

Interdisciplinarity@WMU- Phase One planning Template

- 1. Brief Overview:** Provide a brief overview of the proposed interdisciplinary initiative. What types of questions would the initiative ask? What types of complex problems would it seek to solve?

This proposal emphasizes social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will maintain the Institute model and use joint appointments, primary/secondary, and courtesy faculty appointments to collaborate further. We also present a collaboration between the College of Fine Arts (CFA) and the College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Problems. It seeks to encourage cross-disciplinary and cross-college collaboration through the SRM as opposed to discouraging it.

We propose to use joint appointments, primary/secondary, and courtesy faculty appointments to collaborate further. In addition, through this initiative we aim to foster new opportunities for research and creative scholarship, and teaching through the following:

- a) collaboration between Fine Arts and AAAS for Africana Performance and Cultural Arts
- b) collaboration with climate change working group (proposed Inst. for Climate Change Studies) on an environmental justice initiative. This could be developed as a certification option or separate minor which would include interdisciplinary work from within AAAS/ANTH and others.
- c) collaboration between IAS and social justice issues, also Lewis Walker Institute to develop certificate options that provide marketable skillsets where students can apply issues of important social consciousness to any career field. This could be developed as a certification in Social Justice that includes courses from both ANTH/AAAS and other programs.

- 2. Impacted units:** What existing units, programs, and colleges would be involved in the proposed initiative? What other possibilities for collaboration across campus or in the broader community might exist now or in the future?

Due to cross-listing, faculty may maintain teaching loads as assigned by the faculty member's primary home unit. Service assignments may also include coordination and collaboration across colleges. Finally, the institute streamlines possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration for research, scholarship and creative activities by creating a community of scholars with common interests.

For example, we are currently piloting an initiative with the College of Fine Arts (CFA) to develop a new major, Africana performance and cultural arts with CFA. African American and African Studies, Dance, Theater and the School of Music are the primary programs impacted (a). Other units include Institute for Environmental Studies and Sustainability (b) Lewis Walker Institute, and for c) possibly pull faculty from Sociology, Comparative Religion, Spanish.

- 3. Impact on teaching, learning, and curricula:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on teaching, learning, and curricula. How might this initiative help to grow enrollment, including by reaching new audiences of learners through continuing education, dual enrollment, or professional certification? How will the proposed initiative positively impact the training of undergraduate and graduate students? How does it enhance our institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The proposed initiative allows for a wider range and more flexible list of potential courses to count towards the Major and Minor in African American and African Studies, Dance, Theater and the School of Music. The initiative allows the development of new majors, minors and certificates, as outlined in question #1. Given recent emphases on social justice and #BlackLivesMatter, the program also allows for enrollment growth for students interested in exploring a wide range of racial and ethnic relations, especially as connected to the lives of people of African descent.

In addition, in terms of enrollment, our unit already has faculty with expertise in climate change, social justice, and diversity, equity and inclusion. We can respond to recent demands from students for attention to their concerns. We can teach content that is relatable to students' lived experiences, and that engages them. We already have courses in the catalog that can be used to develop new minors or concentrations in the topics a-c as addressed in question #1. Our current priorities in the unit include: 1) revising existing majors, 2) working with CFA to develop Africana performance and cultural arts major, and 3) developing undergraduate and graduate certificates in social justice, diversity and inclusion, and black leadership. We already have faculty teaching these courses, and so these initiatives don't require new hires or new resources, just a different distribution of resources we already have.

- 4. Impact on research and creative activity:** Describe the anticipated impact of the proposed initiative on research and creative activity. How will this initiative promote discovery and creative scholarship? How might it result in increased external funding?

Because the proposal is a cross-college collaboration, it allows for interdisciplinary research as it pertains to research, scholarship and creative activities. It allows for faculty and students to make connections between research and performance, and theory and practice. It allows for the unit to explore the arts and humanities in relation to discovery driven scholarship. The emphasis on social issues further allows the units to focus fundraising efforts on increasing scholarship opportunities for African American studies and Africana performance and cultural arts students. To date, since African American and African Studies reinstated its fundraising cost center account this past January, we have already received two donations from donors to fundraise in this area.

We already do research, scholarship, and creative activities, and are active in these new proposed areas in our scholarship. We would potentially bring several existing board-appointed faculty members who could join us for primary and secondary appointments. Another positive aspect of this initiative would be the opportunity to apply for more collaborative and cross-disciplinary grants (eg., NEH; NSF) with the arts brought in to enhance the existing scientific research and discovery foci already in place within IAS.

- 5. Efficiencies and/or cost savings:** How might the proposed initiative contribute to increased efficiencies and/or cost savings, for example by reducing administrative positions (e.g. chairs/directors), sharing staff support services and/or by sharing facilities?

Because we are an Institute, we already use cross-listing to share courses with Biology, Sociology, Gender and Women's Studies, History, and the Lewis Walker Institute. Many of our courses also count for a variety of majors, so we already collaborate with a variety of units and programs across the institution. Through the expansion of joint and courtesy faculty appointments in IAS we will not need to remove people from another unit. In this way we would be able to share resources rather than relying on new ones.

Following the Institute model, we are already operating efficiently and would not be reducing administration or staff positions; we welcome additional collaborations with other units. The purpose of the Institute is to share workload and resources in an efficient manner, around big questions in society and culture today.

- 6. Impact on course offerings and workload:** At present, proposed initiatives will only be feasible and sustainable if they can be supported by existing resources, including instructional capacity, faculty and staff time, and facilities. Will the proposed initiative streamline existing course or program offerings? Could the initiative help create more equitable and sustainable workload for faculty, for example, by reducing the need to offer under enrolled courses, reducing the frequency of course offerings or eliminating the need to teach some courses?

Our proposal maintains existing course offerings to ensure that students make timely progress toward the degree. We also offer more course options to students whose majors are not from within IAS to allow more cross-disciplinary opportunities for discovery and exploration. Cross-listing makes teaching loads more manageable already, without the reliance on adding too many new courses. Service loads for joint appointees can be agreed upon between colleges (like between CFA and IAS). Collaboration for joint funding opportunities aligns with the discovery driven pillar of the institution.

- 7. Additional Information:** What additional information would you like to provide in support of this proposal?

CFA is planning to submit a proposal including collaboration with this unit, in support of a new major. We also see opportunities for funding through the Mountain Top's initiative for racial justice.

8. Contact

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