

2011-2012 Report from Working Group on Interdisciplinary Program Support

A group of program directors has met for the past year with the charge of reviewing the needs of current interdisciplinary programs and developing a set of recommendations for the Office of the Provost to support those needs.

Group Membership:

- Directors of Interdisciplinary programs that offer a major or minor. These include Peace Studies, LALACS, GWS, REES, Japanese Studies, Biochemistry, Neuroscience, and ES. In Spring 2012 African Studies joined.
- Directors of Curriculum II and FTS
- Associate Provost and Dean of Academic Programs, Barbara Kaiser

The group's mandate emerged from Goal A.3 of the Academic Strategic Plan:

Goal A.3 Promote, develop and support interdisciplinary programs as well as interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and scholarship by establishing and sustaining financial resources and by encouraging faculty, departments, and committees to incorporate an interdisciplinary view in their work.

Rationale

The excellence of Gustavus's academic program is rooted in the liberal arts tradition and has the goal of developing mastery of a field of concentration within a general framework that is both interdisciplinary and international in perspective. Currently, seven interdisciplinary programs support majors or minors; we must ensure that we meet their needs and encourage faculty and departments to add interdisciplinary perspectives to existing courses and programs.

Timeline and Benchmarks

YEAR ONE

- *Review the needs of current interdisciplinary programs for funding and staff, review the ways that they interact with related departments in hiring faculty and scheduling courses, and develop a three-year plan to support their needs.*
- *Conduct a 2-3 day faculty workshop during January focusing on interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research.*

The program director's working group, chaired by Mimi Gerstbauer, met five times between Spring 2011 and Spring 2012 to discuss the academic strategic plan goal. In addition to discussion, program directors were asked to provide information on their duties as program directors, to identify top needs of their programs, and to complete an on-line survey.

Program directors identified needs of their programs in areas of resources, overall program development, and curricular development. The recommendations below are highly correlated with goals written in program strategic plans.

The Program Director's Working group makes the following recommendations:

1. Equity in course releases, stipends for directors

Program directors operate essentially as department chairs and should be compensated as such. Appendix A provides a summary of job descriptions of seven program directors, revealing the similarities between the jobs of program directors and department chairs. Program directors perform administrative duties such as management of budgets and preparation of reports; they engage in strategic planning such as maintenance of the program's mission statement and funding searches; they coordinate the curriculum and faculty and student development through faculty mentoring, participation in some faculty searches and management of courses. On top of this, some program directors do a significant amount of co-curricular programming such as arranging lectures or other campus wide events or running retreats and orientations.

These are duties that department chairs share. However, program directors operate with less power over their own program committees (whose first allegiance is usually to their departments), less power over their curriculum (which may be subject to staffing and scheduling issues dominated by departments), and in some cases double duties due to the interdisciplinary nature of their work (for example, having to attend meetings of two different departments in addition to the program meetings).

We recommend that the Provost office work on increasing the fairness of compensation for program directors' work, in the form of release time and stipends for program directors that are comparable to department chairs. In addition, some program directors have a contract which specifies certain duties and some do not. We recommend that it might be helpful for all of the positions to have clear written expectations. Clear expectations would also help sort out (as needed) the variance in workload among program directors.

As revealed in the chart below, only about half of program directors receive course releases. Until 2011-2012, no program directors received any stipend except for GWS. The GWS director continues to receive an extremely large stipend compared to all other program directors.

60% of survey respondents identified release time for director as a need and 60% identified it as a top priority for their program.¹ In addition to providing an acceptable accounting method for faculty time, programs have specific needs which could be addressed with course releases. These include classroom

¹ A report of survey results is in Appendix B.

and laboratory curriculum, campus and community outreach, more effective advising and mentoring of students, and more. Other benefits of compensation for program directors include the ability to maintain or recruit high quality directors of the programs.

