

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

I. Identification

- A. School:
- B. Department:
- C. Program Title:
- D. Concentration:
- E. Catalog Description (Application deadline, program mission, core requirements, admission requirements, courses):
- F. Who Prepared this Proposal (Name, phone, e-mail)?:
- G. Who will be presenting this proposal to the curriculum committee?:

II. Program Rational

The proposal should clearly state the need and the inherent value of the interdisciplinary program.

- A. Why are you proposing this program? Are other programs affected in any way by the proposed program? What is the justification for the credits proposed (both student and faculty)?
- B. What is the need for this program? List any factors that might influence demand for this program (e.g. employment opportunities, similar programs in other departments or offered at other universities in Connecticut).
- C. Which students are likely to enroll in this program?

III. Program Goals

- A. What are the distinctive goals of the program? For the student?
- B. How were the goals determined? Were representatives of the constituent disciplines consulted in developing the interdisciplinary goals?
- C. In what ways are the distinctively integrative goals and outcomes of the program appropriate to the institution and to the program itself?
- D. What evidence is there that the distinctive goals are feasible given available resources and personnel?
- E. What process will be used for reviewing interdisciplinary or integrative goals, courses, and curriculum structure?

IV. Administration

A Memorandum of Understanding should be drawn among the program director, participating department chairs, academic school deans, and the Provost. Factors to consider include:

- A. Is there an administrator who oversees interdisciplinary programs?
- B. Is there a particular office location where it is managed?
- C. How does the administrator have a voice in key policy and budget decisions?
- D. What are the typical responsibilities of such a leader? They might include budget allocation, policies and procedures, program evaluation, faculty recruitment, and relations with students, administrators, departments, and schools, as well as chairing a cross-schools committee.

- E. Do resource allocations support the program's needs? Does the program have its own budget line? Does the program have access to funding allocation for classroom equipment and material, supplies, and new technologies?
- F. How are faculty lines allocated for the interdisciplinary program? Does allocation of faculty lines take into account not only numbers of majors or student credit hour generation within a particular unit but also the needs of the interdisciplinary program?
- G. How do procedures for budgeting and policies regarding faculty load acknowledge that team teaching, with the consultation involved, can require more work than individually taught courses?
- H. If team-taught or interdisciplinary courses add revenue, are equitable means in place to share it?

VI. Faculty

- A. Is there a committee composed of representatives from across the departments or schools and library which oversees liaison with their units, faculty recruiting, curriculum, and policy?
- B. Is there an ongoing, effective liaison between the interdisciplinary program and the departments whose faculty participate?
- C. Are faculty from all participating units involved, or at least represented, in administrative decision making?
- D. When a faculty member participates in interdisciplinary programs outside his/her own unit, are there are procedures whereby voices from outside the faculty member's immediate unit (e.g. as representative of the other assignment in the interdisciplinary program) can have input into the process?
- E. If any faculty appointments cross divisions, what assurances are in place that the arrangement recognizes, supports, and rewards the faculty member's status?
- F. If a faculty appointment is between the interdisciplinary program and a specific department, what special provisions are in place to assure an equitable process?
- G. Do promotion and tenure forms explicitly invite mention of interdisciplinary activities?
- H. Does the promotion and tenure assessment take into account the goals of the program within the institution, as well as implications of participation in interdisciplinary programs as distinct from what is expected within a particular discipline? For example, publication outlets, teaching loads and service opportunities may differ from what is expected within a single discipline.
- I. When a faculty member participates in interdisciplinary general education outside his/her own unit, are there are procedures whereby voices from outside the faculty member's immediate unit (e.g. as representative of the other assignment in the interdisciplinary program) can have input into the process?
- J. If any faculty appointments cross divisions, what assurances are in place that the arrangement recognizes, supports, and rewards the faculty member's status?
- K. If a faculty appointment is between the interdisciplinary general education program and a disciplinary unit, what special provisions are in place to assure an equitable process?

VII. Curriculum

Students planned programs will specify the programs involved in the Interdisciplinary Degree. A minimum of 30 credits are required, and 12-15 credits must be core courses. The capstone experience must represent the interdisciplinary philosophy of the planned program.

- A. Where is the concept of interdisciplinarity explained? Are students acquainted with the strengths and limitations of the interdisciplinary approach?
- B. Do the faculty focus explicitly on the process of integration in their classroom teaching, assigned reading materials, and assigned learning activities?
- C. Do faculty serve as mentors helping students to acquire strategies for integrative thinking?
- D. How do students actively engage in connection-making strategies such as juxtaposing, comparing and contrasting disciplinary perspectives?
- E. How do students explore the connections among their interdisciplinary courses and their major courses?
- F. What creates coherence in the program?
- G. If coherence is addressed through sets of common core courses, what are the courses? How are the core courses connected?
- H. Is there a clear and effective working relationship among the different disciplines? What is that relationship? Are there opportunities to reflect on the relationship of the disciplines?
- I. What evidence indicates an effective working balance of breadth (exposure to multiple disciplines), depth (knowledge of pertinent disciplines), and synthesis (opportunities for integration)?
- J. What are the participating disciplines and interdisciplinary fields?
- K. Are the number and extent of interdisciplinary experiences sufficient to achieve curricular goals?

The above guidelines have been adapted from the “Accreditation Criteria for Interdisciplinary Studies in General Education”¹, a report prepared by a task force of the Association for Integrative Studies in response to a request from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U).

Fiscella, J., Jacobsen, J., Thompson Klein, J., & Seabury, M. (2000).

<http://www.muc.muohio.edu/~ais/pubs/reports/genedaccred.html>. Retrieved 4/25/05.