that the new leadership will be able to not only uphold the responsibility, but also open new paths and doors, different from what we had before."