Table 1: COMPENSATION OF PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Program	Course Release	Director Stipend	Notes
African Studies	0	\$500	
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	0	\$500	
Curriculum II	2	\$0	
Environmental Studies	0	\$500	
First Term Seminar	2	\$0	\$1000 per summer for FTS training workshops
Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies	1	\$3,000	
Japanese Studies	0	\$500	
Latin American, Latino & Caribbean Studies	1	\$500	
Neuroscience	0.5	\$500	
Peace Studies	1	\$500	
Russian Studies	0	\$500	
Average Stipend (not including FTS and CII)		\$778	Compared with Department Chair stipend average: \$2492

Payoff: Strengthens program by giving time to director; demonstrates value of program directors and interdisciplinary programs; increased fairness; increase in program director morale.

***see note at end of section 2**

2. Program budgets

80% of survey respondents identified budget or an increase in budget as a concern. 60% identified it as a priority need for their program.

We recommend that the Provost office work with each program director to provide requested budgets. Like the compensation issue discussed in item one above, programs should be on par with departments.

While budgets may vary with the needs of programs, no program should have to do without. The impact of budgets on programs will vary by program, but for most the strategic plan goals require input of resources. The only program surveyed that made substantial progress on their goals was LALACS. While this is by no means the sole factor, a significant budget increase contributed to that.

Payoff: Strengthens programs by allowing services, equipment, faculty development and other needs internal to a program and by affording opportunities to have a larger presence across campus; demonstrates value of interdisciplinary programs

Table 2: PROGRAM BUDGETS

Program	Budget	Notes
African Studies	NA	New program - budget request submitted
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	\$0	
Curriculum II		
Environmental Studies	\$3180	Plus significant grant income
First Term Seminar		
Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies	\$5700	Does not include biennial Moe lecture endowment
Japanese Studies	\$600	Plus \$300 membership to ASIANetwork (consortium for liberal arts colleges with Asian Studies)
Latin American, Latino & Caribbean Studies	\$2,500	Was \$1,200 as of last year
Neuroscience	\$750	
Peace Studies	\$9950	All endowment income (\$8000+ goes to 2 annual lectures, 2 Model UN conferences, scholarships)
Russian Studies AVERAGE (not including FTS, CII, Russian, African)	\$0? \$3240	Compared with Department budgets: Average \$40,356.54 Median \$30,190.50

AVERAGE

Further discussion of 1 and 2:

We recognize the challenges of equity issues in compensation and in budgets. Our key point is that compensation of program directors should be on par with department chairs. Likewise, criteria used to determine budgets allotted to departments should also be applied to programs. We as a group of program directors did not discuss what the criteria should be. Possible factors include the size of the program (number of courses, number of faculty involved, number of students), the expected needs and duties of the program director (annual lectures or events, faculty and curricular development, equipment and supply needs, etc.). We also recognize that fairness in faculty workloads can not be a precise bean counting affair. For example, we would be against a rigid system in which faculty compensation and service looked exactly alike for all.

However, the current system seems to have little rhyme or reason. Rather, compensation and budgets seem based on who asked at the right time and got lucky. This has greatly affected both the capacity of various programs as well as the morale of the program directors.

3. Academic Catalog changes (Cross-listing and course prefixes)

Programs would like to be able to list their core courses with the program prefix. There are many examples of this already, even when a major does not exist (such as FTS, CUR, NDL, IDS, and prefixes for Latin and Greek).

Programs would like courses that count toward their programs to have a cross-listed prefix with combined department codes (BIO 253/BMB 253), etc. This communicates to students that this is an interdisciplinary course. It would also simplify and reduce confusion if we no longer divide the enrolled students divided into those who registered under the BIO prefix and those who registered under BMB. Departments such as Geography have also requested this; the benefit goes beyond interdisciplinary programs.

This has been a consistent recommendation of outside reviewers of our programs. They do not understand why we do not have an effective cross-listing system at Gustavus. With the support of the Provost office, we plan to meet with Kristi Westphal in late summer to discuss options and advocate for changes.

