



Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs

FINAL REPORT

to

SENATE

03 December 2013

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A. Executive Summary

Since achieving University status, Ryerson University has approved inter-and multi-disciplinary programs. Academic Plans (2008-2013), updates to Senate, and Senate discussions in 2010 and 2011 indicate that the expansion of inter-and cross-disciplinary offerings remained a University goal. The 2010-2011 Senate discussions resulted in a presentation identifying the challenges facing interdisciplinary programs, however, no recommendations were made. In the Senate meeting of 24 January 2012 interest in the issue of interdisciplinary was renewed with a proposal to accept Creative Industries as a stand-alone School. Senate narrowly approved the proposal but directed that the issue of interdisciplinarity be revisited. Accordingly a Task Force was established in January 2013 to: (1) identify issues which are problematic to the operations of such programs; (2) consult widely with the Ryerson community; and (3) make recommendations to Senate by the Fall of 2013. The Task Force was constituted with membership from each Faculty.

The Task Force began by establishing definitions related to interdisciplinarity, identifying such programs at Ryerson, and developing a methodology. Using its own expertise, the committee began by compiling a list of known issues. Based on this preliminary information, the committee developed a protocol to interview stakeholders ranging from faculty in interdisciplinary programs to Deans, Chairs, Program Directors, University Planning and the Ryerson Faculty Association. Data from relevant student surveys were reviewed, and focus groups were conducted with graduate students in interdisciplinary programs. The Task Force was guided by its Senate mandate to make recommendations that would improve the operations of interdisciplinary programs with the underlying principle of protecting probationary faculty involved in these programs.

Confusion exists around definitions related to interdisciplinarity, and the terms are often used interchangeably and erroneously. The Task Force divided cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, pluri-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches into two groups: (1) inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches consolidate different disciplinary perspectives into one approach; and (2) cross-, multi-, and pluri- approaches apply distinct disciplinary perspectives to the same problem. For the purpose of this report, we have referred to the former as interdisciplinary and the latter as multi-disciplinary.

Through its consultation process, the Task Force identified the following issues:

1. **Development:** No policy exists stating that multi- and interdisciplinary programs should be treated as equal to disciplinary programs in terms of resources.
2. **Teaching and Learning:** Interdisciplinary approaches require faculty versed in interdisciplinary methods; multi-disciplinary approaches work best in team teaching situations. Both approaches require greater intentionality than is currently evident.
3. **Budget:** Inter- and multi-disciplinary programs must be resourced appropriately. However, such programs are often “in the dark” about available financial resources.
4. **Faculty Resources:** The following factors exacerbate the delivery of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs.
 - a) Team teaching is often required but difficult to accomplish.
 - b) No provision is made for the calculation of team teaching in teaching assignments.
 - c) Faculty are appointed to a single academic unit. Cross appointments are rare, and where they exist, procedures for making appointments, seeking tenure, and responsibilities are not defined or standardized across the university.
 - d) The process of determining faculty complements is unclear, and a tendency exists to “double count” faculty associated with interdisciplinary programs.
5. **Faculty Assignment:** Considerable tensions exist between disciplinary academic units and interdisciplinary programs as the Directors of such programs have to request the “release” of faculty to teach in their programs.
6. **Governance:** Concerns exist that faculty service for interdisciplinary programs will not be recognized.
7. **Class capacity:** Students from multi- and interdisciplinary programs often experience difficulty getting into elective courses.
8. **Sense of Community:** Students and faculty note difficulties – including but not restricted to a shortage of physical space – in establishing a sense of community.
9. **Specialization in Zone Education:** This new specialization is inherently interdisciplinary and will experience the issues identified above.
10. **Chang School of Continuing Education:** The Chang School is experiencing similar difficulties as related to its Interdisciplinary certificates.
11. **Minors:** Many minors contain courses from different Departments. These minors often lack governance especially in terms of ensuring their availability to interdisciplinary students.
12. **Graduate Studies:** Graduate programs have experienced the difficulties identified above as well as other challenges. Several interdisciplinary graduate programs were established when no other graduate programs existed. Now many areas have established their own disciplinary graduate programs, and tensions over resources exist especially in terms of faculty complements and access to graduate student teaching and research assistantships.

The Task Force noted that some improvements have occurred such as the recently-passed Senate Policy 45 that creates a governance structure that applies to all programs – whether disciplinary or inter- or multi-disciplinary. The Senate debate regarding Creative Industry also signals the need for an appropriate model for the delivery of interdisciplinary programs.

The Task Force developed twelve recommendations to address the issues identified above (see pages 17-18) and recommends that Senate accept the Report of the Task Force. It requests that the Provost consider its report in the development of the next Strategic Academic Plan and that the Provost respond to the report in a Fall 2014 meeting of Senate.

B. Background and Mandate

Background

Shortly after achieving University status, Ryerson University began to approve inter- and multi-disciplinary programs. While the multi-disciplinary goals and purposes of each new program were clear, the development of multi-disciplinary programs was not a pillar of the university's academic plan. With the benefit of hindsight, the University probably should have first defined the terms "interdisciplinary" and "multi-disciplinary;" established a clear sense of the goals and purpose of such programs; and addressed many administrative matters vital to the success of such programs (e.g., putting in place an agreed-upon structure, policy regarding approval and operation of the programs, establishing a transparent and understandable process to ensure that the approved programs had an adequate faculty complement). Even in the absence of clear, University-wide, and user-friendly structure and policy, many of the approved inter- and multi-disciplinary programs created their own administrative procedures, and have succeeded and even thrived, but not without experiencing significant challenges, particularly with regard to faculty appointments, resources and student support.

The 2008-13 Academic Plan, *Shaping Our Future* established, as a "principal priority," the need "...to balance discipline-based programs with cross-disciplinary programs ..." (p. 7), noting:

While universities sometimes continue to define canons of knowledge and practice along traditional lines, the world for which we are preparing students is seldom as engaged as we are by our disciplinary categories of knowledge and practice. Generally speaking, the world beyond is intrinsically more cross-disciplinary in its approach. In many arenas it seems that the boundary crossing, within the knowledge economy especially, is speeding up ever more. (p. 8)

and

New and innovative curricula and program structures, including both discipline-based and cross-disciplinary programs, double majors, and increased access to minors within a program of study, will be encouraged. (p. 11)

Increasing interdisciplinarity is lauded in each annual "Academic Plan Update" to Senate. The 04 May 2010 update contains, perhaps, the most clear statement of intent as it describes the interdisciplinary

developments of the 2009-10 year and says “We should encourage these initiatives, and help remove roadblocks” (p. 4). Overall, the Plan and Senate updates make it clear that the expansion of inter- and cross-disciplinary offerings is a University goal. What is missing is an implementation plan.

The issue of governance of interdisciplinary programs was flagged, in Fall 2009, by the “green paper” produced by the Provost’s *Commission on Academic Structures*, which included a proposal to create a separate Faculty for inter- and multi-disciplinary programs. As a result of its deliberations, and submissions to the Commission, the Final Report of the Commission (02 February 2010) did not include any recommendation addressing inter- or multi-disciplinary programs at Ryerson.

By Fall 2010, the issue of inter- and multi-disciplinarity had seized the Senate Priorities Committee, which made the subject one of the “major topics” to which significant Senate meeting-time would be devoted. As a first step, Senate sponsored an information event titled “Making Interdisciplinarity Work” on 04 November 2010, and brought as a guest speaker Dr. Adele Reinhartz, who had headed a University of Ottawa Task Force charged with addressing the subject. A copy of the University of Ottawa *Report Of The Task Force on Interdisciplinarity* (27 June 2006) is attached as Appendix K-1; the *Summary of Recommendations* of the Task Force (27 June 2006) is attached as Appendix K-2; and the presentation by Dr. Reinhartz at Ryerson (04 November 2010) is attached as Appendix K-3.

The next step was a discussion of the subject by Senate, which took place 07 December 2010. Senate was divided into groups, with each group charged with addressing a set of questions. The questions that were considered are attached here as Appendix K-4. The discussion from that meeting was organised into themes, and the questions and responses were presented to Senate by the Provost on 05 April 2011. A copy of that presentation is attached here as Appendix K-5. While the 2010-11 process identified some issues and provided some answers, it did not end with any conclusive recommendations in terms of policy, procedure, or administrative change. Many of the identified challenges continued to exist, yet new programs continued to be proposed and approved.

The catalyst for renewed Senate interest in the issue of inter- and multi-disciplinarity was the approval, on 24 January 2012 (with Board approval following on 25 June 2012), of a program in Creative Industries, and the subsequent proposal, considered by the 04 December 2012 meeting of Senate, to create a stand-alone School as the Academic Unit responsible for the new program. Senate approved the proposal (after a motion to defer was defeated with the President having to break a tied vote), but it directed that the issue of interdisciplinary programs be revisited.

Mandate

Accordingly, the Senate Priorities Committee recommended to the 29 January 2013 meeting of Senate that a *Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs* be established:

1. To examine current practices at Ryerson in order to identify issues which are problematic to the operation of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs;
2. To consult widely with the Ryerson community, including with all current inter/multi-disciplinary programs, with University Planning, and with the Ryerson Faculty Association in the process of identifying such issues;
3. To make recommendations to Senate by the November 2013 meeting of Senate regarding improvements that could be made to improve the operation of such programs, and their relationships with discipline-based schools/departments and programs.

The Task Force was duly constituted, with membership from each Faculty as follows:

- Jennifer Mactavish, Dean, Yeates School of Graduate Studies (Chair);
- Chris Evans, Vice-Provost Academic (Science);
- Elizabeth Evans, Associate Dean (TRSM);
- Sri Krishnan, Interim Dean (FEAS);
- Ron Pushchak, School of Occupational and Public Health (FCS);
- Catherine Schreyer, Chair, School of Professional Communications (FCAD);
- Neil Thomlinson, Politics and Public Administration (Arts); and
- Stéphanie Walsh Matthews, Director, Arts and Contemporary Studies (Arts).

The authority, mandate, and composition of the Task Force are consolidated in Appendix J-1.

C. Methodology

The Task Force has met physically six times (26 March, 25 April, 19 June, 19 September, 09 October, and 31 October) and exchanged documents by e-mail throughout. Recognising that the Task Force members were named to the Task Force because of their involvement and expertise in various aspects of inter- and multi-disciplinary education at Ryerson, the Task Force first undertook to establish the goals of the exercise, and to bring some coherence to the discussion by examining definitions for the terms that are frequently used but rarely explained. The Task Force also identified the inter- and multi-disciplinary programs at Ryerson, agreed to a process to secure as much input as possible within the time constraints of its mandate; and compiled a preliminary identification of issues known to be problematic to the operation of inter- and multi-disciplinary program. The first phase of consultation aimed to solidify the identification of issues and challenges by conducting qualitative interviews of participants drawn from many segments of the Ryerson community including disciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty members, current inter/multidisciplinary Program Directors (both undergraduate and graduate); Chairs of Departments that have faculty participating in inter-

and multi-disciplinary programs; Deans; the Chang School of Continuing Education; University Planning; the Registrariat; and the Ryerson Faculty Association (see Appendix J-4). Data from the student surveys conducted as part of the Periodic Program Review of the Arts and Contemporary Studies BA program were also utilised (see Appendix J-5). Focus groups were conducted with interdisciplinary graduate students in several interdisciplinary graduate programs (see Appendix J-6). The Task Force then attempted to refine and consolidate the results of the consultation in order to identify improvements that could be made to improve the operation of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, and their relationships with discipline-based schools, departments and programs, and to make recommendations as to how those improvements might best be effected. If Senate views the Report favourably, it will then decide upon implementation measures.

D. Goals/Principles

The recommendation of the Senate Priorities Committee regarding the creation of the Task Force established an over-arching principle as it charged the Task Force “To make recommendations to Senate by the November 2013 meeting of Senate regarding *improvements that could be made to improve the operation of such programs, and their relationships with discipline-based schools/departments and programs*” (emphasis added). This direction to the Task Force, taken with the direction of the University’s academic plan, *Shaping Our Future*, establishes the overarching policy goals: that interdisciplinary programs are desirable; that their development should be encouraged; and that their operation should be improved and better integrated with the academic offerings of the University. The advent of Graduate Diplomas and Zone Education constitutes further evidence of the need to act on these general goals. It is generally recognised that another goal is the protection of probationary faculty involved with interdisciplinary programs in light of their traditional academic appointment to a Department/School.

E. Definitions

There is a tendency to think of the classification of academic programs as a binary. On the one hand, there are programs that are administered and taught by an academic unit consisting of faculty, the majority of whom share a common disciplinary training (***Disciplinary***). “Subfields” or “sub-disciplines” may or may not be involved in such programs (***Intradisciplinary***).

On the other hand are those programs that are administered and taught by faculty with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. It is commonplace to refer to such programs as interdisciplinary,

but the application of a single label to the range of combinations and permutations possible within the “non-disciplinary” category can be both unhelpful and misleading. Accordingly, the Task Force distinguishes between ***cross-disciplinary***, ***interdisciplinary***, ***multi-disciplinary***, ***pluri-disciplinary***, and ***trans-disciplinary*** (the definitions are explored in Appendix J-2). Although all of these categories have disciplinary foundations, the role of disciplines is quite different. In the case of ***inter-*** and ***trans-*** disciplinary study, disciplinary approaches are integrated or consolidated, so that the student is presented with a problem as understood through the analysis and contextualisation of a variety of disciplines. The emphasis is not, in other words, on a variety of disciplinary approaches, but rather upon the development of an interdisciplinary approach appropriate to a problem. In the case of ***cross-***, ***multi-***, and ***pluri-*** disciplinary approaches, distinct disciplinary approaches are applied to the problem. This report generally refers to the former as interdisciplinary and to the latter as multi-disciplinary.

When identifying issues, challenges, and problems, many are found across most non-disciplinary programs – whether graduate, undergraduate, or continuing education – and also with respect to the administration of Minors. It is fruitful, therefore, to structure the discussion around the issues, rather than around the program types, and to simply identify, within that discussion, the unique situations, if any, that are encountered by individual program types (i.e., those cases where problems or challenges are encountered differently by inter- versus multi-disciplinary programs).

F. Issues / Challenges / Problems

The Task Force, through its consultation with the Ryerson community, has identified some issues/challenges/problems associated with the development and delivery of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, and with their relationship to disciplinary programs.

1. Development

The capacity of inter- and multi-disciplinary offerings can be increased in two ways: increasing the capacity of existing programs, and developing new programs, minors, and double-majors. While it is generally assumed that programs (whether disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or multi-disciplinary) should be treated equally and equitably in terms of resource allocation, administrative support, and governance requirements, this is nowhere stated as policy. It is an open question whether it should be. A related question is the degree to which standardisation can – or should – be expected *between* inter- and multi-disciplinary programs.

At the very least, those involved in the development of new initiatives should be aware of the issues that they will face with the operation of the program, and should be as proactive as possible so that the issues do not become major problems. It is hoped that the identification of issues here will be helpful in that respect.

2. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning versus multi-disciplinary teaching and learning

Interdisciplinary teaching really involves presenting material from an interdisciplinary perspective, a feat best accomplished by faculty who, themselves, have been trained in interdisciplinary methods and approaches. In some circumstances, students may be presented with the disciplinary bases of the methods and approaches used, but this would not necessarily be the case.

Multi-disciplinary teaching and learning involves the presentation and examination of problems from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. On the teaching side, this can be best accomplished by team-teaching, but other methods can also be used to cover deliberately the approaches and methods of more than one discipline. On the learning side, students recognise and synthesize discrete and identifiable approaches and methods.

In addition to the need for clarity around goals and objectives, logistical challenges are different between the two approaches. As the curriculum structure of Ryerson is amended to facilitate greater student choice, students will be able (assuming that seats are made available in courses across the University) to formulate their own multi-disciplinary program, perhaps including some interdisciplinary offerings. The provision of those offerings, however, requires a greater degree of intentionality than is currently in evidence.

3. Budget

Interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary programs must be resourced appropriately relative to other programs offered by the University. This involves such matters as staffing, physical space, library resources, course capacity, and especially faculty complement (see #4 below). Ryerson currently devolves central funding to Faculties, and funding for programs is devolved from Faculties to Departments or, in the case of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, directly to the programs. The existing practice is not transparent and often leaves those developing programs – as well as those operating approved programs – “in the dark” as to the financial resources that *are* available, as well as with respect to the financial resources that they should *expect* to be available. The situation is particularly acute in programs that cross Faculty boundaries.

