



Interdisciplinarity @ WMU

Jennifer Bott

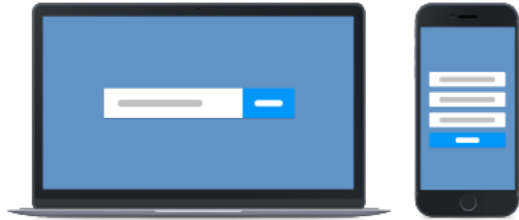
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs Town Hall

November 18, 2020

How to join

Web



- 1 Go to **PollEv.com**
- 2 Enter **WMU783**
- 3 Respond to activity

Text



- 1 Text **WMU783** to **37607**
- 2 Text in your message

“As we look to the future, it is our belief that we are reaching a point in higher education where departments can no longer afford to go it alone. Rather, the value of reaching out within colleges and across the university at large becomes important in ensuring that various kinds of core knowledge areas and future skill sets are made available to our students.”

--Faculty Senate Ad-Hoc Interdisciplinary Studies Report (2020), p. 7

Call to Action: What and How?

Using **interdisciplinarity** as our guide, we will **reimagine and restructure** Academic Affairs at WMU with an emphasis on replacing single-focus programs with **collaborative, multi-disciplinary** programs that solve complex, interconnected problems.

- *Enhance learning and discovery,*
- *Create sustainable programs and*
- *Balance workload.*

How: **Together.**

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Call to Action: Why?

Origin:

Faculty Senate ad hoc study committee, culminating in the May 2020 final report. Inspired by many successful interdisciplinary programs that spur scholarly achievements and ensure our students are prepared for meaningful careers.

Why:

As knowledge and the world we live in is **constantly changing**, our **disciplines evolve, combine, or interact** with other disciplines in pursuit of better understanding and improved learning. Many of the biggest issues or questions we confront **occur at the intersection of traditional academic disciplines** – climate change, social justice, public health, as examples.

Call to Action: Why?

To create a sustainable future, our administrative and curricular structure must acknowledge (pre-pandemic):

- Enrollment has declined by approximately one third; demographic predictions place us at 17,000 in 2031 without intervention.
- State support also decreased year-over-year and has yet to be fully restored following the 2008 recession.

Why: Through innovation, we have an opportunity to reduce administrative overhead and better align curricula to the size of our current faculty.

Inspiration: Successful Prototypes

We have already demonstrated our ability to create and sustain outstanding interdisciplinary programs and structures:

- Institute for Environment and Sustainability,
- Interdisciplinary Health Sciences PhD,
- Institute for Medieval Studies,
- The Richmond Institute for Design and Innovation: Product Design,
- Data Science,
- Center for Leadership and Business Strategy,
- WMU Essential Studies @ Level 3 (Connections),
- Our newest online degree, cybersecurity and
- Many more.

