

PROPOSED CHANGE – Curricular Authority Document

INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

I. INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

Interdisciplinary programs are curricula that have significant coursework from more than one discipline and are not under the control of a single department. Such programs may be majors, minors, graduate programs, degrees or specialized protocols. These programs are coordinated by a council made up of representatives from the disciplines that makeup the program. The council has a person in charge (director/chair), and is governed by a set of bylaws. The interdisciplinary council takes responsibility for student recruitment and advisement, academic program reviews, student academic outcomes assessment, assuring that program courses are offered and staffed, and program compliance with university curricular procedures.

Interdisciplinary programs use ‘interdisciplinarity’¹ to develop a greater understanding of a field of study that is too complex or wide-ranging to be understood with using the knowledge and methodology of just one discipline. The foundation of ‘interdisciplinarity’ is the interchange of perspectives that occur in balancing depth, breadth and synthesis² within the curriculum, pedagogies, assessment and faculty development.

The decision to designate a program as interdisciplinary is at the discretion of the unit or units proposing the program. Not all programs that require courses from more than one department are classified as interdisciplinary. The department chairs from each of the departments cooperate with the council in course scheduling and staffing. There are two types of interdisciplinary programs at CMU: cooperative and freestanding.

- **Cooperative program.** Required courses in the minor, major, graduate program or degree come from two or more separate academic departments.
- **Freestanding program.** Courses may bear a designator unique to the program (e.g., WST for Women's Studies) that may or may not be cross-listed with courses in particular departments. The faculty that teach those courses which are not cross-listed generally do so under released time and/or compensation arrangements with their home departments.

Establishing a New Interdisciplinary Program

Proposals for interdisciplinary programs are initiated by a group of faculty from different departments who wish to develop the program. The proposals go through three stages: endorsement, approval, and implementation.

Endorsement

The first step in the process is the endorsement of the two or more departments and of an appropriate academic dean. For departments from different colleges, both college deans should be consulted, although a single dean is designated as the “responsible” dean. Participating departments send supporting letters and copies of minutes to the academic dean. This endorsement must be included with the proposal documents that are developed and submitted during the planning phase.

Approval

Approval must be obtained from the Academic Planning Council, the provost, the various curricular review bodies, and the Academic Senate.

Academic Planning Council: The proposing unit completes [Planning Form 1: Proposed New Program](#), paying

¹Interdisciplinarity is “the bringing together of distinctive components of two or more disciplines in research or education, leading to new knowledge which would not be possible without this integration.” Nissani. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 1995.

²Depth fosters the necessary disciplinary, professional and interdisciplinary knowledge. Breadth leads to a multidisciplinary variety of perspectives. Synthesis fosters integrative process and construction of a holistic perspective that is greater than the

simple sum of its part. Klein and Newell, *Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies* in Jerry Gaff and James Ratcliff, *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum*.

particular attention to the “*Guidelines for Evaluating New Academic Programs*.” All documents must be submitted to the appropriate departments and ‘responsible’ college curriculum committee for support. If supported by the college curriculum committee and the dean, the ‘responsible’ dean will take the proposal forward to the Academic Planning Council. Documents are reviewed by the Academic Planning Council which makes a recommendation to the provost. If approved by the provost the proposed program will then proceed through the appropriate curricular process.

Establishment of a Council: Once approved by the Provost, there must be provision for a governing council that is representative of the multiple departments in the program and functions or proposes to function in a manner similar to an academic department in overseeing and nurturing the program. This council is responsible for carrying out any curricular changes, student learning outcomes assessment and program review functions, as well as assuring that program courses are offered and staffed. Membership on the council and its functioning are defined by a set of bylaws that address the topics below. These bylaws must be approved by the council, all affected unit deans and the “responsible” dean. The original document is housed in the office of the “responsible” dean with copies distributed to the council and the Office of Academic Affairs.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COUNCIL DESIGN FOR BY-LAWS

A council's by-laws must address the following:

(1) Council Charge

The charge must be clear and complete, including provisions for:

- Designating participating departments;
- Establishing a process by which curricular changes are developed and approved;
- Devising curricular proposals that are then routed to (a) the relevant colleges, with notice to the participating departments, (b) the Master of Science in Administration (MSA) Council when proposal relates to the MSA degree, or the Undergraduate Extended Degree Program Council (UEDPC) when a proposal relates to an undergraduate extended degree program, (c) the Professional Education Curriculum Committee (PECC) when the proposal relates to a professional education program, and (d) either the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) or the Graduate Council (GC), as appropriate;
- Establishing qualifications and recommending advisers to the program director or council chair;
- Establishing responsibilities, qualifications and search procedures for selecting a program director or council chair;
- Recommending a program director, coordinator and/or council chair to the appropriate dean;
- Establishing student requirements;
- Creating program procedures and guidelines and overseeing that they are carried out, including those for program review and student outcomes assessment.
- Establishing council procedures for recommending changes in the interdisciplinary status and/or administrative structure of the program if either situation were to arise.