4. Faculty resources (teaching assignment, service, administration)

The successful delivery of any program – undergraduate or graduate degree, diploma, certificate, or minor – is obviously very much a function of the quality of instruction available. For inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, the problems routinely experienced are similar to those experienced within Department-based programs, but exacerbated by several factors:

a. possibility of team-teaching

While team-teaching is sometime desirable within Department-based programs – particularly for those courses with an intra- or interdisciplinary focus – it is essential in many multi-disciplinary programs, to bring the perspective of two or more disciplines to bear on the analysis of a problem, issue, or theme. Organising team-teaching at Ryerson is not easy for a variety of reasons, including the way in which faculty members' teaching assignments are calculated.

b. calculation of faculty teaching assignments

At Ryerson, in most Faculties, teaching is assumed to consist of undergraduate courses that are the responsibility of the academic unit to which the faculty member is appointed. The faculty member is then "released" from such courses in order to pursue other activities such as graduate teaching, teaching in other programs (including inter- and multi-disciplinary ones), research, service, etc. It is expected that the faculty "teaching load" will add up to whatever is the "Departmental Teaching Standard" for his/her Department. No explicit provision is made for the calculation of non-standard course delivery, including team-teaching.

One result of this method of calculating faculty teaching load is that team teaching is often possible only if a faculty member is willing to engage in it on an "overload" basis (i.e., in addition to the normal teaching assignment).

A second result of this method of calculating faculty teaching assignments is a degree of possessiveness, on the part of Departments/Schools, with respect to scarce faculty FTEs (see also "c" below).

c. nature of faculty appointments

At Ryerson, faculty are usually appointed to a single academic unit (usually a Department or School) and are usually expected to fulfil their teaching obligations with respect to the courses for which that academic unit is responsible, and their service obligations with respect to the Department or School to which they are appointed. This is problematic for inter- or multi-disciplinary programs, the Directors of which must secure teaching capacity by negotiating the "release" of desired faculty with the Chairs or Directors of the Departments or Schools to which the desired faculty members are appointed. Since the hiring of the faculty member was usually justified initially on the basis of the needs of the programs or courses for which the Department/School is *directly* responsible, requests from the Directors of inter/multi-disciplinary programs are not always received warmly.

Even where the teaching in inter/multi-disciplinary programs is covered adequately by negotiated teaching release, there remains a need for faculty to be involved in the governance and the administration of the inter/multi-disciplinary program, and to have that service recognised as equal to other forms of service within the Department/School

to which the faculty member is appointed. This is a serious issue for all faculty, but is of critical importance to probationary faculty.

Memorandum of Understanding #3 in the RFA collective agreement¹ provides for cross-appointments, but it refers to “concomitant appointments in two Departments/Schools” (p. 223). Only in very rare cases have faculty been appointed, or cross-appointed, to a *program* as opposed to an *academic unit*. This restriction is intended to protect faculty – particularly probationary faculty facing the rigours of tenure and promotion – by ensuring that academic appointments can be made only by academic units possessed of a Department Hiring Committee (DHC)² and a Departmental Evaluation Committee (DEC).³

d. calculation of faculty complement

The process of determining the faculty complement necessary to deliver a program is unnecessarily opaque at Ryerson, and it often works to the disadvantage of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs. As noted above, faculty are usually appointed to Departments or Schools, even when their letter of appointment specifies involvement in inter- or multi-disciplinary programs. This can create two serious problems. First, involvements specified in Letters of Appointment are difficult to enforce over time. Second, there is a tendency to “double count” those faculty members such that they are FULLY counted in *both* the disciplinary program administered by the academic unit to which they are formally appointed *and* by the inter- or multi-disciplinary program in which they teach. It is not particularly problematic to have faculty considered to be part of the complement of the Department/School and of the complement of a separate inter- or multi-disciplinary program, but their teaching *capacity* cannot be counted (in full) in both places. Their Department Teaching Standard will specify the maximum number of courses members of the faculty can teach. If some or all of that teaching is in inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, there must be “backfill” in the Department/School-based program, the needs of which probably justified the faculty hire in the first place.

5. Faculty assignment

Given that faculty hires are usually justified on the basis of the needs of the programs and/or courses for which an academic unit (Department or School) is responsible; and given the preferences of many faculty to teach in inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, diplomas, and certificates, serious questions arise about the best way to resolve a series of competing imperatives.

Faculty allocation is a zero-sum game, so if faculty members are totally or partially allocated to a disciplinary program based in the Department or School, they are not available for allocation to the inter/multi-disciplinary program. The reverse is also true. Given that the number of faculty is insufficient to teach all of the courses that are on offer in any given semester, the competing imperatives of the various programs creates considerable tension between faculty members (who

¹ Collective Agreement between the Board of Governors, Ryerson University and the Ryerson Faculty Association. In force until 30 June 2015.

² Article 4.1

³ Article 5.1

want to follow their teaching and/or research interests), their Chairs/Directors (who are responsible for the optimal delivery of the programs for which their Department/School is directly responsible); and the Program Directors of inter-multi-disciplinary programs (who are responsible for the optimal delivery of the inter/multi-disciplinary program). As noted above (4b, 4c, and 4d), Directors of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs must approach the Chairs and Directors of Departments and Schools and negotiate the “release” of faculty members from teaching obligations within the programs for which the academic unit is wholly responsible. Moreover, in any given semester or academic year, the Chairs/Directors of Departments/Schools are likely to be faced with several such requests, possibly from several different programs. Chairs and Directors are evaluated according to the success of the program(s) for which their academic unit is responsible; the inter/multi-disciplinary Program Directors are evaluated according to the success of the program for which they are responsible; and faculty would generally like the ability to choose the programs in which they teach. In addition, the negotiations surrounding these competing imperatives normally also involve Faculty Deans. Given that there are too few faculty to satisfy the needs of all programs, tension is inevitable.

6. Governance

Governance issues are of two types. Internal issues relate to the operation of the program, and are often related to the question of faculty resources (see #4 above) and faculty assignment (see #5 above). External issues relate to governance, communication, and decision-making across Faculties.

Currently, the governance structure for inter/multi-disciplinary programs, certificates, or minors involves a “Dean of Record,” a Program Director, and a Program Council (Senate Policy 45). The position “Dean of Record” has not been defined by Senate policy. The Provost’s *Commission on Academic Structures* (02 February 2010) explicitly rejected the creation of a separate Faculty to house interdisciplinary studies. One major reason for that decision was a desire to integrate inter- and multi-disciplinary programs within Faculty structures (even when more than one Faculty is involved) and to ensure close collaboration between inter/multi-disciplinary programs, and disciplinary programs based in Departments. The reality, however, is that the weight of all these goals falls very heavily on the Program Director of the inter/multi-disciplinary program. While Policy 45 spells out the requirements of Program Councils for inter- and multi-disciplinary programs, concern remains that faculty service on such bodies will not be adequately recognised in consideration of tenure and promotion by DEC members normally drawn from the ranks of the discipline-based program(s) housed in a Department/School.

7. *Course Capacity (seats in disciplinary courses for students of inter/multi-disciplinary programs)*

Ryerson's curriculum policies (both existing and proposed) require undergraduate students to take courses outside the program in which they are enrolled. Different programs require the completion of different numbers of such courses. Currently, these are in the Professionally-Related and Liberal Studies categories. In the curriculum model currently under consideration by a committee of Senate, these would become "Open" and "Breadth" electives. What is a "professional" or "program" course for the students of most academic undergraduate programs (whether required or elective) may also be an elective for the students of other programs. The availability of space (seats) in such courses is an issue for the students of many programs, but the concern is heightened for the students of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Where Departments and Schools have allowed their program courses to be included in the curriculum of multi-disciplinary programs (in order to provide exposure to that particular discipline), there must be some mechanism to ensure that an adequate number of seats is available. This space must be provided in any course available as an elective to students from *any* other programs (whether disciplinary, inter-, or multi-disciplinary).

8. *Sense of community (students and faculty)*

One of the persistent problems reported by students in inter- and multi-disciplinary programs is that, absent a Department/School that takes responsibility for the administration of the program, it is very hard to build and sustain any sense of community. This general claim has several constituent parts:

- lack of a "champion" for the program (either an individual or a cohesive small group of faculty), both within the university and externally (e.g., to industry, potential employers)
- faculty not concentrated in a single physical location;
- administrative offices that are housed in Departments/Schools (and sometimes move when the Program Director or Program Administrator changes);
- lack of physical space for building relationships with colleagues and faculty in the program and for collaborations involving course work and/or research (a problem shared by many discipline-based programs); and
- governance questions.

Successful programs engender a sense of community among students and faculty. This makes faculty feel like they belong, it improves the student experience while enrolled, and it is likely to pay dividends when students graduate and begin to consider alumni contributions. Inter- and multi-

disciplinary programs face unique challenges in developing a sustained sense of community. They also face increased challenges to ensure adequate communication between program and students – and among students – to ensure that students are aware of resources across campus and beyond campus. Data derived from surveys of ACS students and alumni confirm these challenges with respect to development of a sense of community. There is a need to examine the successes and failures of such programs in other institutions and to attempt to identify some “best practices” that could be utilised at Ryerson.

9. Specialization in Zone Education

The recently announced Specialization in Zone Education is inherently interdisciplinary, in addition to being a vehicle to provide experiential learning for students in a variety of disciplinary, multi- and interdisciplinary programs. It is projected to provide six one-semester course credits, so it is, in terms of academic credit, similar to a Minor or a Chang School Continuing Education Certificate. It is likely to experience most of the issues identified above. Given the heavy emphasis on practitioner participation, it is likely that there will be additional challenges around governance, particularly the preservation of academic control.

10. Chang School of Continuing Education Certificates

In keeping with the “collaborative model” espoused by the Chang School, there is normally an academic unit with assigned responsibility for courses and Certificates offered by the School. The Chang School, however, is also involved in the delivery of interdisciplinary courses, as well as many multi-disciplinary Certificates, including a successful collaboration with the Faculty of Community Services through which a series of interdisciplinary courses (CINT) are delivered. Such courses form a part of several Certificates and Minors offered by the Faculty of Community Services. The governance and administrative model utilised in the Faculty of Community Services may offer some guidance for other similar collaborations.

Since 1998, the Chang School has also administered the Interdisciplinary Certificate in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management, which draws from Departments/Schools in three Faculties: Arts (Politics and Public Administration); Community Services (Social Work); and the Ted Rogers School of Management (Human Resources and Organizational Behaviour, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship and Strategy). Despite its success, the operation of this Certificate highlights many of the problems with inter- and multi-disciplinary programming at Ryerson. It also highlights many of the ingredients necessary for success, not least of which is the presence of a research Centre (The Centre for

Voluntary Sector Studies). The program was also grounded in an unusual degree of cooperation between three Faculties and the School of Continuing Education (as it then was). In terms of problems, the “root” is, quite simply, a lack of faculty whose primary (or even secondary) responsibility is to the courses, the Certificate, or the Minor. As a result the Coordinator, employed by the Chang School, has a difficult time administering the Certificate, and there really is nobody tasked with administering the “day” offerings that make up the Minor, a situation that causes a lot of problems including, but not restricted to, hiring and assessing of CUPE instructors, monitoring of course outlines, and responding to students enrolled in the course. Expansion of the day offerings, long a goal of all involved, is impossible in this environment. Thus the problems of the Certificate are mainly in the areas of faculty resources and governance, and unfold along lines very similar to the problems experienced by other multi- and interdisciplinary programs.

11. Minors

Academic responsibility for minors normally rests with a Department or School. There are many minors, however, that contain courses that are the responsibility of different Departments or Schools. In such cases, there is rarely any kind of effective governance arrangement. Some kind of governance structure is required to:

- ensure availability of courses making up the minor;
- review regularly the syllabi of the courses making up the minor to ensure continued coherence or relevance;
- conduct negotiations with Teaching Departments/Schools to ensure that there are sufficient seats made available in courses that form part of the minor to allow the students of other programs to enrol in them.

Since the courses that make up minors are typically “Professional” courses within the program of the Teaching Department (and “Professionally-Related” courses for the students completing the minor), this can be a major issue.

12. Graduate Studies

Many of the problems identified with inter- and multi-disciplinary graduate programs can be reduced to some common denominators: availability of faculty to teach and supervise, availability of faculty to engage the administration of the program, and availability of support for students (particularly in the absence of a Department/School to act as advocate).

At Ryerson, several inter- or multi-disciplinary graduate programs were approved at a time when there were no graduate programs based in the Departments of the contributing disciplines.

Naturally, faculty who were keen to engage in graduate education leapt at the opportunity to participate in the programs proposed and eventually launched. As time went on, many of the contributing Departments/Schools launched their own discipline-based graduate program and, at that point, faculty found themselves pulled in two opposing directions. Pressure was, quite logically, applied to ensure that faculty were engaged in the graduate programs that are the responsibility of the academic unit to which they were appointed. Concurrently, concern was expressed in many quarters that undergraduate education would be “cannibalised” by the needs of graduate education, since it is generally supposed that graduate courses should be taught by tenure-stream faculty, while undergraduate courses can be (and often are) taught by part-time and sessional instructors. Also, since graduate courses generally have lower enrolment and are more intellectually challenging, many faculty would prefer teaching graduate courses to teaching undergraduate courses, particularly high-enrolment undergraduate courses. But, at a time when Departments/Schools are under pressure to increase the student/faculty ratio, having faculty members teach more than one low-enrolment graduate course per year is enormously problematic for both the Department’s performance indicators and for the undergraduate programs that are the responsibility of that Academic Unit. While it is tempting to conclude that the problem of inadequate “faculty complement” in inter- and multi-disciplinary graduate programs would be relieved, if not totally solved, by letting faculty teach as many graduate courses as they liked, the implications of such action, particularly for *undergraduate* education, have not been well studied and are poorly understood.

At the level of graduate students, ongoing problems have been identified with respect to student support. The problems exist in discipline-based programs as well, particularly in cases where funding is not provided beyond the third year of a doctoral program. The situation is particularly acute, however, in inter- and multi-disciplinary graduate programs because the allocation of employment as a Graduate (teaching) Assistant (GA) – tied as it is to undergraduate program offerings – is controlled by the Academic Unit responsible for the undergraduate program requiring the assistance. If the Academic Unit also has a department-based graduate program, its students are likely to receive the majority of the limited number of Graduate Assistantships available, partly because the Department will desire to support its “own” students, and partly because the graduate students are more likely to be known to the faculty needing assistance. This has resulted in a situation where many graduate students enrolled in interdisciplinary programs are employed by departments that do not have a department-based graduate program. As more department-based

graduate programs are launched, the potential sites of employment for interdisciplinary graduate students are reduced further. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that funding for graduate assistantships is usually provided by Faculty Deans who, in the face of their own budget pressures, seek to constrain the amount of GA funding made available. Inter- and multi-disciplinary graduate programs that cross Faculty boundaries are thus doubly disadvantaged.

G. Improvements

Ryerson has made some progress with the project of institutionalizing inter- and multi-disciplinary programs at all levels. Senate recently passed an amended Policy 45 that sets out structure for Program Councils and treats inter- and multi-disciplinary programs similarly to programs that are based in Departments/Schools. Senate approved some Graduate Diplomas, but then passed a resolution directing that policy concerning Graduate Diplomas be in place before any more are approved. Though no formal direction has (yet) been given, it seems likely that policy defining the scope, function, and responsibilities of a “Dean of Record” will be shortly forthcoming. At its 04 December 2012 meeting, Senate narrowly approved the establishment of a School of Creative Industries as the academic home of the new interdisciplinary program in Creative Industries. The vote on that motion made it quite obvious that there are serious differences of opinion, within the Ryerson community, as to the most appropriate model for the delivery of interdisciplinary programs. Senate responded to that difference of opinion by establishing this Task Force.