Payoff: Program ownership of courses and visibility in other disciplines (e.g. student sees that a sociology class counts toward Peace Studies or Environmental Studies).

4. Administrative help

We recommend that all programs have access to administrative support, as do departments. Administrative assistants should not have this work as an uncompensated or hidden “extra”. In some cases, it might make sense for assistants to be shared across programs.

Administrative assistance is spotty across programs. Some programs utilize the designated person in their building (such as LALACS or Peace Studies). Others fall under administrative assistants who are unable to add additional workloads (BMB). Sometimes a change in the program director could result in the work shifting to a different administrative assistant (for example when GWS directorship moved from Peg O’Conner to Jill Locke).

Some programs have student academic assistants, who receive a small stipend from the Provost’s office. Others have also occasionally or regularly relied on hiring work study students. Most do not have regular summer administrative assistance.

One of the largest demands on director time is administrative duties and logistical issues for which administrative support is essential. Some programs do a lot of campus-wide programming which requires room reservations, posters, web reservations for media services, announcements, college

calendar, News/Marketing, etc. There are many hoops to jump through to organize a single event on campus. Some programs would benefit from lab support staff in addition to administrative assistance.

60% of survey respondents named “provision of administrative support” or “more administrative support” as a need of their program. This is a need that has repeatedly been supported by external reviews of many programs.

Payoff: More director time for strategic program building; demonstrates value of interdisciplinary programs; recognizes work of support staff

5. Staffing and faculty participation in programs

Programs are vulnerable to departments and their decisions about hiring faculty or replacing faculty. Programs have had varied success working through the Provost’s office for participation on hires that might contribute to our programs. We would like to be able to “contract” with departments that they will either replace a position or another department will. For example, Political Science hired Mimi Gerstbauer to contribute to Political Science and to Peace Studies. If Gerstbauer were to leave and Political Science does not hire another person (or a person who would contribute to Peace Studies), the Peace Studies piece, contracted to endure, might go instead to a History department hire. Departments have the majority of power on hiring; interdisciplinary programs need empowerment on this issue.

80% of survey respondents noted faculty to teach courses as a need, 60% noting that staff to teach courses is one of the top 3 resource priorities, with the potential for making the biggest difference to the program. In their respective strategic plans, every interdisciplinary program noted something related to the ability to hire faculty for their programs and/or faculty development opportunities to encourage new courses for their programs.

In addition, faculty and departments should be encouraged (or expected) to participate in interdisciplinary program committees. Faculty members often have an interest in participating with a program, but view their department as their primary responsibility. At times, getting a release from a department in order to teach a course for a program is difficult. Several survey respondents noted difficulty in finding faculty to serve on the program or its committee as a significant challenge to the program.

Payoff: Strengthens ability of programs to maintain their current course offerings (by protecting lines) and to potentially grow their curriculum by offering more courses in their interdisciplinary area. Overall, allows for increased control over program curriculum and ability to attract faculty to participate in programs.

6. Space

Some programs are scattered across campus and lack a centralized location for their identity (or even to hang a poster or bulletin board). Survey respondents identified space for their program as a need (60%), but not a high priority need. This space is desired not as storage, but rather as a means of program identity building. Thus, when the opportunity came for space in the basement of the new Anderson Hall,

programs rejected the location due to the lack of natural connection with students or faculty participating in their programs. The space was also extremely small. Thus, we hold out hope for a better space either as individual programs or as a collective.