(2) Council Membership

Each program shall have a council that may include:

- Knowledgeable and/or interested faculty, including perhaps faculty members from each of the departments that offer courses. These might be volunteers or selected by the relevant departments.
- A program director and/or council chair who is responsible for the effective implementation of the program.
- Student(s) involved in the program, appointed by the program director and/or council chair;
- Other interested parties.

(3) Program Director, Coordinator or Council Chair

Each council shall have a program director, coordinator and/or council chair who is responsible for the effective

implementation of the program.

The by-laws should define:

- The role of the program director, coordinator and/or council chair;
- The responsibilities, qualifications and search procedures for selecting and recommending the program director, coordinator and/or council chair;
- The term of office(s);
- The reporting relationship of the program director, coordinator and/or council chair to the relevant dean;
- The relationship of the program director, coordinator and/or council chair to the council.

(4) Program Review Procedures

(5) Student Academic Outcomes Assessment Procedures and Responsibilities

(6) Faculty Involvement

Faculty who teach in the interdisciplinary program should meet periodically to advise the council.

Curriculum Design and Curricular Process:

Curriculum Design. Interdisciplinary programs must include a capstone experience. Units are strongly encouraged to also include an introductory overview course or seminar course early in the program course sequence to introduce students to interdisciplinary thinking, unless there are sound reasons not to do so.

Curricular Process. Once approved by the Provost to proceed through the curricular process the proposing unit completes the New Academic Program Request Form (blue) with particular attention given to the criteria listed in Appendix F of the CAD. If a new designator is being created or any new courses have been developed, the request for the designator, the Course Request Form (green) and Master Course Syllabi must be submitted to the appropriate curricular bodies as outlined in the Curricular Authority Document (<http://academicsenate.cmich.edu/CAD.htm>). The designator approval and new courses that will become part of the proposed program must progress through the curricular process prior to the proposed program.

Implementation

State Review: Upon approval of the Academic Senate, new majors and concentrations go to the Academic Officers of the Presidents' Council, State Universities of Michigan, for review. The Office of Academic Affairs manages this process.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Within eight (8) weeks after Academic Senate approval, the program should submit the student learning outcomes assessment plan to the Assessment Council.

Management of Interdisciplinary Programs

Funding: The Academic Planning Council will review New Program proposals and make recommendations to the provost. Requests for funding beyond any commitments by the college or provost, are made by the Provost to the University Budget Advisory Council, which makes recommendations to the president.

Administrative Support: The office of the "responsible" dean will serve as a repository for official records and information concerning interdisciplinary programs, such as the cooperating departments and deans, the program's primary adviser(s), the program council's by-laws, as well as the names of the program director or council chair and council members. Upon request, the Office of Academic Affairs will assist programs with the proposal process and the development of bylaws and assessment plans.

Communication: It is essential that there be communication between interdisciplinary councils and appropriate departments, colleges, and deans. Council directors and deans in particular need to be advocates for the programs within the college and campus. It is recommended that deans consider inviting directors, particularly of the larger

interdisciplinary programs, to participate as members of the Dean's Advisory Council.

Curricular Changes: Once a program is established, modifications of courses, designators or other aspects of interdisciplinary curricula should be forwarded through the curricular process by the program council, according to the provisions of its bylaws.

Discontinuation: For existing programs, requests to remove the program from status as an interdisciplinary program should emerge from the program council, after consultation with the affected departments. A recommendation to discontinue the program must be voted on by the interdisciplinary council and by all participating departments and be sent through the curricular process beginning with the UCC or Graduate Council as a publication item. The deletion of majors and concentrations will be announced to the Academic Officers of the Presidents' Council, State Universities of Michigan.

In the absence of a viable program council or program, the Interdisciplinary Program Advisory Committee (see following section) may petition the Senate to delete the program or remove its status as an interdisciplinary program.