H. Recommendations

Before enumerating recommendations for Provostial consideration, it is important to note that the Task Force did not examine how interdisciplinary programs (and graduates therefrom) are viewed *outside* Ryerson, although this matter was certainly flagged in student responses to the Task Force. The mandate of the Task Force involved making recommendations to ensure that programs approved by the Ryerson Senate are delivered well. The Task Force was not asked to engage in any kind of assessment of individual programs, nor was it asked to examine or discuss the employability of the graduates of inter- or multi-disciplinary programs. These questions, while serious and important, should be addressed through the program review processes that are mandated for all Ryerson undergraduate, graduate, and CE programs.

It should also be noted, at this juncture, that the Task Force is explicitly **not** recommending two policy options that were suggested as part of the consultation process. Some members of the

Ryerson community continue to support the creation of a Faculty or other administrative unit to take charge of all inter- and multi-disciplinary activity. This idea was rejected by the Task Force, at least partly because, as recently as February 2010, a University-wide Commission examining the broader question of University structure (The Provost's *Commission on Academic Structures*) studied the question and declined to recommend a separate Faculty. The Task Force concluded that there are other policy options that could produce the same benefits without that alteration of structure.

The second option that seems attractive to some members of the Ryerson community is to permit academic appointments to programs, including cross appointments. The goal embedded in that option is to have faculty with direct responsibility for inter- and multi-disciplinary programs. The Task Force concluded that this goal can be addressed in other ways that do not require major changes to the collective agreement between the Ryerson Faculty Association (RFA) and the Ryerson Board of Governors. Moreover, these other options would retain more flexibility for faculty than would result from a direct appointment model. However, where cross-appointments to multi-disciplinary programs exist, and remain the only option to appropriately staff multi-disciplinary programs, revisions to the RFA collective agreement should be considered.

The Task Force makes the following specific recommendations, and includes, at the end of the list, a procedural recommendation that would ensure that these recommendations are investigated, and a report is made to Senate.

- 1) State, as a matter of general principle, that the University will treat all programs equally and equitably in terms of resource allocation, administrative support, and governance requirements.
- 2) Hire interdisciplinary scholars to teach in interdisciplinary programs, with faculty acquisition plans for multi-disciplinary programs equitably recognized in the university's hiring process.
- 3) In the calculation of the faculty complement necessary to deliver approved programs, refrain from "double-counting" faculty as being fully available to a Department/School and its programs and, at the same time, to inter- or multi-disciplinary programs.
- 4) Ensure – irrespective of the place of primary appointment – that calculations of FTE faculty requirements for inter- or multi-disciplinary programs are done in exactly the same way as for programs based in a Department/School; and that this calculation is part of the formal approval process undertaken by Senate on the recommendation of its Academic Standards Committee, or of the YSGS Council if the program in question is at the graduate level.
- 5) Work with the Ryerson Faculty Association to develop clear and transparent mechanisms to:
 - a. guide the hiring process when faculty will be appointed to a Department/School but expected to teach in, and contribute to, an inter- or multi-disciplinary program. This guidance should address such things as the creation of the job ad and the formation of an appropriate hiring committee (DHC).

- b. ensure that faculty – particularly probationary faculty – are not disadvantaged when some or all of their service responsibilities are rendered to inter- and multi-disciplinary programs and/or when their research is interdisciplinary in nature.
 - c. monitor, and negotiate changes to, teaching assignments specified in letters of appointment. This could include assignments for fixed periods of time.
 - d. balance faculty wishes with respect to graduate and interdisciplinary teaching with needs of approved undergraduate programs based in the Department/School to which the faculty member is appointed.
 - e. facilitate team-teaching, where that is seen as necessary to the success of the program. This could include establishing policy for team-teaching assignments as a common unit of faculty teaching load.
- 6) Define “Dean of Record” in Senate policy, and codify the responsibilities and powers of the position.
 - 7) Identify specific policies that should be revised in order to improve the operation of inter-/multi-disciplinary programs, and their relationships with discipline-based schools/departments and programs.
 - 8) Develop mechanisms to ensure that the courses offered by disciplinary programs provide a sufficient number of seats for the students of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs who require the course.
 - 9) Develop consistent policy pertaining to space and support staff allocation for interdisciplinary programs (both graduate and undergraduate). Space and/or staff could be shared with Departments / Schools, but this shouldn’t be dependent upon the academic appointment of the Graduate Program Director (GPD), and should require consultation between the Program Council and the Department/School Council. Recognise formally that space and support staff are prerequisites for engaging students and developing a sense of community. Common student space for graduate programs, in particular, needs to be a high priority.
 - 10) Promote linkages between multi- and interdisciplinary programs and appropriate research centres or institutes.
 - 11) Develop policy regarding the support of graduate students through GA/RA allocation, and to ensure that the funds follow the students. Consider policy that allocates GA funding to multidisciplinary programs to enable offers of admission supported by appropriate funding, consistent with norms across universities.
 - 12) It may be necessary to create an academic leadership position at a relatively high level, and to assign to that position specific responsibility for inter- and multi-disciplinary programs (Certificate, Undergraduate, Graduate) and research.

The Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs recommends that Senate accept the Report of the Task Force, and request the Provost to consider the Report in the preparation of the Academic Plan, and to respond explicitly to the Report of the Task Force – including the recommendations enumerated above – setting out specific actions to be undertaken by the university. The Provost’s response should be considered by Senate by October 2014.

I. Acknowledgements

The Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs takes this opportunity to thank members of the Ryerson community for their support and participation in the consultations that are the basis for our report. Faculty, program and Department/School administrators, students, and RFA officials were extremely gracious in responding to surveys, participating in interviews and/or focus groups, and otherwise providing comment to the Task Force. All members of the Task Force appreciate very much this willingness to work for improvements in the delivery of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs.

For their efforts in supporting the timely completion of this report, the Task Force extends a special thanks to Research Assistant (and Ryerson grad student!) Margaret Bancarz, as well as to staff members Rachel Trozzolo and Patrick O'Donoghue.



Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs

FINAL REPORT

to

SENATE

03 December 2013

J: APPENDICES: Supporting Documents

The Bylaw of Senate provides:

7. AD HOC COMMITTEES

7.1. General:

- 7.1.1. **Formation and Life:** An ad hoc committee may be formed for a limited term by a Senate resolution. Members need not be members of Senate. Unless reconstituted by Senate, the committee is dissolved upon presentation of its report. The motion to establish an ad hoc committee must include the Terms of Reference of the committee, and may include:
- 7.1.1.1. the proposed number of members on the committee;
 - 7.1.1.2. details of proposed distribution of members, if any;
 - 7.1.1.3. names of proposed members of the committee, if any; and
 - 7.1.1.4. the committee report date.

Composition of Task Force:

Motion passed by Senate 29 January 2013:

That Senate hereby establish a Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs, consisting of the following members: Dr. Jennifer Mactavish, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair); Dr. Chris Evans, Vice-Provost Academic; Dr. Stephanie Walsh-Matthews, Director, Arts and Contemporary Studies; Dr. Ron Pushchak, School of Occupational and Public Health; Dr. Neil Thomlinson, Politics and Public Administration; Dr. Sri Krishnan, Associate Dean, FEAS; and Elizabeth Evans, Associate Dean, Ted Rogers School of Management.

Amendment

“ ... to add at least one member from each Faculty...”

Dr. Catherine Schreyer, Chair, School of Professional Communications (FCAD) was added and this was reported to the 05 March 2013 meeting of Senate.

Mandate of Task Force

Although the Bylaw of Senate requires that the Terms of Reference of the committee be part of the motion establishing it, the 29 January 2013 motion approved by Senate did not include that information. However, the Report of the Senate Priorities Committee to the 29 January 2013 meeting of Senate (included in the agenda package) included the following:

The Task Force shall have the following mandate:

1. To examine current practices at Ryerson in order to identify issues which are problematic to the operation of inter- and multi-disciplinary programs;
2. To consult widely with the Ryerson community, including with all current inter/multidisciplinary programs, with University Planning, and with the Ryerson Faculty Association in the process of identifying such issues;
3. To make recommendations to Senate by the November 2013 meeting of Senate regarding improvements that could be made to improve the operation of such programs, and their relationships with discipline-based schools/departments and programs.

Definitions

prepared by Stéphanie Walsh Matthews, PhD¹
for Ryerson University Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs
09 May 2013

cross-disciplinary	Introduces students to a wide variety of learning from divergent disciplines (much like multi-disciplinarity). “Cross-disciplinary” is often reserved to define the grouping of disparate learning environments. At Ryerson, this would be from different Faculties, thus allowing for a congruence of “applied” learning, “theoretical” learning, as well as innovation.
inter-disciplinary <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">v. 1</div>	When researchers exchange their knowledge, analysis, and methods between two or more disciplines. Interdisciplinarity occurs when there is interaction between specialists and their fields and where a mutual enriching dialogue occurs. The disciplines involved will eventually have to transform , even if slightly, to accommodate the functions of the other disciplines. A good example of this would be Human Ethology, where the study of animal behaviourism and childhood psychology and cancer studies are all studied under the multiple lenses of biologists, doctors, psychologists, and philosophers. Interdisciplinarity is a founding principal of cognitive sciences.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">v. 2</div>	To focus on a particular issue or a series of interrelated issues through a multitude of lenses, thus opening the scope of enquiry. Interdisciplinary refers to the variety of disciplines used to analyse, contextualise, understand a problem. The multi-discipline approach will happen within the context of a course.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">v. 3</div>	Reinforces the value of broadening skills and experience beyond the boundaries of a single concentration. Interdisciplinary studies involves students in a range of thought, from scientific to humanistic. Courses are designed to illuminate principles, methods, and skills that cross disciplinary boundaries. These programs are intended for students whose interests do not conform to standard academic programs. (Concordia University)
intra-disciplinary	As opposed to cross-disciplinary (that proposes a very large arch of study), “intra-disciplinary” reserves the disparate learning to specific fields from within a larger discipline. In many respects our difficulty in separating and understanding the variants within these terms can be a taxonomical problem, simply put.

¹ using material from Concordia University (noted in text), and

- «Interdisciplinarité», sur *Wikipédia*, en collaboration avec: Darbellay, F. (éd.) (2012). *La circulation des savoirs. Interdisciplinarité, concepts nomades, analogies, métaphores*. Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang.
- [Edgar Morin](#) – 1994. «Sur l'interdisciplinarité», Bulletin Interactif du Centre International de Recherches et Études transdisciplinaires, n° 2, 1994.

multi-disciplinary	When a student has access to a multitude of disciplines and where there is a common thread through each of the disciplines (i.e., humanities, social sciences, a historical period). Usually, “multidisciplinary” has been used in defining multiple discipline stakeholders within one “Faculty “ (or larger context of study). In this case it is the program that shares the many-disciplinary approach.
pluri-disciplinary	When researchers from different disciplines meet and discuss around a given theme. Pluri-disciplinarity is the result of the researchers, although converging around a common theme, retaining/keeping their particular discipline’s focus. In other words, parallel approaches all contributing (by addition) specifically.
transdisciplinary	When a particular thought system is applied across diverse sciences without concern for boundaries. A good example of this is André Leroi-Gourhan’s Prehistoric Anthropology where the notion of systems is evaluated across physics, biology, economy, and sociology.

Inter/Multi Disciplinary Programs

a. GRADUATE

- Environmental Applied Science and Management
- Communication and Culture
- Immigration and Settlement Studies
- Policy Studies (housed in Arts, but 2 other faculty are also involved so the program is billed as an IDP)
- Masters in Digital Media (New program for Winter 2013, includes Arts, FCAD, FEAS, FOS and TRSM)
- Proposed programs (currently in LOI phase) all are multi-departmental with additional TRSM courses:
 - Biomedical Engineering
 - Energy and Innovation
 - Facilities and Infrastructure Management

b. UNDERGRADUATE

- Arts and Contemporary Studies
- Arts Undeclared
- Biomedical Engineering
- Contemporary Science (has no department of its own – it is run from the Dean's office; there are no contemporary science courses *per se*)
- Creative industries (modular system involves schools in FCAD plus a business requirement offered by TRSM). This now has its own school so its structure will differ from other IDP.
- Economics (BComm Economics and Management Science is housed in Arts, but most of the curriculum comes from TRSM)
- Environment and Urban Sustainability (Arts and FOS)
- Financial Math (ne course that is structurally an IDP: FOS and TRSM)
- Medical physics (has no interfaculty courses)
- Specialization in Management Sciences
- New business minors developed solely for non-business students
- Chang School Certificates for example the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management Course. The change in structure of this program has created problems; it may serve as a “poster child” for what is good and about IDPs.

c. MINORS

Minors where it is not clear that a single Academic Unit is responsible for the Minor (i.e., where consultation might reasonably be required to change the requirements of the Minor)

- Business Essentials (BSM, ENT, FIN, GMS, ITM, MKT)
- Curatorial Studies (FPN, HST, MPC, NPF)
- eBusiness (ENT, GMS, HTI, ITM, LAW, MKT, RMG)
- Family Supports and Community Practice (CLD, DST, FNA, FNF, FNP, INT, SWP)
- Global Management (FIN, GMS, HIS, LAW, MHR)
- Labour and Employment Relations (ECN, LAW, MHR, OHS, POG/PPA, SOC)
- Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management (INP but courses the responsibility of Politics, Social Work, HROB, MKT, ENT)
- Sales Management and Service Quality (CMN, HTH, MHR, MKT, RMG)

d. CHANG SCHOOL CERTIFICATES

Courses with **Required** courses drawn from more than one Academic Unit, and with Interdisciplinary Governance structure?

- Accounting – Finance
 - Required: ACC, FIN
 - Electives: ACC, FIN, ITM, LAW, QMS
- Advancing the AODA: Principles and Practices of Accessibility
 - Required: DST, INT, SWP
 - Electives (3 from 6 streams): CLD, DST, GER, INP, INT, MHR, OHS, PHL, SOC, SWP (and no PPA course in a stream called “Public Policy and Law”)
- Business Analysis
 - Required: GMS, ITM, QMS
 - Electives: CMN, GMS, HTH, ITM, MKT, QMS
- Business Management
 - Required: ACC, ECN, GMS, ITM, LAW, MHR, MKT, QMS
- Community Engagement, Leadership, and Development
 - Required: INP, CVSW (Social Work)
 - Electives: CMN, CRM, DST, FNY, INT, CKPM (Project Mgmt), CODG (Geo), PHL, PSY, SOC, SWP, CVFS (Family Supports)
- Economics and Finance
 - Required: ECN, FIN
 - Electives: ECN, FIN
- Ethics
 - Required: all PHL (but certificate has interdisciplinary governance structure)
 - Electives: CODG (Geo), CRM, ECN, ENG, HST, INT, PHL, POG, PPA, PSY, SOC
- Financial Management
 - Required, ACC, FIN, GMS, ITM, LAW, MHR, QMS
- Financial Planning
 - Required: ACC, ECN, FIN, LAW, QMS
- Fundraising Management
 - Required: INP912 (TRSM), INT916 (FCS), CVFM
- Health Informatics
 - Required: CHIT (ITM??), HSM
 - Electives: CHIM, ITM, MHR, CZLW (Law)
- Health Services Management
 - Required: CMN, HSM, CVNU (Nursing)
- Health Studies
 - Required: HSM, CDCE (Workplace communication: CMN??)
- Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management
 - Required: INP courses [Politics, Social Work, Bus Mgmt (HROB, Mkt, Ent/Strat)]
- Nursing Leadership and Management, Advanced
 - Required: CVNU (Nursing),
 - Electives: CKPM (Project Mgmt), CVSW (SOWK), HIM, HSM, INP, INT, MHR, PPA
- Project Management
 - Required: ITM, CKPM
 - Electives: CMN, CKPM, HSM, ITM, MHR,
- Social Sciences and Humanities Foundations
 - Required: Interdisciplinary SSH courses (FoA)
 - Electives: all “platform” intro courses in FoA

Qualitative Interviews Report

Interdisciplinary Task Force

Prepared by Margaret Bancercz

Introduction

Interviews were conducted over the course of two months with 13 interviewees from the Ryerson University community. Interviewees ranged from junior and senior administrators (3) to disciplinary (4) and interdisciplinary (6) faculty members. Interdisciplinary faculty members were identified as interdisciplinary if they had a current leadership role in interdisciplinary programs at Ryerson or were heavily engaged in teaching in an interdisciplinary program. Interdisciplinary programs were identified using the “Inter/Multi Disciplinary Programs”¹ list as created by the Interdisciplinary Task Force.