Underlying Principles

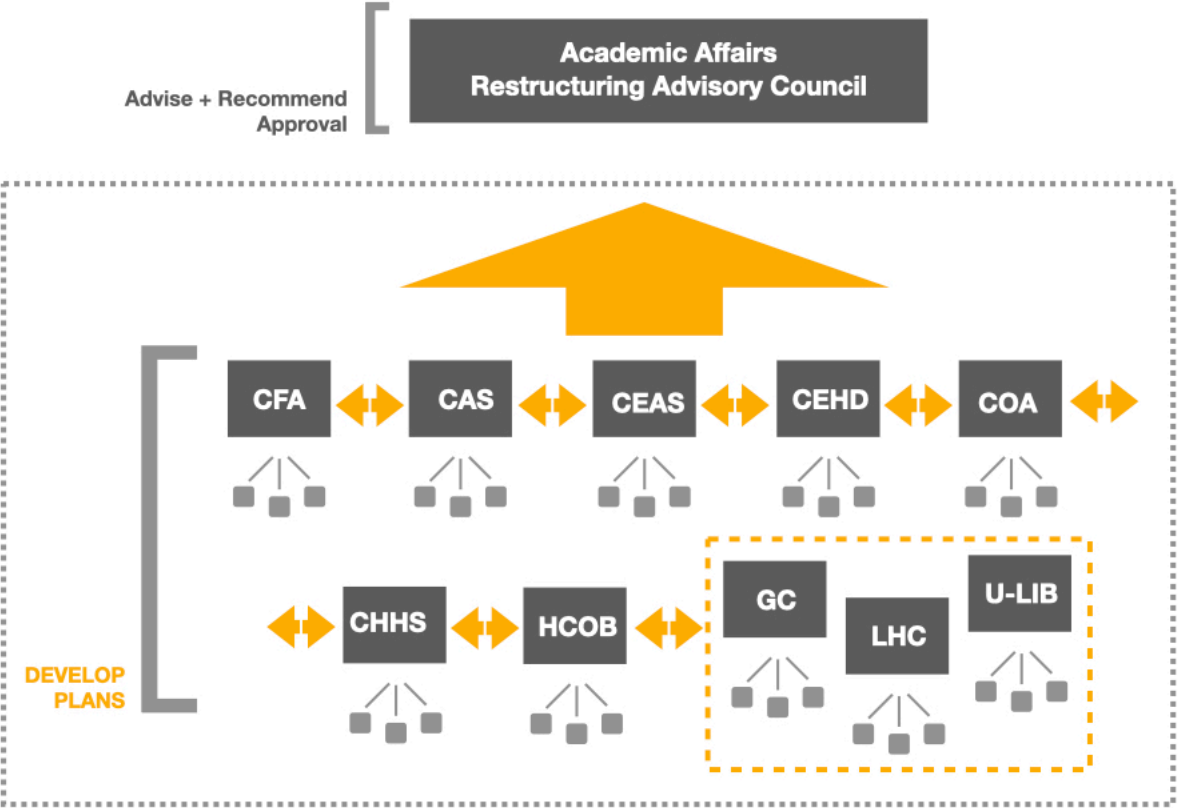
- A commitment to our three pillars: learner-centered, discovery-driven and globally engaged that empowers our students to find their purpose and passion and supports world-class scholarship and creative activities;
- A process that fully engages faculty and relies on their expertise;
- An efficient timeline with milestones for decision making; and
- Coordinated discussion and planning across units and colleges, facilitated by Western administration and Faculty Senate.

Timeline: Aggressive but Attainable

- Short-term (by April 2021): Planning.
 - Identify pillars of interdisciplinary strength and supporting programs.
 - Recommend realignment of programs/courses that result in fewer academic administrators/units and/or programs, including a balanced portfolio of graduate programs.
- Long-term (by 2022): Execution for competitive advantage.
 - **New combinations/integrations of programs/units** as a result of interdisciplinary program implementation.
 - Grant and research/creative activity **productivity enhanced by interdisciplinary collaborations.**
 - **Sustainable academic programs with robust enrollments.**

How: **Together!**

Shared Governance & Shared Responsibility



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Two-Step Process

- College level:
 - Interdisciplinary teams [faculty + chairs/directors] work within and across colleges,
 - Identify interdisciplinary opportunities and propose to the Academic Affairs Restructuring Council.
- Institutional level:
 - Academic Affairs Restructuring Council [faculty + Senate + administrators] solicit campus feedback, review proposals and invite full proposals.
 - Recommend programs for implementation to institutional leadership that follow governance processes.

Get Engaged & Involved

Year One Timeline:

- **Late November:** Nominations for college groups or Academic Affairs Restructuring Council due. Teams composed in early Dec.
- **Mid-January:** Brief proposals due.
- **Early February:** Full proposals invited by Academic Affairs Restructuring Council.
- **Early March:** Full proposals completed and submitted to Academic Affairs Restructuring Council.
- **Late April:** Recommendations sent to the Provost's Council with conversation with Executive Leadership by the end of the spring 2021 term.

Our Future, Together

This is an ***ambitious process*** with an ***aggressive timeline***, both of which reflect the urgency of the moment.

We can ***no longer afford—literally or figuratively—to continue to allow external forces to shape the future of our institution***. Instead, ***we will seize the moment to come together under difficult circumstances to take control of our core academic mission*** by reimagining and reshaping our approach to interdisciplinary-driven teaching, learning, and discovery.

Join Us: www.wmich.edu/interdisciplinarity