

In Memoriam: Dr. Cynthia Berrol, Professor Emerita of Kinesiology and Physical Education

The California State University, East Bay community mourns the passing of Dr. Cynthia Berrol, Professor Emerita of Kinesiology and Physical Education, educator, scholar, pioneer in Dance/Movement Therapy, and beloved colleague, who passed away on May 25, 2026 at the age of 92.

Dr. Berrol taught at California State University, Hayward (now California State University, East Bay) from 1976 until her retirement in 2000. During her years on the faculty, she helped shape generations of students while building bridges between dance, psychology, rehabilitation, education, and neuroscience. Her work reflected a lifelong belief in the power of movement not only as an art form, but also as a means of healing, learning, and human connection.

Born and raised in the Brighton Beach neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, Cynthia discovered modern dance as a teenager. That passion would become the foundation of a remarkable professional journey that ultimately led her across the country to California, where she earned a Master's degree in Dance from Mills College and later a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Throughout her life, she combined the curiosity of a scholar, the creativity of an artist, and the compassion of a teacher.

At CSU Hayward, Dr. Berrol became a respected member of the Kinesiology and Physical Education faculty and was among the first women at the university to achieve tenure. Her research explored the relationship between movement, learning, rehabilitation, and human development, particularly among individuals with developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and other neurological conditions.

One of her most enduring contributions to the university was the creation and development of the Special Graduate Major in Dance/Movement Therapy, established through a pioneering collaboration between the Departments of Kinesiology & Physical Education and Educational Psychology. What began as student interest evolved into an innovative interdisciplinary program integrating dance, psychology, counseling, and therapeutic practice. Through this work, Dr. Berrol helped prepare and mentor a generation of professionals who would go on to contribute to the growing field of Dance/Movement Therapy.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Berrol was a respected researcher whose scholarship helped advance understanding of the therapeutic applications of movement. She conducted groundbreaking work in rehabilitation, movement assessment, and neurological recovery, secured federal research funding, and collaborated with colleagues nationally and internationally. Her contributions helped establish Dance/Movement Therapy as a field grounded in both clinical practice and scientific inquiry. In recognition of her many contributions to the profession, she received the American Dance Therapy Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.

Those who knew Cynthia remember not only her accomplishments, but also her intellect, independence, and unwavering commitment to her students and colleagues. She approached ideas with rigor, welcomed spirited discussion, and inspired others to pursue their passions with confidence and purpose. For nearly a quarter century, through her teaching, mentorship, research, and program development, she helped shape both the university and the emerging field of Dance/Movement Therapy.

The CSU East Bay community extends its deepest condolences to her family, friends, former students, colleagues, and all those whose lives were enriched by her work.

In lieu of flowers, gifts can be made to the [Marian Chace Foundation](#).