This report will begin with the identification of a purpose, followed by a brief discussion on methodology and a results section. The results section is separated by headings that identify with a particular question in the interview guide: successes, challenges, key opportunities, steps/ recommendations, and miscellaneous. The “Inter/Multi Disciplinary Programs” list created by the Interdisciplinary Task Force is Appendix J-3 of the Task Force Report. Schedule 1 attached to this report is the interview guide including potential probes that were used in some cases, and Schedule 2 of this Report is a more detailed summary of interviewee responses.

The information under each heading is stratified using the three groups interviewed: administration, disciplinary faculty, and interdisciplinary faculty. The data is sub-headed based on the amount of interviewees giving the same response.

Under headings “successes” and “challenges”, responses are sub headed with “top”, “most important”, and “less important” (if applicable) based on the amount of times a particular response was given in the interview process. Under the “key opportunities” and “steps and recommendations” headings, “top” and “most important” sub headings will be used as well. However, responses given by only one interviewee will be stratified into a chart identifying administration, disciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty. Finally, the miscellaneous section offers data that may be useful to the Task Force but is not able to be grouped under a particular interview question. Modes were identified if they existed. More details were provided under each data point that received more than one response. Single responses were also noted.

Purpose

The purpose of these interviews is two-fold. First, the information collected is intended to inform the final report of the Interdisciplinary Task Force that will be written for the Ryerson University Senate. Second, the information collected will also serve to inform a series of surveys that will be distributed to other stakeholders in the Ryerson University community.

¹ See Appendix J-3 of the Report

Methodology

Interviewees were preselected by the Task Force using nested purposeful sampling methods.² Intensity sampling was used to identify “information rich cases”,³ or interviewees viewed as those that would be able to provide more information than the average Ryerson community member based on their past and present experiences. Interviewees were then stratified to identify common threads in the three groups interviewed: administration, disciplinary faculty, interdisciplinary faculty.

A common interview guide⁴ was used for all interviewees with general and open-ended questions in order to identify participants’ perspectives on interdisciplinarity at Ryerson University. Probes were used to gain more insight into an interviewee’s response, or touch on more specific topics related to interdisciplinarity.

Interview responses were coded in two cycles. The first cycle included structural coding,⁵ or the organization of data based its relation to a particular research question found as headings in the results section. The second cycle was based on pattern coding,⁶ which identified common themes or responses between participants which were then grouped together.

Results

Successes

Top Successes:

- Current interdisciplinary programs already in place – Arts and Contemporary Studies, current graduate programs, liberal studies, Creative Industries as a good model because faculty from different disciplines have a common goal [3/13] [2 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Team teaching as found in Arts and Contemporary Studies, as richer for both faculty and students [3/13] [2 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]

Important Successes:

- Ryerson fairly supportive of interdisciplinary research funding wise [2/13] [1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Ryerson faculty open to collaboration and cooperation [2/13] [2 interdisciplinary]

² Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods 3rd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2002).

³ Patton.

⁴ See Schedule 1 for full list of questions used in interviews

⁵ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009).

⁶ Saldaña.

Some interesting successes:

- Dean of Graduate Studies assumption of role of Dean of Record for interdisciplinary programs [1/13] [interdisciplinary]
- Interdisciplinary courses offered jointly by the Chang School and the Faculty of Community Services [1/13] [administration]
- Research effective because of a research centre - the Centre for Immigration and Settlement Studies
- Benefit from a chair's perspective: Beneficial to release a faculty member to the Environmental Science and Management (ENSCIMAN) program to teach because ENSCIMAN provides generous compensation, more than enough to hire a CUPE instructor

Challenges

Top Challenges:

- Enough stable and continuous teaching support in interdisciplinary programs (interdisciplinary courses treated as overload, no one reports to the program director of interdisciplinary courses, casual relationships and "begging" of disciplinary chairs to release faculty members to teach) [6/13] [1 administrator⁷, 2 disciplinary, 3 interdisciplinary]
- Graduate interdisciplinary students have a hard time getting TAs/GAs/RAs – process is not stable, very casual, ambiguous; disciplinary graduate students end up with jobs and even some undergraduates [6/13] [2 disciplinary, 4 interdisciplinary]

Important Challenges:

- Not being able to have joint/cross appointments [3/13] [1 administrator, 1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Hiring is done only for specializations in a particular areas of research or for disciplines [3/13] [1 administrator, 1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Interdisciplinary programs not properly funded [3/13] [1 administrator, 1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- No physical space for interdisciplinary students/programs – nowhere for an interdisciplinary program to exist, no signage for program, nowhere for students to lounge and interact [3/13] [3 interdisciplinary]
- Structure of undergraduate teaching responsibilities hinders opportunities to teach at graduate level, where undergraduate teaching takes precedence and faculty

⁷ Administrative interviewee mentioning challenge from conversation with faculty members, though not personally experienced.

members can only then be “bought out” from their undergraduate responsibilities [3/13] [3 interdisciplinary]

Less important Challenges:

- PhD students graduating from interdisciplinary programs will have a hard time finding academic jobs [2/13] [1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Interdisciplinary research may pose risks to a faculty member's hiring/promotion/tenure because of a low number of publications, or publications in certain types of journals that are not disciplinary journals [2/13] [1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]

Key opportunities

Top opportunities:

- Joint hires/cross appointments [3/13] [2 disciplinary⁸, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Look at other universities for best practices or experiences [3/13] [2 disciplinary, 1 administrator⁹]
- Protocols for acquiring teaching personnel for interdisciplinary programs [3/13] [1 administrator, 1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary¹⁰]

Important Opportunities

- Interdisciplinary graduate students to be properly funded (i.e. TAs) [2/13] [1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Interdisciplinary programs should be treated equally with disciplinary programs [2/13] [1 administrator, 1 interdisciplinary]

⁸ One of which suggested a 60/40 commitment split between two departments, alternating with every new faculty member hired between the two departments (rather than the traditional 50/50)

⁹ Suggested that the Task Force focus on professional universities, or polytechnics, since Ryerson is a polytechnic

¹⁰ Interdisciplinary teaching support as requirements for departments

Responses from single interviewees:

Ways to increase interdisciplinarity at Ryerson University		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Expand the current interdisciplinary courses between the Chang School and the Faculty of Community Services to more faculties	Create more interdisciplinary programs, both undergraduate and graduate	Having an associate VP with responsibilities in terms of administration and resources for interdisciplinary programs could be tried out
Altering professional programs (i.e. engineering) to a combined BA/MA 5 year program in order to include interdisciplinary courses	Increase capacity of programs so that students of different disciplines could take courses across campus	
	Have a communal shared space between departments or faculties to encourage organic discussions on collaboration	

Improve Current Interdisciplinary Research		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
	Protocols for research – funding RAs for both faculty and students	Ryerson could create more grants that require the engagement of colleagues across the university, as they did one year in the past
		Acknowledgement for research grants for non-principal investigators involved in a project

Steps/recommendations for the Task Force to put into ReportTop recommendations:

- Take baby steps, approach interdisciplinarity cautiously [3/13] [2 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Fund interdisciplinary graduate students properly with systematic, transparent and equal access to TAs/As/RAs [3/13] [1 disciplinary, 2 interdisciplinary]

Important recommendations:

- Back up any ideas with resources (funding and space) [2/13] [1 disciplinary, 1 interdisciplinary]
- Foster communication between departments/faculties (i.e. communal space)[2/ 13] [2 disciplinary]
- Create a systemic way of ensuring stable teaching support for interdisciplinary programs (i.e. by requiring departments to release faculty members) [2/13] [2 disciplinary]

Responses from single interviewees:

In General		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Look at polytechnic universities to see what they are doing with multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity		Lack of a common understanding of interdisciplinarity, leading to a poorly structured interdisciplinary framework could create further power inequalities between programs/departments at Ryerson
		Define the problem clearly in the report, discussing existing issues/practices and current multidisciplinary services offered
		Understand view of all stakeholders, especially students
		Think about maintaining the quality of interdisciplinary programs
		Space for the Centre for Immigration and Settlement Studies in new building on Yonge St.

On faculty members: hiring/teaching/research		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
	LTO workshops on teaching interdisciplinary courses	Understand current environment of tenure in departments
	Creation of cross-appointments	Think about identity issues for faculty
	Do not let the university push interdisciplinarity onto faculty, interdisciplinary research should be allowed to flourish organically	
	Fund research centres to encourage interdisciplinary research	
	Make sure hiring/promotion/tenure committees are able to give adequate credit to interdisciplinary research	

On structures		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Do not create new structures to house interdisciplinary studies, use existing departments to create a flexible atmosphere	No interdisciplinary faculty, expertise housed in departments and programs combined between departments	Structures and administration devoted to interdisciplinary programs so that interdisciplinary programs do not have to keep using disciplinary resources for collaboration
Make sure that interdisciplinary programs are treated on equal footing with disciplinary ones		Fix the structural impediments to teaching graduate courses (i.e. undergraduate teaching should not undermine graduate teaching)
		Multidisciplinary programs should become departments with core faculty

Students		
Administration	Disciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Require students to take interdisciplinary course for their Ryerson degree		Identity issues for students in interdisciplinary programs

Miscellaneous

- Confusion of terms, meaning of interdisciplinary [6/13] [2 administration, 2 disciplinary, 3 interdisciplinary]
 - Multidisciplinary versus interdisciplinarity (x2)
 - Interdisciplinarity not just a classroom filled with students from different backgrounds
 - Multidisciplinarity versus interdisciplinarity versus transdisciplinarity (x2)
 - Some might argue that the tripartite structure at Ryerson provides interdisciplinarity if the term “interdisciplinary” is not properly defined
 - Current discipline departments offer interdisciplinarity through their service courses
 - Very little common understanding
 - No single definition
- The creation of a Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies is not a good idea [4/13] [1 administration, 2 disciplinary, 2 interdisciplinary]
 - May become a second tier form of hiring for disciplinary faculty that did not get hired in a disciplinary department
 - Interdisciplinary studies frequently cut, would not a secure place for faculty
 - Would rather see programs rather than rigid structures that are not flexible and fluid and do not mirror interdisciplinary knowledge
 - Would be detrimental to Creative Industries

Response given by single interviewees:

- Look at Bologna Process in the European Union which has standardized a variety of undergraduate and graduate level training across the European Union Zone, perhaps there is more interdisciplinarity found in that process
- Look at the University of Waterloo, since they are more of a hands-on institution
- Best faculty teach core courses in disciplinary departments, “worse” faculty go to teaching service courses and others, so we must understand this practice first
- Breaking down hierarchies and barriers between the university is unrealistic and inefficient
- Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies is a good idea
- Too much interdisciplinarity may sacrifice knowledge depth for students

Analysis

Though all thirteen interviewees offered unique responses and perspectives on viewing interdisciplinarity at Ryerson University, some overarching patterns could be developed.

Generally participants were in favour of interdisciplinarity at Ryerson and supported its expansion, however a few were concerned about how this would impact students' future, in terms of knowledge depth and academic careers.

Current interdisciplinary successes at Ryerson were very few, where interviewees from administration had the hardest time identifying them. A few faculty members, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, cited the availability of current interdisciplinary programs and team teaching as successes. Interdisciplinary research was considered successful as well.

The challenges found at Ryerson were the most discussed topic across each interview. The top challenges were primarily identified by those of the interdisciplinary faculty and are arising due to administrative reasons. The difficulty of acquiring stable teaching support for an interdisciplinary program was identified by 6 out of 13 participants, with the overwhelming majority coming from faculty, with 3 interdisciplinary faculty members voicing this concern over 2 disciplinary ones. Another major challenge identified was the difficulty of interdisciplinary graduate students obtaining TAs, GAs and RAs on campus, where one interdisciplinary faculty member described the situation as "...the largest most important thing impacting interdisciplinary graduate students". This challenge was voiced by 6 faculty members with a majority of them interdisciplinary. It was curious to note that both science faculty members interviewed mentioned no issues with their interdisciplinary graduate students' opportunity to obtain work at Ryerson. In fact, one interviewee mentioned that many Environmental Science and Management students go to the Faculty of Science for TA/GA/RA opportunities.

Key opportunities, much like the challenges, centred for the most part on administrative opportunities, having to do with teaching, graduate student funding through TA/GA/RA opportunities, as well as the equal treatment of interdisciplinary programs. This was where most of the discussion about structural elements at Ryerson occurred. Many interviewees at the same time argued against the creation of a Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies (see miscellaneous section above), but also supported the creation of formal structures to ensure the sustainability and survival of current interdisciplinary programs, both for the faculty and students.

The top steps and recommendations were again based on administrative issues. One recommendation addressed the financial support of students through access to TA/GA/RA and the creation of a "formalized" and "equal" process for interdisciplinary graduate students in the acquisition of TA/GA/RA positions. Faculty teaching support in interdisciplinary programs was also mentioned as an important step, which should have "stable, and continuous teaching personnel". A couple of faculty members also would like to see the fostering communication between faculties and departments through the creation of some common space as elicited earlier in their interviews.

Both disciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty voiced concerns about caution in the Task Force's approach to interdisciplinarity, as well as concern about resources behind the ideas that may be implemented at Ryerson. However, administration did not suggest any concrete recommendations. More generally, over half the participants voiced a concern over the confusion of the term "interdisciplinary" which could cause problems for any further steps taken towards interdisciplinarity at Ryerson. As mentioned earlier, there was a group of interviewees that voiced disfavour for a Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, of which 2 were interdisciplinary, 1 disciplinary and 1 administrative. A single interdisciplinary participant was in favour of such a structure. It is important to note however, that the question of having an interdisciplinary faculty was mostly brought up by the participants themselves and not by the interviewer.

On the whole interviewees were able to identify concrete challenges they have been experiencing, or have seen at Ryerson with regards to interdisciplinarity, though solutions to them were very scarce. The theme of the lack of teaching supporting in interdisciplinary programs was prevalent throughout the interviews, exhibited in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty members, though mostly in the latter. Access to TA/GA/RA opportunities for interdisciplinary graduate students was also a theme throughout interviews, though not as frequent as the former theme of teaching support. Drawing from the discussions in the interviews, interdisciplinary programs at Ryerson are being treated as "second class programs" in the words of a participant administrator. Disciplinary departments and programs have permanent and larger amounts of resources, while interdisciplinary programs do not. They are forced to either use some of disciplinary departments' resources, or use informal relationships, specifically to garner teaching support. Moreover, based on the structural impediments of graduate teaching discussed by some participants, we can conclude that graduate interdisciplinary programs are at a larger disadvantage than undergraduate ones because faculty members must be "bought out" of their undergraduate teaching responsibilities, making it harder for graduate interdisciplinary programs to source teaching personnel. This could stem from the fact brought up by the administration group that Ryerson remains a polytechnic university and the majority of its programs are professional undergraduate programs.

An interesting observation to note from the interview process is the lack of awareness on the part of administration of many faculty issues, and *all* student issues. In addition, senior administration was the only group that found no other changes needed at Ryerson to increase interdisciplinarity other than equal treatment of programs. Both of these observations suggest a disconnection between faculty, students and administration and a need for a feedback mechanism from students and faculty to Ryerson administration.

It is also important to note that most discussions focused on the current interdisciplinary issues and programs at Ryerson University, rather than new initiatives for programs. We can infer that the majority of interviewees would support the restructuring of current programs and their relationships with departments, rather than creating completely new structures such as a faculty. Thus, key recommendations and steps should focus on current interdisciplinary issues occurring at Ryerson with which both faculty and students are dealing. Further consultation with a larger group of faculty and interdisciplinary students is recommended.

Schedule 1: Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Interdisciplinarity at Ryerson Interviews

This past January, the Senate created an Interdisciplinary Task Force assigned to examine current interdisciplinary practices at Ryerson through consultation with the Ryerson community. This was done in order to suggest recommendations to Senate on how to improve interdisciplinarity at Ryerson.

Based on your experience, you have been selected by the Task Force as an ideal candidate to participate in this study.