Interdisciplinary Advisory Committee

The Office of Academic Affairs will form an Interdisciplinary Advisory Committee of council representatives that is convened on an ad hoc basis to advise the provost on resource allocation and other interdisciplinary program issues.

In collaboration with the relevant dean(s) and council(s), this advisory committee will periodically review programs to evaluate their level of activity and conformance with these guidelines. Every spring semester, the advisory council will advise the Academic Senate Executive Board on the status of implementation, assessment, program activity, and related issues for interdisciplinary programs. The committee will formally petition the appropriate Academic Senate to delete inactive programs deemed unlikely to be reactivated and/or to remove the interdisciplinary designation from programs that are not operating in accordance with these guidelines.

II. INTERDEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMS

Interdepartmental Programs are majors, minors, graduate degree programs or specialized protocols cooperatively coordinated by two or in rare instances three departments, although one department will be identified as the “lead” department. They are governed by procedures and bylaws developed by the individual departments. The chairs of the involved departments officially commit, beginning in the academic planning and Senate curricular proposals, to shared ownership and responsibility for student recruitment and advisement, course scheduling and staffing, academic program reviews, student academic outcomes assessment, and program compliance with university curricular procedures.

Establishing a New Interdepartmental Program

Proposals for interdepartmental programs are initiated by a group of faculty from different departments who wish to develop the program. The proposals go through three stages: endorsement, approval, and implementation.

Endorsement

The first step in the process is the endorsement of the two or more departments, the appropriate academic dean(s), with one department identified as the “lead” department. The involved academic departments must submit a letter of agreement that states that (1) the departments are jointly responsible for the program with the identified “lead” department, (2) it is agreed that any curricular changes must be approved by both cooperating departments, (3) the cooperating departments are jointly responsible for student learning outcomes assessment and program review functions and how these will be administered, and (4) how any disputes will be resolved. Participating departments send supporting letters and copies of minutes to the appropriate academic dean(s). A formal proposal is then developed and submitted to the appropriate college curriculum committees for support. If supported by the committees and the deans, the deans will then take the proposal forward to the Academic Planning Council.

Approval

Approval must be obtained from the Academic Planning Council and the various curricular review bodies, including the Academic Senate.

Academic Planning Council. The proposing unit completes [Planning Form 1: Proposed New Program](#), paying particular attention to the “*Guidelines for Evaluating New Academic Programs.*” Documents are reviewed by the Academic Planning Council which makes a recommendation to the provost. If approved by the provost the proposed program will then proceed through the appropriate curricular process.

Curricular Process: Once approved by the Provost to proceed through the curricular process a New Academic Program Request Form (blue) with particular attention given to the criteria listed in Appendix F of the CAD. If any new courses have been developed, the Course Request Form (green) and Master Course Syllabi must be submitted to the appropriate curricular bodies as outlined in the Curricular Authority Document (<http://academicsenate.cmich.edu/CAD.htm>). New courses that will become part of the proposed program must progress through the curricular process prior to the proposed program.

Implementation

State Review: New majors and concentrations go to the Academic Officers of the Presidents’ Council, State Universities of Michigan, for review prior to enrolling students. The Office of Academic Affairs manages this process.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment. Within eight (8) weeks after final curricular approval the “lead” department is responsible to submit a student learning outcomes assessment plan to the Assessment Council.

Management of Interdepartmental Programs

Funding: The Academic Planning Council will review New Program proposals and make recommendations to the provost. Requests for funding beyond any commitments by the college or provost, are made by the Provost to the Budget Review Advisory Council, which makes recommendations to the president.

Administrative Support: The office of the “lead” department will serve as a repository for official records and information concerning the program. Upon request, the Office of Academic Affairs will assist programs with the proposal process and the development of assessment plans.

Communication: It is essential that there be communication between the appropriate departments, colleges, and deans.

Curricular Changes. Once a program is established, modifications of courses, designators or other aspects of the curricula must be communicated to all appropriate departments and reference to these changes should be noted in all affected department curricular minutes. It is the responsibility of the “lead” department to forward requested changes through the curricular process.

Discontinuation: For existing programs, requests to remove the program from status as an interdepartmental program should emerge from cooperating departments. A recommendation to discontinue the program must be voted on by all participating departments and be sent through the curricular process beginning with the appropriate departments, college curriculum committees and the UCC or Graduate Council as a publication item. The deletion of majors and concentrations will be announced to the Academic Officers of the Presidents’ Council, State Universities of Michigan.