Payoff: Program identity building; other opportunities unique to individual programs

Table 3: SUMMARY CHART OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND THEIR PAYOFFS

RECOMMENDATION	IMPACT
1. Equity in course releases, stipends for directors	Strengthens program capacity Increases fairness Demonstrates value of program director’s role Impacts program director morale
2. Budget or increase in budget	Strengthens program capacity Demonstrates value of interdisciplinary programs
3. Cross-listing and course prefixes	Promotes program visibility Demonstrates interdisciplinary nature of Curriculum
4. Administrative support	Strengthens program capacity Demonstrates value of interdisciplinary programs Recognizes work of support staff
5. Empowerment for staffing and faculty participation	Strengthens curriculum and stability of curriculum Impacts ability to attract faculty to participate
6. Space	Builds program identity

Interrelationship among Recommendations and Further Ideas

We recognize that many of these goals are interrelated. A specific need might be met by support in the form of faculty release time, or a program budget, or administrative support. However, one form of support might demand another. For example, larger budgets and greater program capacity would warrant more release time and administrative support. Overall, we hope that multiple forms of support will be granted (as with departments) with the goal of strengthening and growing our programs.

Although we are not prepared to make specific recommendations, the group of program directors also explored larger institutional changes which might support interdisciplinary programs in creative ways. Some food for thought is below, and could be the start of more brainstorming.

1. Student degree options:

Require all students to have an interdisciplinary minor (and only one minor). Practiced at Beloit College.

Develop a system of Supplementary Majors, which can only be taken as 2nd majors and are typically smaller (8 courses) than some majors. Practiced at University of Notre Dame.

Develop an interdisciplinary concentration that allows students to experiment with several interdisciplinary programs. At Gustavus, there was once a proposal for a “social justice” concentration

that allowed students to take an introductory course and then select courses from several interdisciplinary programs such as GWS, Peace Studies, Environmental Studies, LALACS.

2. Cooperation among programs to meet needs

Shared space

Shared administrative support

Shared programming (some institutions have joint lectures among programs with overlapping interests such as Environmental Studies, Peace Studies, GWS)

Shared faculty – hires that might contribute to more than one interdisciplinary program

Appendix A

DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTIONS (compiled from BMB, CII, ES, GWS, JS, LALACS, PS)

ADMINISTRATIVE:

- *Manage program budget
- *Chair the program Committee
- *Attend monthly meetings with Associate Provost
- *Attend monthly Chair's meeting
- *Ex-officio membership on CC and Provost Council (CII)
- *Prepare annual reports, program reviews, assessments, academic catalog copy, etc.
- *Maintain a webpage, newsletter, blog, Moodle Site, etc.
- *Hire/train/supervise work study students
- *Serve as library liaison

Longer-term STRATEGIC PLANNING:

- *Maintain/update program mission statement
- *Write grant applications
- *Coordinate fundraising with alumnae
- *Represent program in committees for facilities planning, equipment needs, etc.
- *Promote the minor/build identity
- *Identify new Director
- *Maintain institutional on-campus research on faculty and students

CURRICULAR/STUDENT and FACULTY FOCUSED:

- *Coordinate changes in Major/Minor
- *Communication with depts. that contribute to the program (2-15 departments, depending on program)
- *Scheduling of courses and management of core courses in particular
- *Participate in searches in relevant depts.
- *Identify faculty to teach courses and manage staffing needs, leaves, etc.
- *Mentoring of faculty – particularly as relates to teaching of a “core” course.
- *Letters for faculty promotion/tenure
- *Provide opportunity for faculty/student interaction (picnics, receptions, program meetings)
- *Maintain current “lists” of students
- *Advising students (info session for students at registration time, approving senior projects, study away programs, application for graduation, exit interviews of students)
- *Communicate with prospectives/programming on visit days
- *Promote/publicize opportunities for students in our minor (internships, jobs, scholarships, etc.)
- *Organize student awards
- *Maintain relations with/network with like programs at other colleges or disciplinary organizations or study away programs.
- *Attend conferences related to the program

PROGRAMMING:

- *Organize speakers, campus-wide events
- *Coordinate with or host things with related student organizations (or campus centers like Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation)
- *Run retreats, social events, orientation events