This will be a short interview meant to get your perspective on interdisciplinarity at Ryerson. It will be used to inform the final report created for the Senate as well as a survey distributed to a larger number of faculty in September. No attribution will be made to you or your name through your responses; confidentiality will be respected. The raw data will only be seen by the Task Force and all data will be deleted upon the completion of the study.

As mentioned in the contact email, this interview will be recorded. Is that okay? (i.e. Do I have your consent to do so?)

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding this process before we begin?

1. What has been your experience with interdisciplinarity at Ryerson? Please tell me about it.
 - Research
 - Taught, developed courses, programs, curriculums, syllabi?
 - Different departments?
 - Supervised students (undergrad/grad)
 - Student life
2. Thinking about IDP at Ryerson from your perspective, what do you think has been working well?
 - Courses
 - Faculty
 - Research opportunities
 - Type of university that Ryerson is (new, more hands-on)
3. What do you see as challenges?
 - Grants
 - Hiring, tenure, promotion
 - Administration
 - Institutional culture
 - Leadership
 - Lack of interdisciplinary faculty
 - Lack of funds
4. What do you think could be done differently? (key opportunities)

- How to make it work better/ how to improve
 - Some options from challenges section
 - More support for some of the things that have been working well
5. As far as the Task Force report to Senate is concerned, what would you like to see with regards to recommendations/steps that should be taken?
6. Did I miss anything important, do you have anything further to add?

Schedule 2: Thematic Analysis of In-Depth Interviews

Point Form Summary

Themes	Issues identified
Limited Resources/Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Properly fund interdisciplinary programs so both faculty and students want to be there ○ Some programs receive more resources than others, interdisciplinary programs suffer --- fund them equally so they are not the “poor cousins” ○ Back up interdisciplinarity with resources and physical space ○ Make sure that there are resources behind whatever the Task Force proposes ○ When engaging in interdisciplinary research under an interdisciplinary program with no home department and working between faculties, research grants become ambiguous with more than one dean ○ Increased enrolment of students, but number of instructors and administrative structures are not growing with it ○ Interdisciplinary graduate students need to be funded properly and consistently with TAs
Hiring, Tenure, Promotion of Faculty & Rewards System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Untenured faculty unable to participate in new interdisciplinary program innovations because seen as risky ○ Unable to hire interdisciplinary instructors for interdisciplinary programs ○ Hiring process does not understand multidisciplinary programs or departments ○ Create an interdisciplinary hiring committee sourced from across the university capable of assessing interdisciplinary teaching and research ○ The committees created for the hiring of CRCs have been very successful ○ Joint hires are not allowed under collective agreement and are never 50/50 between departments ○ Creation of cross-appointments needed ○ Currently, no rewards for faculty supervising interdisciplinary students, unless they are in the Faculty of Arts who have a point system ○ Faculty members should be rewarded for trying different innovative interdisciplinary initiatives, rather than penalized if the idea does not work for the first time

Institutional Culture

- **Lack of a common understanding of interdisciplinarity, leading to a poorly structured interdisciplinary framework could create further power inequalities between programs/departments at Ryerson**
- **Lack of faculty/department flexibility when trying to create new interdisciplinary programs**
- **Disciplinary culture continues to exist**
- **Friction between faculties**
- **Siloes in university preventing interdisciplinary collaboration**
- **Territoriality, departments wanting their own courses and not sharing with any other departments**
- **Cultural barriers in institution hampering creativity**
- **Graduate interdisciplinary programs are treated like second class programs, no one is willing to be responsible for them**
- **Faculty very willing to collaborate on interdisciplinary research**

Governance

- No faculty report to interdisciplinary program directors
- Lack of authority/ownership in interdisciplinary programs, no one is in charge, no one can force change or improvement
- No permanent faculty teaching in interdisciplinary programs relying on casual relationships and encounters to survive
- Engaging in graduate teaching is not systematized across campus, not in RFA Collective Agreement
- No formal structures to hire instructors or faculty in interdisciplinary programs
- Need for good formal governance structures for interdisciplinary studies which should be created in consultation with the community and stem from our current structure
- Need interdisciplinary programs to be more like departments
- Need for equity in resource distribution in particular for graduate interdisciplinary programs
- No standard, transparent or structured ways to deal with TA work. Who is in charge of hiring or giving money to TAs?
- When two deans involved in a program, there is no equal sharing of costs (i.e. ISS program)

ACS – SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES
(Survey conducted as part of the Periodic Program Review, 2013)

The Arts and Contemporary Studies (ACS) program aims to prepare graduates to think, work and participate actively in the changing social, political and cultural environments of the 21st century. It combines the intellectual agility and other benefits of a liberal arts education with hands-on, applied skills and competencies. In terms of student numbers, it is the largest interdisciplinary undergraduate program at Ryerson.

Program Structure

The program comprises a range of required interdisciplinary courses that allow students to focus on “Ideas that Shaped the World” from ancient times to the present day. In these courses, students also develop key skills and competencies, including the ability to read precisely and critically, communicate effectively, develop strategies for life-long learning, mediate conflict, work in teams and conduct research and analysis. Students also have the option of pursuing a complementary minor in a professionally-related area.

Program Enrolment

ACS is a high-demand program at Ryerson. On average, it receives 1800 applications per annum and admits only 175 new students each September. The most recent data show that the applicants-to-registrants ratio for ACS (11.5:1) is higher than the Ryerson average (9.2:1). Over the last 5 years, the mean entrance-grade average for ACS was 82% – higher, again, than the Ryerson average (80%).

As part of the Periodic Program Review process mandated by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and Ryerson Policy, an extensive survey was conducted of current students enrolled in the ACS program and of alumni. The full results of those surveys may be seen in the Periodic Program Review documents. What follows is an explanation of the survey responses particularly germane to the Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs.

Current Students

Surveys of ACS students have demonstrated that skills acquired through the program are valuable and sought-after assets in the work place. These skills include, but are not restricted to research, analysis, and critical thinking. Although some students have found it difficult to determine how, exactly, the program has led them to their career choice, most of

them emphasize the importance of a broad liberal arts degree, combined with the essential skills in research and applied methodologies (such as qualitative research methods and statistics). These skills make the graduates adaptable to different work areas and research disciplines. The availability of minors in fields such as human resources, professional communications, business, accounting and law is an additional asset that contributes to the success of ACS graduates in the workplace.

According to the survey data¹, nearly 90% of the current student body surveyed agrees that most of their professors and instructors are current and knowledgeable in their fields, that they are available outside of class time to help students, and generally speaking, that the teaching in the ACS program is of high quality. Because of ACS's interdisciplinary nature, this kind of feedback strengthens the program's resolve to continue to work with excellent faculty members, and demonstrates the nature of those faculty members' commitment, and the overall collaborative character of the Faculty of Arts under the guidance and direction of the Dean of Arts and operating with the full support of the chairs of the partner Departments. In addition, over 90% of the surveyed students agreed that ACS is an academically-challenging program, and over 80% said that they are given useful feedback on their academic performance.

Of the current student body surveyed, over 65% said that the program was good preparation for a career. Students also noted that ACS helped them to develop their creativity and leadership, and to improve their problem-solving, research, critical-thinking, and oral and written communication skills. In addition, students reported that the various assessment methods used by their professors and instructors were effective ways of measuring their understanding of the material. Overall, ACS students had overwhelmingly positive comments to make about the program, adding that they would strongly recommend it to other prospective students. In this regard, they commented primarily on the program's flexibility and the wide range of faculty expertise.

Alumni

ACS alumni were very much in agreement with current students. Among ACS graduates, 92.8% indicated they would highly recommend the program – a score that is significantly higher

¹ In the Periodic Program Review, see "Student Satisfaction Survey Form & Data"

than the Ryerson average. Among ACS graduates, 35% felt “very satisfied” and 58% were “satisfied” with where their education had led them thus far. Only 7% were dissatisfied, which is significantly lower than the Ryerson average as well as the Faculty of Arts average.

From Interdisciplinary Curriculum to Professional Life

ACS students who go on to be successful OGS and SSHRC applicants attribute their achievements to the academic strengths of the program and to the support they received from faculty and staff. ACS students who go on to a career in education state that ACS was instrumental to the development of qualities they consider to be unique and indispensable in finding a job teaching in Toronto. Those qualities are directly linked to the broad and flexible curriculum offered by ACS, which allows students to complete necessary courses in many teachable areas. ACS graduates also do very well in the editing and publishing world. Some of our graduates hold senior editing, managing, and publishing positions, and achieved those positions soon after graduation. ACS alumni are presidents, journalists, curators, entrepreneurs, professors, teachers, researchers, marketers, and more.

On Interdisciplinary Studies: Student Comments

Student comments highlight several features of the interdisciplinary ACS program as being highly valuable. The ability to gain valuable knowledge in several areas was cited as a strength not typically found in university programs. Several respondents noted that the program meets the needs of those who know what they want to study, but it is also very well-suited to those who are not so sure. The program was credited with developing the interests of each person with maximum flexibility. One student summarised nicely:

I would recommend ACS to others. It draws from a broad base of traditions and disciplines that help to ensure that it appeals to students’ diverse interests. More than most programs, I feel it offers a meaningful learning experience in personal, social, and cultural terms, as opposed to being geared simply towards developing skills for the workplace. The degree of freedom with which I’ve been able to navigate the program’s various offerings is also something of which I’ve been particularly appreciative. The flexibility with which I’ve been able to chart my academic course has helped to alleviate the stress that is inherent in trying to schedule and organize my academics, make the most of my university experience, and get into graduate school.

Interdisciplinary Task Force: Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Focus Group Report

Introduction

To develop a clear understanding of the current state of interdisciplinary programs at Ryerson University, the Interdisciplinary Task Force engaged in conversations with those who are involved in the programs, seeking their feedback and ideas. Included in these conversations were two focus groups of current graduate students in interdisciplinary programs.

Throughout the focus groups students discussed their experiences and views about the strengths and challenges associated with interdisciplinary graduate education at Ryerson. Collectively, the students self-identified, with pride, their status as the “first-generation” of interdisciplinary students. Students were drawn to interdisciplinary graduate programs because they perceived them to have greater practical application in their fields of interest and allowed for greater flexibility to work with supervisors from multiple disciplines. They were thrilled with the support their program directors provide and it is evident for them that faculty members really want to be a part of their programs. Despite the assets of interdisciplinary programs there are many challenges inside and outside Ryerson University that require attention as both academia and industry adjust to a world of changing knowledge. Discussions in the focus groups centred on four main themes: the lack of a champion for interdisciplinary programs, program curricula, graduate assistantships (GA) and teaching assistantships (TA), and physical space. This brief report will begin with an overview of the methodology used, followed by a thematic analysis of the focus group results and recommendations.

Method

Focus groups were used for two purposes: first, to engage graduate students in Ryerson’s interdisciplinary discussion through learning about their experiences, and second, as a method of data triangulation, complimenting earlier in-depth interviews with faculty members and administration involved in interdisciplinary education at Ryerson University. Two focus groups were conducted with a total of 6 students representing the Communication and Culture program and the Environmental Science and Management Program.

Both sessions¹ proved to be very informative and supported insights on student challenges discussed in the faculty and administration interview report. Interview responses were coded in two cycles. The first cycle involved structural codingⁱ, or the grouping of data based on a particular question asked during the focus group session. The second cycle centred on pattern codingⁱⁱ, identifying common themes from participants, which were then grouped together and presented thematically.

Analysis

Lack of a Champion

Many of the challenges discussed during the focus group sessions flowed from the perceived lack of a “champion” at the decanal level for interdisciplinary programs. There was a feeling that without someone advocating for students at a higher administrative level with a deep understanding of and interest in the program, many opportunities such as involvement in campus initiatives (i.e. learning/research centres) were missed. In addition, students need someone to ensure there are reserved seats in classes that are often at capacity with disciplinary students. Without a champion, students felt that they lacked an identity. This affects

¹ Appendix A shows the questions and potential probes used during the focus group sessions.

current students as well as graduates who encounter difficulties defining their degree when applying for jobs. There is a lack of familiarity both within Ryerson and outside of it with regards to what a given interdisciplinary program encompasses and the meaning of such a degree. As such, students feel that there is a fundamental need for either one person or a collective group of faculty members to facilitate the integration of their program with both the university and the industry. The lack of clarity concerning the degree itself and the lack of identity are ongoing embedded concerns across the major themes discussed.

In lieu of a champion at the decanal level, there could be opportunities for collective support. Despite the large number of faculty members who participate in interdisciplinary programs, these faculty are not easily accessible and the onus is on the student to locate faculty members for support. If the faculty collaborated to host open houses and networking events bringing people together from around campus and from relevant industries, this could help the program and students to create a more distinguished presence on campus and solidify an identity.

Program Curricula

An interdisciplinary program's flexibility is desirable in both the admissions process, where students of different background are eligible to apply, as well as throughout their degree in terms of course variety and research topics. A number of students mentioned that they felt better prepared for employment because they were able to build their course work and research in a unique direction. It however, should be noted that some students felt that because it was not a disciplinary program it made it difficult for employers to understand students' competencies and presented a challenge when job searching.

The flexibility of course selection is seen as an asset to the program, however this flexibility also hinders the number of courses that are offered and available to students. Though the course calendar shows all approved courses, this did not necessarily translate into courses offered. While this is true in all programs throughout the university, interdisciplinary students may only have a select few courses that apply to their area of interest. If they entered a program intent on taking courses that are never offered, it prevents them from steering their studies in a desired direction.

Bringing together students of different backgrounds and research areas adds breadth to class discussions, collegial relationships, and collaborative work. One student indicated that because everyone's research area is so different, there is a more cooperative research environment. Students are more willing to share resources, conference information, and sources rather than hoarding information, which may occur in disciplinary programs where competition is much higher. While students noted that there was a benefit to having a class with colleagues from different backgrounds, they also believed that this could cause difficulty when some students are underprepared for the complexity of a core course because they have not completed relevant courses in the past.

There were mixed feelings about how to support some curriculum concerns because of the inconsistency in how interdisciplinary programs are set up. Students in programs without streams felt that these could be beneficial as guides in course selection. However, at the same time students in programs with streams felt that these guides stifled their opportunity to develop their own plan of study. Nonetheless, there was an overarching sense that students could benefit from more guidance in course selection and the securing of seats in different departments when attempting to take courses outside of the program.

Graduate Assistantships/Teaching Assistantships

Graduate students turn to GAs and TAs to supplement their funding and to gain valuable skills that are necessary for some industry positions and vital for a future in academia. There were vast differences in students' experiences around applying for and obtaining or not obtaining GA/TA positions, though there was agreement that interdisciplinary students need additional support in this respect.

Students in interdisciplinary programs face unique difficulties in attaining GA/TA positions because the job postings are most widely circulated and recruited for within departments and often granted to a supervisor's own students. Interdisciplinary students are likely to have a background that would make them qualified applicants for positions in programs where they have no faculty connections and go unnoticed in the hiring process. Interdisciplinary Students need help networking with faculty members that are hiring.

Graduate programs do not keep consistent records on the success rate of students in attaining GA/TA positions and thus it is difficult to assess the extent of the issue. Regardless, more commitment needs to be made to help students ensure they have access to enough funding opportunities to be successful in their programs. If there was more support in fostering the informal relationships between students and faculty members of different departments, this could potentially aid in the opening up of contract opportunities for interdisciplinary students. A formal mechanism around GA/TA positions and ensuring that all students have an opportunity to work at Ryerson would ensure equity and create a better educational experience. It is important to monitor which positions are being filled and in what departments to ensure a protected number of spots for interdisciplinary students. It was mentioned that a lot of interdisciplinary students hold positions in departments where there is no graduate program. While this is currently a benefit for interdisciplinary graduate students, there is fear that with the growth of new graduate programs, new disciplinary students will be given priority access to their departmental positions leaving interdisciplinary students with even less GA/TA opportunities.

Physical Space

The most visibly apparent challenge for interdisciplinary students is the lack of physical space for them on campus. There is no collective area for interdisciplinary students to congregate where they would have easy access to their program director, program administrator, faculty members and a location to share information and postings of opportunities. Students feel that they have no place to call their own and interact with fellow classmates.

With an ever changing and growing campus, students felt that there needs to be someone fighting on their behalf (such as the above mentioned "champion") where there are opportunities for space to be acquired. This space is a necessity for interdisciplinary students in order to complete course and research work, fulfill GA/TA responsibilities, and to collaborate with other students and form collegial relationships. In addition, such a space designated for interdisciplinary students could be an area where academic support, conference, employment and research opportunities would be posted which would be easier to navigate than the onslaught of inapplicable emails they are receiving. Lastly, students understood that it is not possible to have all faculty members from the program in one space, but felt that their Program Administrator and Program Director should be easily accessible in one location to facilitate discussions and administrative procedures without trekking from one building to another.

Recommendations

- 1) Champion – Facilitate involvement with research centres, network with faculty and industry to promote program, and advocate for physical space and presence on campus
- 2) Curricula – Improve access to existing academic resources and evaluate potential of offering streams/concentrations to help students focus their coursework and research to better define their academic competencies and skills (i.e. the three existing policy fields in the Policy Studies PhD Program)
- 3) GA/TA – Explicate the CUPE 3904 Unit 3 Collective Agreement and institute formal mechanisms that increase transparency of hiring process to ensure opportunities for interdisciplinary students
- 4) Space – Establish a single, central location for all interdisciplinary graduate programs to use with each program having an individual communication board for program specific-information and a separate board where interdisciplinary information such as academic resources and conferences can be displayed. This lounge can double as a workspace and collaborative area.

ⁱ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009).

ⁱⁱ Ibid.



Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs

FINAL REPORT

to

SENATE

03 December 2013

K: APPENDICES: Background Information

Report of the Task Force on Interdisciplinarity

Prepared by

Adele Reinhartz,
Vice-recteure associée à la recherche/
Associate Vice-President Research
Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa

On behalf of the Task Force on Interdisciplinarity

June 27, 2006.

Context of Working Group

Interdisciplinarity, that is, intellectual work that entails collaboration or integration between and among the disciplines, has been a feature of the University of Ottawa for many years, as it has of other universities. Interdisciplinarity takes place in many and diverse ways and places, within the traditional departments, in labs, informal and formal research groups, and in many cases within the work of individual scholars who bring a range of methodologies to bear on their research questions. At the same time, the University also has fostered specific endeavours, in the form of university-based, formally-structured Interdisciplinary Units (“IUs”) that exist explicitly to undertake interdisciplinary research and/or teaching in particular areas. Many, indeed, most of these IUs, have functioned smoothly. But in some cases, particularly with those that have experienced rapid growth in size and complexity, IUs have found themselves constrained by structural features. The University has been engaged in a lengthy and gradual process with the hope of addressing these constraints, so that these particular IUs can continue to flourish but also to lay the groundwork for the future.

The current discussion had its origins at a Deans’ retreat in December 2001. A working group, chaired by Susan Mann, was established, and delivered its report in September 2002.

Dr. Mann’s working group undertook a broad process of consultation, with deans, department chairs, and directors of programs, centres and institutes, members of administration, faculty, staff, students as well as representatives from other universities in Canada, the United States, and overseas. Its mandate was to:

- assess the current situation at the University of Ottawa in the area of interdisciplinary programs, centres and institutes;
- examine what other institutions are doing in the area, to determine best practices;
- recommend the best way for both existing and potential interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs to reach their full potential and especially their teaching objectives, all on the strength of a coherent disciplinary core;
- recommend measures that will allow centres and institutes to operate in the most favourable conditions possible;
- state the structural or administrative impact of the academic recommendations, and propose governance models for programs, centres and institutes.

The report was intended to “serve as both a guide and template as we set our institution’s future course in the management of interdisciplinary programs and research.” The report recommended a framework for interdisciplinarity, made a number of suggestions for expanding interdisciplinary activities, underscored the importance of investing financially in such activities, and provided some guidelines for resolving practical issues.

The recommendations were adopted by Senate in April 2003. A number of its recommendations were acted upon.¹ For example, the Strategic Areas of Development (now called Strategic Areas of Development in Research) have become a vehicle for the promotion of interdisciplinary research (Recommendation 4); interdisciplinary programs have been attached to and governed by one or more faculties (Recommendation 7); a new award – the Interdisciplinary Research Prize – has been created (Recommendation 21); interdisciplinarity has been incorporated into many new undergraduate programs (Recommendation 26), and in some cases faculty members have been hired specifically for interdisciplinary programs or for the “express purpose of being partly in an interdisciplinary program and partly in a disciplinary program” (Recommendation 17).

Other recommendations, however, have not been acted upon. For example, the Mann report recommended “that the University community be kept informed of progress in interdisciplinarity through an annual report to Senate from the vice-presidents (Academic and Research), and reporting by Associate Deans at the Faculty level” (Recommendation 2). This has not been the practice. Similarly, recommendation 3 specified that the vice-deans and chief librarian, “individually and in concert across faculties, be the facilitators and problem-solvers for interdisciplinarity” yet it does not seem that this mandate has been taken on by this group of people (not surprising, given that each of them already has a large and complex portfolio). The recommendation “that the promotion of interdisciplinary teaching or research be included as a criteria [sic] for the allocation of University research chairs” (Recommendation 16) has also not been implemented. While some progress has been made, it seems that there has not been widespread and consistent “recognition at the individual, unit, and grants administration levels of out-of-faculty thesis supervision and research collaboration” (Recommendation 24), nor have there been “revisions to the collective agreement” to “allow for / ensure: a) joint chairs and joint appointments for those professors who wish to be formally attached to two different faculties; b) sensitivity to the nature and demands of interdisciplinarity in hiring, evaluation, tenure and promotion procedures and decisions” (Recommendation 27).

Despite the fact that many of its recommendations were not implemented, the Mann Report has had a positive impact at the University. The report, as well as the process of consultation and discussion of which it was a part, raised the profile of interdisciplinarity, encouraged discourse and dialogue, led to faculty support for a number of interdisciplinary enterprises, and stimulated the formation of new interdisciplinary units. Yet the very movement towards greater interdisciplinarity itself accentuated the ongoing structural barriers to activities that took place between two or more units, particularly when two or more faculties were involved.

In 2004-2005, interim associate vice-president research, Nicole Bégin-Heick, was asked to revisit the question of interdisciplinarity at the University of Ottawa. Her mandate was to examine current best practices related to the nurturing of interdisciplinarity in

¹ For a detailed analysis of the implementation of the Mann Report, see “A Framework for Managing Interdisciplinarity at the University of Ottawa,” a report prepared by Nicole Bégin-Heick, March 2005 (attached).

academic institutions and to suggest possible mechanisms to attain a greater degree of interdisciplinarity in research and teaching at the University of Ottawa. Her report (attached) points to a number of barriers to interdisciplinarity that exist at the University of Ottawa, as they do at most universities. Among them are institutional structures, policies and procedures; the academic reward system; decentralized budget strategies, and limited resources. Her report also evaluates the Mann recommendations, and, most important, calls for the University “to establish a visible strategy that will engage all the players. This strategy must demonstrate what the goals are, what elements are in place and a time line to ensure that the goals will be reached.” She points to the fact that when Senate adopted the Mann recommendations, it “unfortunately... did not, at the same time, provide a path to ensure that the recommendations would be enacted, or a mechanism to validate the results.” Her report concludes that “As a matter of course, the Senate should never be asked to adopt a report’s recommendations without an accompanying strategy for implementation.”

In the winter 2005-2006, a small working group of three (associate vice-president academic, Sylvie Lauzon, associate dean of FGPS, Ruby Heap, and associate vice-president research, Adele Reinhartz [chair]) began a third phase in the discussion. Initially this group focussed on the governance of interdisciplinarity, but it soon became clear that governance was only one aspect of the issue. Governance could not have a major impact without a close look at other aspects, principally, budget, and the possibility of some central funding particularly of faculty positions.

The present task force was established in April 2006. Its mandate is to look principally at the institutional or structural barriers to interdisciplinarity and to develop a set of recommendations that in the short term would soften them if not eliminate them altogether, and in the long term would help to foster all manner of interdisciplinary initiatives both within the IUs and elsewhere throughout the University.

This report will outline the recommendations, and present an action plan that, it is hoped, will result in full implementation within one year, i.e. by July 1, 2007.

Definitions

“Interdisciplinarity” is a buzz word that appears in the strategic plans, websites and press releases of virtually every Canadian university, and a good number of American and overseas universities as well. Yet the term itself means different things to different people. The Mann report defines interdisciplinarity as a generic term denoting any intellectual activity that embraces more than one discipline. The report goes further than this, however, by distinguishing among three related terms: Multidisciplinarity, which is the gathering of specialists in more than one discipline around a topic of teaching or research; Interdisciplinarity, which entails the integration of separate streams of specialist knowledge in aid of a specific topic or problem; and Transdisciplinarity, which refers to new ways of thinking about problems that lie outside the purview of any discipline. While these three forms of intellectual activity may be seen as sequential and hierarchical (multi being the lowest and trans the highest), this need not be the case.

As the Mann report notes, however, the question of how universities might best facilitate interdisciplinarity does not require, nor is it addressed by, these sorts of definitions. Thus the report adopts a more pragmatic definition: “interdisciplinarity had to involve two or more disciplines, it had to be centred around a topic, problem or theme, it had to be developing ‘a new intellectual space’ and, at the program level, it was likely beginning to create courses specific to the theme with new course codes.”

The term “interdisciplinarity” implies the existence of a well-defined set of “disciplines” upon which “interdisciplinarity” can draw. At the current juncture, when methodologies developed in one field of inquiry are readily and frequently adopted by other fields of study, the definitions of “disciplines” are by no means absolute. Indeed, the definition of a “discipline” may even be arbitrary, given that areas that at some universities may be interdisciplinary (such as women’s studies) may in fact be full-fledged departments (and hence “disciplines” at other universities), and discrete departments, such as human kinetics or religious studies, may in fact involve faculty trained in a variety of disciplines such as history, sociology, and anthropology. While we agree completely with the Mann Report in acknowledging that interdisciplinarity can flourish only in the context of strong disciplines, we must also accept that “discipline,” like “interdisciplinary” can be defined and interpreted in many different ways.

Finally, whereas the Bégin-Heick report pointed to centres and institutes as the ideal locale for interdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity is by no means confined to these formally-structured entities. Even in the absence of task forces, working groups, detailed recommendations, implementation strategies, and special initiatives, interdisciplinarity will continue to inform much, though by no means all, of the research and teaching that takes place within the traditional departments, in labs, informal and formal research groups, and in some cases within the work of individual scholars who bring a range of methodologies to bear on their research questions.

For present purposes, we have used the term “interdisciplinarity” to refer to any activity that takes place between two or more, formally constituted, entities (e.g. departments, schools, faculties). The recommendations in this report pertain primarily to the university-based, formally-structured Interdisciplinary Units (“IUs”) that exist explicitly to foster interdisciplinary research and/or teaching in particular areas or focussed on specific problems or topics.

Mandate

The present task force aims to do two things: address (and, we hope, to eliminate or at least to soften) the barriers experienced in the context of these latter entities and to continue to provide an environment in which interdisciplinarity, in its myriad forms, locations, and levels of formalization, can continue to flourish.

In doing so, we must keep in mind three important points: First, interdisciplinarity is only one aspect of the teaching and research at the University and is not meant to replace the

current structures, disciplines, programs, etc., or to create a new competing enterprise (“University of Interdisciplinarity”). Indeed, as we have noted, interdisciplinarity depends upon the disciplines, however they are defined, as a foundation for intellectual and professional activity and training. Second, we must take care not to “throw the baby out with the bath water.” In making new recommendations we should not be introducing new problems or undermining current successes. Finally, we must acknowledge that interdisciplinarity activities will and should continue to take place in the full variety of informal and formal ways that we currently see, and perhaps others that we cannot yet predict. It is neither possible nor desirable to regulate or to subsume all interdisciplinarity under the governance and other frameworks being proposed here.

The recommendations of this task force will therefore pertain to the following Interdisciplinary Units (IUs) (see appendices for the full listing):

- U of O institutes (currently 4)
- U of O research centres (currently 16)
- Interdisciplinary graduate programs (currently 13)
- Interdisciplinary undergraduate programs (currently 17). This category includes programs
 - That have core courses taught by professors coming from at least two departments/faculties
 - And/or that have courses developed and coded to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the program (e.g., EAS in Aboriginal studies; BPS in Biopharmaceutical Science; DVM in International Development and Globalization; FEM in Women’s studies, etc.)

Recommendations

The Task Force looked closely at five interrelated areas:

- I. Governance
- II. Budget
- III. Faculty
- IV. Students
- V. Promoting and Valuing Interdisciplinary Research

In addition, the Task Force considered two additional areas: VI. Benchmarking and Performance Indicators, and VII. Implementation Process

I. Governance

The Mann Report spoke out strongly against creating new structures for the governance of interdisciplinarity, on the grounds that interdisciplinarity should be integrated completely and seamlessly into the very fabric of the university.

As the report stresses:

None of this requires major structural change at the University of Ottawa. Should new structures eventually be required they will follow the path scholars will have traced and the culture the institution will have developed with the increasing

practice of interdisciplinarity. That path and that culture will be one of flexibility and ought not to need structural anchoring. Indeed, the University should avoid encumbering interdisciplinary activities with governance structures peculiar to them. That can only add to the burden of scholars interested in working in this way and risks casting in stone something that is, by definition, nimble and changing. On the contrary, the University is in a very good position to take the unusual step of integrating rather than isolating interdisciplinarity. Both the practice and the theory elsewhere suggests that interdisciplinarity requires new administrative structures, its own permanence, its own budget, outside traditional university patterns. The conventional thinking appears to be based on the presumed impossibility of fitting horizontally arranged study, knowledge, research and teaching into vertically arranged structures of power, status and prestige. I think the University of Ottawa can do just that. Better to link than to separate. Better to co-operate than compete. Better to share than hoard. A commitment to that approach, with a mandate and resources to go with it could go a long way to having interdisciplinarity flourish at the University of Ottawa.

In keeping with this principle, the Mann Report charged the entire senior administration with the responsibility for interdisciplinarity, by recommending “That the University’s interest in promoting and facilitating interdisciplinarity be clearly indicated by a formal mandate of responsibility to the following people : Vice-Rectors (Academic and Research); Assistant Vice-Rectors (Academic and Research); Deans of faculties; Vice-Deans (Programs and Research)” (Recommendation 1), and “That all University administrators with responsibility for promoting and facilitating interdisciplinary activity be required to meet together at least twice a year for purposes of co-ordination and collaboration” (included in the Report as Recommendation 4 but not in the final recommendations as adopted by Senate).

In theory and in principle, the Mann Report is of course correct. It is indeed the case that interdisciplinarity is an important enterprise for the entire university, and that it involves those responsible for the administration of academic programs and research at the faculty level as well as centrally. Yet in practice, the fact that interdisciplinary units, their directors, and at least some of the faculty who participate in them continue to confront structural barriers suggests that specific structures and leadership may indeed be necessary, as other universities have found.

A number of different models exist in North American universities.

College or Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, headed by a Dean (e.g. New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University at the West Campus)

Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary Studies (Dartmouth College; covers primarily undergraduate academic programs)

Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Research (University of Missouri-Kansas City)

Vice-Provost for Interdisciplinarity (Duke University, since 1998; reports to the Provost)

The view of the Task Force is that it is counterproductive to create a new faculty or college. While doing so might simplify the processes for addressing the difficult financial and human resource facets of interdisciplinarity, it also violates the very spirit of this enterprise, for instead of making the walls around the faculties more permeable to allow more fluid movement of resources across faculty boundaries, it simply encapsulates interdisciplinarity in a potentially impermeable structure of its own.

What is needed, however, is an individual at each level of governance (university-wide, faculty, IU) who will act as leader and champion and take responsibility for troubleshooting as well as for insuring that there are mechanisms and processes in place for the many negotiations that are necessarily integral to the smooth functioning and indeed the flourishing of endeavours that involve the participation and cooperation of two or more “disciplinary” units such as departments, faculties and schools. Second, at each level, there needs to be a forum for the discussion and management of interdisciplinary units. In addition, there is need for a forum for the IUs and others involved in interdisciplinary activities. This would help to overcome the isolation in which many IUs currently function. Finally, there need to be mechanisms for including representatives of IUs in the decision-making processes of the university that pertain to interdisciplinarity, and, conversely, for ensuring that those most closely involved with the administration of interdisciplinarity are in direct communication with those whom the University has charged with steering its major interdisciplinary ventures.

To this end, the Task Force recommends the following:

Recommendation 1: University-wide:

- a. For the Interdisciplinary enterprise as a whole: a leader and champion at the Associate Vice-President level, with the title Associate Vice-President for Interdisciplinarity. In keeping with the dual focus of interdisciplinarity at the University of Ottawa, the AVPI reports to both the Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Research. The experience at Duke, which, though with far fewer students than the University of Ottawa, is a research-intensive university considered one of the top ten in the country, suggests that ideally the AVPI would be a full-time position. Initially, however, it may be preferable to combine it with a current AVP position such as that of the associate vice-president research (AVPR). Doing so would prevent delay in the implementation period, and also allow for further consideration as to the need for and budgetary implications of creating a brand-new administrative position at the associate vice-president level. This recommendation, therefore, is that the AVP Research become the AVP Research and Interdisciplinarity (AVPRI) for the period of a year.
- b. Interdisciplinary Council: The council is a sub-committee of the Academic Planning Committee and will report regularly to the Academic Planning Committee through the Chair. Its initial mandate will be to implement recommendations of Interdisciplinarity Task Force, to participate, in partnership with the Interdisciplinary Forum, in the review and development

of policies as needed, to discuss new IUs, and to oversee the review of current IUs.

Composition:

AVPRI (Chair)

Will call meetings of the Council as needed

Will report monthly to the Academic Planning Committee

Executive Committee (AVPRI, AVPA, Associate Dean FGPS);

Mandate is to constitute a single address for interdisciplinary units;

be a clearinghouse for issues to be referred to the Council;

supervise the implementation process, and trouble-shoot as

needed).

Executive committee of Interdisciplinary Forum

Deans

AVP HR

AVP Resources

AVP Institutional Research and Planning

Director of Research Grants and Ethical Services

- c. Interdisciplinary Forum: The Forum is parallel to and independent of Interdisciplinary Council. It will develop its own terms of reference but, as its name suggests, it will provide a forum for the discussion of issues, both broad and specific, pertaining to interdisciplinarity as it is practiced at the University. In addition, it will be involved with the review and development of policies, in partnership with the Council, and in the promotion and evaluation of interdisciplinarity.

Composition:

Director or delegate of each IU

Student representatives (to be selected by GSAED and SFUO)

Executive of Interdisciplinary Council

Chair and Executive to be selected by the Forum itself

Other faculty/students involved in interdisciplinary activities outside the framework of the IUs

Recommendation 2: Within the Faculties: a designated decanal-level individual with responsibility for interdisciplinarity. The Faculties are essential partners in interdisciplinarity, including the interdisciplinary research and teaching taking place within and between their departments or schools, and those that take place between faculties as well as in the formal IUs. At this level too there needs to be a leader. Each faculty will need to decide whether it will be necessary to create a new position, whether the Dean can take on the role of leader, or whether this mandate should be added to a current vice-decanal position. Furthermore, each faculty will need to ensure that there is a place or forum for the discussion of interdisciplinarity and of the IUs in which its faculty members and/or departments/schools are involved.

Recommendation 3: Within the IUs:

- a. A leader, in the person of the formally-appointed director. The variety and diversity of IUs precludes a neat template for the governance of these units.
- b. Each IU needs to determine the governance structures that are best suited to its size and mission and that will execute the necessary leadership and administrative functions, including financial responsibility, research/academic programming, and external relations.
- c. Students should be included in those IUs that involve academic programs at the undergraduate and/or graduate level, and/or in which students are involved in the research activities.
- d. Each IU should ensure that its governance provides for the following functions or activities as applicable:

Scientific and/or academic direction
 Financial Management
 Strategic Planning
 Liaison with external partners
 Program management (e.g. courses, research seminars)
 Hiring/Tenure/Promotion
 Day to Day management
 Role of members (faculty, students) in decision-making processes
 Others as needed

NB: In some IUs, a single committee can deal with all of these functions, in others a more elaborate committee structure may be appropriate. Not all of these functions are necessary for all types of units. The list is likely to be fully applicable to the Institutes; Centres normally would not have to deal, for example, with program management or with hiring/tenure/promotion processes. Undergraduate and Graduate programs, on the other hand, may not need scientific direction or liaison with external partners, but they will have to address the full range of “student life” matters that are outlined below.

II. Budget

Without appropriate financial measures in place, interdisciplinarity will remain a modest and underdeveloped project for the University. The Mann report recommended the creation of incentives, such as prizes and research grants (19, 20, 21), envisioned some resources towards positions allocated to the Faculties that would specifically span an IU and a department or school (17), and suggested a review of the distribution of BIU funding in order to facilitate collaboration among participating units in an interdisciplinary program (23).

These measures have been implemented to a greater or lesser extent, yet it is fair to say that the financial arrangements for some (though by no means all) of the IUs continue to be a source of difficulty for the IUs and the Faculties alike. The IUs are in the position of constantly requesting resources from the Faculties, and often feel that they lack the

autonomy to and resources to fulfill their mandate properly. In allocating resources, the Faculties may be in the difficult position of choosing between the needs of a core department that is struggling to staff large undergraduate courses, and those of an IU that may have few students of its own yet whose mandate is core to the University.

A way to address this problem would be to increase the resources available centrally for the operation of IUs. For example, if IUs had their own positions to offer, on a shared (joint or cross-appointment) basis with the Faculties, and if these positions do not come at the expense of the Faculty's "own" allocations, then a gain for the IU will also mean a gain for the Faculty. Similarly, if appropriate compensation could be provided to faculties or departments whose faculty members participate in IUs, a secondment to an IU would pose less of a hardship for the "home" department.

Currently there is some central funding that supports the operations of some of the Research Centres and Institutes, and a small number of faculty positions have been allocated to several IUs either from Faculty budgets or centrally. The key questions that will need to be addressed are: 1) how much funding should be available centrally for the IUs, and for which sorts of activities? and 2) where will the necessary funds be found?

In principle, the funding of IUs involves partnership between the University (Central Administration) and the Faculty (Department). In some cases, there are also external funding partners, such as the granting councils, ministries and agencies, business or industry. The needs and opportunities will vary depending on the nature of the IU (Institute, Research Center, Program), whether professor positions are required, and the expected size of the student pool where applicable.

Recommendations:

1. That each unit develop a business plan that is coherent with its own strategic plan, and that will outline the amount of each contribution, and include a detailed needs analysis, a plan to maximize external revenues, and a timeframe to reach stability.
2. That central administration create a central pool of funding, in time for next fiscal year, to provide:

Some faculty positions to be allocated centrally to the IUs and shared with the Faculties

Appropriate compensation to faculties whose faculty are seconded to IUs.

Currently faculties/departments are compensated on a per-course basis, which in most cases does not truly compensate for the "loss" of a core faculty member.

This last measure is crucial; without significant investment, interdisciplinarity will be unable to flourish at the University of Ottawa.

III. Faculty: Hiring, Tenure and Promotion

Another issue that is absolutely crucial for the interdisciplinary enterprise pertains to the career path of the faculty involved in the IUs. The Mann Report recommended that revisions to the collective agreement be undertaken with regard to joint chairs and

appointments, sensitivity to interdisciplinarity in all processes pertaining to career path, and that the functions of an interdisciplinary program director be akin to those of a departmental chair with regard to participation in hiring, tenure and promotion, and other matters (27, 10). Important steps have been taken with regard to the Institute for Women's Studies, and it is time to move in this direction for the other IUs as well.

The guiding principle is that faculty members need to have their interdisciplinary activities taken into account appropriately throughout the processes of hiring, tenure and promotion, whether they are seconded from other units or hired specifically for IU activities. Normally, IU faculty will have a formal affiliation with at least two units, one or, occasionally, two of which may be IUs. Currently, these are all cross-appointments, meaning that the primary appointment is in a department or school, and the secondary appointment is in the IU or in another department or school. One possibility that should be considered, however, is that of a joint appointment, in which a faculty member has an equal appointment in more than one unit. Furthermore, as the Mann recommendations specified, it is important that the IU, perhaps through its director or a personnel committee, have a formal role in the hiring, tenure and promotion processes of the faculty who are members of the IU. It is crucial that faculty not be penalized for participating in interdisciplinary units, and that in each case that work is taken into full account for the processes of tenure and promotion.

Recommendation 1: That discussions and negotiations take place between the administration and the APUO such that faculty who participate in IUs have those activities taken fully into account in at the time of hiring, tenure and promotion.

IV. Student Life

As the Mann report recognized, it is essential that the University foster a sense of belonging among students in interdisciplinary programs, for example, by providing space, creating a "virtual home" and special courses, encouraging students to form student associations, and providing student advisors (8, 9, 11). Some programs have indeed done so, others are still struggling to achieve this goal. With regard to student advising, for example, students in some interdisciplinary programs fall between the cracks, unsure of where to turn.

The viewpoints of the present task force are consistent with those articulated in the Mann report. The fundamental principle is that students in interdisciplinary programs should have the same level of service as students in department programs. Three main areas must be addressed: funding, a sense of belonging, and access to student services.

Recommendation 1: that each program address the following issues:

- Sense of place, both physical and social
- Student association
- Inclusion of students in program governance
- Professors who are visibly and clearly identified with the program and can speak on its behalf

- Academic advising
- Orientation and transition program for new students
- Early-identification for at-risk students
- Availability of TAs specifically assigned to this program
- Student mentoring
- Library support, e.g. designated librarians
- Financial resources, especially for funding graduate students (TAs, RAs, scholarships)

V. Promoting and Valuing Interdisciplinary Research

This element was not addressed in the Mann Report, but the need for robust and flexible information systems is stressed in the Bégin-Heick report as a matter that should be addressed as soon as possible. As the report indicates,

At present the research database is incapable of ascribing parts of a grant to two or more researchers. As a result, only the principal investigator and his/her academic unit are credited. Similarly, participation in team teaching and co-supervision of theses are not appropriately recognized. These issues should remain at the forefront when designing new systems and capturing data. In a first step, the RE form used by the Research Grants and Ethics Service to record applications for fund and grants received should be modified to include co-PIs and the proportion of each person's involvement. Similarly, the FGPS should devise means to record co-supervisions and ascribe appropriate credit. (BH Report, section 5.1)

The Director of Research Grants and Ethical Services and his team have already done considerable investigation into what would need to be done in order to:

- Identify interdisciplinary research: who, what, where, how much. This requires that we incorporate the concept of multiple PIs into our research databases.
- Identify how and where such research is being catalyzed
- Celebrate interdisciplinary research and its accomplishments
- Obtain information on trends
- Demonstrate how each unit *enables* interdisciplinary research
- Demonstrate how each unit *generates* new projects

Recommendation 1: That RGES take the lead in developing information systems that will generate information at the level of the individual, faculty / department, and IU. Doing so will be of benefit not just for tracking the activity of the IUs, but all interdisciplinary research on campus, including the impact of the SADR on our research activities.

VI. Benchmarking and Performance Indicators

It will be helpful to establish a set of performance indicators that will allow us to see whether the recommendations and their implementation are achieving the desired goal of breaking down barriers to interdisciplinarity, facilitating interdisciplinarity, and contributing to knowledge. In addition, given that other universities are currently in the

process of finding their own solutions to the challenges posed by interdisciplinarity, it will be important to benchmark our own activities against or with the measures being developed at comparable institutions in Canada and elsewhere.

Recommendation 1: That a working group composed of members of the Council and Forum, and others as needed, be formed to develop appropriate performance measures and to propose a plan for benchmarking our performance with regard to interdisciplinarity against comparable universities

VII. Implementation Process

As was pointed out in the Bégin-Heick report, adopting a set of recommendations does not ensure implementation. Nor can these recommendations be implemented overnight. In this case, the complexity of the issues and the large number of units and individuals involved will necessarily require a careful implementation process for which we must allow adequate time for consultation and discussion. We anticipate that while some aspects will be relatively quick and easy to put in place, others, such as budget and Human Resources considerations, may take the better part of a year. It is our hope that full implementation will be in place by June 30, 2007.

Recommendation 1:

- That the implementation process as outlined in the Report of the Task Force on Interdisciplinarity begin in September 2006
- That the Council report monthly to the Academic Planning Committee on progress in all six elements of the plan (governance, budget, faculty, student life, valuing research, and benchmarking/performance indicators)
- That a final report, including recommendations for the next phase of activity be brought to the Academic Planning Committee in June 2007.

What follows is a brief outline of implementation processes, including persons responsible, for the major recommendations. These will be filled in and perhaps modified as the process unfolds.

Governance

Leadership:

University Level:

Goal: To develop a governance structure that brings focus and consistency to the university discussion and decision-making processes specifically pertaining to Interdisciplinary Units. To provide a mechanism for dealing constructively with problems and issues as they arise. To ensure that the IUs as well as the deans and senior administration are involved in governance. To promote interdisciplinarity within the University community as well as outside it.

What: AVP for Interdisciplinarity; addition of this mandate to the AVP Research on a one-year basis

Who: AVPR to develop terms of reference, submitted to necessary committees for consultation and finally to the Administrative Committee for approval.

When: Process to begin immediately; position to be effective September 1.

NB: Position to be reviewed after implementation period, to determine need and scope.

Faculty Level:

What: Vice/Associate Dean level leadership

Who: Deans of the faculties, in consultation with current vice-deans and others as needed

When: Effective September 1

Interdisciplinary Council:

What? Mandate, Terms of reference, modus operandi

Who? Academic Planning Committee to strike the Council; Council itself to develop terms of reference

When? Council to be struck at first meeting of Academic Planning Committee in September. Committee to consider terms of reference and formal mandate by December 2006.

Interdisciplinary Forum

What? Mandate, Terms of reference, modus operandi

Who? Academic Planning Committee to strike the Forum; Forum itself to develop terms of reference

When? Forum to be struck at first meeting of Academic Planning Committee in September. Nomination of executive and chair. Committee to consider terms of reference and formal mandate by December 2006.

Policies:

What? Policies and procedures on:

Hiring faculty for work in IUs

Secondment of faculty members for work in IUs

Establishment of new IUs

Review of existing IUs

Research Chairs

Role of SADR in Interdisciplinarity

Development of interdisciplinary programs

Others as needed

Who? Working groups, to include members from Council and Forum, chaired by a member of Council Executive. Working group prepares policies, consults with constituents, presents to both Council and Forum. Must be passed by Academic Planning Committee, then to Senate.

When? Ongoing. To be completed by June 30, 2007.

Governance in the IUs

What? IUs will be asked to prepare three brief documents: an academic plan, a governance plan, and a business plan.

Who and How? Process initiated by the Council executive; the director will organize the process of discussion and consultation within each IU. In some cases, the current structures, budgets and processes already address all relevant issues and thus will simply need to be reported. In others, this will provide an opportunity to rethink and revise current practices.

When? Initial meeting with Council Executive in September. Internal consultations throughout the fall, to be followed by meetings with the relevant deans and the executive committee, and others as needed. Revision of academic, governance and business plans as needed, followed by sign-off by the IU (through the Director), the relevant deans, and the Council Executive. Processes should be complete by June 30, 2007.

Budget

Goal: To ensure that the University is providing adequate and appropriate resources to support interdisciplinarity, including the IUs. University support comes indirectly through the Faculty budgets, and directly through central resources. One important aspect of the implementation of the recommendations pertaining to budget will be to examine the current level of central funding and to consider whether and how it could be possible to increase the amount of central funding available without at the same time compromising faculty budgets or other university initiatives.

Who? Working group of Council and Forum, to include AVP Institutional Research and Planning, AVP Finance, Council Executive, representatives from the IUs.

How? Analyze current level of central funding as well as the need for central funding, based on IU business plans. Make recommendations regarding the appropriate level of compensation to the faculties/departments for faculty members seconded to IUs. Project funding needs to 2010. Look closely at possible sources, including but not limited to BIUs generated by IU programs. Develop guidelines for eligibility. Provide to the IUs a template for their business plans, and guidance in how to create such a plan.

When? Process to begin September 1. Ideally it will be possible to submit a budget request to the Administrative Committee in December, in time for implementation for the coming fiscal year.

Faculty: Hiring, Tenure and Promotion

Goal: To arrive at hiring, tenure and promotion practices that will take interdisciplinarity activities into full account.

Who? AVP Human Resources or delegate, AVPI, others as needed

How? Negotiation with APUO on inclusion of IUs formally in processes of tenure and promotion. Consideration of question of joint vs. cross appointments.

When? Timeline: Begin summer 2006, with aim for implementation for 2007-2008 academic year

Student Life

Goal: To ensure that students are functioning under the same conditions (funding, student services, sense of belonging) as are students in departmental undergraduate and graduate programs.

Who? Dean of FGPS, Associate Vice President Academic, others as needed.

How? Interdisciplinary programs will be asked to work with the checklist provided in the recommendations above. Budgetary needs will be addressed in the business plan, as detailed above.

When? To begin in September, with an aim to have measures in place by June 30, 2007.

Promoting and Valuing Interdisciplinary Research

Goal: To put new information systems in place to allow a more comprehensive and flexible way of gathering and analyzing research data.

Who? Director of Research Grants and Ethical Services, in consultation with the Council, the Forum, others as needed.

How? Build on draft documents; consider integrating this project with other data needs that have been identified (e.g., evaluation of the SADR; benchmarking; scorecard).

Identify processes and budgets required.

When? Consultation to begin September, 2006. Consider phasing in as IT capabilities and budgeting become available.

Benchmarking/Performance Indicators

This area was not covered in detail in the deliberations of the Task Force, yet in discussion all agreed that it would be important to develop these measures early on in the implementation period.

Goal: To be able to measure our own progress and to benchmark our activities against comparable national and international institutions.

Who? Council Executive, in consultation with the Council, Forum, experts in the field of program evaluation, as well as Benchmarking and Balanced scorecard committees at the University

When? A plan to be in place by June 30, 2007.

Implementation Timetable

June 14, 2006 Final recommendations brought to the Task Force

June 27, 2006 Task Force report to Academic Planning Committee

July 2006 Report to Executive of Senate

July 2006-June 2007 Implementation

Spring 2007 Inaugural Event:

-Poster Display and prizes

-Key note address

June 2007 Wrap-up Report, to include:

-Revisions as ascertained by implementation process

-Recommendations for the long-term

Postscript

As will be obvious throughout this report, the recommendations of the 2006 Task Force bear a remarkable resemblance to the recommendations of the Mann Report passed by Senate in April 2003, with three exceptions:

- Identification of a leader who has primarily responsibility for shepherding the implementation of the recommendations
- Creation of two new structures (Interdisciplinary Council and Interdisciplinary Forum)
- Inclusion of a plan for implementation

We will learn from the year-long process of implementation that no doubt will require us to revise and rethink some of these recommendations.

These recommendations do not put an end to the conversation but allow us to begin the real work of creating an environment where interdisciplinarity is valued and facilitated, whether through formalized research and program structures or in all manner of informal ways, alongside and in dialogue with the disciplines.



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Task Force on Interdisciplinarity

Summary of Recommendations
June 27, 2006

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa



Governance: University-wide

Recommendation 1a: Leadership

For the Interdisciplinary enterprise as a whole: a leader and champion at the Associate Vice-President level, with the title Associate Vice-President for Interdisciplinarity.

Reports to both the Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Research.

One year trial: Add Interdisciplinarity to mandate of AVP Research

Reopen at end of implementation period.

Governance

Recommendation 1b: Interdisciplinary Council

Sub-committee of the Academic Planning Committee

Reports monthly to the Academic Planning Committee

Initial mandate: implement recommendations of Interdisciplinarity Task Force

Composition:

- AVPI (Chair)
- Executive Committee (AVPI, AVPA, Associate Dean FGPS)
- Executive committee of Interdisciplinary Forum
- Deans, AVPs for HR, Resources, Institutional Research and Planning; Director of Research Grants and Ethical Services

Governance

Recommendation 1c: Interdisciplinary Forum

Subcommittee of Academic Planning Committee.

The Forum is parallel to and independent of Interdisciplinary Council.

Will provide a forum for the discussion of issues, both broad and specific, pertaining to interdisciplinarity as it is practiced at the University.

Will be involved with the review and development of policies, in partnership with the Council, and in the promotion and evaluation of interdisciplinarity.

Composition:

- Director or delegate of each IU
- Student representatives (to be selected by GSAED and SFUO)
- AVPA, AVPR, Assoc Dean FGPS (ex officio)
- Chair and Executive to be selected by the Forum itself
- Other faculty/students involved in interdisciplinary activities outside the framework of the IUs

Governance: In the Faculties

Recommendation 2:

A designated decanal-level individual with responsibility for interdisciplinarity: Dean, current associate/vice-dean, or new position.

A forum for discussion and decision-making with regard to interdisciplinarity within the faculty and in partnership with other faculties

Governance: In the IUs

Recommendation 3

Leadership: Director, as at present,

Governance structures as needed to address the following areas, as pertinent to the IU:

- Scientific and/or academic direction; strategic planning
- Financial Management
- External activities
- Program management (e.g. courses, research seminars)
- Hiring/Tenure/Promotion
- Day to Day management

Inclusion of students in governance structure(s) where appropriate (e.g. for IUs that are or involve academic programs)

Budget Recommendation 1

That each unit develop a business plan that is coherent with its own strategic plan and includes revenues from all sources

The Plan will include:

A detailed needs analysis

A plan to maximize external revenues

A timeframe to reach stability.

Budget Recommendation 2

That central administration create a central pool of funding to provide:

- Some faculty positions to be allocated centrally to the IUs and shared with the Faculties
- Appropriate compensation to faculties whose faculty are seconded to IUs. Currently faculties/departments are compensated on a per-course basis, which in most cases does not truly compensate for the “loss” of a core faculty member

Faculty Recommendation 1

That discussions and negotiations take place between the administration and the APUO such that faculty who participate in IUs have those activities taken fully into account in at the time of hiring, tenure and promotion.

Discussions will include the question of joint vs. cross-appointments

Student Life

Recommendation 1

That each program develop ways to ensure that students have funding, a sense of place, and access to student services to the same level as students in departmentally-based programs.

Promoting & Valuing Interdisciplinary Research

Recommendation 1:

That RGES take the lead in developing information systems that will generate information at the level of the individual, faculty / department, and IU. Doing so will be of benefit not just for tracking the activity of the IUs, but all interdisciplinary research on campus, including the impact of the SADR's on our research activities.

Benchmarking/Performance indicators

Recommendation 1

- That a working group composed of members of the Council and Forum, and others as needed, be formed to development appropriate performance measures and to propose a plan for benchmarking our performance with regard to interdisciplinarity against comparable universities

Implementation Process Recommendation 1

- That the implementation process as outlined in the Report of the Task Force on Interdisciplinarity begin in September 2006
- That the Council report monthly to the Academic Planning Committee on progress in all six elements of the plan (governance, budget, faculty, student life, valuing research, and benchmarking/performance indicators)
- That a final report, including recommendations for the next phase of activity be brought to the Academic Planning Committee in June 2007.



RYERSON UNIVERSITY



Making Interdisciplinarity Work

Adele Reinhartz
University of Ottawa
November 4, 2010

General Definition

- Interdisciplinarity is a generic term denoting any intellectual activity that embraces more than one discipline.

Specific Definitions

- **Multidisciplinarity:** the gathering of specialists in more than one discipline around a topic of teaching or research
- **Interdisciplinarity:** the integration of separate streams of specialist knowledge in aid of a specific topic or problem
- **Transdisciplinarity:** new ways of thinking about problems that lie outside the purview of any discipline.

Issues at the University of Ottawa

- Interfaculty funding for Interdisciplinary Research Centre and Institutes
- Tracking and properly crediting collaborative research funding from external granting agencies
- Faculty Appointments, Workload calculation and Tenure/Promotion criteria
- Staffing Interdisciplinary graduate programs
- Student Experience in Interdisciplinary undergraduate programs

Context at the University of Ottawa

- Mann Report Sept 2002
- Begin-Heick Report March 2005
- Reinhartz Report June 2006

Main Topics

- Governance
- Budget
- Faculty
- Students
- Promoting and Valuing Interdisciplinary Research
- Benchmarks and Indicators

Governance

Models

1. No new structures: Deans and Senior Administration takes responsibility
2. College or Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, headed by a Dean (e.g. New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University at the West Campus)
3. Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary Studies (Dartmouth College; covers primarily undergraduate academic programs)
4. Vice-Provost for Interdisciplinarity (Duke University, since 1998; reports to the Provost)

Recommendations

1. University: Leader/champion for interdisciplinarity as part of the senior administrative team
2. Faculty: Senior admin within each faculty (vice-deans)
3. Programs: Determine appropriate governance mechanisms
4. Opportunities for “horizontal” (cross-faculty) governance, communication and decision-making
 1. Interdisciplinary Council (vice-deans)
 2. Interdisciplinary Forum (chairs of the Interdisciplinary Units/programs)

Budget

Interdisciplinary programs must be resourced appropriately: staffing, space, library resources and especially FACULTY

Compensation to Faculties for secondment of professors/instructors to interfaculty endeavours

Who is responsible for funding interdisciplinary programs?

Recommendations

- 1. Agreements between/among Faculties
- 2. Central fund supplements interfaculty agreements especially for faculty compensation and staffing

NB: Appropriate measures will depend on existing budgetary structures

Faculty: Hiring, Tenure and Promotion

- Faculty members need to have their interdisciplinary activities taken into account appropriately throughout the processes of hiring, tenure and promotion, whether they are seconded from other units or hired specifically for interdisciplinary programs

Ryerson Faculty Association

Memorandum of Understanding – 3:

INTERNAL CROSS APPOINTMENTS FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

“Where sound academic reasons exist, a faculty member may receive a subsequent appointment in the University such that she/he holds concomitant appointments in two Departments/Schools.”

Students

- Space (physical, psychological)
- Student services: academic counselling; access to staff to help navigate rules and regs
- Sense of place, both physical and social
- Student governance (e.g., student association, student-run activities)
- Inclusion of students in program governance
- Professors who are visibly and clearly identified with the program and can speak on its behalf
- Orientation and transition program for new students
- Early-identification for at-risk students
- Availability of TAs specifically assigned to this program
- Student mentoring
- Library support, e.g. designated librarians
- Financial resources, especially for funding graduate students (TAs, RAs, scholarships)

Recommendation

- Ensure that new (and existing) programs address the issues explicitly
- Ensure adequate resourcing of interdisciplinary programs (see above under Budget)

Promoting and Valuing Interdisciplinary Research

- Identify interdisciplinary research: who, what, where, how much. This requires that we incorporate the concept of multiple PIs into our research databases.
- Identify how and where such research is being catalyzed
- Celebrate interdisciplinary research and its accomplishments
- Obtain information on trends
- Demonstrate how each unit *enables* interdisciplinary research
- Demonstrate how each unit *generates* new projects

Benchmarking and Performance Indicators

- How do we know when we are doing well, and what areas need to be improved?
- Set up clear goals and benchmarks
- Document progress
- Develop performance indicators
- Perhaps can be done by a small group that includes administrators and chairs of interdisciplinary programs

**Interdisciplinarity
Senate Discussion
December 7, 2010**

QUESTIONS

Topic 1: Governance and Organization (Leadership, structure, budget)

1. As a university, do we want to encourage and “grow” our interdisciplinary profile, and if yes, how much bigger?
2. If much larger is the answer, then the structure has to reflect this, which raises the question, who owns the program, who owns the curriculum and who assigns the budget?
3. Should we have a separate faculty? (We could answer this question differently from the Task Force on restructuring.)

Topic 2: Interdisciplinary research (Funding/credit)

1. What can Ryerson do to facilitate “credit” sharing between departments, faculties and even universities?
2. How can the ORS facilitate interdisciplinary research at Ryerson, especially in terms of increasing awareness of expertise amongst the faculty, but also identifying the appropriate funding sources (case work model)?
3. Can we devise a system to share credit internally only? (e.g. Can we have more than one PI?)

Topic 3: Faculty Appointments (Tenure, promotion, “home”)

1. Can the Collective Agreement have a clause that deals with cross-disciplinary hiring?
2. Collectively, should we devise interdisciplinary clusters that we support strategically as a university?
3. Are there structural models of faculty agreements at other universities that we can use?
4. Should cross-disciplinary programs be housed in a disciplinary department or an interdisciplinary cluster?

Topic 4: Graduate Program Staffing (“backfill” for disciplinary departments/schools. TA’s, general cooperation and resources)

1. How do we ensure that undergraduate (usually disciplinary, department-based) programs are not cannibalised to support graduate programs, especially interdisciplinary graduate programs?
2. Can we clarify, to the faculties and departments, the particular funding arrangements for graduate and undergraduate programs, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary?
3. How do we ensure equitable support for graduate students in disciplinary and interdisciplinary graduate programs? (Particularly worrisome is the term of GA appointments, which are mostly controlled by discipline-based program departments.)
4. How can the university balance the FTE requirements of disciplinary programs, disciplinary department-based undergraduate programs, interdisciplinary graduate programs and interdisciplinary undergraduate programs?

Topic 5: Issues in Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Programs (Student experience, preparation for graduate study and careers.)

1. Should we focus on professional differences or commonalities? Service courses are essentially the same with a slightly different slant, e.g. ACS401, so would it be beneficial to combine them?
2. Given the limitations of a high school education, how do we provide a broad, yet deep, knowledge base to give students the confidence to specialize in their chosen field?
3. How can we find structural ways to provide a faculty identity while providing flexibility of choice in courses?

Topic 6: Issues in Graduate Interdisciplinary Programs (Student experience, graduate supervision, careers)

1. How do we ensure students have access to professional accreditation?
2. Who will champion interdisciplinary programs?
3. How do we nurture the development of interdisciplinary collaboration?

Topic 7: Are we true believers? (Role and importance of interdisciplinary programs and interdisciplinarity)

1. Are we already sufficiently interdisciplinary but at different levels (macro/micro)?
2. Are we in danger of short-changing students without a strong disciplinary background?
3. What are we willing to give up to be, or not be, inter/multi-disciplinary?
4. How much inter/multi disciplinary content is necessary to be real added value (more than "dabbling")?



THEME 1: ACADEMIC COMMITMENT

- Is Ryerson already interdisciplinary enough?
- How can students be provided with the broad knowledge base they need to succeed?
- Does interdisciplinarity threaten strong Ryerson discipline based programs?
- How might Ryerson be willing to change to become more interdisciplinary?

ACADEMIC COMMITMENT - RESPONSE

- Curriculum model proposal
 - More interdisciplinary approach
 - Retains strong professional program base
 - Provides students with more choice and opportunity for broader education
 - Encourages interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary program development

THEME 2: ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

- Should there be an Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies?
- Should the university establish interdisciplinary clusters?
- Who will champion interdisciplinary programs and nurture their development?
- How can faculty be hired for interdisciplinary programs or given cross appointments?
- What is the best way to fund interdisciplinary programs?

ACADEMIC STRUCTURE - RESPONSE

- Interdisciplinary Faculty was not recommended
- A “Dean of Record” is established for interdisciplinary programs and initiatives to serve as champion and ensure appropriate funding.
- Ten Cross Disciplinary appointments will be funded for next year.

THEME 3: GRADUATE STUDIES

- How can interdisciplinary graduate programs best be funded?
- How can graduate students in interdisciplinary programs be provided with graduate assistantships?
- How can faculty participate in interdisciplinary graduate programs without disadvantaging undergraduate programs?

GRADUATE STUDIES - RESPONSE

- Existing interdisciplinary graduate program funding is through the Dean of Graduate Studies. This model could be discussed.
- Undergraduate programs should be encouraged to look employ qualified graduate students in interdisciplinary programs as graduate assistants.
- Departments and Schools must manage teaching assignments to the best advantage of both undergraduate and graduate programs.

THEME 4: RESEARCH

- How can interdisciplinary research be facilitated?
- How can faculty be made more aware of the research of others to promote interdisciplinary collaboration?
- Can a process be devised to share the “credit” for research both internally and externally?
- How can interdisciplinary research best be funded?

RESEARCH – RESPONSE

- Vice President Research and Innovation is in process of compiling a database of research interests to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration.
- A method should be devised to ensure that appropriate credit is given internally for interdisciplinary research.